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Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Dostoyevsky Smith Willis
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Henry Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Nietzsche
Stockton Turgenev Balzac Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Tolstoy Gogol Busch
Darwin Thoreau Thoreau Twain Plato Scott
Potter Freud Zola Lawrence Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Jowett Stevenson Dickens Plato Scott
Andersen Andersen Cervantes Burton Hesse Harte
London Descartes Wells Wells
Poe Aristotle Wells Wells
Hale James Hastings Hastings Cooke
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Swift Dante Shaw Shakespeare Irving
Wodehouse Wodehouse Wodehouse
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**Found in the Philippines The
Story of a Woman's Letters**

Charles King

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: Charles King

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8472-1845-6

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Found in The PHILIPPINES

The Story of a Woman's Letters

BY
CAPTAIN CHARLES KING



GROSSET & DUNLAP PUBLISHERS

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FOUND IN THE PHILIPPINES.

CHAPTER I.

Something unusual was going on at division headquarters. The men in the nearest regimental camps, regular and volunteer, were "lined up" along the sentry posts and silently, eagerly watching and waiting. For a week rumor had been rife that orders for a move were coming and the brigades hailed it with delight. For a month, shivering at night in the dripping, drenching fogs drifting in from the Pacific, or drilling for hours each day on the bleak slopes of the Presidio Heights, they had been praying for something to break the monotony of the routine. They were envious of the comrades who had been shipped to Manila, emulous of those who had stormed Santiago, and would have welcomed with unreasoning enthusiasm any mandate that bore promise of change of scene—or duty. The afternoon 6 was raw and chilly; the wet wind blew salt and strong from the westward sea, and the mist rolled in, thick and fleecy, hiding from view the familiar landmarks of the neighborhood and forcing a display of lamplights in the row of gaudy saloons across the street that bounded the camp ground toward the setting sun, though that invisible luminary was still an hour high and afternoon drill only just over.

Company after company in their campaign hats and flannel shirts, in worn blue trousers and brown canvas leggings, the men had come swinging in from the broad driveways of the beautiful park to the south and, as they passed the tents of the commanding general, even though they kept their heads erect and noses to the front, their wary eyes glanced quickly at the unusual array of saddled horses, of carriages and Concord wagons halted along the curbstone, and noted the number of officers grouped about the gate. Ponchos and overcoat capes were much in evidence on every side as the men broke ranks, scattered to their tents to stow away their dripping arms and belts, and 7 then came streaming out to stare, unrebuked, at headquarters. It was still early in the war days, and, among the volunteers and, indeed, among regiments of the regulars whose ranks were sprinkled with college men who had rubbed shoulders but a few months earlier with certain subalterns, the military line of demarcation was a dead letter when "the boys" were out of sight and hearing of their seniors, and so it happened that when a

young officer came hurrying down the pathway that led from the tents of the general to those of the field officers of the Tenth California, he was hailed by more than one group of regulars along whose lines he passed, and, as a rule, the query took the terse, soldierly form of "What's up, Billy?"

The lieutenant nodded affably to several of his fellows of the football field, but his hand crept out from underneath the shrouding cape, palm down, signalling caution. "Orders—some kind," he answered in tones just loud enough to be heard by those nearest him. "Seen the old man anywhere? The general wants him," and, never halting for reply the youngster hurried on. 8

He was a bright, cheery, brave-eyed lad of twenty who six months earlier was stumbling through the sciences at the great university on the heights beyond the glorious bay, never dreaming of deadlier battle than that in which his pet eleven grappled with the striped team of a rival college. All on a sudden, to the amaze of the elders of the great republic, the tenets and traditions of the past were thrown to the winds and the "Hermit Nation" leaped the seas and flew at the strongholds of the Spanish colonies. Volunteers sprang up by the hundred thousand and a reluctant Congress accorded a meagre addition to the regular army. Many a college athlete joined the ranks, while a limited few, gifted with relatives who had both push and "pull," were permitted to pass a not very exacting examination and join the permanent establishment as second lieutenants forthwith. Counting those commissioned in the regular artillery and infantry, there must have been a dozen in the thronging camps back of the great city, and of these dozen, Billy Gray—"Belligerent Billy," as a 9 tutor dubbed him when the war and Billy broke out together—the latter to the extent of a four-day's absence from all collegiate duty—was easily the gem of the lot. One of the "brightest minds" in his class, he was one of the laziest; one of the quickest and most agile when aroused, he was one of the torpids as a rule: One of the kind who should have "gone in for honors," as the faculty said, he came nearer going out for devilment. The only son of a retired colonel of the army who had made California his home, Billy had spent years in camp and field and saddle and knew the West as he could never hope to know Haswell. The only natural soldier of his class when, sorely against the will of most, they en-

tered the student battalion, he promptly won the highest chevrons that could be given in the sophomore year, and, almost as promptly, lost them for "lates" and absences. When the 'Varsity was challenged by a neighboring institute to a competitive drill the "scouts" of the former reported that the crack company of the San Pedros had the snappiest captain they ever saw, and that, with far 10 better material to choose from, and more of it, the 'Varsity wouldn't stand a ghost of a show in the eyes of the professional judges unless Billy would "brace up" and "take hold." Billy was willing as Barkis, but the faculty said it would put a premium on laxity to make Billy a 'Varsity captain even though the present incumbents were ready, any of them, to resign in his favor. "Prex" said No in no uncertain terms; the challenge was declined, whereat the institute crowed lustily and the thing got into the rival papers. As a result a select company of student volunteers was formed: its members agreed to drill an hour daily in addition to the prescribed work, provided Billy would "take hold" in earnest, and this was the company that, under his command, swept the boards six weeks later and left San Pedro's contingent an amazed and disgusted crowd. Then Billy went to metaphorical pieces again until the war clouds overspread the land; then like his father's son he girded up his loins, went in for a commission and won. And here he was a "sub" in Uncle Sam's stalwart infantry with 11 three classmates serving under him in the ranks and half a dozen more, either as junior officers or enlisted men, in the camps of the volunteers. He was a handsome boy, a healthy, hearty boy, and, as boys go, rather a good boy—a boy in whom his mother would have found, had she not long since been lifted above the cares of this world, much of comfort and more to condone, but a boy, nevertheless, who had given his old dragoon of a dad many an anxious hour. Now, just as he neared the legal dividing line between youth and years of discretion, Billy Gray had joined the third battalion of his regiment, full of pluck, hope and health, full of ambition to make a name for himself in a profession he loved as, except his father, he certainly loved nothing else, and utterly scoffing the idea that there might come into his life a being for the sake of whose smile he could almost lay down his sword, for he had yet to meet Amy Lawrence.

"Who are the women folks up at headquarters, Billy?" asked a youth of his own years and rank, peering eagerly through the drifting mist at the dim, ghostly outlines of the general's camp.

"Didn't get to see 'em. Where's the old man—the colonel?" was the reply. "Chief wants him toot de sweet!"

"What's wanted?" called a voice from the biggest of the neighboring tents, and a close-cropped head was thrust out between the front tent flaps. "That you, Billy? Who wants the colonel? He and the 'brig' rode over to the Presidio an hour ago—ain't got back. Come in; I've started a fire in our oil stove." A puff of warm air blew from the interior and confirmed the statement. It was well along in summer and, not a dozen miles away to the east, men were strolling about with palm-leaf fans and wilted collars. Here, close to the gray shores of the mighty sea, blankets and overcoats were in demand. Hospitably the older officer tugged at the lacings of the military front door, swore between his set teeth when the knots, swollen by the wet, withstood his efforts and then shouted:

"Sergeant-major; send somebody here to open this." 13

A light footstep sounded on the springy board floor, nimble fingers worked a moment at the cords, then the flap was thrown open and the adjutant's office stood partially revealed. It was a big wall tent backed up against another of the same size and pattern. Half a dozen plain chairs, two rough board tables littered with books, papers and smoking tobacco, an oil stove and a cheap clothes rack on which were hanging raincoats, ponchos and a cape or two, comprised all the furniture. In a stout frame of unplanned wood, cased in their oilskins and tightly rolled, stood the colors of the famous regiment; and back of them, well within the second tent where one clerk was just lighting a camp lantern, were perched on rough tables a brace of field desks with the regimental books. The sergeant-major, a veteran of years of service in the regulars, sat at one of them. A young soldier, he who had unfastened the tent flap to admit Lieutenant Gray, was just returning to his seat at the other. Two orderlies lounged on a bench well beyond and back of the sergeant-major's seat, and a bugler, with his hands in his pockets, was smoking a short brier-root pipe at the opposite or back doorway. Woe to the enlisted men who sought the presence of the colonel or

adjutant through any other channel. The sergeant-major would drop on him with the force of a baseball bat.

"Who all are over yahnduh at the chief's?" asked the adjutant, as soon as he had his visitor well inside, and the soft accent as well as the quaint phraseology told that in the colonel's confidential staff officer a Southerner spoke.

"All the brigade and most regimental commanders 'cept ours, I should say, and they seem to be waiting for them. Can't we send?" was the answer, as the junior whipped off his campaign hat and sprinkled the floor with the vigorous shakes he gave the battered felt.

"Have sent," said his entertainer briefly, as he filled a pipe from the open tobacco box and struck a safety match. "Orderly galloped after him ten minutes ago. Blow the brigade and battalion commanders! What I asked you was who are the women up there?" 15

"No, you didn't! You said, 'who all are up yonder?' I'm a sub, and s'posed you meant *men*—soldiers—officers. What have I to do with anybody in petticoats?"

"And I'm a grizzled vet of a dozen years' duty, crows' feet and gray hairs a-comin'," grinned the adjutant, pulling at a long curly mustache and drawing himself up to his full height of six feet, "and when you're as old as I am and half as wise, Billy, you'll know that a pretty girl is worth ten times the thought our old frumps of generals demand. My name ain't Gordon if I haven't a mind to waltz over there through the mist and the wind just to tell them I've sent for Squeers. Then I'll get a look at the girls."

"I've got to go back," said Billy, "and you've no business to—with Mrs. Gordon and an interesting family to consider. What tent'd the ladies go to? I didn't see 'em."

"Mrs. Gordon, suh," said the adjutant, with placid superiority, "considers it a reflection on her sex when I fail to pay it due homage. Of course you didn't see the ladies. The party 16 was shown into the general's own domicile. Couldn't you see how many young fellows were posing in picturesque attitudes in front of it? Awe Hank!" he suddenly shouted to an officer striding past the tent in dripping mackintosh. "Goin' up to division headquarters? Just tell

the staff or the chief I've sent an orderly galloping after Squeers. He's halfway to the Presidio now, but it'll be an hour before they can get back." The silent officer nodded and went on, whereat Gordon made a spring for the entrance and hailed again.

"Say, Hank! Who are the damsels?"

The answer came back through the fog:

"People from the East—looking for a runaway. Old gent, pretty daughter, and pretty daughter's prettier cousin. Heard the orders?"

"Damn the orders! They don't touch *us*. Where do they come from?"

"D'rect from Washington, they say. Three regiments to sail at once, and — —"

"Oh, I know all that!" shouted Gordon impatiently. "It was all over camp an hour ago! Where do they—the girls—come from? What's their name?" 17

"Wasn't presented," was the sulky reply. "Let a lot of stuffy old women show up in search of long-lost sons and those fellows at headquarters unload them on us in less than no time, but a brace of pretty girls—! Why, they double the gate guards so that no outsider can so much as see them. Billy, here, knows 'em. Ask him."

By this time the youngster had ranged up alongside the adjutant and was laughingly enjoying the latest arrival's tirade at the expense of the headquarters' staff, but at his closing words Lieutenant Billy's grin of amusement suddenly left his face, giving way to a look of blank amaze.

"I know 'em! I haven't been east of the Big Muddy since I was a kid."

"They asked for you all the same, just after you started. 'Least one of 'em did—for What's-his-name?—the chief's military legal adviser, came out bareheaded and called after you, but you were out of hearing. He said the cousin, the prettiest one, recognized you as you skipped away from the general's tent and pointed you 18 out to her friend. Somebody explained you were running an errand for one of those aides too lazy to go himself, and that you'd be back presently."

"Then go at once, young man," said the adjutant, laying a mighty hand on the junior's square shoulder. "Stand not upon the order of your going, but git! Never you mind about the colonel. He won't be *here* until after he's been *there*, and he's in for a rasping over this morning's inspection. Just look at the report. Sergeant-major, send me Colonel Colt's report!" he called aloud, tossing his head back as he spoke, "Come in, Parson; come out of the wet." And, eager enough to read a famous inspector's criticisms of the appearance of the regiment, the officer addressed as Parson shoved briskly into the tent.

The young soldier who had opened the tent flap a few minutes before came forward with a folded paper which, in silence, he handed the adjutant and turned back to his desk. Mr. Gordon took the paper, but his eyes followed the soldier. Then he called, somewhat sharply: 19

"Morton!"

The young fellow stopped at the dividing crack between the two tent floors, and slowly faced the three officers. He was slender, well built, erect. His uniform fitted him trimly, and was worn with easy grace, his hands and feet were small and slender, his eyes and hair dark and fine, his features delicate and clear cut, his complexion a trifle blistered and beaten by the harsh winds that whistled in every day from the sea, and, as he turned, all three officers were struck by its extreme pallor.

"You're sick again, Morton," said the adjutant somewhat sternly. "I thought I told you to see Dr. Heffernan. Have you done so?"

"I—wasn't sick enough," faltered the young soldier. "I was all right a minute or two—or rather this morning, sir. It'll be over presently. Perhaps it was the smell of the oil that did it—the stove is close to my desk."

But Gordon continued to look at him doubtfully.

"Move your desk across the tent for the present, anyhow," said he, "and I'll speak to the 20 doctor myself. With all this newspaper hullabaloo about our neglect of the sick," continued he, turning to his friends, "if a man changes color at sight of a smash-up he must be turned over to the Red Cross at once. What is it, orderly?" he

finished suddenly, as the tent flaps parted and a soldier in complete uniform, girt with his belt of glistening cartridges, stood at salute, some visiting cards in his gloved hand.

"Lieutenant Gray here, sir?" was the comprehensive answer. Then, catching sight of the young officer who stepped quickly forward, he held forth the cards.

"The adjutant-general's compliments, sir, and he'd be glad if the lieutenant would come over at once."

Gray took the cards, curiously studied them and then read aloud, one after the other, and placing the topmost underneath the other two as soon as read.

"MR. LISPENARD PRIME."

"MISS PRIME."

"MISS AMY LAWRENCE."

21

It was the last name that lay uppermost at the end, receiving particular attention, and the Parson noted it.

"That's the pretty cousin, Billy," quoth he. "Case of the last shall be first, don't you see? Scoot now, you lucky boy, and tell us all about it later."

But Gray was still gazing dreamily at the cards.

"I'm sure I never met any of them before in my life," said he. "There must be some mistake. Yet—that name—sounds familiar—somehow," and "that" was the only name now in sight. "I'm off," he suddenly announced, and vanished.

There was a sound of light, quick footsteps on the flooring of the rearward tent at the same time. The sergeant-major glanced up from his writing; looked at a vacant desk, then at the clock, then, inquiringly, at his regimental deity—the adjutant. It was just the hour of the day at which all manner of papers were coming down from division and brigade headquarters to be duly stamped, noted and 22 stacked up for the colonel's action. This was the young clerk Morton's especial function, but Morton had left the office and was gone.

CHAPTER II.

The little party of visitors in the general's personal tent made a striking contrast to that assembled under the official canvas. In the latter, seated on camp stools and candle boxes or braced against the tent poles were nearly a dozen officers, all in the sombre dark blue regulation uniform, several in riding boots and spurs, some even wearing the heavy, frogged overcoat; all but two, juniors of the staff, men who stood on the shady side of forty, four of the number wearing on their shoulders the silver stars of generals of division or brigade, and among their thinning crops of hair the silver strands that told of years of service. One man alone, the commanding general, was speaking; all the others listened in respectful silence. In the gloom of that late, fog-shrouded afternoon a lantern or two would have been welcome, but the conference had begun while it was still 24 light enough for the chief to read the memoranda on his desk, and now he was talking without notes. In the array of grave, thoughtful faces, some actually somber and severe in expression, a smile would have seemed out of place, yet, all of a sudden, grim features relaxed, deep-set eyes twinkled and glanced quickly about in search of kindred sympathetic spirits, and more than half the bearded faces broadened into a grin of merriment and as many heads were suddenly uplifted, for just as the gray-haired chief ended an impressive period with the words: "It will be no laughing matter if I can lay hold of them," there burst upon the surprised ears of the group a peal of the merriest laughter imaginable—the rippling, joyous, musical laughter of happy girlhood mingling with the hearty, wholesome, if somewhat boyish, outburst of jollity, of healthful youth.

"Merciful powers!" exclaimed the chief. "I had forgotten all about those people. They must have been here twenty minutes."

"Sixty-five, sir, by the watch," said a saturnine-looking 25 soldier, tall and stalwart, and wearing the shield of the adjutant-general's department on the collar of his sack coat.

"They ought to go, then," was the placid suggestion of a third officer, a man with keen eyes, thin, almost ascetic, face, but there

twitched a quaint humor about the lines of his lips. "That visit's past the retiring age."

And then another peal of merriment from the adjoining tent put stop to conversation.

"They don't lack for entertainers," hazarded a staff officer as soon as he could make himself heard. "The solemn-looking Gothamite who came with them must have slipped out."

"It seems he knows Colonel Armstrong," said the chief thoughtfully. "I sent for him an hour ago, and he may be piloting Mr. Prime around camp, looking up the runaway."

"Another case?" asked a brigade commander with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Another case," answered the general, with a sigh. "It isn't always home troubles that drive them to it. This boy had everything a doting father could give him. What on earth could make *him* bolt and enlist for the war?" 26

No one answered for a moment. Then the officer with the humorous twinkle about the eyes and the twitch at the lip corners, bent forward, placed his elbows on his knees, his fingers tip to tip, gazed dreamily at the floor, and sententiously said:

"Girl."

Whereupon his next neighbor, a stocky, thickset man in the uniform of a brigadier, never moving eye, head or hand, managed to bring a sizable foot in heavy riding boot almost savagely upon the slim gaiter of the humorist, who suddenly started and flushed to the temples, glanced quickly at the chief, and then as quickly back to the floor, his blue eyes clouded in genuine distress.

The general's gray face had seemed to grow grayer in the gloom. Again there came, like a rippling echo, the chorus of merry laughter from the adjoining tent, only it seemed a trifle subdued, possibly as though one or two of the merry-makers had joined less heartily. With sudden movement the general rose: "Well, I've kept you long enough," he said. "Let the three 27 regiments be got in readiness at once, but relax no effort in—that other matter. Find the guilty parties if a possible thing."

And then the group dissolved. One or two of the number looked back, half-hesitating, at the entrance of the tent, but the chief had turned again to the littered table before him, and seating himself, rested his gray head in the hand nearest his visitors. It was as though he wished to conceal his face. One of the last to go—the thin-faced soldier with the twinkling blue eyes, hung irresolutely behind the chief a moment as though he had it in his mind to speak, then turned and fairly tiptoed out, leaving the camp commander to the society of a single staff officer, and to the gathering darkness.

“Kindly say to Mr. Prime, or his friends, that I will join them in a moment,” said the former, presently, without so much as uplifting head or eye, and the aide-de-camp left as noiselessly as his predecessor, the humorist. But when he was gone and “The Chief” sat alone, the sound of merry chat and laughter still drifted in with the mist at the half-opened 28 entrance. Shadowy forms flitted to and fro between the official tent and the lights beginning to twinkle at brigade headquarters across the wide roadway. An orderly scratched at the tent flap, but got no answer. The lone occupant sat well back in the gloomy interior and could barely be distinguished. The waiting soldier hesitated a moment, then entered and stamped once upon the wooden floor, then turned and noiselessly stepped out, for, anticipating his question, the general spoke:

“No light just yet, orderly. I’ll call you—in a moment. Just close the tent.”

At his hand, he needed no light to find it, lay a little packet that had been passed in to him with the mail while the council was still in session. It was stoutly wrapped, tightly corded, and profusely sealed, but with the sharp point of an eraser the general slit the fastenings, tore off the wrapper, and felt rather than saw, that a bundle of letters, rolled in tissue paper and tied with ribbon, ribbon long since faded and wrinkled, lay within. This he carefully placed in a large-sized military letter 29 envelope, moistened and pressed tight the gummed flap, stowed it in the inner pocket of the overcoat that hung at the rear tent pole, reduced the wrapper and its superscription to minute fragments, and dropped them into the wastebasket, all as carefully and methodically as though life knew neither hurry nor worry; then bowed his lined face in both hands a moment

in utter silence and in unmistakable sadness. Presently his lips moved: "Can you look down and see that I have kept my word, Agnes?" he murmured. "God help me to find him and save him—yet."

Once again the laughter, the gay young voices, rang from the other tent. All over camp, far and near, from the limits of the park to the very slope of the height at the north, the evening bugles were calling by thousands the thronging soldiery to mess or roll call. Slowly the General rose, drew on his overcoat, and in another moment, under the sloping visor of his forage-cap, with eyes that twinkled behind their glasses, with a genial smile softening every feature, his fine soldierly face peered in on the 30 scene of light, of merriment and laughter under the canvas roof of the only home he knew in the world—the soldier home of one whose life had been spent following the flag through bivouac, camp or garrison, through many a march, battle and campaign all over the broad lands of the United States until now, at the hour when most men turned for the placid joys of the fireside, the love of devoted and faithful wife, the homage and affection of children, the prattle and playful sports of children's children—homeless, wifeless, childless he stood at the border of the boundless sea, soldier duty pointing the way to far distant, unknown and undesired regions, content to follow that flag to the end of the world, if need be, and owning no higher hope or ambition than to uphold it to the end of his life.

There was nothing in such a face as his to put a check to fun and merriment, yet, all on a sudden, the laughter died away. Three young gallants in soldier garb sprang to their feet and faced him with appeal and explanation in their speaking eyes, although only one of their number 31 found his tongue in time to put the matter into words. There were only two girls when the general left that tent to meet his officers at four o'clock, and now there were four, and the four were having five-o'clock tea.

At least any one would have said they were four blithe girls, innocent of graver responsibilities than social calls and dinner or dance engagements, for never looked four young women so free from the cares of this world as did those who were picturesquely grouped about the General's camp table and under the brilliant