

EXECUTION OF A SOLDIER.

PRIVATE WM. W. LUNT, NINTH MAINE VOLUNTEERS, SHOT FOR DESEPTION—INCIDENTS OF THE TRAGIC SCENE—LAST WORDS OF THE PRISONER, &c., &c.

The awful doom prescribed by military law for the crime of desertion to the enemy was this morning meted to William W. Lunt, late a private in Co. I, 9th Maine Volunteers. The offence was committed in Florida soon after the occupation of that place in April last, by the United States forces and the prisoner was returned to our lines by the rebels on the ground that a man who would desert, could not be trusted at all, and they sent him back, hoping that any of their soldiers who should act in a similar manner, would receive like treatment at our hands. Of course while there was no intention of following the enemy's suggestions in this respect, nothing was left but to take the prisoner, who was soon afterwards tried before a Court Martial convened at St. Augustine, of which Gen. Terry, (then Colonel of the 7th Conn. Regt.) was President, upon the following charges and specifications:

CHARGE I.—Description.—Specification.—In this, that the said private William W. Lunt, Company "I," 9th Maine Regiment, stationed at Fernandina, Fla., at the time the alleged crime was committed, did desert from the U. S. Army, and go to the enemy's lines without arms and accoutrements. This at Fernandina, Fla., on or about the 7th of April.

CHARGE II.—Highway Robbery.—Specification.—In this, that the said William W. Lunt, Company "I," 9th Maine Regiment, near the R. R. Bridge called Lofton on the railroad running from Fernandina to Baldwin, Fla., did forcibly take from Miss Ellen Manning, money to the amount of two hundred and sixty-eight dollars, more or less. This at Fernandina, Fla., on or about the 8th of April, 1862.

Of both the charges and their specifications Lunt was found guilty and he was sentenced "to be shot to death at such time and place as the Commanding General may direct."

In accordance with an act of Congress, passed at its last session, requiring that the proceedings in cases of condemnation for a capital offence shall be submitted to the President before the execution of the sentence, the evidence and findings of the Court were forwarded to Washington. Within two weeks Gen. Brannan received an order from the War Department to the effect that the proceedings of the Court had been approved by the President and directing that the sentence should be executed.

There was then no further hope, and Monday, Dec. 1 was decided upon as the day for carrying out the decree of the military tribunal.

Lunt, for some weeks, had been an inmate of a cell in the prison of the Provost Marshal, at Hilton Head, having been brought up from St. Augustine last September, but as soon as his fate was decided he was placed in a separate tent by Major Van Brunt, the Provost Marshal, in order that he might fit himself for the great change soon to come over him. From his own confession, the prisoner had been a reckless, wayward youth, committing crimes which had brought him into the meshes of the law, and up to the time when his certain doom was announced, he gave no evidences of repentance, even for a day afterwards speaking lightly of his fast-approaching end. Soon, however, through the earnest ministrations of Chaplain Butts of the 47th New York Volunteers, who from the first took a christian pastor's interest in the case, the unhappy man was brought to seek the consolations of religion, and for the past few days became a different creature. Realizing his condition, he prayed for the forgiveness of God, and died professing his faith in the mercy of the Almighty.

During the last four days he preserved a remarkable composure of mind, acknowledging his readiness to die, and expressing himself at peace with himself and the entire world. From first to last he persisted in declaring his innocence of the crime of desertion, asserting that he had been sent outside our lines by one of his superior officers, upon an improper errand, and while in the performance of his mission was captured by a squad of the enemy's cavalry. The witnesses upon whose testimony he was convicted, he accused of perjury; but while alluding to himself as a deeply-wronged man, he said that he cherished no ill-feeling towards his persecutors. It is singular that a man on the verge of the grave should obstinately utter sentiments which, if human reason have any weight whatever, are in the light of the evidence so much at variance with the truth, but instances are common of criminals denying their offences even in the face of death, and in this case there appears to have been no doubt of the prisoner's guilt.

A short time before the prisoner was led out for execution he sent for the writer, and requested that his protestations of innocence might be made known through the press. "Tell my fellow soldiers," said he, "that I have been a hard boy, I have done a good many wicked things, and they must take me as a warning to them, not to

be led astray by bad company. I am willing to die, and it is a great deal better to die innocent than guilty, and for the sake of my family I want it to be published that I am innocent."

Lunt's manner was perfectly self-possessed throughout the interview, and on our rising to leave, after a long conversation concerning the occurrences for which he was condemned, in which he endeavored to explain away the circumstantial evidences of his guilt, he handed us for publication, the following:

HILTON HEAD, S. C. 1862.

I'm about to suffer death, which punishment I am willing to bear for a warning to others which may be led astray by bad company. Fellow soldiers you should take warning by me and keep out of bad company and shun everything that is bad. Keep good company and you will be respected by your worst enemies.

Oh! may God bless the officers of the Forty-seventh New York Regiment, for the kindness they have shown to me, a wicked sinner. They have done everything that was in their power, and they brought me tracts to read and religious papers that led me the right road to my Savior. Oh may God help and sustain them through the perils of the battles that they may come out victorious in them all, and God speed the time when peace shall once more be, and the friends that is here at war will be going home to their families.

ALBERT W. LUNT.

It will be seen that the prisoner signed his name Albert, although he enlisted and was condemned as William W. Lunt, but Albert was really his name. He was nearly 22 years of age and was born at Hampden, Me., of respectable parents. In early youth he became restive under parental restraint and ran off with a circus company, with which he continued some years. Subsequently he was convicted of horse-stealing, for which he served a term in the State prison, and immediately following his release he enlisted. During his connection with the regiment his conduct had been fair on the average until he committed the crime for which his death was the forfeit. He was of remarkable physique, being more than six feet in height and of a frame proportionably large and muscular.

At half past ten o'clock the prisoner was brought from his tent and approached the wagon between a guard of two men, with side arms. He was habited in the usual blue army overcoat and wore a black felt hat. He still retained his almost stolid firmness of manner—not a muscle of his features moved, not a limb trembled, as he quietly entered the wagon and seated himself upon the coffin, detained so soon to contain his mortal remains. The wagon was guarded by the squad of men who were selected as the firing party under Capt Eddy, and was preceded by an escort of forty men of the 47th N. Y. Vols. Chaplains Butts of the 47th N. Y. and Hill of the 3d New Hampshire, who acted as his spiritual attendants, followed immediately in the rear—together with those of the Medical Department who were to assist in the proceedings all mounted. As soon as the prisoner entered the cart, Major Van Brunt took his position on the right and the solemn procession moved forward to the sound of muffled drums—the escort with shouldered arms and the guard with arms reversed. Nothing was neglected which could add to the solemnity of the occasion and make it as impressive as possible. As the procession slowly made its way to the intrenchments, the guards and sentinels along the route, presented arms and crowds of soldiers, civilians and contrabands pressed forward eager to gratify a morbid curiosity and catch a glimpse of the features of the doomed man. Throughout the march the prisoner sat upon his coffin, almost without motion his face resting upon his hand—no moisture on his brow, no tear bedewing his cheek, his whole manner betokening perfect calmness and resignation. The spot selected for the scene of the execution, was without the entrenchments and opposite the southern sallyport. Here the entire regiments of the command were drawn up to witness the tragic scene, formed in three sides of a hollow square. Near the centre of the square was stationed Gen'l. Terry and his staff, with several prominent officers. The procession halted directly opposite the General and his staff and the condemned man alighted without assistance. The coffin was taken out and placed beside him, and his sentence was then read to him in a clear and distinct voice by Lieut. Gallier, Adjutant of the Provost Marshal's force, to which he listened without manifesting the slightest emotion. After the reading of the sentence, Major Van Brunt addressed a few words to him to the effect that his sentence was about to be carried out, and if he desired to make any remarks he was at liberty to do so. At the invitation the prisoner arose and with a calm voice said:

"Fellow soldiers, I want you to take warning by me and seek salvation from the Lord before it is too late. I am not guilty of the crime for which I have been condemned to death."

Having made these few remarks he was divested of his overcoat, and in his shirt, shortly re-

quired to kneel upon his coffin. In this position his eyes were bandaged with a white cloth and the squad of twelve men were silently motioned to take their position directly in front of him at 20 paces distance, at the same time preparing to aim. Everything was now ready and Chaplains Butts and Hill both went to the prisoner to receive his parting words. He expressed himself as perfectly resigned to his fate and ready and willing to die. The chaplains having retired, Major Van Brunt shook the prisoner by the hand, and after bidding him farewell stepped a few paces back and with a wave of the handkerchief announced that the fatal moment had come. With a motion of his sword Capt Eddy commanded his men to the position of "ready—aim," and instantly uttering the word "fire" there followed a flash and loud report, and at the same moment the wretched man fell forward, pierced with nine balls. One cap exploded and the piece missed fire; one shot did not take effect and the twelfth musket contained a blank cartridge. At a sign the twelve men moved aside and a reserve of twelve more took their positions. But there was no need of them. The surgeons pronounced the culprit to be dead. He could not for one moment have suffered physical pain.

Every detail was carried out in excellent order. Not a verbal command was given except the single word "Fire." The firing party consisted of twenty-four men—twelve to fire first and twelve to act as a reserve in case the first fire should not prove effective. One musket in each twelve contained a blank cartridge with a heavy wad, and as the loaded muskets were handed to the men none could say to whom fell the blank. At the instant the unhappy man fell the surgeons approached and examined the body, finding the carotid artery had ceased to pulsate and the spark of life was extinct. A few moments sufficed to convince them of this fact, and the body was then placed in the black coffin and conveyed to the burial-place, in charge of six members of the Provost Guard with side arms. The customary funeral honors of the soldier were not accorded.

Thus ended the second execution of this kind which has taken place in our army during the war. Gen. Terry took the greatest care to make it appear not so much an affair of retributive justice as an example to the soldiers. With this view he wisely forbade the presence of all those whose idle curiosity alone would have prompted to attend.

—A letter from Snicker's Gap, Va., says: At one farm house a venerable African asked "Is dat all the army o' de Norf?" "No" replied our waggish surgeon, "the last end is just coming through Bangor, Maine." "Bress my soul, w' ar dey all grow? Massa Linkum's got de biggest pile dis time, any how."

—Jerrold went to a party at which a Mr. Pepper had assembled all his friends. Jerrold said to his host, on entering the room "My dear Mr. Pepper, how glad you must be to see all your friends mustered!"

—"Thou art a little bear, madam," said a quaker to a fashionable belle at an evening party. "Sir?" exclaimed the dismayed fair one. "About the shoulders, I mean," smilingly replied broadbrim.

—A Cleveland paper says that the people of that town are using mouse-raps, old jack-knives, and shirt buttons for small change.

REGULAR LINE OF PACKETS BETWEEN NEW YORK AND PORT ROYAL, S. C.—The undersigned will dispatch a vessel twice a month from each of the above named ports. For freight or passage, apply to JOHN PILTS, Agent, Bay Point, S. C., B. H. BIXBY, 56 Greenwich St., N. York.

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AMERICAN WATCHES FOR AMERICAN SOLDIERS.—The American Watch Company of Waltham, Mass., give notice that they have lately issued a new style of watch expressly designed for soldiers and others who desire a good watch at a moderate price. These watches are intended to take the place of the cheap anchors and lepiners of foreign manufacture with which the market is flooded, and which, as every one knows, were never made to keep time, being refuse manufactures, unsaleable in Europe and sent to this country for jockeying and scientific purposes only.

Our new watch is most substantially made, cased in sterling silver, and is a reliable and accurate time-piece. It is offered at a price but little above that which is asked for the trashy anchors and lepiners already referred to. We have named this new series of watches Wm. Ellery, and they may be found at the stores of our agents, Channey G. Robbins, Beaufort; and Douglas, Steele & Co., Hilton Head, For the American Watch Company.

H. A. ROBBINS, General Agent.

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