



## [Keys To Prosperity]

KTP-0008

### Do The Job – Carrying The Message To Garcia



*“How you do one thing, is how you do all things.” – Anon*

Hello Achiever!

#### **Rowan and Hubbard.**

100 years ago those names were household words, widely known and celebrated. Today, few recognize either, or know the story of *“the man who carried the message to Garcia.”*

When the United States went to war with Spain in the spring of 1898, the War Department needed information on the Spanish forces then occupying and governing Cuba, and the willingness and ability of the Cuban insurgents to cooperate with an American invasion.

The man chosen for the job was Lieutenant Andrew S. Rowan, an Infantry officer working for the fledgling U.S. Army intelligence office in Washington, D.C. Rowan was a logical choice because he spoke Spanish, had been to Cuba, and had even co-authored a descriptive and historical book about the island.



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Lt. Andrew Rowan

On April 9 of 1898, Lieutenant Rowan sailed from New York to the island of Jamaica, where he secretly met with Cuban exiles who would lead him to General Calixto Garcia, leader of the Cuban insurgents.

Following a wild night ride through the Jamaican jungle, a hazardous crossing in a small fishing boat evading Spanish naval patrols, hacking their way through tangled mangrove swamp, and climbing into the Sierra Maestra mountains on horseback and on foot, Rowan finally reached Garcia's mountain camp at Bayamo on May 1.

Having completed his mission and having obtained the needed information, it took Rowan another 15 days to hack his way through more mangrove swamps to the northern shore, row and sail 200 miles over open water across the Caribbean to Nassau in the Bahamas, then to Key West before returning by train to Washington.

There Rowan reported his contact with General Garcia to the Commanding General of the Army, General Nelson A. Miles, and to Secretary of War Russell A. Alger, and to President William McKinley himself.



Gen. Calixto Garcia

As a result of Rowan's mission, Garcia had advised the Americans to land at Daiquiri, where his forces made a diversionary attack that facilitated their landing without Spanish opposition, and thus helped win the battles of El Caney and Santiago.

Rowan's personal account of his adventure "[My Ride Across Cuba](#)" was published in McClure's magazine in August of 1898.

Rowan did not rise to the level of popular hero of the same stature as Admiral Dewey at Manila Bay or Theodore Roosevelt at San Juan Hill, but in 1899 his fame was given a big boost by Elbert Hubbard, publisher of the magazine *Philistine*, who wrote a brief filler piece in February 1899 about the



value of personal initiative and attention to duty, which came to be titled “*A Message To Garcia*”.

### **A Message To Garcia**

*“In all this Cuban business there is one man stands out on the horizon of my memory like Mars at perihelion.*

*When war broke out between Spain and the United States, it was very necessary to communicate quickly with the leader of the Insurgents. Garcia was in the mountain fastness of Cuba – no one knew where. No mail or telegraph message could reach him. What to do?*

*Someone said to the President, “There is a fellow by the name of Rowan will find Garcia for you, if anybody can.” Rowan was sent for and given a letter\* to be delivered to Garcia.*

*How the “fellow by the name of Rowan” took the letter, sealed it up in an oilskin pouch, strapped in over his heart... ..and delivered it to Garcia – are things I have no special desire now to tell in detail.*

*The point I wish to make is this: McKinley gave Rowan a letter to be delivered to Garcia; Rowan took the letter and did not ask, “Where is he at?”*



Lt. Andrew Rowan with Gen. Calixto Garcia at Bayamo, Cuba



*By the Eternal! There is a man whose form should be cast in deathless bronze and the statue placed in every college of the land!*

*It is not book-learning young men need, nor instruction about this or that, but a stiffening of the vertebrae which will cause them to be loyal to a trust, to act promptly, concentrate their energies: Do the thing – “Carry a message to Garcia.”*

*General Garcia is dead now, but there are other Garcias. No man who has endeavored to carry out an enterprise where many hands were needed, but has been well-nigh appalled at times by the imbecility of the average man – the inability or unwillingness to concentrate on a thing and do it.*

*Slipshod assistance, foolish inattention, dowdy indifference, and half-hearted work seem the rule; and no man succeeds unless by hook or crook or threat he forces or bribes other men to assist him; or may-hap, God in His goodness performs a miracle and sends him an Angel of Light for an assistant.*

*You, reader, put this matter to a test: You are sitting now in your office – six clerks are within call.*

*Summon any one and make this request: “Please look in the encyclopedia and make a brief memorandum for me concerning the life of Correggio.”*

*Will the clerk quietly say, “Yes, sir,” and go do the task?*

*On your life he will not. He will look at you out of a fishy eye and ask one or more of the following questions:*

*Who was he?*

*Which encyclopedia?*

*Where is the encyclopedia?*

*Was I hired for that?*

*Don’t you mean Bismark?*

*What’s the matter with Charlie doing it?*



*Is he dead?*

*Is there any hurry?*

*Shan't I bring you a book and let you look it up yourself?*

*What do you want to know for?*

*I will lay you ten to one that after you have answered the questions and explained how to find the information, and why you want it, the clerk will go off and get one of the other clerks to help him try to find Garcia – and then come back and tell you there is no such man.*

*Of course I may lose my bet, but according to the Law of Average I will not.*

*Now, if you are wise, you will not bother to explain to your "assistant" that Correggio is indexed under the C's, not in the K's, but you will smile very sweetly and say, "Never mind," and go look it up yourself.*

*This incapacity for independent action, this moral stupidity, this infirmity of the will, this unwillingness to cheerfully catch hold and lift – these are the things that put pure Socialism so far into the future; for if men will not act for themselves, what will they do when the benefit of their work is for all?*

*A first mate with knotted club seems necessary; and the dread of getting "the bounce" Saturday night holds many a worker to his place.*

*Advertise for a stenographer, and nine out of ten can neither spell nor punctuate – and do not think it necessary to.*

*Can such a one write a letter to Garcia?*

*"You see that bookkeeper," said the foreman to me in a large factory.*

*"Yes; what about him?"*

*"Well, he's a fine accountant, but if I'd send him up town on an errand, he might accomplish the errand all right, but on the other hand, he might stop at four saloons on the way, and when he got to Main Street would forget what he had been sent for."*



*Can such a man be entrusted to carry a message to Garcia?*

*We have recently been hearing much maudlin sympathy expressed for the “downtrodden denizens of the sweatshop” and the “homeless wanderer searching for honest employment,” and with it all often go many hard words for the men in power.*

*Nothing is said about the employer who grows old before his time in a vain attempt to get frowsy ne’er-do-wells to do intelligent work; and his long patient striving after “help” that does nothing but loaf when his back is turned.*

*In every store and factory there is a constant weeding-out process going on. The employer is constantly sending away “help” that have shown their incapacity to further the interests of the business, and others are being taken on.*

*No matter how good times are, this sorting continues: only if times are hard and work is scarce, the sorting is done finer – but out and forever out the incompetent and unworthy go.*

*It is survival of the fittest. Self-interest prompts every employer to keep the best – and those who can carry a message to Garcia.*

*I know one man of really brilliant parts who has not the ability to manage a business of his own, and yet who is absolutely worthless to anyone else because he carries with him constantly the insane suspicion that his employer is oppressing, or intends to oppress, him.*

*He cannot give orders, and he will not receive them. Should a message be given him to take to Garcia, his answer would probably be, “Take it yourself!”*

*Tonight this man walks the streets looking for work, the wind whistling through his threadbare coat. No one who knows him dares to employ him, for he is a regular firebrand of discontent. He is impervious to reason, and the only thing that can impress him is the toe of a thick-soled Number Nine boot.*



*Of course, I know that one so morally deformed is no less to be pitied than a physical cripple; but in our pitying let us drop a tear too for the men who are striving to carry on a great enterprise, whose working hours are not limited by the whistle, and whose hair is fast turning white through the struggle to hold in line dowdy indifference, slipshod imbecility, and the heartless ingratitude which but for their enterprise, would be both hungry and homeless.*

*Have I put the matter too strongly?*

*Possibly I have, but when all the world has gone a-slumming I wish to speak a word of sympathy for the man who succeeds – the man who against great odds has directed the work of others and having succeeded finds there's nothing in it: nothing but bare board and clothes.*

*I have carried a dinner-pail and worked for a day's wages. I have also been an employer of labor, and I know there is something to be said on both sides.*

*There is no excellence, per se, in poverty; rags are no recommendation. All employers are not rapacious and high-handed, any more than all poor men are virtuous.*

*My heart goes out to the man who does his work when the "boss" is away as well as when he is at home.*

*And the man who when given a letter for Garcia, quietly takes the missive, without asking any idiotic questions and with no lurking intention of chucking it into the nearest sewer, or of doing naught else but deliver it.*

*Such a man never gets "laid off," nor has to go on a strike for higher wages. Civilization is on long, anxious search for just such individuals.*

*Anything such a man asks will be granted; he is wanted in every city, town and village – and in every office, shop, store and factory.*

*The world cries out for such; he is needed and needed badly – the man who can "Carry a Message to Garcia."*



### **\*What Was The “Message To Garcia”?**

Elbert Hubbard described the message as being a letter from President McKinley, however this appears to have been a bit of literary license. No copy or record of the contents of an actual letter has ever been found.

In fact, Rowan himself provided the answer in his own account [“How I Carried the Message to Garcia”](#) published in 1922.

Rather than an actual letter *“sealed up in an oilskin pouch and strapped over his heart”*, Rowan wrote that he was given a series of inquiries from the President which were to be communicated to Garcia.

Recalling that Nathan Hale was executed during the American Revolution when the British found incriminating documents in his boot, Rowan’s superior Colonel Arthur Wagner instructed him that “written communication” was to be avoided. So there was no actual written message.

### **Unexpected Success**

“A Message to Garcia” had probably the most striking success of any short essay of modern times. This success came as a surprise to its author no less than to others who at first did not realize its outstanding merits.



William McKinley

This “literary trifle”, as Hubbard characterized it, was written one evening in a single hour after dinner. Hubbard’s eye had caught in the daily papers an account of Lieutenant Rowan’s Cuban exploit, which led to a discussion in which Hubbard’s son Bert suggested Rowan was the real hero of the Cuban war -- for Rowan had gone alone and done the thing – he had carried the message to Garcia.

Coming on the heels of a rather trying day in which Hubbard had been endeavoring – without a great deal of success – to train and motivate certain of his employees, his son’s observation sparked a sudden insight ... that the





hero is the man who faithfully does his work – and who carries the message to Garcia.

The piece ran in the March *Philistine* without a heading, and toward the back of the magazine.

Within weeks, orders began to come in for extra copies. When the American News Company ordered a thousand, Hubbard asked one of his office clerks which article it was that had “stirred up the cosmic dust.”

“It’s the stuff about Garcia,” he said.

A few days later a telegram from George H. Daniels of the New York Central Railroad inquired about the cost for a hundred thousand reprints of the article in pamphlet form.

As a small publisher of magazines and deluxe books, the order was far beyond Hubbard’s capacity, so he gave permission for Daniels to reprint the article, who issued it in booklet form in editions of over a half-million copies each.

Two or three of these half-million lots were sent out by NYCRR, and the article was reprinted in over two hundred magazines and newspapers. The phrase “*to carry a message to Garcia*” passed into common use for many years as a metaphorical reference to taking initiative when carrying out a difficult assignment.

Tragically, Elbert Hubbard and his wife Alice were aboard the RMS Lusitania when it was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine just off the coast of Ireland on May 7, 1915. Neither survived.

Hubbard’s “*A Message to Garcia*” was subsequently adapted into two movies, a 1916 silent movie, and then again in 1936, starring Barbara Stanwyck, Wallace Beery, and John Boles.

Andrew Rowan retired from military service in 1909 and continued to write and speak about his Cuban adventure. Numerous requests for reactivation, including in 1917 toward the end of World War 1, were declined by the War



Department. Rowan died at the Letterman Army Hospital in San Francisco on January 10, 1943, and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

**Individual Initiative and Conscientiousness**

Like Napoleon Hill, Elbert Hubbard recognized the value of individual initiative and conscientiousness as being among the fundamental keys to successful achievement, and that opportunities will abound for those who will go “above and beyond” to accomplish the tasks assigned to them (what Hill referred to as “going the extra mile.”)

How dependable are you? Can you “get the message to Garcia?”

That’s it for now. Talk to you again soon ...

To your success,



*“The success and prosperity guy”*

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