Fighting Aguinaldo’s Insurgents
in the Philippines

TODD L. WAGONER

I. INTRODUCTION

ONE hundred and forty days of front-line duty on the island of Luzon, in 1899, are recorded in this account by Todd L. Wagoner, a private of Company F, 20th Kansas Volunteer infantry. From Mr. Wagoner’s manuscript, covering his year-and-a-half service with the regiment, the section describing the fighting he saw between February 4 and June 24, 1899, has been selected for publication.

The 20th, of the four Kansas regiments (20th, 21st, 22nd and 23rd) organized to fight in the Spanish-American war, was the only regiment to be sent to the Philippines, and the only one to experience actual fighting. At the time of mustering in it numbered 46 officers and 964 enlisted men. In all, three officers and 30 enlisted men were killed in action, or died of wounds, on Luzon. Three of the latter were from Company F. Mr. Wagoner tells of their deaths in his account, and also describes the killing of 1st Lt. Alfred C. Alford.

The 20th Kansas was organized at Topeka between May 9 and 13, 1898. Soon afterward the regiment was sent to the San Francisco bay area where, until June 18, Lt. Col. E. C. Little was in command. Then Col. Frederick Funston arrived and took over. In late October and early November the United States transports Indiana and Newport carried the 20th Kansas troops to Manila, where they arrived on December 1 and 6, respectively.

Mr. Wagoner’s account, as published here, begins approximately two months later (February 4, 1899) with the first engagement between United States forces and the Filipino insurgents; and ends with the embarkation of the regiment on the transport Tarter on September 2, 1899, homeward bound. The 20th Kansas troops disembarked 39 days later at San Francisco, and 17 days thereafter (October 28), the regiment was mustered out of service.

II. THE NARRATIVE

The air was full of war, the big ball was about to roll. We had been brought here—for what purpose we knew not. We had
guarded churches, pest houses and graveyards. We had suffered
disease and privation of food. Insult upon insult had been heaped
upon us by these conceited little Filipinos who were armed with
much better muskets that we were. We had been spit at; rifles had
been pointed at our heads with threats to kill; and we had stood
like dummies with orders "Don't shoot!" And Congress Was Still
Deliberating.

But on February 4, 1899, about eight o'clock in the evening, the
old eagle, soaring high above all this uncertain state of affairs, let
out one mighty and far-reaching scream. A repeatedly-insulted
Nebraska soldier took matters into his own hands and shot a Filipino.
The sound of that old Springfield echoed and re-echoed. It re-
verberated with the sound of Mausers and Remingtons, the boom
of Gatling gun and cannon. It reached the bay, and from end to
day of the 15-mile front, only to be augmented and sent back in
broadside after broadside in the unerring aim of the boys on the
sea who had so neatly made a submarine of the once invincible
Spanish Manila fleet.

In the warm barracks quite a number of us had discarded our
heavy woolen shirts and were unprepared for the hasty order to
buckle on our cartridge belts, fill our haversacks with ammunition
and proceed at double time to the scene of action. After we had
run about three-fourths of a mile, something else besides tinware
began to fly. From every window and alley came rifle and pistol
flashes, and instantly we returned the fire from every quarter in
such a convincing manner that it soon ceased. A few of the boldest
rushed at some of the boys with machetes, thinking to strike a blow
for liberty, and they did. They struck blows from Springfield
bullets that gave them liberty of soul from body.

An hour put these city heroes back to bed, where the quiet sur-
roundings were more productive of health and longevity. Riots
broke out in various parts of the city, but the American soldier was
"Johnny on the spot" and immediately quieted them. Soon the
town was more peaceable than before the outbreak, with the ex-
ception of the continuous crack-crack, pop-pop-pop, boom-boom
from the solid fighting line and the battleships; and the bullets
dropping on the roofs like hail.

After the riot was quelled, guards were located in various quar-
ters. Bally, on guard at the fourth post from where the main body
of the battalion rested for the night, had an interesting little expe-
rience. Orders were to command anyone crossing your beat to
"Halt, halt, halt!" and if said trespasser did not halt, to shoot him.
Trespasser No. 1 started across Bally's beat and Bally shouted: “Halt, halt, halt!” Trespasser failed to obey. Crack!—trespasser No. 1 dropped. Trespasser No. 2, following No. 1, started across the street and Bally shouted: “Halt, halt, halt!” Trespasser failed to obey. Crack!—trespasser No. 2 dropped. Bally shouted: “Officer of the guard, post No. 4,” which Nos. 3, 2, 1 repeated. At which the officer of the guard formed a squad, myself being one, and we hastened to the scene.

The street Bally was guarding was only light enough to distinguish a moving form. On our approach Bally shouted: “Halt!” But he never got to say the second “halt” for we halted. “Who comes there?” Reply: “Officer of the guard with squad.” “Advance officer of the guard and he recognized.” Which we did. “What’s going on down here Bally?” Bally: “Nothing at all now, it’s all over I guess.” Officer: “What was it?” Bally: “A couple of guys tried to cross over here and I halted them but they refused to stop till I weighted them down with a .45.” Officer: “Where are they?” Bally: “Down the street there somewhere.” We found them—a couple of frightened Chinamen trying to get home, who probably did not know what Bally meant by “halt” until he emphasized it with a .45. Bally had obeyed orders to the letter, but he had been gentle in so doing. He had only winged this pair of chinks. We used to jolly Bally afterward about fighting the Chinese in Manila. To which he would reply, “Well they had no business outdoors a strenuous night like that.”

The fighting on the line ceased a short time before the following day which was Sunday, but began again shortly after daylight. We stood and watched the old gunboat as she hurled broadside after broadside into the Filipino ranks.

There was one man among us whom I shall term “Old 56,” but who was, nevertheless, a true character—true to himself, I mean, in the commissary department. He is now dead, and in all due respect for his murdering and villainous nature I shall not speak ill of him. “Old 56” and my pal were chatting and watching the gunboat in action, when a native strolled up to them and stood by, watching the boat also. Well, the story as “Old 56” told it, was that the native walked around while my pal’s attention was attracted to the boat, got behind him, and slipped his hand down inside a loose blouse he (the native) was wearing. At this moment “Old 56” looked at him, and without any formality shot and killed him. On investigation it was found that he died with a big dirk knife in his hand, but never got it outside his shirt.
I did not see this incident, do not know the imminent danger in which my pal was situated, and he never knew just how close the native was to him. But from the very nature of “Old 56” and an act he committed later, I have always considered this a cold-blooded murder. But why speculate over a little matter like this, “Old 56” had a license from the U. S. to kill! Is it not strange that murder committed in our country by the hand of the individual is punishable by death or life imprisonment and yet a soldier may commit the same crime in the service of his country, and in the very presence of the flag of his nation, and be applauded before the world as a hero?

The fighting on the line ceased within an hour or two, and the rest of the day till about three o’clock passed quietly. We formed in line and started to the front, marching in columns of fours. We passed the old graveyard, crossed a bridge over the little canal, and advanced up the road without a sound of friend or foe to be heard in the dense mass of vegetable growth on either side. The first sound that suggested we were seen was a prolonged “Wheeeeee!” of a Mauser bullet high above us. The boys all exchanged smiles which seemed to say: “If they don’t shoot any closer than that, this fighting will not be even interesting.” But just as everyone was meditating what a snap this battle was going to be, a big .45 brass-covered Remington passed just above our heads and on back over the entire battalion with a Brrrrrrrrr! that changed the pleasant smile to a sickly grin; and everybody seemed to be stooping toward the ground in search of something he had recently lost—and it might have been a piece of his nerve.

But no one had time to look long, for at that moment the whole island before us rattled and thundered with musketry and artillery; and with the crack of the old Remington sending its deadly brass-covered bullets and the pop-pop of the Mauser spurring its penetrating little steel messengers. This was responded to by volley after volley from the Springfields of the boys already located in the fighting line; and the boom-boom-boom of the Gatling gun, which shot an inch-solid ball from various circular barrels set in revolution and operated by machinery; and the little, rapid Maxim, working like a mowing machine with a purrrrrrr! that lulled many a Filipino to his eternal rest, often penetrating his body eight or ten times before he had time to fall. These various sounds were confused and augmented by the terrific explosions of the big eight- or ten-inch guns of the navy.

We continued our course up the road about 100 yards till we
reached the three two-inch field pieces of the Utah battery. These had just been hauled from the brush and set in action to clear the breastwork of ties, steel and dirt located about half a mile on up the road just in front of the bridge we were soon to cross. We received orders to lie down till the battery had removed this obstacle to our progress, which took perhaps 10 minutes. As we lay stretched flat upon the ground back of fence posts, bamboo trees and various objects of mediation between a bullet and our heads, we wondered if we had been brought all this 8,000 miles to be shot at without even a show of resistance. But soon the situation changed. The breastwork ahead being completely cleared for our advancement we were ordered to our feet and formed in line, thus filling up the vacancy made for us on our approach.

The whole line was ordered forward with the command to “fire at will” as we advanced. I can see our little colonel [Frederick Funston] standing there with arms folded as he gave the order to go. He remarked as we started: “Boys you’ve got a nasty fight ahead of you, but I know you are good for it.” My company, F, started directly up the road. In passing the field pieces with which those volunteer Utah gunners had just completed such successful destruction of the obstruction ahead, my attention was called to various little grooves cut in the wheel tires by little steel Mauser bullets and I wondered that not one of the gunners had been hit.

The Filipino stronghold lay along, and just beyond, the river; and still further beyond were tier after tier of them, back of rice dikes rising at gradual elevations like a big amphitheater. The elevation of this incline was sufficient to allow all of these Filipinos to shoot at the same time, without danger to the tiers ahead of them. As soon as we had started the general advance there was certainly not an idle gun in the hand of the thousands of Filipino soldiers before us. The road was not wide enough for a company to be deployed in skirmish order, six feet apart, and being in the first squad to the right I was forced out into the brush and soon got mixed up with M company. I knew however that I was still with the regiment as M company carried the regimental flag. So I fell in line with them and continued to pump those old .45’s from the old Long Tom as fast as I could load it.

Having gone about halfway to the river, I felt something strike the calf of my right leg. I hesitated a moment to ascertain whether a bullet had hit me or the stub of a weed had run up my trousers (I not having put on my leggings in our haste the night before). Making a hasty examination I discovered a small spot on the back
of my leg bleeding, with the skin just broken but no hole in my trousers. I looked at the outside of the trousers leg and found a streak across it—the mark of a passing bullet.

In the meantime the company had probably gone three or four rods, but were out of sight in the brush. Turning my trousers leg down I straightened up. There before me stood the captain of M company about six feet from me with sword raised in the air, looking straight at me. He broke forth in a volley of ejaculations, questions and orders, privately and personally directed to me. This is the colloquy which took place: Captain: “What are you doing back here?” To which I replied: “I was looking to see if a bullet had struck me.” Still waving his sword around through the air in a menacing fashion, he said: “Get on up there in your company.” To which I responded: “I know where my company is all right and I don’t need any directions from you to find it.” That old war hoss went right up in the air, and I sure thought he intended to perform some sort of a surgical operation on me right then and there with that little pointed steel blade. He made a step toward me with his saber raised. I stepped back a step, meanwhile leveling old Long Tom, with the pointed bayonet on the end, straight at this old grouch’s commissary department. Yanking the hammer back and with a finger on the trigger, I looked him fairly in the eye with a little smile and asked: “What are you doing back here. Aren’t you afraid you’ll get lost? Hadn’t you better get up there with your company? I’ll find mine all right without any of your assistance.” The air fairly turned blue, as with a few promises he left me.

Well, I let him get entirely out of sight, and knowing I could not get back into my own company, and not wanting to enter his company near him, I took a run down to the other end of company M, fell back into line without the captain’s discovering me, and proceeded to pump lead with the rest of them. We soon entered an open space and here we had good shooting. We could see the timber on the banks of the river we were approaching, where the Filipinos were entrenched. With all the drill we had gotten over the old sand hills at Frisco, when it came to real fighting all we had to do was to maintain an unbroken line, advancing and shooting at everything that jumped up before us. In this we were succeeding nicely, shooting perhaps eight or ten times a minute, while the enemy, with the lever-loading-and-unloading attachments on the Mauser was probably shooting three or more times to our one. But, as is commonly true in battle, and especially with the powerful
guns they had, they mostly shot high. So, continuing our advance, we soon reached the river.

Company F, now holding the bridge, halted a moment at the river. Looking across we beheld hundreds of Filipinos tearing out through the brush into another opening, running like a stampeded herd of Arkansas hogs. We continued to shoot, but were soon ordered to cease fire as the captain declared we were shooting into our own men on the opposite side. To my own knowledge not an American soldier had yet crossed the river; and besides we could see them as plainly as we could see each other. I presume the captain’s eyes were full of smoke so he was not to blame.

Meanwhile the enemy escaped, getting over across the railroad which lay about 200 yards to the right of the wagon road, and on out behind the dikes in the big amphitheater. We were all assembled at the bridge, and about 30 or 40 of us thinking that we were supposed to cross over and catch these fleeing Filipinos, and then come home, never stopped at the bridge at all. We rushed across thinking all were coming. About half of us ran to a small fortification directly ahead; the other 15 or 20 cut diagonally to the right, reaching the railroad right-of-way fence before we looked around.

But, on doing so, we discovered we were at least 200 yards ahead of the regiment, with no one else coming, and not even an officer with us. The Filipinos discovered this about the same time we did and hiss, hiss, hiss, brrrrrrrr, things were sure coming our way. The boys out in front had a small breastwork for protection. We had nothing so far discovered. We all thought the balance of the regiment would follow, so we remained, shooting at anything that moved. But the Filipinos’ equilibrium having become somewhat restored, they were getting our range. There was a little ditch alongside of the fence just deep and wide enough to lie in. We all lined up and lay down in this rut, face toward the enemy, perfectly quiet, waiting for our comrades to make the grand rush from the bridge. The grand rush never came from the bridge. But let me tell you, as soon as we had become comfortably located, the grand rush did come, from the opposite direction, and in an entirely different form than from friendly comrades.

I have always believed that those Filipinos, deliberately resting their rifles on the rails of the track not three rods from us, actually tried to bury us alive by trimming the edges off that rut and letting it roll down upon us. We lay here for perhaps five minutes. I am guessing at this as you will realize it is a little difficult to calculate
time correctly under such conditions. There being a patch of weeds and brush between us and the track, the enemy could not see us, but they were mighty good guessers. I presume some of them had just left the ditch we were then occupying, for I know my place was still warm. We did not rise above the weeds to see where the Filipinos were. We knew. But we did look to see if we had any officers interested in us, and to our great pleasure we beheld our doughty and nery little colonel Fred coming on a full run. He advanced about 100 yards beyond the bridge, stopped, folded his arms, took in our situation and paused for perhaps half a minute in deliberation, with bullets falling around him like the big drops of an April shower. With a final 10-inch shell exploding directly above him, he decided. Though his voice could not be heard amid the noise of musketry, he waved his sword toward the bridge, and proceeded back on a slow run.

We soon arranged our immediate removal from this being-buried-alive process which was getting quite interesting. Our plans were to face about, still lying down, and at a given signal rise to our feet, run low for a short distance along the ditch, and try to avoid the direct fire of the enemy so close at hand. In rising above the weeds at a different point from which we had lain down we would deceive the enemy until we had a good start back.

This plan was carried out to the letter, and listen—you have seen fast horse races, marathon races, auto races, motorcycle races—on leaving that ditch with only about 150 yards to cover, each one of us, amid the mighty thundering behind us, fairly shot across that space like zigzag streaks of lightning, going this way and then that way, but at the same time traveling exceedingly fast straight ahead. Tall and short, fat and lean—all arrived at practically the same time, propelled by the hiss, hiss, hiss of the Mauser rifle and the brrrrrrrrr of the old brass Remington. We shot across the bridge amid the final farewell of our aerial associates spattering against the steel rails of what was left of a once-secure and formidable stronghold. Perceiving a big hole in the ground (the dirt having been removed in making this fortification), we jumped in and sat down to rest.

But no sooner had we entered till orders were given to fall in, and forming in column-of-fours we retreated down the road perhaps 200 yards. During this time two or three shells from the boats burst above and beyond us. A piece of one struck a comrade on the shoulder, but being so small and its force expended, it did him no injury. He picked it up and put it in his pocket.

Company F entered a small church by the roadside to receive
instructions for the night. With the pop, pop, pop of all the shots I had heard and was still hearing, and the noise of occasional bullets shattering windows of the church, I could see the captain’s lips move, but could not hear what he said though he stood directly in front of me. We went from here in a body and took our position again in the general line which had advanced into the enemy’s territory all around the city to an average distance of a mile.

I have just told you what I saw and experienced in this first general movement of the American forces around Manila. Imagine if you can the magnitude of this advance in all directions by the 15-mile solid line of American infantry and artillery into the enemy’s territory, fighting every step of the way. At the close of this battle we were deaf from the noise, our clothing wet with sweat, our faces dirty almost beyond recognition. Our old Springfields were almost red-hot—the grease frying out of the stock end which held the barrel like fat meat sizzling in a skillet. With no blankets, and many of us without even our overshirts, we lay down on the ground to sleep—no, not to sleep, but to dry out and chill in the cool night air of a tropical clime.

Guards were placed ahead, and the enemy, returning in small numbers, kept up an incessant fire all night. A lieutenant, officer of the guard that night, secured a large piece of matting in which he wrapped himself when not busy looking after the guards. The rest of us had been unable to secure any covering. Whenever this lieutenant would take a stroll out to see how the guards were getting along, my pal and I lying near him would take possession of this piece of matting and cover up; and warming up, would drop to sleep. When the lieutenant returned he would remove the cover, wrap up in it, and soon my pal and I would awaken again thoroughly chilled. That is the way he and I put in the night, but many were not as fortunate as we were. We were all dry by morning, but let me tell you, that bunch of soldiers were mighty glad to see old Sol peeping over the horizon.

The commissary supplies and more ammunition had been brought up during the night, but no blankets or clothing. With a few acrobatic performances as we arose, as a substitute for the missing shirts and blouses, and a hot cup of black coffee and a few hardtack as a means of loosening up our partly-congealed blood, we were ready to go. We filled our haversacks with cartridges, replaced the vacancies in our belts, and advanced once more across the bridge. Then, in single file, we pursued a narrow path through the brush and weeds in a diagonal direction to our left. We passed several
honorably-discharged Filipino soldiers lying in various positions—sleeping on their laurels of the previous evening's fight.

Proceeding about a mile we halted just in front of a heavy timber of mahogany, rosewood and palms, undergrown with brush and weeds. We met with no interruption. The rest of the line advanced accordingly. Immediately in front of this dense timber, perhaps 50 yards, we dug trenches, piling the dirt up in front of us; and rested here for the day. That afternoon our scouts reported that the Filipinos were advancing through the timber preparatory for a night attack. About three o'clock one company was sent into the timber to reconnoiter and discover the location of the hidden foe. These boys had not gone over 300 yards until they found them all right, and they were met instantly with the reports of a thousand rifles.

Our boys, being well deployed on entering the woods, fought in the true Indian fashion, dodging from tree to tree, but advancing steadily, and those old Springfields talking right along. The natives, outnumbered our boys ten to one, and fighting behind a zigzag line of breastwork of logs and dirt, shooting through portholes and armed with the repeating Mauser rifle (whose little steel bullet penetrated trees two feet in diameter as a sewing machine needle penetrates a thin piece of cloth), should have been able to hold 10,000 at bay. But not so, not against these determined Americans who always went where they wanted to go though the going was often far from good.

The trenches were taken, the enemy routed. At this moment other enemies were discovered. Reports of rifles from above attracted the attention of several of the Americans and casting their searching glances into the treetops they discovered an unusually heavy clump of leaves in the top of one. By way of investigation they sent a volley of Springfield bullets through said clump of leaves and shot a Mauser rifle loose and then they understood.

At this moment a sad incident occurred because of the sympathetic nature of one of the kindest, noblest and bravest officers of the regiment. Advancing side by side with a comrade, he noticed a wounded Filipino soldier sitting on the ground, leaning with head bent, resting his body on one outstretched arm, the blood pouring from his breast, his old Remington lying on the ground beside him. As this sympathetic officer paused to bind up the bleeding hole in his wounded and dying foe's breast, he remarked: "Poor fellow isn't it a shame, a few minutes will end it all with you." Passing on in pursuit of the fleeing enemy, the officer had not gone two rods
until this bleeding, dying, half-ape-and-half-devil seized his rifle, took deliberate aim and shot the lieutenant squarely through the head. As he fell dead, the officer's comrade turned and beheld that grinning Malay demon sitting erect in a dying effort to reload and strike one more blow for his cowardly and wealth-aspiring chieftain (who never got closer to the line of battle than our own large contented chieftain—the big shot of the Eighth Army Corps). The dying wretch never fired the second shot. The old Springfield, in the hands of the American soldier, snuffed out the Filipino's light.

I shall never forget the cyclonic roar of that dense timber battle and the hail of bullets around us as we sat in our trenches and listened. After about an hour the boys returned through the timber and with the keen sight of squirrel hunters they picked the Filipinos from the treetops. Some of the tree fighters fell on being shot; some only dropped their rifles; others remained, retaining their arms. The first class, not having tied themselves to the limbs on which they sat, fell. The second class remained on the limbs of the trees because they had strapped themselves there. The third class remained in the trees because both they and their guns were fastened securely. These tree fighters had orders from their officers to remain quiet until the American soldiers had passed, and then shoot them from behind. Only under penalty of death could they return to their respective organizations preceding the attack by the American force. Then, if it were possible for them to escape and make their way back through the American line to their own regiments, good and well. But, in this particular battle—the first in which the Filipinos had resorted to the tree method—the main body of the American line remained at the edge of the timber. And the Filipinos, knowing that we had not all passed by, remained on their perches until the boys returned to the trenches over the same route by which they had advanced. Then the boys relieved these backbiters from the intense strain of the recent excitement during which they had had a bird's-eye view, but a squirrel's death. The boys figured if they were going to play the squirrel act they must expect to be treated like squirrels. There was no night attack.

The next afternoon there was a general advance. We had no sooner entered the timber than the enemy, before, and above, opened up on us. Little squads dropped out to do the squirrel shooting, while the main line pushed the enemy back. The same trench was retaken. A large stone church stood beside the wagon road, at Caloocan, a small town about five miles due north of Manila. We
were about two miles from Caloocan, but nearing it rapidly. The
hottest fire seemed to come from the direction of this church, and
the bullets were hissing and buzzing past, close and fast. Not
being able to see the church ourselves, on account of the timber,
we were unable to locate this bunch of sharpshooters, but they
seemed to know where we were. However, our old stand-by out
in the bay located our lofty entertainers. With the never-failing
accuracy of the boy behind that old 6-inch gun, one solid shot at
that old house of worship, from a distance of at least five miles,
tore one whole corner off it, bored through a solid stone wall sur-
rounding the church, dug a good-sized cistern and bounded out
into the great beyond. In respect for that gunner's accuracy, the
Filipinos in the belfrey got down, fell down or jumped out. Any-
way the firing from that quarter ceased.

We continued our advance, turned to our right, and approached
the old church directly. The enemy vanished before us. Entering
Caloocan we heard another mighty boom from the bay and
wondered what other obstruction our comrades on the sea were
removing from our progress. As we caught sight of the old church
we understood the sudden cessation of the sharpshooters. Off to
the right, planted squarely on the railroad track and pointed our
way, stood a big muzzle-loading cannon about 10 feet long. On
examination this proved to be loaded half full of grape and canister
consisting of bullets, whole cartridges, bolts, nuts, iron, coconuts
and rocks, all held in with dirt. Back of all this junk was an equal
amount of powder, with a fuse attached, ready for ignition. Now
just think of the nerve of those braves, figuring on loading us up
with all that junk! Fifty feet short of the old gun was an excava-
tion that would have held a dozen American-retired Filipinos; and
on a dead line with the cannon, about the same distance beyond,
was a similar hole. But the big round messenger which had so
kindly and convincingly impressed the enemy had bounded on out
into the distance beyond.

As we advanced through the timber and town, an old white-
haired Filipino who had been shooting at us ran out of a little
shack, leaving his gun inside, and dropped to his knees as the
Americans came upon him. He clasped his hands extended upward
in prayer and supplication for mercy. Nobody paid any attention
to him, seeing he had no gun, and never thought of harming him.
But "Old 56," advancing squarely in front of him, ignored his
humble attitude of submission and his prayers to man and God for
mercy, and shot him. Murder No. 2 by "Old 56."
I shall not comment on this second inhuman crime of "Old 56," but wish to call your attention to another one that occurred on this advance. A big, lank, cadaverous corporal, a fool by birth, and a smart-aleck by habit, plunged his heel into the face of a helpless, dying Filipino, with an oath that would have caused any man able to stand on his feet, to fight. You say: "Why didn't you shoot both of these dogs?" It wasn't up to us, we had officers to look after these affairs.

The main line advanced on beyond Caloocan about one half mile. But the 20th Kansas, being somewhat in advance of the line, to the right of the railroad, failed to get the order to halt and rushed on beyond for a mile, through another timber, in hot pursuit of the fleeing enemy. We finally wound up at the further edge of this second belt of timber with dark overtaking us. After a few farewell shots at the hastily retreating foe, we settled down for the night. The next morning a bunch of staff officers rode out to find out where we were going and ordered us back into line. We fell in and marched back, occupying the position which we should have held the night before.

This had been a general advance of about three miles. Our solid line now extended probably 25 miles around Manila, the enemy having been pushed back from every quarter. This line reached from bay to bay on the north, east and south. Here we dug trenches and awaited re-enforcement as our line was becoming weakened by extension. To our left now was Malabon. In front of us was the belt of timber we had previously crossed and recrossed. About 500 yards distant on our right was the Utah battery. To their right was the First Montana regiment; and to their right was the First Nebraska, then the Dakotans, Pennsylvanians, Tennesseans, Coloradoans, Oregonians, some other batteries and cavalry units, on down to the gallant First Californians, the standing joke of American soldiery. They were the bowery boys of California, and the only American organization that the Filipinos ever whipped. In all, some 15,000 soldiers formed this line. The poor Iowa regiment was still held on board its transport, quarantined, and was finally taken off to another island.

The Filipinos returned to the strip of timber ahead of us the night of the same day we fell back into line. They built a formidable fortification just in the edge of the timber in front of us and next morning were ready for business. So were we, in our little holes dug in the ground, with the loose dirt thrown up before us. The Utah battery held the situation in hand, being located on a high knoll well fortified with sacks of dirt piled up around.
While we held this line there was much discussion of our advance on Caloocan as we related our similar, yet varied, experiences. The long, lean, lank, cadaverous corporal boasted of his self-considered brave and honorable act in stamping his heel into the helpless, dying Filipino soldier’s eye. A dozen soldiers were on their feet instantly, and in one voice threw the same epithet into his teeth that he had so cowardly insulted the helpless native with. There were suggestions that if he wanted to ram his heel into any more eyes he might have the pleasure of trying it on any of the dozen pairs that faced him; and that if any one of them ever heard another boastful expression out of him concerning that dirty, cowardly act, he would get his own eyes poked back into the cavity which should have been occupied by brain. Now do you ask what a private can do to right the wrongs committed in his presence? This long, lank, cadaverous corporal never repeated the boast, or the act. But a little later on, an old Remington tore the calf off one of his legs. “Old 56” made no comments on his dastardly deed. He wanted to appear brave in battle, even though nothing was to be gained by doing so.

A few days later the enemy opened up on us from front and left flank, a terrible fusillade pouring forth from Malabon. We had placed little strips of matting, obtained in Caloocan, over our pits to shield us from the sun. The bullets came ripping through these coverings fast and furiously. We kept up a continuous fire to prevent an assault. Rising above the pile of dirt in front of us we would fire, drop down to reload, rise and fire again, and so on. Not so with “Old 56,” he stayed right up on top of the dirt pile, reloading and shooting from this exposed position all the time. Some of the boys near him cautioned him of the recklessness of his actions, which he absolutely disregarded. Pretty soon pop-bang, and “Old 56” dropped with arms outstretched, head drooping, on the outside of the dirt pile, feet hanging down in the ditch. He was dead—shot through the head.

Re-enforcements having been placed in the line somewhere, we were crowded a little farther to the left, the end of our line being on the extreme left, right up to the bay. The two lines extended at an angle from the bay out to the right. The Filipinos moved to the left also, and in closer. The boys at the left found them one morning strongly fortified just across a wagon road from them. The lines widening toward the right, this placed F company about 400 yards from the entrenched enemy. Here we lay for seven weeks waiting for re-enforcements to cross the big pond.
While located in these trenches we had plenty of fish to eat, mixed with ducks and chickens. We were right at the bay and there were various fish traps near, enclosed by high dikes with a slat gate opening. We would go out in the evening as the tide was coming in and open the gate. Before the tide went out the following morning we would go out and drop the gate, thereby imprisoning all fishes large enough to eat. Then, after the water had dropped, we would go out with sacks, wade out into the mud, and gather up all the fish we needed. Every catch gave us plenty and some to spare.

Our company on the left, and the opposing enemy company just across the road from them, could not get along at all. You have heard it said that intimacy breeds contempt. I presume this must have been the real cause of their difficulty because they certainly were too closely associated for a really warm feeling to exist between them. Yet each tried to make it as warm as possible for the other. They usually succeeded, not only as far as they themselves were concerned, but for everybody else within a mile of them.

Down to the left, the boys did their guard duty from back of their breastwork, while we, being further from the enemy, placed pickets out in front. The usual location of our picket was about 75 yards ahead, through open land, then about 25 yards of timber, and then out perhaps 25 yards more in the open. The American guard was placed here only at night, after dark, and taken off at daybreak. A squad of eight of us being located here one moonlight night took our position back of a rice dike. Everything remained quiet for perhaps half an hour, until down on the left the boys got into an argument with the enemy and there broke forth, from either side of the road, flashes from musketry that seemed to meet in the center. We were on the flank of the Filipino company down the line, so we thought we would surprise them a little with a few volleys. I presume we did, but let me tell you they were not the only ones surprised. Out of a little horseshoe entrenchment, not 100 feet ahead of us, came a volley of flashes that almost singed our whiskers. So we had a little fight on of our own. We gave our attention to this little horseshoe group, perhaps about equal in number to us. We lay back of our dike and gave them as much noise as they did us. But soon, to our discomfiture, the whole Filipino line beyond, having located us by our gun flashes, centered their fire on us.

Our orders were to stay out there as long as we could, and we did. But when they began to trim down that little rice dike (only
about a foot high to begin with), we had completely fulfilled our orders. We had to go in in order that our main line could fire. Marathon race No. 2. Our trenches were a series of pits, each pit being occupied by two. On reaching the pit which I supposed was mine, I jumped into it, thinking I would learn after I got in whether or not it was. I found out all right, without investigation, or even stopping to look at it. I have always felt grateful to my two comrades, lying there on their backs so comfortably, for letting me down so easily. I lit fairly and squarely, with a heel in each one’s National Biscuit-and-Salmon establishment, passed on, and turned abruptly into my own pit which lay next to theirs. About that time someone shouted “outpost in,” and I got busy preparing to shoot, and they never knew that it was I who had recently passed over. But when those boys caught their breath I knew that Webster had deceived the American people on his completeness of the English language.

Orders immediately followed to fire. After an hour we went back to the recently-deserted rice dike. The Filipinos had been there and gathered up a few articles which we had left. Within a half hour practically the same experience happened again, only this time I had placed a piece of white cloth in front of my pit. After fighting for another hour, three of us went out, but this time only to the timber. We were forced in again. Another hour’s fighting and again we three went out to the timber. The enemy opened up, but we picked us a good tree each and watched to see if they were coming, and stayed there until they ceased firing, without a shot returned from us. We stayed our required length of time, and then were relieved and returned to the trenches about midnight. This ended the fighting for that night and we slept.

There was not a day passed that shots were not exchanged. It was simply a matter of picking each other off on sight. I have witnessed an 8- or 10-inch shell from the gunboats light in a bunch of Filipinos, separate and scatter them into the air as a wind stacker scatters the straw which it carries from the thresher, and dig a grave for them while they were still in the air. I have watched the Gatling guns and battery field pieces trim the limbs off trees as a sharp razor clips a hair.

They fired on our flag of truce. They placed their women and children in front of their ranks and attempted an assault, presuming on the tenderheartedness of the American. But they could not run anything like that over us, for we calculated that if they did not care any more for their own families than that, we didn’t. How-
ever, they only tried this once. They carried away all their dead and wounded that they conveniently could. Up to this time we had sent their wounded back to our hospital for Filipinos in Manila. Some of the prisoners were retained, and some were turned loose. It became a matter of getting the guns with us now. After the death of the lieutenant, whenever we found a gun we stuck the barrel through the fork of a tree and bent it, then broke the stock off. The largest Filipino funeral I had seen to date was 60 enemy soldiers buried in one hole.

Sitting in the trenches one day we watched a shadowy form winding its way towards us. It seemed more ghost than human. On its arrival how surprised we were to see our old friend and comrade Bill, all this time in the smallpox pest house, and as we supposed never to return. Glad indeed we were to see him. Everybody greeted him warmly, then all jollied him a while. I said to him, "Bill, why in the world didn't you get someone to bury you back in town, instead of coming out here to eat up rations that we need? And, by the way Bill, does it hurt to have smallpox?" To which he replied, "Never mind old boy I'll get even with you."

The night of the outbreak the Filipinos had escaped with every train but one. It furnished us transportation for our necessities. By this time we had our clothing and blankets and although sleeping on the ground, we were quite comfortable. It was certainly interesting to see a group of natives watching our boys run that train. No side breaks for them. It looked as if their eyes never would return to their sockets, nor their mouths ever shut. It made no difference to those Frisco railroad engineers and firemen whether the train ran on the track or out in the road. The natives wouldn't even stay on the right of way when the train passed. These little brown men were seeing and learning new things as well as we were.

The lizard screamed, the parrot screeched, the monkey chattered; and the enemy at various intervals reminded us with a volley of musketry that he was still present. Some of the wounded, and prisoners, informed us that the enemy complained that we did not fight fairly. They said that when the Spanish were fighting them the Spanish soldiers would come out of Manila, drive them out of a trench and then go back to Manila to smoke cigarettes and have a good time, leaving the trench again in possession of the Filipinos; and also that the Americans did not use an ordinary rifle but carried a little cannon. The old Springfields sure felt like little cannons to us at times. Our shoulders were black and blue all the time from the reaction of them. They were inefficient at a distance
much greater than 500 yards, though they were sighted at 1,000 yards. After 50 or 100 shots the gun became hot and the barrel expanded, thus causing the bullet to fall short and be inaccurate even at short range. The Remington was more powerful and deadly than the Springfield, shooting the same size bullet, but with a brass covering. If the bullet failed to kill, the brass was likely to complete the operation, and perchance this brass covering happened to burst before reaching its intended victim there was no calculating its destructiveness. This gun was sighted at 1,400 yards.

The Mauser rifle, the most powerful of the three, was sighted at 3,000 yards, and would shoot three miles. It shot a .28 steel bullet which produced a wound the same size as the bullet after the first half mile; but up to this distance it made even a larger hole than the Springfield, as the back end of the bullet rotated. We would have exchanged our rifles for theirs gladly. But they could not stand against the roar of the Springfield and the soul-chilling American yell which always accompanied it on every advance. They soon learned also that it was expedient to provide some safe means of escape as well as defense while they remained to fight. From here on, they always had a nice open getaway ditch leading back about half a mile; and as we advanced they made our approach exceedingly interesting for us, shooting through portholes with their repeating Mausers and deadly Remington, until we reached a distance of perhaps 200 to 300 yards from their trench. Then they invisibly beat it. But we always found the getaway ditch, and woe unto those who had stayed too long and failed to get to the ditch. When they started out in plain view across country, even if the old Springfields were boiling grease and wouldn’t carry up, we sure saw some classical dodging and running.

Two of the saddest events of the war occurred in these trenches at Caloocan. One day, while the most of us not on guard were sleeping, the authorities decided to build our breastwork higher. It consisted of just a high pile of loose dirt and they decided to add to it with sacks of dirt. Several of us were awakened to perform this task. Among the number were my pal and myself. My pal, being shorter than I, was located down the line a short distance. He, and a little corporal about his height, arose yawning and stretching, and took a look over the breastwork to ascertain if there were any Filipinos in sight. They saw none, but one saw them, and a sharpshooter at that. With a crack from an old Remington, my pal got it just above the left eye, the bullet coming out his right ear. At the time he was shot he was standing close to the breastwork,
facing the enemy. In a minute I knew it and rushed to him. He was lying on his back, head still towards the enemy, his arms folded, and a gallon of blood on the ground beside him. No one had touched him. Only a 20-year-old boy, he had died—in the service of his country, shall I say?—fighting Filipinos 8,000 miles from home. You answer that question for yourselves please and don’t let politics enter into the decision.

This sharpshooter was soon located in a tree and allowed to descend, not at a rate of speed he might have chosen, but at a speed determined upon by a volley of Springfield bullets. I obtained permission to assist in carrying my pal back to the church which we were using as a temporary hospital.

Fighting began again in earnest. Bullets whizzed past our heads as we started. We were compelled to seek shelter for a time as we had to ascend a hill to reach the church. When the firing ceased somewhat, we resumed our journey. About halfway we saw Don, Oscar’s older brother, approaching as was his custom after every encounter with the Filipinos. (Don assumed a fatherly interest over the “Kid,” as he always called him, and would always ask: “How is company F? How is the Kid?”) As Don met us we could not face him. We cast our glances to the ground. He asked, “Who is it, boys?” We could not answer. He knew. As we stood with heads bowed and hats removed, Don approached that silent form, raised the little white cloth from Oscar’s face, and seeing that ghastly wound over his eye, sobbed, “My God, the Kid!” Pausing a minute or two, Don regained self-control, and said, “Boys I must not detain you longer. Thank you.” He walked along with us until he reached his own company. We left him standing there, hat in hand, head bowed in grief.

We finally established our guard post about three rods in front of our line. Here, behind sacks of dirt, we sat alone in the silent hours of darkness and watched the enemy, while our comrades slept. One night after I had been sitting quietly for perhaps half an hour, a huge lizard, as unaware of my presence as I of his, let out a scream that caused my hair to stand on end and my whole form to ascend into the air for probably a couple of feet. The lizard, as much alarmed as I, rushed off into the darkness, rustling the grass and weeds as he went.

On another occasion, just before daybreak, while we were sleeping back of our fortifications, a comrade lying beside me awakened me with a bump from his elbow along side my head which caused me to wonder if we were being engaged in a hand-to-hand encoun-
ter with the enemy. Rising to ascertain the source of the blow, I received another punch squarely on the nose. Moving to one side, a safe distance from my comrade, I beheld the source of my sudden awakening. There he lay on his back in all the apparent agonies of a hideous nightmare. I shouted at him, "Hey, wake up there! What's the matter with you?" The only response I received was a muttering as he desperately clawed at his breast as if trying to tear his heart out. When at last he withdrew the hand from his shirt front, he hurled a small but active little three-inch lizard on the ground with such a vengeance that the poor little fellow curled up his claws (which were very like needle points), and departed forever from his native tropical clime. My comrade sat up with a silly grin on his face and said, "By George, you'd squirm too if you had one of those pesky little lizards in your shirt."

A truce was declared one day, as the enemy regiment before us was contemplating surrender. About noon, a group of the boys were engaged in a little game of draw when someone called their attention to a prominent and important-looking Filipino soldier standing on the very top of his fortification. With the practice we had had while here most of us could have cut the dust from the top of this breastwork every shot. Jim—one of those engaged in this little profit-and-loss amusement—rose to his feet and stood for a moment watching the Filipino in his exalted position. Jim smiled, but said nothing, and returned to the game. He played another hand, then asked, "Is that Filipino still standing there?" Someone told him yes, so he got up again, picked up his old Springfield and leveled it at the stationary form on top of the enemy breastwork. He looked over the sights for an instant, then lowered his gun and remarked, "I'd like to take a shot at that guy just for luck, if it wasn't for this bloomin' truce." The boys suggested he better forget taking a shot, and come on back to the game if he intended playing any more. Another hand was played, and I presume Jim thought he had better change his luck, so he says, "If you fellows will keep your mouths shut I'll cut the dirt out from under that Filipino's feet. He's seeing too much for our good." The boys replied that it was none of their business what he did, as none of us were officers. "O. K., here goes," Jim said. He got up, picked up his old Long Tom, took a fleeting squint along the sights, pulled the trigger, and boom! the Filipino got down.

All the boys had risen and watched this performance, so all knew who fired the shot. The game proceeded as before, only with more apparent interest. The rest of us lay down and went to sleep
immediately. The captain quickly appeared, and in curt tones, asked, “Who fired that shot?” No one answered. Then he proceeded to question each one of us as follows: “Did you fire that shot?” “No, sir.” “Do you know who did?” “No, sir.” “And so on, till he came to Baldy. “Did you fire that shot Baldy?” “No, sir.” “Do you know who did?” “No, sir.” But Baldy grinned. That was evidence enough for the captain, so he says, “All right Baldy, I’ll just hold you responsible until you tell me who did it.” Jim spoke up at once and said, “You don’t need to hold Baldy, captain. I fired the shot.” “Report to the colonel at once,” ordered the captain.

Jim reported at once, and his trial procedure was as follows: “Is your name James ———?” “Yes sir.” “You are a member of company F?” “Yes sir.” “You are charged with disobeying orders by firing upon the enemy under a truce. Guilty or not guilty?” “Guilty.” “Well, sir, why did you do this?” “Well, I’ll tell you colonel, I just calculated that that guy perched up over there on top of that mound was exceeding the conditions of the truce, and seeing more than he had a right to, or was to our interest; and I decided to make him quit it.” “Did you hit him?” “Couldn’t miss him at that distance.” The colonel replied very gruffly, “Return to your company. But don’t let it happen again.” Jim returned with a smile and related the conditions on which he was released. He said they suited him all right, as he did not think that the curiosity of any of the rest of those Filipinos over there would reach the height of the recently departed one.

A sufficient number of exciting and interesting incidents had already occurred in these Caloocan trenches to leave a lasting impression on the minds of all present. But one more event occurred which was the climax to all preceding ones. One day, sitting under the matting awning which we had stretched above us to shelter us from the enervating rays of a tropical sun, Howard and I engaged ourselves in memories of the past, discussing the whys and wherefores of our enlistments. Howard was a perfect type of physical manhood, about six feet tall, straight, square-shouldered, with large, intelligent gray eyes and brown hair. He was a little reckless at times in his conduct and speech, but he had a good heart and good intentions. While we talked, a sharpshooter had been incessantly pecking away, but no bullets could be heard. Just beyond the end of our breastwork, to the right, stood a large tree with a brush pile about three feet high in front of it. At the close of our conversation Howard rose to his feet, walked up before a group of ten or so of
the boys, and suggested that we all go out in front of that tree and fire a few volleys in trees and clumps of bushes and try to dislodge the sharpshooter. All assented, willing to take a chance for a little diversion, and forthwith advanced to the position suggested.

Howard, though a private, assumed command and directed the shooting. We fired several volleys at suspicious-looking places but failed to locate the sharpshooter, or to interrupt his shots, which came at intervals of from two to three minutes. Wise old Faber spoke up, "Say boys I'll tell you, this is a little diversion all right, but having no orders to expose ourselves in this reckless manner, it seems to me to be quite a bit of foolishness as well. The enemy may open up on us any moment with a volley. That Filipino out there isn't doing anything now but wasting ammunition, but mind what I tell you, he is going to get our range pretty soon, and it will be just like shooting into a bunch of quail. So my advice to the bunch is to cut this nonsense out." To which I replied, "I believe you are right Faber." So he and I walked back to the breastwork and sat down.

The rest of the bunch, unheeding his advice, remained and continued to fire according to Howard's directions. Faber and I had become interested in some other subject of interest when bang, crack, a bullet hit the tree just back of the boys. All started on a run for the breastwork but Howard, who sat back on the brush pile in front of which he had been standing. He exclaimed, "Where are you fellows going? Are you going to leave me out here?" None of them knew then that the shot had been effective, but at his call they turned back and brought him in. They laid him down beside me, his head resting upon my knee. The boys circled around. All were silent. The doctor opened Howard's clothing and examined the anterior wound, where the big, ugly Remington bullet had entered. Turning him over we saw the mark of its exit. He was shot through the groin.

The boys all loved this reckless, goodhearted youth, and the faces of all in the group clouded in an expression of sympathy and grief when they saw the wounds caused by the bullet. The wounds were not bleeding much, but the doctor proceeded to bandage them securely. As calmly and unaffectedly as I am writing to you, Howard asked, "What is your opinion of the wound, doctor?" To which the doctor replied, "I am unable to answer your question fully, Howard, as I have not yet formed a complete opinion. From external appearances the wound does not seem so bad, but concerning the internal injury, I do not know. In case the bullet has
missed the vital parts within, the chances are ten to one in your favor.” But Howard understood too well the deadly effect of a big .45 brass-covered Remington passing through his body.

Fighting had immediately reopened, and we carried him back to the old church at the top of the hill, and placed the stretcher on the floor. Along with numerous others, I tarried for a moment and knelt down beside him to ask if there was any corresponding he wished me to do for him while he was laid up. He replied, “No I think not. I don’t think I want to do any writing until I get better.” He asked me to look after his belongings and bring them to town as soon as I could get away. I hated to leave him, and I told him so. He said he was glad I felt that way, but realized that I must return to the line soon. As I said good-by to him I knew I would never see the boy alive again.

He was taken back to the hospital at Manila. That night about 10 o’clock he sent word by his nurse that he wished to see the chaplain. The chaplain came and talked with him, and then at Howard’s request knelt by the cot of the young soldier and prayed with him. Howard thanked him, and as the chaplain passed on to speak to some of the rest of the boys, he turned over on his side. Returning soon, the chaplain on his way out, said, “Good night, Howard.” Receiving no response he bent over the outstretched form to look closely into Howard’s face, and then he understood. This young soldier had finished his honorable earthly career. He had fought his last battle with the same courage and fearlessness that he had been fighting the foe before us.

Sufficient re-enforcements having arrived by this time, those in authority decided to make a general advance. The whole line was divided into three parts: one to go south, one east and one north. One night our regiment was placed at the extreme right of the brigade, to continue the northward advance. The Oregon regiment was stationed in our trenches with orders to remain there until we had completed the big left turn (thus keeping our line intact), and had reached the bay again to the north. Each separate division had its purpose. Our purpose was to surround Aguinaldo, who all this time had been in Malabon, about two miles to the left of our trenches. The right end of our line reached beyond a heavy strip of timber. Under its cover we advanced rapidly ahead of the rest of the line, since the enemy could not discern our movements.

This plan would have proved successful had it not been for the ambitious impulse of the colonel of the Oregon regiment and his disobedience of orders—or his ignorance of the position at that
time of the right end of the big swing. When we had covered only half the distance, the Oregon colonel ordered a charge, with fixed bayonets. These Oregon boys were a fine bunch, and at the word from their colonel over that old breastwork of ours they went. About a dozen of them never went any further. Several others fell by the wayside, but the majority of them climbed the Filipino breastwork and engaged the enemy hand-to-hand. They routed them through the timber, chased them into the swamps, and had made a general cleaning of this bunch of Filipinos within half an hour. Though it was a heroic and complete victory, they caused us to fail in our final purpose.

Aguinaldo, observing the advance of the Oregon regiment only two miles to his right, slipped out of Malabon and made his getaway before the right end of our line had encircled him. Our brigade lined up again and continued the advance northward. We routed the Filipinos out of trench after trench, down their getaway ditches, and chased them over railroad bridges. The men, women and children fleeing before us burned their towns, or at least tried to. We occupied the homes that were not destroyed, during their absence. We took Malolos, their capital; fought some 15 or 20 more battles, finally reaching San Fernando, about 50 miles due north of Manila.

It would become monotonous to you for me to go into detail concerning all the battles on this advance, for we fought every step of the way. Bill, who had promised to get even with me for asking if it hurt to have smallpox, now got even. I received a bullet through the calf of my leg at Malolos, and as it entered my legging it cracked like a pistol. Bill, down the line, not knowing the nature of my wound, true to his promise, and seeing his opportunity, shouted, "Say Wagoner, did that hurt?" Our jokes were always to the point. But it all went to keep us optimistic.

In one advance we became short of ammunition before we reached the enemy in the timber ahead. We only had about a half-dozen cartridges each, and the ammunition wagon was a considerable distance to the rear. Several of the boys were only going through the motions of firing, saving those few cartridges for an emergency. Let me impress upon your minds, as on this particular occasion it was impressed upon mine, it did look like those Filipinos knew we were short of cartridges and were coming straight for us. I always had felt sorry for our poor commissary sergeant. He seemed to have attacks of nervous headache, and on the present occasion the attack grabbed him hard. Well, I never heard of the
sunshine cure for nervous headache, especially in a tropical sun. But let me tell you just what this honorable defender of his commissary privileges did. He went around on the sunny side of a little haystack just behind our line, while the enemy bullets were penetrating the shady side of the same stack. Of course, you will all understand that the sunshine was preferable treatment. And the big, fat commissary sergeant remained right there until the enemy ceased firing while the rest of us lay stretched out upon the ground with our hats pulled down over our faces to keep the bullets from throwing dirt in our eyes.

Well, we never got orders or ammunition. But I have always thought the enemy found out the sergeant had a severe attack of nervous headache and refused to attack us, realizing the confusion and turmoil they might cause in our ranks in the absence of our cautious and secretive stomach robber behind the little haystack.

On various occasions our advance was halted after we had routed the Filipinos from their fortifications and had pursued them to within a proper distance for securing effective results. Once, when we had a whole regiment of the enemy lined up on either side of a railroad bridge and crossing the bridge at the same time, about a mile ahead, in plain view, with the Utah battery’s field pieces trained to fire on them, orders came to cease fire. Thus the entire enemy regiment was allowed to escape and secure themselves in fortifications beyond, so we might have the pleasure of routing them out again. This was showing humanity to the enemy, and extending the term of service to the well-paid American army officials. But what was the private getting? One more opportunity to walk for a mile or two in the face of the deadly Mauser and Remington in the hands of the previously unmolested foe. The private soldier as a rule believed in showing humanity to the enemy and did so from an individual standpoint. But we never could see where the justice or the humanity part of it came in when the high officials, hobnobbing around Manila with the false and robbing spiritual advisors of our enemy, extended this mercy to the enemy at the sacrifice of the lives of the American soldiers who were fighting their country’s battles. In military circles who cares for the private? What rights has he that he can secure with honor? High remunerative positions in the army unmake many men and develop them into heartless and selfish beasts who push their ambitions for self-aggrandizement and profits, at the sacrifice of comforts, necessities, honor, and even the lives of their inferiors in rank, over whom they have unrestricted jurisdiction.
Three or four battles of importance occurred at San Fernando. The result of one was the almost complete annihilation of a Filipino regiment, the funeral lasting all the next day. The natives in town were forced to dig the graves—immense holes in the ground; and the American teamsters, with four big American mules hitched to a big army wagon with high sideboards, hauled dead Filipinos all day from the battlefield (to say nothing about those who had attempted to escape through the swamps, but failed, being interrupted by Springfield bullets). These stiffened dead bodies were dumped from the wagons like so much cord wood. And perchance the wagon was not close enough to the big hole in the ground for the bodies to fall into it as they fell to the ground, the master of ceremonies stuck a spade under the inert human clay and rolled it over and over until it fell in. They were covered up as they lit: face down, face up, mouths open, arms and legs at various angles, crosswise, lengthwise, clothes on, clothes off. The dirt was heaved in, and these Filipino warriors were left to disseminate into Old Mother Earth from which they had originated.

Occasionally a “man” gets a commission. We had one: Lieutenant Colonel Ed [Lt. Col. Edward C. Little]. He met with a misfortune in line of duty, being injured by the accidental discharge of his own gun. He was laid up most of the time from its results. Several of the officers insinuated that he had shot himself on purpose. But the wound was inflicted by his accidentally dropping his six-shooter on the ground, the hammer striking and discharging the bullet upward into his leg—not a very likely way for a man to shoot himself. On one occasion Lieutenant Colonel Ed led us in an advance against a threatened attack. We boys knew the country out in front for a couple of miles as we had captured many a forsaken chicken and hog there. One of the boys spoke up to the colonel informing him that a straight advance was a mistake. He said that the Filipinos were located in a deep irrigation ditch directly parallel to our intended approach. The colonel called a brief council of several of the boys who at once verified the information given by the spokesman, and then remarked, “If that is the case then boys, we’ll flank them.” He then gave the order, “left face, file right march, double time.” Colonel Ed ahead of us—not behind us as the officers usually were—erect and cool, led us to one of the most successful and complete victories of the campaign.

We had no sooner started than that whole irrigation ditch flooded us with bullets. In a short time we had reached their flank and
then the flood returned to the banks from which it had come. The
enemy beat it, and we followed in hot pursuit, Lieutenant Colonel
Ed in our midst. There was another funeral. Those who escaped
did so under the protection of timber with heavy undergrowth and
a dense field of sugar cane. We all sat down to rest. After a short
time I ambled off into a strip of jungle alone, looking for some fruit.
At about 100 yards distance I paused a moment peering on through
the brush, when wham! an old Remington cracked within two rods
of me. Don't think for a minute that I stood still for his second
shot. I entirely forgot what I went into that timber for, but I
have never forgotten what caused me to get out.

One more battle was fought here before we returned to Manila.
As we advanced against the entrenched enemy in columns of fours,
along a narrow path, we were suddenly fired upon. The bullets
came thick and fast. An order was shouted to lie down, and we
did so. Then came a confusion of orders from the various officers in
command. We all knew the position into which they were attempt-
ing to place us, but we lay there for a while till the confusion of
commands should resolve itself into one definite order of movement.
Staff officers shouted one order, majors and captains another, lieu-
tenants still another; and the sergeants and corporals tried to repeat
all of them at once. And there we lay, like a nice strip of green
meadow with the sickle closing in on us at every round of the enemy.
But like the thistle, influenced by the steady and persuasive breezes
blowing overhead, we pulled up and blew away. In a minute we
were deployed back of a rice dike, returning the enemy fire.

I never learned whether that bunch of shoulder straps ever agreed
on a definite order of movement out of our hazardous position. But
they did not follow us according to any military order I ever
heard. We advanced, firing as we went, routing the enemy before
us. Two lieutenants in conversation at the close of this battle asked
as to each other's welfare. One replied that he was feeling all right,
only a trifle stiff in the joints. A private remarked that the lieuten-
ant hadn't shown any indication of stiff joints when he dropped to
the ground under that fusillade of bullets. The lieutenant said that
the private's joints had seemed to be in good working order then,
too. To which the private replied that had he remained where he
was until the officers had reviewed the book of tactics for the proper
move out of the dilemma, neither he nor the lieutenant would then
be anticipating our homeward journey.

The theoretical movements and methods of warfare are as different
from the actual movements and methods as shooting at a squirrel is from being the squirrel shot at. Some officers in the army are a handy nuisance, and a good means of increasing the superfluous expense of war. War is legalized murder, often encouraged from a commercial standpoint of profits, but carried on by those who never receive any benefits worthy of mention. The Filipinos were fighting to gratify the personal ambitions of Aguinaldo. We were fighting for our lives. We had now been on the firing line about five months, had advanced 50 miles, taken the Filipino capital, fought almost every day. We had defeated every resisting foe in human form, had impressed the Filipinos with our relentless methods of warfare, had eaten great quantities of tropical fruits, fishes, chickens, hogs, had drunk some wine, and had planted the old American flag in the very heart of the Philippine Islands.

On June 24 we were replaced by fresh troops and we returned to Manila where we went into quarters inside the walled city. There was a report circulated that General Otis had been shot at twice in Manila, by American soldiers. We privates all felt sorry indeed that he was "shot at."

The buildings inside the walls were constructed of better material than those outside. The rainy season had set in. One night I was awakened from my sleep by such a sudden downpour of rain on the tin roof that I imagined the whole top of the barracks was falling in. I jumped up and was halfway out of a window at the head of my cot before I discovered that it was only raining. There were at least two inches of water standing on the level ground.

We remained here about two months performing guard duty in various parts of the city, as formerly. One institution coming under our jurisdiction was the penitentiary. (We found the convicts engaged most of the time in making ornaments from water buffalo horn and the fine native woods.) Inducements were offered for our re-enlistments—$500 and a promotion. Several of the boys accepted.

We had established a permanent foothold in the Philippine Islands. Following the devastations of war came the blessings also. Emerson says "Everything goes in pairs, and evil for every good." So here they were already—the big brewery companies, and the American Christian missionaries working side by side—both offering the heathen Malay the healing balm. He accepted from both, realizing now that he was rapidly becoming a full-fledged American citizen. He must fall into line and do as Americans wanted him to
do. He must wear American clothes, eat American foods. He must use his own tobacco after it had visited America and returned. He must drink American booze. He must do all these things, and many more, and thus become a living source of revenue for the coffers of those whose influence had brought about this Filipino insurrection.

Orders came for us to embark for home. Our friends being few throughout the city, it did not require much of our time to bid them be good. We went aboard an English transport—capacity 1,000, with 1,300 on board. We were jammed up some, but what did we care, weren’t we coming home? The boys from our ranks who had re-enlisted stood on the wharf as we pulled out. The $500 bounty had grabbed them. They looked mighty lonesome standing back there as we started to take our $500 out in another trans-Pacific voyage. Let me say, by the way, the par value of this homeward trip increased 100 per cent every day, as long as it lasted.

Fellow Americans, can you not see the inconsistency of patriotism being the prevailing spirit in the heart of the American soldier, 8,000 miles from home, fighting a people in no way responsible for the cause in which we had enlisted; fighting a people who loved their own homes as we loved ours? Let me tell you, as a private soldier, the spirit within the heart of every true American who soldiered in the Philippines was one of pity and sympathy for this simple-minded, deluded foe. The prevailing motive that brought about this conflict was profit. So the simple Filipino and the American soldier were placed in the same boat—forced to engage in a death struggle with each other that the ambitions of the powers that were, might be gratified in dollars and cents.