

A Soldier's Letter.

EDITOR TORCH OF REASON:

I should have written to the Torch long ago, but I have neglected to do so. I sincerely hope that you will accept this poorly written and incorrectly composed letter as an atonement. Notice the word "atonement"—this is what a good Christian would say. As the distance traveled since leaving the States is so great, the time so long and the objects of interest so varied, I will not attempt to give a full account of all. I will begin from the time we landed on the Phillipine Islands.

We arrived in Manila Bay on June 30th, 1898, and on July 2nd landed at Cavite Arsenal, where we remained just one month. Manila Bay is considered one of the finest harbors in the world. I can assure you that it is a pretty place. It is twenty-five miles from the city of Manila to the ocean. Cavite Arsenal is the place that Admiral Dewey captured, with all of its machine shops and appertanences, and it certainly is a valuable piece of property. Right in front of Cavite is where the great battle took place between the American and Spanish fleets, the result of which is too well known to you already to require a description, but I will say that the American people do not realize and can not imagine the destruction done by our ships. It must be seen to be appreciated.

While lying at Cavite we became acquainted with the Spanish mode of warfare, and soon realized that if they pursued the same tactics with us we would have no trouble in whipping them. The Spaniards and Insurgents would have a fight at night and sleep in the day time. It was amusing to see the natives leaving Cavite in the evening, then returning in the morning, after fighting all night, just as workmen would return from a factory.

In the latter part of July we established troops at Camp Dewey, just across the bay from Cavite. To this camp most of the American troops rendezvoused in a short time. The organization to which I belong, the Fourteenth Infantry, landed here on August 3d. From that date to the present time we have had a hard time of it.

The Pennsylvania regiment engaged the Spaniards on July 31st, our first battle with them after landing. On August 5th, it fell to the lot of the Fourteenth Infantry to engage them again. I can assure you that the engagement was quite interesting for about forty-five minutes. Our loss was two killed and four wounded. This was my first time under fire, and I must say that for a short time I was much frightened, but after the firing had progressed awhile I was all right and became as cool as possible. We soon realized that there

was no danger from small guns, but they were shelling us heavily, the shells bursting in the trenches quite near to us. Two burst so near me as to throw sparks over my arms. I began to think my time had come, although I do not remember calling on the Lord to save me, or offering up any kind of prayer.

On August 13th we marched in and captured the city of Manila. From that date to the 5th of February things ran on quite smoothly, although we looked for an outbreak of the insurgents most any day. On Feb. 5th we fought them all the forenoon behind their trenches, but finding that we could not rout them in this way, our commander concluded to make a charge in the afternoon. The charge was made as directed and proved a complete success, as we routed the Filipinos in twenty minutes. The charge that we made is considered a great one, as we were against big odds. If the Filipinos were good shots or had any pluck at all, there would not have been enough of us left to tell the tale. The Fourteenth Infantry lost in the day's engagement, 1 officer and 13 enlisted men killed, and 36 enlisted men wounded—the greatest casualties of any organization engaged.

We have extended our lines so that the distance covered by us is thirty miles. All we can do now is to hold what we have until re-enforcements arrive from the States, which should be soon. The Twentieth Infantry has arrived already, and we are anxious that enough should arrive in time to settle the matter before the hot and wet season comes on.

If the people in the States think that a soldier's life in the Phillipines is a picnic, they are sadly mistaken. We have been in the field now twenty-one days without a change of clothing, and have to keep our clothing on all the time. One thing is in our favor just now, however—the weather could not be finer.

The Filipinos are generally a low and miserable class of people. They are so treacherous that you cannot trust any of them. Those who claim to be our friends and have white flags flying from their houses will shoot us whenever an opportunity arises. They are even burning their own houses, thinking that in this way they are injuring us, when the poor devils are only cutting off their noses to spite their faces. When the trouble with them may end no one can predict, but I honestly believe we will have trouble with them as long as we hold the islands. These islands are the greatest "white elephant" the United States has ever had on its hands.

What can you expect of these poor, priest-ridden fools? The Catholic church has had full sway

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