

NEBRASKA CITY TO MANILA AND RETURN.

[CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK.]

It must have been about 9 o'clock for I had just finished cleaning up the galley when a small steam launch came gliding up. The stars and stripes floated from her bow. Under her canopy sat a large man dressed in white with a large Panama hat pulled down over his eyes. He was inclined to be stout and the way he came up the ladder gave one the impression that he was well satisfied with himself and his present condition. Smiling blandly, he shook hands with the commanding officer, talked a few minutes and left, taking several officers with him. Government officials, apparently, have an abundance of time, for he did not come again until the third day. We were all in agony to go ashore. Everyone was sick and tired of the old ocean tramp. We left the ship in several large launches. I remember leaving in the second one. After running shoreward a couple of miles, she passed among hundreds of small boats on which were houses made from palm leaves. Then she ran along by an old stone wall that was cracked in many places and green with age, and over the top protruded a long row of queer shaped brass cannon. I heard some one say we were in the Pasig river. On the left side was a stone pier where we disembarked, every one in high spirits. I will never forget that moment; how good it felt to have firm mother earth under my feet once more.

The regiment was halted in front of a low stone building which looked as if it had stood for two centuries. Traveling rations and ammunition were issued, each man receiving one hundred rounds. It began to look like war. The streets were full of natives watching us curiously from the corners of their little yellow eyes. Some had oranges and cigarettes for sale. At the end of the block was a narrow railway and the strangest cars I ever saw; coaches with seats like church pews and a door at the end of each seat; the flat cars were not much longer than a centre table. We lay around there all that day, smoking black Manila cigarettes and wondering what the next move would be. Towards evening more cars came up, drawn by a tiny arrangement about one third the size of an ordinary locomotive, which made about fifteen miles an hour. Into the coaches we were ordered. Our baggage was placed upon the flat cars, there was a great squeaking and jerking and the seventeenth-century engine began to move. We soon left the suburbs of Manila and started down a beautiful valley. The heat of the day was over and the air was heavy with the sweet sickening fragrance of a tropical growth. On either side were low green ranges of mountains. Several of us climbed on top the cars and, as far as the eye could

reach were waving fields of yellow rice. In one place I saw a man plowing with a forked stick and another harvesting Paddy with a bolo knife.

Calocoon.

Then we stopped at a place called Calocoon where coal was taken on. One native stood on the tender, while a long line of others passed the coal up in small baskets. There were deserted rifle pits all about. In one of these I found a canteen made from a bamboo pole and further on a pair of faded red trousers with a great rent in one leg. For months the Filipinos held these outposts until driven back by the First Nebraska Volunteers. The engine gave several little shrieks; we hurried into our places and she slowly pulled out.

Malaban.

Next we passed through Malaban, then Sanfernando where we tried to make some coffee, but the engineer got in a hurry and we had to desert coffee, cans and all. Every body was hungry. By the rarest good luck I managed to get a pie from a Chinaman. He said it was apple pie; I found one small slice of dried apple in the centre. I do not know what the rest was made of. Here and there along the track were wrecked engines, ditched cars, ruined depots and burning plantations. Every bridge we crossed was patrolled by a heavy guard of men. Things began to take on a warlike appearance.

Then like a great veil the tropical night settled down. Strange noises came from the cane brakes and large bats kept continually snapping their teeth, flew about, while the little creaky engine kept pounding away. It must have been about midnight when a man, with a lantern, came running down the track shouting "Bridge out! bridge out!" We all jumped off. The companies soon got together. Then the order came "Fours left, column left, march." Several natives came up with bull carts and began loading up with baggage. On one of these I climbed, the driver cracked his whip and we started. The caribou walked about half a mile an hour and lay down in every water hole he came to. On and on we went but never came up with the boys. At last I became worried, so taking the driver by the shoulder, I yelled "Saldado," the only Spanish word I knew. But he only went the slower. Picking up a tent pole I shook it at him, at the same time repeating "Saldado." The effect was wonderful. In less time than it takes to tell it, he had turned the cart about and, in not more than twenty minutes, drove up to the regiment. I will always believe that fellow was trying to take me, baggage and all, into the rebel lines, not a mile distant.

Everything was confusion, a fine rain had begun to fall and the boys were

trying to put up their dog tents in the slippery sandy mud. They said we were going to be attacked and half of the bunch were thoroughly frightened. Pretty soon an officer came along, saying: "Any man found with a unloaded gun will be put under arrest," but that did not help matters any. Many times since I have seen those same fellows lay down in the mud and go to sleep without ever thinking of loading their rifles.

I rolled up in my blanket and tried to sleep. I heard the guard tramping back and forth through the weeds; when I dozed off he was still splashing along. I don't think "reveille" was blown at all next morning, for, when I woke up, part of the boys were chewing away on hard tack and canned beef, while many were still soundly sleeping. On every side was a beautiful country; all seemed peaceful and happy, save for the presence of guns scattered about and a crow which kept continually cawing from the top of a bamboo break, but the enemy was watching us and closely at that. All felt that there was going to be trouble soon, but that did not seem to worry many, for, I remember, we sat around the camp-fire that night, smoked, laughed and told stories.

A person can only truly write of what he sees himself. I took no active part at all in the scenes I shall now describe. I was a non combatant, but now it rises like a great panorama before my eyes as if it were but yesterday—that long road to Mandalong, the wet, sandy ground, the great walls of dense bamboo, the waving rice fields, the grey dawn—how things are burned into one's mind sometimes!

The Advance.

"Reveille" was blown at half past three a. m. There was a confused murmur of voices, clanking of guns and equipment. Men groped their way slowly into line; a whispered command passed down the front; double columns of fours swung to the right and marched off; the splashing of many feet was all that could be heard, as men stumbled their way along. With the quartermaster, I followed in the rear. On and on we went, over rice fields and wading deep water holes. A rifle cracked in the distance and I heard the leaden messenger go whistling overhead. In the east the sky was breaking into hills of grey.

"Fours left, halt!" and down we lay behind a high field of sugar cane. Have you ever watched the coming of a storm? How very quiet all is. It was such that morning. The dawn slowly came; then I could see beyond the cane patch to the rice field. It was skirted by a waterway along which loomed indistinctly a ridge of yellow sand and cut bamboo.

"Bang! bang! bang!" Such was the dawn. Then came a rattling volley and a hundred shrieking messengers clipped the leaves from the canestalks and went