

"FIGHTING FIRST."

STORIES OF THE HEROIC VOLUNTEERS HOME FROM MANILA.

First California at Malate—General King's Praise of the Charge of the Californians—A Corporal's Account of the Native Uprising.

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ALL the returning volunteers from the Philippines may seem to have brought the same proud record home with them, leaving no room to specialize their deeds of valor. But in point of fact each regiment had its own individual experience, and only in a general way is the story of one the story of all.

When General Anderson told of the capture of Manila from the Spaniards, he said that so much enthusiasm and valor among the volunteers was curbed for lack of a worthy foe that he felt sorry that the fighting was so brief and one sided.

The first veteran of the California regiment to come home with his personal story of the war in the Philippines was Captain A. J. Kelleher. The captain was disabled by the climate, but not until after the Californians had met the new enemy, the Filipino insurgents.

"Our boys are veterans, every one of them. Why, I've seen them make a charge on the enemy just as if they were enjoying drill. In the attack last February at Santa Ana I heard General King say, 'There go the California boys, and hades itself cannot stop them.' They are game to a man. Every one of the regiment has a record."

General Charles King's own story of the prowess of the Californians appears in his graphic account of the Filipino campaign. In writing of the insurgent outbreak in February the general sketches the strange situation as it is known to all, then continues: "The intelligence bureau had notified me that there were two redoubts close to the river to my left front and one Krupp gun, but we were confident that there existed still another and larger redoubt on a mound which we could not see, either from blockhouse No. 2 or any point within the village of Paco. It was sheltered by trees along the Concordia. When at last we were permitted, after patiently standing their fire for six hours, to dash in to the attack, we found three redoubts and two Krupp guns instead of one. As the insurgents rushed away before us in their attempt to escape the charging lines it was comical to see them shedding their blue uniforms, throwing off coats and trousers and appearing in spotless white, the everyday dress of the native Filipino. But our men were too close on their heels to be deceived by any such artifice. The simultaneous wheel to the left of battalions of my brigade, just as planned beforehand, enabled me to pen the insurgents between my line and the river, and that was how we were enabled to take so many prisoners as well as to inflict such fearful damage upon those who stood and fought, and fight they did pluckily and well that day, because they had been sedulously coached by their officers in the belief that the Americans dared not stand up before them if they stood together and piled their Mausers."

"My orders from the division commander were not to go beyond Santa Ana for fear of coming under the fire of the Monadnock, which was shelling the woods opposite Pacoy, but in the ardor of pursuit Colonel Smith of the First California, far out on the right flank, chased the insurgent reserves all the way to Guadalupe church, nearly three miles out, his gallant Californians dashing on their lines whenever they attempted to make a stand. Oddly enough, after we had swept into Santa Ana and rounded up all the main body of the insurgents, shells actually began bursting in the plaza in front of the beautiful church, under whose walls two of the California companies were compelled to huddle for shelter."

As stated at the opening of this article, every regiment had its particular experience, and although countless stories have been given of the outbreak of the insurrection the narrative of Corporal Bradley of Company K, First California, is especially interesting. The writer says that during the whole of January the city was on the verge of panic, and the slightest excitement led to a commotion which in itself almost precipitated trouble. Then, just at the close of January, quiet reigned, but it was the ominous quiet which precedes the storm.

The next development was the appearance of the Filipino proclamations, which Corporal Bradley says were at times treasonable and again ridiculous. "One," he declares, "purported to emanate from an English soldier, but its execrable English betrayed its origin. It called upon all the American soldiers to fire into the air, in case of an attack upon our lines, and to surrender to the attacking party."

"From not a few reliable sources we learned that Spanish soldiers on parole had joined the insurgents, and the number of dead soldiers among the fallen proved the truth of these statements. For months immense quantities of provisions were sent up the river to the natives. From our outposts, beyond which we could not go without a pass from Aguineldo, we could look into the native territory, see the marching regiments and hear their bugles and drums. For a month our entire army was held in quarters, ready at a moment's notice to be turned loose in case of attack. So intense was the strain that once when a false alarm was sounded the whole city was in a ferment of excitement in a few minutes. Nothing less than riot and slaughter was looked for by the entire populace."

"At length we came to look upon all signs of war with complacency. But on the 4th of February the city was startled by the sound of infantry fire. The outbreak had come at last. The first firing was in front of the Nebraska regiment, but soon extended along the line and continued until about 11 p. m., when it ceased for about two hours, only to be resumed by the natives along the same line from time to time. About 4:30 on Sunday morning the Utah battery, along the Montana front, poured shells into the churches, houses and trenches occupied by the enemy. Personally, I joined the Utah battery."

The corporal tells how the battery kept abreast of the advancing infantry, firing shrapnel into the native quarters. In the charge the battery became separated from the California regiment, but during a lull in the artillery firing Bradley hurried back to his company. "For more than a mile," he says, "along the Paco and Santa Ana road it was a panorama of death and desolation. On the knoll in the bend of the Pasig, where the natives found their retreat cut off, they made a desperate stand in the trenches. An open stretch of paddy fields, with mud knee deep, and the Santa Ana creek, with water up to the waists, separated the Americans from this stronghold. With a rush and a shout the Washington, California and Idaho boys plunged in and either killed, wounded, took captive or drove into the Pasig every native found on that little isle of the river. The dead lay four deep and were buried in the trenches in which they fell the following day. We captured every one of their strongholds and drove them farther back as they steadily advanced. The trenches and breastworks of the insurgents



COLONEL SMITH. CAPTAIN KELLEHER. [Now brigadier general.] availed them little against the concerted onslaught of the American troops. "The Filipinos build the best of breastworks, but lack bravery and determination to hold them. They are treacherous and cruel and can fight in ambush, but are the worst cowards in the open. Their poor marksmanship has saved thousands of the lives of our men. The gallant conduct of the Californians does not detract from the valor of other American troops in the field. All have done their utmost and have proved the valor of American soldiers beyond dispute, though the California regiment is the pride of the army in the Philippines."

The First California left Manila July 26 on the transport Sherman with 48 officers and 950 men, including those unfit for duty. The two batteries of California heavy artillery which have been at the front in the Philippines return with the regiment. GEORGE L. KILMER.

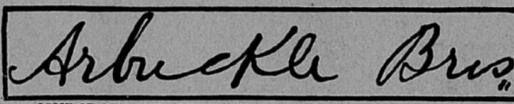
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