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## SAM WIDDIFIELD

Describes a Filipino Execution at Negros Island.

### REMARKABLE NERVE OF VICTIMS

One of the Sights That Were Common Before the Advent of the Americans.

Mrs. M. C. Widdifield, mother of Lieutenant S. W. Widdifield, has received letters verifying the news of her son's promotion. By the last mail from Manila she also received an extremely interesting letter from him, together with his picture taken at Iloilo, which is here reproduced. The letter, from which the following extracts have been taken, was written at Negros Island on May 16th last:

"We are located in Isabella, one of the native towns on the island," he writes, "and of all the lonesome places



FIRST LIEUT. S. W. WIDDIFIELD, U. S. ARMY.  
(From a photo taken at Iloilo, P. I.)

on earth this takes the bakery. It takes an age to get anything here from Manila, and our mail is always a couple of weeks late. We expect to receive orders to leave for home any day now. Company L seems to be ordered to march all over the island from one end to the other while the other companies stay in camp or march five or six miles and back again.

"You know, of course, that we are here to protect the peaceful natives and those who want good government from the raids and murders of the renegade priest and outlaw named Ignacio Papel. So whenever word comes to headquarters that he is around any little village or sugar plantation we are dispatched there immediately. The other night word came to us that Ignacio was going to raid a town called Castellana, fifteen miles from here. So the Captain picked out twenty of us and sent us there immediately to meet him. We made the fifteen miles across swamps and rivers in exactly four hours on foot and reached there at 9 o'clock in the evening. We stayed there fifteen days and during that time I saw something that I have always wanted to see and something that seems so much more cruel and blood-thirsty than war. You can stand and shoot down an opposing soldier because he has his gun pointed and you shoot to save your life, but to see an execution of three men looks pretty cold-blooded and you must have pretty strong nerves to stand it without flinching.

"You know the United States Government here has enlisted about 100 natives as police, and they are governed and ruled by a man named General Ramos, a half-caste Spaniard. Well, these native soldiers are red hot after this band of outlaws led by Ignacio, and in one of their raids against him they captured three of his men. They were tried and found guilty of being outlaws and assassins and sentenced to be shot. General Ramos had told us that he would let us know when the execution was to take place. So one morning he sent us word to come up to his headquarters, as the execution was to take place then.

"The day was a beautiful one. It was like our ideal days in Honolulu. The sun shone bright and a gentle wind was blowing, and everywhere could be seen that quiet and peace, that tends to make life a pleasure in the tropics. We marched up to the headquarters and waited a few moments. Then General Ramos came down and picked out from among his soldiers the best shots and made them into the firing squad. Directly afterwards the three men came down tied together and abreast of each other. They were dressed in dirty working clothes, for according to a custom among the natives that when a man is sentenced to die he sends his best clothes and so forth to his nearest relative or friend—just the opposite to our ideas among criminals. I honestly affirm that, although the men were a trifle pale about the face, they were as cool as though they were on their way home. The crowd around them was much more affected, and many a boy in our squad was as white as a ghost. As for myself, I felt very squeamish. The three men were marched to their positions and the firing squad took their places about thirty feet to the rear of them. (They always shoot their victims in the back in this country.) I watched the victims as they took their places, and one of them, with all the coolness a person could possibly have, reached down and pulled up his pants so as to enable him to kneel better, the same as I or any one would do if we were afraid of creasing or bagging our pants at the knees. Immediately on kneeling they crossed and recrossed themselves and said their prayers, having pre-

viciously confessed and been absolved upstairs by the priest. You can nerve these simple natives up to almost anything, such is their blind obedience to the religion of their priests. They were still praying, with their hands raised in supplication when "crash" went the volley, and the poor men were straightened up and thrown flat on their faces, a convulsive shudder from two of them and their souls were with the One who would judge them again and justly. The third lay twitching and clenching his hands, so a soldier walked up behind him and ended the poor fellows' lives with a well-directed shot in the head. When the volley was fired two bullets hit the middle one of the three victims square in the head, and you could see a piece of his skull about as large as a saucer go flying through the air.

"We went up and looked for the effects of the bullets on them, and you could see at a glance that they never knew what hit them. The one on the left was shot straight through the head and died instantly. The one in the center, with his head all blown to pieces, the same and the one on the right, although not dead from the first shot was unconscious when ended with the second. Thus died three men for following what a priest in his religious zeal had ordered them to do, and in their blind, fanatical way of reasoning thought they were doing right. Such sights as this were common, every-day occurrences before the advent of the Americans in this country.

"We went home and for the remainder of the day the boys kept unusually quiet and did not feel so much like skylarking. We were all pretty busy with our own thoughts, and every once in a while some one would break the silence with 'Gee! how that middle man's head looked,' or 'Wasn't it cold-blooded?' As for myself, I will remember it until my dying day. I have seen heaps of dead bodies, both native and American, and seen men shoot down other men, and have shot and killed some myself, but nothing looked so like cold-blooded murder as that execution of three Filipino outlaws.

"We have just heard that Aguinaldo has surrendered and that all the fighting has ceased, both in Manila and Luzon. How true it is I don't know, but we hear all kinds of reports and never get a paper or a line from Manila.

"The climate here is grand and wherever we go we strike a river and the bathing is great. I am in very good health although I have just gotten over an attack of dysentery, and, although feeling fine, am a little thin."

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Thos. G. Thrum.

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