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NOTES AND COMMENTS ON THE PHILIPPINES

INTERESTING LETTER FROM CORPORAL W. J. BOYCE.

Otis Is Not Popular with the Men in the Ranks Because He is Too Slow—Chinamen Are the Best Friends the Yankee Soldiers Have Among the Residents of the Islands—Rainy Season Will Not Be Over Till November 1—Routine of Life in the Barracks.

Appended is another interesting letter from Corporal William J. Boyce, of this city, who is with the Nineteenth regiment in the Philippines. It is written to his mother under date of September 7.

Manila, P. I., Island of Luzon, Sept. 7, 1899.

My Dear Mother: Just a few lines to keep you from worrying about me as a result of my long absence from home.

I am in good health and enjoying myself as much as possible in this far-away place. I am so far away that I hope this epistle will find you all enjoying the best of health; and that you have written me in the way to me, as I am anxious to hear from you.

We arrived in the harbor here on Aug. 21, but did not leave the boat until the 25th, when we arrived at our present location. We are in the barracks here at Manila, about one and one-half miles from the center of the city. The barracks consist of two long buildings created by the natives, without the use of nails. I had read a great deal about houses being built without nails but never had the chance to see them until I came here. The buildings and the barracks are 100 feet long and 40 feet wide, so that one-half of a building has room enough for one company of men. There is room enough for the men to be down in comfort.

I believe this is a healthier country than Porto Rico was when I was here. There is better health here. We are in a nice place and would be all right if it wasn't so muddy, and we couldn't step outside of our barracks without sinking up to our knees. But we won't be here more than a week longer, as we are going to move again, this time not so far as our last move. But we are equally as tired. We are going on to Zamboanga, under General Lawton. I do not know yet where we are going. It is either to relieve the Third Tennessee or the Washington regiment of volunteers. These two regiments have had an extremely hard time and will be overjoyed to get back home again.

ABOUT THE PEOPLE. The people of the Philippine Islands are an amalgamation of classes; some are intelligent, others very ignorant. Some of the men and women especially in the small towns and cities, can't count to ten, and when you find one that can count to twenty by using his fingers and toes, they call him a learned mathematician.

They are not as some people would have you believe. They are generous and will give us anything they have, but they are very treacherous and if you do not have anything more to do with them than can be helped. They are fond of music and can learn to whistle, or sing a tune by hearing it once, so it is not surprising to see down town and hear the natives whistling "Georgia Camp Meeting," "Just One Girl" and the like. The ladies are carried in a chair borne over their mother's hips, when they are four months old, and put in a bag with an opening left for his head, then either in a cart or carried on a pole.

The natives are very small, but they hit their toes to hocks and here in the city they hit their toes to ears. But the most of the heavy work they do with the water buffaloes. They are something like oxen, but live mostly in water.

It has been raining here very hard ever since June 1. They said in the States that the rainy season stopped Sept. 1, but such is not the case. It rains here until about Nov. 1. Everything has been quiet here for some time, as far as fighting is concerned, and it will stay so until after the rainy season is over. Of course they have some noise in a while, when a few men lose their lives, but nothing like we thought they were having.

OTIS TOO SLOW. General Otis hasn't many friends here among the enlisted men, as he is too slow. The insurgents could have whipped him long ago if the government had a better man in command of the army here. I should think they would take a tumble to themselves, as men are dying here by the thousands of typhoid fever and a conglomerate of other diseases. It seems to me to see so many good young men losing their lives, for a lot of savages to please a few politicians. Yesterday there were 21 funerals passed our barracks, of United States soldiers. None of them were killed, nor died of wounds, but died of diseases contracted in the service of the United States in these islands.

The Nineteenth infantry, our regiment, has had what is termed "good luck" since we arrived here, but we have had the misfortune to lose three men since landing, and have several in the hospital. I suppose that when we return to the States two years hence, our companies will look much different than they do now.

Manila is a city of 500,000 inhabitants; it is divided in several suburbs; the two principal ones are termed Old Manila and New Manila. Old Manila is what is termed the walled city, as there is a wall built all around it. It is not as high, however, as the wall around China, but fairly as strong. It seems as though it ought to have been impossible to take this city. But we have the city and it is being patrolled by the Forty-eighth United States Cavalry. No one is allowed on the streets after 8:30 p. m., and if a person is caught after that time he is severely dealt with. If it is a soldier he finds himself minus his pay the next day.

The streets are very narrow and dirty, and in Old Manila, where the business is mostly done, almost anything can be bought. The stores are mostly run by Chinamen, as they are the most thriving of the population, and we can't go down town without getting the impression that we are in the heart of China.

The Chinamen are our best friends. They carry victuals to us when we are in the firing line, and it is impossible to get teams to where we are. Our company as well as every other company of the regiment have four of these good natured Chinamen who carry our wood and water; also do all of our heavy work for 50 cents "Mexican money" a day.

VALUE OF MONEY. In regards to money, I will say that an American dollar is worth \$2 of the money

here, as the money is Mexican money, so if we want to buy anything and ask the price of it they say "60 cents Mexican and 20 cents American," etc. But as far as it doesn't make any difference, as we haven't received a cent since we left Camp Meade. You can rest assured money will come handy to us when we get it, as we have lived many a day on bacon and hard tack.

Here, as I have said before, it is very dangerous to go outside of your barracks after 10 p. m., as the insurgents have a good many friends here who prove around night. One night last week, three Filipinos were found sneaking around the company's barracks in the dead hours of the night with large knives on their persons. My company is next to us, so they were getting pretty near home, but fortunately were captured before any damage was done, and will be properly dealt with. On guard at night we have to be very careful as the guards are given orders to shoot at the least provocation, so that a soldier sneaking in quarters at night is apt to get shot by one of his own men as a native is. Our daily routine of duty is:

5:30 a. m., first call for reveille.  
5:45 a. m., assembly.  
6:00 a. m., mess call (breakfast).  
6:30 a. m., fatigue call.  
6:45 a. m., sick call.  
8:15 a. m., first call for guard mount.  
9:30 a. m., assembly.  
10:00 a. m., mess call for drill.  
11:00 a. m., first sergeants' call.  
11:30 a. m., recall from fatigue.  
12:00 p. m., mess call for drill, dinner.  
1:00 p. m., fatigue call.  
4:00 p. m., recall from fatigue.  
4:30 p. m., first call for drill.  
5:15 p. m., assembly.  
5:30 p. m., recall from drill.  
5:30 p. m., mess call (supper).  
6:15 p. m., first call for retreat.  
8:30 p. m., assembly.  
9:30 p. m., first call for quarters.  
9:30 p. m., taps.  
9:00 a. m. (Saturdays) inspection.

I will have to conclude now as my time is limited and paper is scarce. So au revoir for this time.

Lovingly your son,  
Corp. William J. Boyce.

Co. K, 19th U. S. Infantry,  
Manila, P. I.

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