

A PENNSYLVANIAN IN THE PHILIPPINES: EXTRACTS FROM THE LETTERS OF CORPORAL WILLIAM S. CHRISTNER, 1898-1899

EDITED BY JOHN B. B. TRUSSELL, JR. *

FOR THE Spanish-American War, Pennsylvania provided fifteen infantry regiments, a cavalry squadron, and three artillery batteries.¹ Of these, one regiment—the 10th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, drawn from Beaver, Fayette, Greene, Washington, and Westmoreland counties—saw substantial action in the Philippines against both Spaniards and Filipinos. It not only represented Pennsylvania's major participation in the war, but as it happened, was the first American organization to come under fire on Philippine soil.²

Serving with the 10th was William S. Christner, a 26-year-old coal miner and part-time farmer from Salt Lick Township in Fayette County. An articulate and observant correspondent, in his letters he provides first-person accounts of events, now largely forgotten, which represent a significant episode in American history. Beyond that, his sometimes naive but always positive reactions to a whole new exotic world epitomize the nation's experience as it embarked, for good or ill, on a drastically altered course.

I should like to express appreciation to Mr. Christner's son, Lt. Comdr. Donald R. Christner, USN-Ret., and to the staff of the U.S. Army Military History Research Collection at Carlisle Barracks, Pa.³ Editing has been limited primarily to paragraphing and punctuation. Spelling is unaltered.

* The author is associate Historian of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

1. Thomas H. Steward, *Record of Pennsylvania Volunteers in the Spanish-American War, 1898* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1901), p. 5.

2. Two of the 16th Pennsylvania Infantry's three battalions fought in one engagement in Puerto Rico. This regiment's third battalion, the cavalry, and the artillery reached Puerto Rico but saw no combat. No other Pennsylvania units left United States territory.

3. For Christner's letters, see File 1898-268, U.S. Army Military History Research Collection, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

On 25 April 1898, when President McKinley called for 125,000 volunteers for war with Spain, Governor Daniel H. Hastings ordered the Pennsylvania National Guard to assemble on 28 April at Mt. Gretna. There those who were physically qualified and elected to volunteer would be mustered into the federal service. On 3 May, Private Christner reported to his family:

There is over ten thousand eight hundred soldier boys here, and we are all eating hard tack and drinking black coffee, but they are very near all enjoying good health. . . . To day we enter into the United States service providing we can pass the [physical] examination.⁴ There is a great many of the boys leaving . . . for home, but as I write there are thousands going cheering past me who have mustered in.

On 11 May, he wrote again:

I Guess we will leave here this week . . . and I for one am not sorry. Am tired of this place. It is so muddy. . . . To day we join the United States army. . . . When you think of me don't worry. If any one gets along it will be me.

On 17 May, the 10th Pennsylvania received orders to proceed to Chickamauga Park, Ga., followed immediately by a telegram re-directing the regiment to San Francisco. War Department plans had called for the East Coast regiments to be sent to Cuba, with midwestern and western units going to the Philippines.⁵ The 10th Pennsylvania proved to be the only exception. Press accounts said the 10th was picked because it was the best trained of the Pennsylvania regiments. Actually, political pressure had been applied. Col. Alexander Hawkins, the regimental commander, was a Republican candidate for the state senate, and is said to have requested the intervention of President McKinley's brother, a resident of Somerset, Pa. The second-in-command, Lt. Col. James E. Barnett, a Washington, Pa. attorney who was formerly deputy secretary of the Commonwealth and was active in Republican politics (in November, 1899, he would be elected state treasurer), also enlisted the support of Deputy Attorney General John P. Elkins and State Treasurer Benjamin J.

4. Christner was too optimistic. Recruiting each company from its 60-man peacetime strength to a 75-man wartime complement and replacing the physically disqualified and those unwilling to volunteer delayed the regiment's muster-in until 11-12 May.

5. William T. Sexton, *Soldiers in the Philippines* (Washington, D.C., 1944), p. 6.



PRIVATE WILLIAM S. CHRISTNER

Courtesy of the U.S. Army Military History Research Collection, Carlisle Barracks.

Haywood to approach Senators Boies Penrose and Matthew Quay to influence the regiment's assignment to the Philippines.⁶ Certainly, with the clear example of the influence of Civil War service on political fortunes, no political aspirant could have been insensible to the potential value of an active combat record.

6. *History of the 10th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, Its Forebearers and Successors* (n.p., 1966), p. 65; William P. Clarke, *Official History of the Militia and the National Guard of the State of Pennsylvania* (n.p., 1909), 1:234.

The regiment left Mt. Gretna on 18 May. After stopping at Harrisburg for Governor Hastings to shake each man's hand, it started on its week-long journey, arriving to a tumultuous welcome at San Francisco on 25 May. Christner lost little time in reporting his impressions. On 26 May he wrote:

We have at last arrived at Frisco and encamped near the golden gate. . . . We were met at every stop by thousands, each striving to outdo the other in giving fruits and flowers to the boys in blue. . . . At Frisco the ladies of the Red Cross society met us, and such a breakfast the boys had not eaten for some time [only canned rations and hardtack had been issued en route]. Then they packed our haversacks with sandwiches, oranges, and bannanas. . . . We marched from the pier to our camp, about three miles. All the way the streets were so crowded we had to almost fight our way through. All you could hear was, "Hurrah for Pensylvania and God bless her soldier boys." One lady told me we were given the grandest ovation of any troops that had passed through the city. . . . The other regiments . . . are very envious of us. When we came they all had to take a back seat. They tell the girls we are no good but it won't go well.

Some of the boys of other regiments are on board the ships and far on their way.⁷ We . . . will get a ship soon. . . . I don't suppose there is a chance of us getting back before the two years we enlisted for are up, so you don't need to save any sour crout or home made sugar for me this year.

On the same day, Christner wrote in another letter:

There is 50 thousand of us going to the Philipppines. It will be a trip of over six thousand miles on the water. The islands are near to China. I can't say for sure when we will go. . . . The boys are all in good health and spirits, and think they can whip the world. . . . We will try to acquit ourselves as soldiers of Pensy and never dishonor the old flag.

Christner evidently relished the life he was leading. On 30 May, he wrote:

Some of the boys are a little afraid of the sea, but it has no terrors for me. Would just as soon be on there as under the ground digging coal. The sea is very calm this time of year. The

7. The "First Expedition" to the Philipppines had sailed on 25 May.

worst thing we will have to stand is the heat. They say it boils a man nicely. . . .

We have lots of books, Religious and novels. . . . We hear preaching by our chaplain twice each Sunday. He was telling the boys all yesterday to write every day to their parents . . . they were writing letters all afternoon.

In his next letter, dated 6 June, Christner reported something definite:

We have orders to go aboard the ship on the 7th or 8th. The name of her is the *Zealandia*. She is a fine vessel and they say we will be very comfortable on board. There will be between 7 & 8 hundred on our ship. It will take about 30 days to make the trip from here. . . .

To day we got three new uniforms: blue, white, & brown; 2 pair new shoes: new hats, new shirts and socks; new guns and belts—well, in fact, every thing we need. We shall be right well equipped and think we can make some Spaniards very tired when we meet. The boys all seem anxious to get at them. I don't know how they will act when the dance begins, but I don't think any of them is a bit afraid of the Spaniards, but they are afraid of sea sickness. . . .

Mother, pray for me, but never shed a tear. I would not like to hear of you crying about me. Mind, I am only one in 125 thousand and most of them have mothers and fathers to leave. I am coming back. Then will be time enough to cry about how the way your buckwheats and butter will disappear.

Not until 14 June, in fact, did the 10th Pennsylvania board its transport, which remained in harbor overnight. Before sailing, Christner got off a final letter:

We have got a barroom and everything nice and us boys must stand guard to keep the boys out. There is no one drinks but officers in it. One of the boys got in yesterday after a drink of lemonade and had to pay twenty five cents for it. I don't know what a whiskey would be.

The *Zealandia* and three other transports⁸ made up a convoy carrying the 3,000 troops under Brig. Gen. Francis V. Greene comprising

8. *Official History of the Tenth Pennsylvania Infantry, U.S.V. in the Campaign in the Philippine Islands* (n.p. c. 1900), pp. 2-3.

the "Second Expedition" to the Philippines.⁹ On 21 June, at sea, Christner wrote again:

Most of the boys have been sea sick but about all right again. I was pretty sick myself but feel like a saltlick township buck now. . . .

Some one told the people back there we were not being fed and clothed properly. That is a lie. We get plenty to eat and good substantial food such as potatoes, beef, beans, prunes, dried apples, figs, bread, butter, coffee, turnips, onions, pork. . . . That does not sound like starving, does it? As for clothing, I have four suits . . . ; two pair shoes, 2 hats, one cap. When we land at Honolulu we get [sun] helmets, slippers, and mosquito netting to keep the mosquitoes from running their long garbills into us. . . .

I just quit writing . . . to watch them consign one of our comrades to his last resting place in the sea. He died on board the ship *Colon* which sails beside our own. They wrapped him in canvas and tied heavy shot to his feet so he went straight to the bottom.

The convoy reached Hawaii on 24 June. On 25 June, Christner wrote:

Am sitting on the deck writing while the people on the wharf are throwing pineapples and bannanas up to the boys. The natives here are almost as dark as negroes. There is about 18 thousand whites in this city.

Later that day the troops marched to the Palace grounds for a lavish lunch and a serenade by the Royal Hawaiian Bard. Although many soldiers spent the afternoon watching the 10th Pennsylvania's baseball team soundly defeat the team of the 1st Nebraska Volunteers,¹⁰ Christner visited the Hawaiian Senate chamber. Helping himself to official stationery, he dashed off another letter.

I am sitting in the Senate Chamber of the Republic of Hawaii where Queen Liliuokalani used to write. We just had a feast on the palace grounds, and let me tell you it was fine. . . . The palace is beautiful . . . and the grounds are the finest

9. Sexton, *Soldiers in the Philippines*, p. 13.

10. *Official History of the Tenth Pennsylvania Infantry*, p. 3.

I was ever in. The people treat us fine. They are in splendid good humor. They know the time is near when the American flag will float over their little Island.¹¹

The expedition resumed its voyage on 26 June, entering Manila Bay on the morning of 17 July. That same day Christner sent off a letter:

. . . Our ship anchored by Dewey's fleet and among the wrecks of the seven Spanish war ships which he sank. . . I saw & heard a battle to day, from our ship. It was fought in the hills back of the city between the Spanish and the insurgents. The losses were, Spaniards killed and wounded, about one hundred; insurgents, near fifty. . . .¹²

The boys are all in good spirits and think they can take Manila in short order when they let us loose to go at the devils. . . . Expect to land tomorrow and as soon as the other [third] expedition lands, we intend to take the city and put it in our pockets.

The troops were held aboard ship for four more days before being lightered close to shore, wading the rest of the way through the surf. The American force was concentrated just inland from the beach at "Camp Dewey," a former peanut farm. Six miles to the north lay Manila's outer limits. Two miles south of Manila was the suburb of Malate, screened by Spanish fortifications. Some 1,200 yards still farther south was a line of entrenchments manned by Filipino insurgents.

The relationship of the American command to the insurgents was embarrassingly ambiguous. If the Americans had come to the Philippines merely because Spanish forces could be struck there, the insurgents could be looked on as allies and aided toward their goal of independence. On the other hand, if the United States, in a surge of its heady new imperialism, should desire to retain the Philippines, the insurgents would become an obstacle. Lacking clear instructions, Admiral George Dewey and Maj. Gen. Wesley Merritt, the senior commanders of each service present on station, wanted to benefit as

11. Hawaii was annexed on 17 July.

12. Here, as later, Christner displays the Volunteers' blithe tendency to relay sheer speculation as undisputed fact. At the same time, many of Christner's reports in later letters of plans and impending developments are startlingly accurate, showing both the soldier grapevine's effectiveness and the laxity of security.

much as possible from the insurgents while making only minimal commitments to them.¹³ In immediate terms, this meant capturing Manila before the Filipinos ringing the city could do so. Reluctantly, the insurgent leaders agreed to evacuate the trenches north of Camp Dewey so that American forces could replace them.

General Greene, as overall tactical commander, began another line of trenches about 200 yards closer to Malate. By 31 July, some 250 yards had been completed, stretching eastward from the beach to a macadamized road running southward from Manila toward Cavite. That morning brought the 10th Pennsylvania's turn for outpost duty. Colonel Hawkins, already suffering from the cancer that would take his life before the regiment's return home, was sick in quarters; and Lieutenant Colonel Barnett was in Pennsylvania seeking recruits. Hence, command on the line devolved upon Major H. C. Cuthbertson, a civil engineer from New Brighton, Pa.¹⁴

Cuthbertson placed four companies in the trenches, along with four guns of the Utah Artillery Battalion. The regimental reserve, consisting of two companies, one of them Private Christner's Company E, was put 200 yards to the rear. Across the road, in the open, was a third Pennsylvania company, its left flank on a line with the two reserve companies but arcing forward as it extended farther to the right.¹⁵

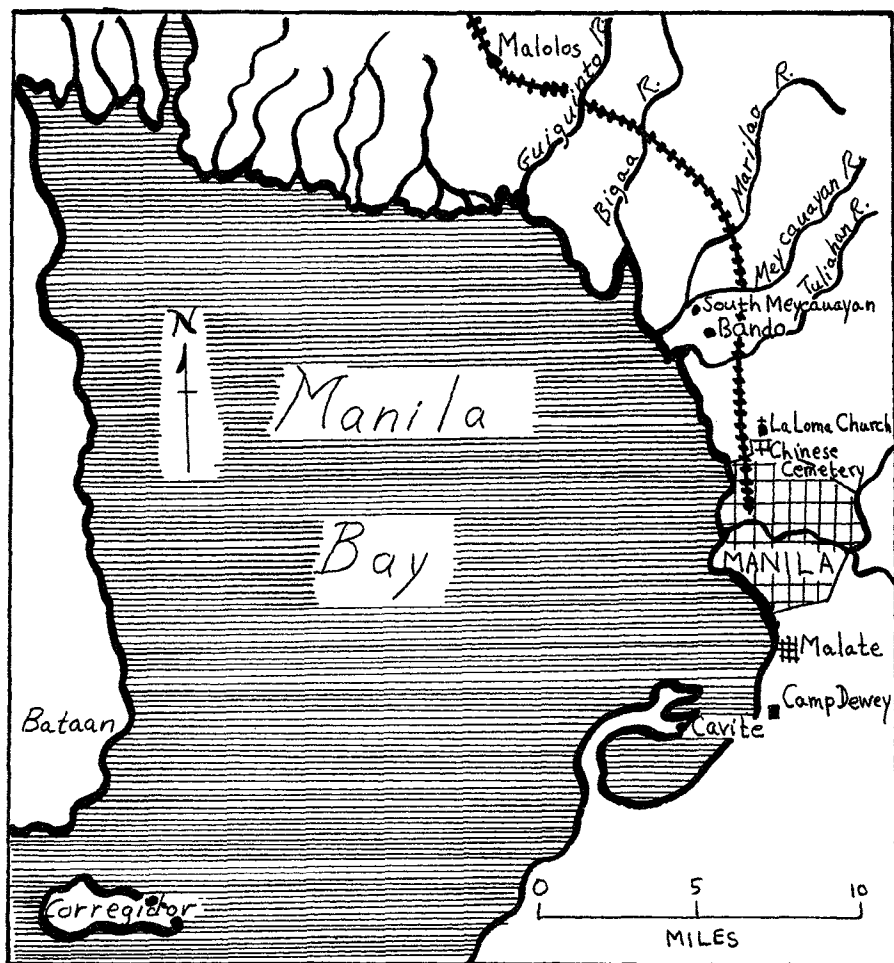
All day the enemy remained quiet. Rain fell intermittently,¹⁶ but with darkness the heavens opened and rain came down in torrents. At about 11 P.M. a thunderous fire crashed from the Spanish lines. For half an hour artillery predominated; then, ominously, the crack of Mausers swelled. Major Cuthbertson concluded that enemy infantry was advancing, and the Pennsylvanians, disregarding their rapidly dwindling ammunition, poured volley after volley into the darkness. On the other hand, Lieutenant Gibbs, commanding two of the Utah guns, had been ordered not to fire unless an actual attack was taking place, and remained unconvinced. He held his

13. The best treatment of these maneuverings is provided by Sexton, *Soldiers in the Philippines*. The subject is also addressed by Walter Millis, *The Martial Spirit* (Cambridge, Mass., 1931); and Leon Wolff, *Little Brown Brother* (New York, 1960). In contrast to Sexton's objectivity, both the latter allow the situation's inherent potential for hilarity and irony to give their accounts a tone approaching the frivolous.

14. *Official History of the Tenth Pennsylvania Infantry*, pp. 5, 29.

15. *Annual Report of the Major General Commanding the Army to the Secretary of War, 1898* (Washington, D.C., 1898), pp. 93-95.

16. Pvt. Ernest W. Hewston, Unpublished Diary, File 1898-82, Military History Research Collection, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.



fire until Cuthbertson “pulled rank” to make him bring his guns into action.¹⁷

About midnight there was some slackening in the roar on the immediate front, but the volume soon picked up on the right. Cuthbertson decided that the Spaniards were now enveloping his landward flank and sent the two reserve companies to extend the line of the company on the right, east of the road, which had already advanced its left flank to be even with the trenches.¹⁸ Earlier, he had hurried messengers to the rear for more ammunition. By the time the men were resupplied, they were down to an average of four rounds apiece.¹⁹

Meanwhile, alerted by the firing, Colonel Hawkins had started forward. The outpost reserve—Batteries H and K of the 3d U.S. (Regular) Artillery, operating as infantry—was already on the way and soon

17. *Annual Report of the Major General Commanding, 1898*, p. 98.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 93-95.

reached the trenches. General Greene also ordered two battalions of the 1st California Volunteers to move up.

Before the California troops arrived, the Spanish fire had ceased. The Americans spent the rest of the night wet and miserable and nervously alert, but there was no further action. The Pennsylvanians were convinced that they had driven off a massive enemy assault. By contrast, Lieutenant Gibbs' skepticism was shared by some of the Regular officers: 1st Lt. M. G. Krayenbuhl, commanding the 3d Artillery's Battery H, had also clashed with Cuthbertson, but having ten years' service (Regular Army promotion was painfully slow), he refused to be intimidated by a mere major of Volunteers.²⁰ General Greene himself was dubious, but tactfully noted:

Major Cuthbertson reports that the Spaniards left their trenches in force and attempted to turn our right flank, coming within 200 yards of his position. But as the night was intensely dark, with incessant heavy rain, it is possible that he was mistaken. . . . The Spaniards used smokeless powder, the [bamboo] thickets obscured the flash of their guns, and the sound of a Mauser bullet penetrating a bamboo pole is very similar to the crack of the rifle itself.²¹

Significantly, no Spanish dead or wounded were seen in front of the American position when dawn finally broke.²² As for American casualties, the night's action had taken a toll of ten killed and forty-three wounded.²³ Of these, eight of the dead and twenty-seven of the wounded were from the 10th Pennsylvania. Christner's company alone had lost five killed and seven wounded.²⁴

Whatever the facts, the Pennsylvanians had held their ground against what they perceived as a full-scale assault. If they had been prodigal of their ammunition, they had stood firm. This was no mean achievement for Volunteers in their initial combat—indeed, in the initial combat of the entire force. In his first letter after coming ashore, written on 6 August, Christner made it clear that, in his mind, the regiment had won a glorious victory.

19. *History of the 10th Pennsylvania*, p. 69.

20. *Annual Report of the Major General Commanding, 1898*, p. 105.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

24. *Official History of the Tenth Pennsylvania Infantry*, *passim*.

The tenth reg fought a desperate battle with the Spaniards July the 31st. We [Company E] lost 5 killed and about 9 wounded. We had to bear the brunt of the battle, turning a flank movement made by about three thousand Spaniards. We killed three hundred and sixty five dons and wounded about 9 hundred. We have raised thunder with them since we are here. There is fighting all the time and a fellow gets all he wants of it. . . . They said the Spaniards would not fight. Well, that is a lie. They are as hard a fighter as ever Uncle Sam's troops went against but we are getting them holed up now.

The Spaniards were indeed "holed up." The problem facing both Spanish and American commanders was to get the Americans into Manila without allowing the insurgents to enter the city as well. Arrangements were finally concluded whereby, on 13 August, the Americans would move independently of their quasi-allies, with the Spanish garrison opening the city gates after only a token resistance. Although some American units had to race the insurgents to Manila and the resistance in one sector stiffened beyond what either side had intended, the city was occupied much as planned. The 10th Pennsylvania quickly settled into a routine of drills and training.²⁵ Christner wrote again on 31 August.

You will doubtless know by this time that we are in the city and the war is about all over now, and the boys are not spited a bit that it is so, but they are just as willing as ever to go in to it again should they be called upon to do so. . . . We are quartered in a large bank building and this evening while I write the boys are playing the violin and dancing, singing songs, and so forth. We get payed tomorrow and then there will be a city bought and sold.

I was greatly pleased to hear the berry crop was good for we expect to be home in time to devour some of this year's crops. . . .

I have been promoted to the rank of corporal and am getting along good, being in good health, and was never so well contented in my life. I don't think it will be very many months until we return home as I understand only the regulars are to stay here. Even if they do keep the islands, the boys all expect to be home for their Christmas dinner.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Four days later, his outlook was less rosy:

The food we get is substantial but not very appetizing. It consists principally of meat, bread, and potatoes, black coffee, and sometimes tea.²⁶

We received word last night we were to be taken home and mustered out in the near future. There is a great deal of doubt among the boys as to whether the report be true or not.

We are going to retain possession of the Philippines.²⁷ Well, they will form a very rich acquisition to our country. Manila is a city of great wealth and the surrounding hills are rich in gold and precious stones but inhabited by an uncivilized and war-like race of people. Some natives of the interior are supposed to be cannibals who will dine upon the hind leg of any rich, juicy white man who may fall into their hands.

I am learning to talk Spanish and have many acquaintances among the natives, among them one little Philipina who I go to see every night or so. She is a lolypop. . . . We had regimental review parade the other day in the grand plaza. We all dressed in white with yellow shoes. We looked snipitious.

Barely a week later, on 11 September, Christner was noting signs of change:

We are having some trouble with the natives now but think all the fighting will soon be over. . . . [Manila] is quite a lively place. . . . There is fights and riots to settle every hour, and since I am corporal, have lots of business on hand. . . . The women chews tobacco and smoke cigars . . . and are a damed mean set generally. I will be home soon with an abnormal appetite for buckwheat, so be ready.

Rising Filipino hostility soon led the American commanders to improve their tactical situation. A 16-mile-long outpost line was established around the city. Each regiment was assigned a specific

26. *Official History of the Tenth Pennsylvania Infantry*, p. 11, says, "The ration issued from this time on was abundant and of excellent quality—a first-class article of Australian beef or mutton being issued to the troops seven days in ten. . . ." Christner's complaint may have reflected the institutional monotony of mess-hall meals. Frequently, also, Volunteer company cooks had no particular qualifications for their positions. In Christner's company, the cook was George A. Anderson, of Washington, Pa. In civilian life he was a carriage painter.

27. Christner's view was completely accurate, as it turned out, but it was not until December that the United States formally assumed sovereignty over the Philippines.

sector, maintaining one company constantly in the line. The regiments holding the southern half of the line were grouped into the 1st Division, under Brig. Gen. Thomas Anderson, with the regiments on the northern half comprising the 2d Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Arthur MacArthur. The 10th Pennsylvania, part of the 2d Division, was assigned a sector just to the west of the approximate center of MacArthur's command.²⁸

Christner's next letter was written on 21 September:

We are doing outpost duty to keep the insurgents out of the city. They are not causing us much bother now. We killed a few of them to learn them a lesson, and you bet they learned it. . . .

We was paid on the 16th and the city has been very lively ever since. There is a good many drunks and the guard house is generally full. I was corporal of the guard day before yesterday and I had about 25 prisoners to look after. . . . There is very few sick men in our regiment. None have died from sickness except one and only nine from battle.²⁹

On 5 October, Christner wrote again.

I will have to tell you a little secret. I have a girl. She is a Philipina but almost white and very, very pretty. Her mother runs a store. One great objection I have to their mode of sparking [is that] the Mother is ever present. . . . She wears wooden shoes and no stockings. She powders a little and perfumes a great deal, but for all that she is a dear little thing.

Most of Christner's letters continued to be preoccupied with food. By 17 October his generally tolerant assessment of the rations had markedly deteriorated:

I suppose by the time you get this . . . the buckwheat cakes and sausage will be ripe. As Uncle Sam does not issue buckwheat flour and make sausages, we don't get any, but we do get bread with nice plump, red ants in it, and you know I was always a great boy for my ants. The coffee is liken unto that which our mothers used to make—that is, when they made it out of roasted boot legs and dish water. We have beef steak

28. Sexton, *Soldiers in the Philippines*, pp. 59–60.

29. Actually, there had been eight battle deaths. As Christner wrote this letter, a second Pennsylvania soldier died of disease. Considering endemic health hazards in the Philippines, and especially in comparison to the losses to illness of other Volunteer regiments, the Pennsylvanians' health record (only eight deaths from disease during their entire period of service) is remarkable.

sometimes. Have you ever eaten a nice, juicy piece of India rubber? You would certainly prefer it to our beef. I fear very much our cook has never learned the grand secret of gravy making, as some of his efforts in that direction are miserable failures. We get very many rice, in fact so much that the boys will walk a mile around to avoid looking at a rice field. Now and then we get decomposed potatoes and sick onions. Oh, we have quite a variety of substantial food if properly gotten up. I am sorry for our black cook.³⁰ Dear man, he tried to boil some water properly the other day but alas, he burned it. . . .

I had for dinner eggs, buns, pickled peppers, steak, bread, gravy, & coffee, but I have money and buy what I like. I am beginning to like this country better than at first. . . . The troops are all but a few in fair health and spirits. We are having very little to do now . . . and a boy of my prying disposition can find many things to interest him in an oriental town. . . .

Rumors about the Volunteers' future were continuous. On 4 November:

We hear now we are sure to keep the Islands, so we expect to stay quite a while yet. The insurgents . . . are not giving us any trouble. The weather is not so warm as a month ago, and we wear white clothes all the time so we don't suffer much from heat.

By 23 November, however, the rumors had changed. Christner reported that:

There has been telegrams recd here stating that the volunteers at Manila were soon to be relieved by other troops but we hear very little news of them starting for this place so I suppose it is a myth. . . . We expect to be home by spring just when the young calves and dandelions is ripe. About the time you get this the sausage and buckwheat festivals will be in full blast. . . . I hope you will enjoy the holidays. . . . As you eat the turkey just reach

30. American troops in Asia, then as since, hired native labor to perform tasks repugnant to the soldiers themselves. Christner implies that Company E had hired a Filipino cook, who provided an unwelcome change from the company's previous fare, indifferent though it may have been considered. On the other hand, the heavily-handedly humorous tone of Christner's comments and their lack of real bitterness suggests that, in a fit of nostalgia for favorite foods, he was merely playing the grousing "old soldier."

for a thigh and say, 'I will eat this for the lad in Manila,' and I will eat six dozen bananas and a bushel of oranges for you.

Prospects of being mustered out continued to figure prominently in Christner's letters, but he was consistently (and rightly) dubious. On 7 December he wrote:

We have quit thinking of coming home until our two years are up, as it does not look to us as if we would be discharged until then. Well, I am satisfied to stay until Uncle Sam thinks he doesn't need us any more. The duty is light and we are getting pretty well acclimatized. . . . All together, soldier life is not the worst. There is a little talk of the insurgents tackling us since the peace commission has come to a settlement,³¹ but if they do I don't think it will take us long to knock the tar out of them. We are not worrying much over the harm they can do us.

Obviously feeling a little sorry for himself, Christner next wrote the day after Christmas:

Christmas is over and we did not get our boxes in time. They were here three days before Christmas but our officers were not interested enough in their men to try to get them off the ship.³²

I had a very nice time. . . . Was at a Philippine Feast Christmas eve; lots of music, wine, and girls. Had a splendid dinner with the [1st] Montana reg boys and a general good time all around. . . .

We are expecting to leave here before long for home as we hear they are going to discharge 50 thousand more volunteers.³³

With the new year, the situation began to crystallize. Christner reflected these developments in a letter of 5 January 1899:

The President's proclamation [announcing United States sovereignty over the Philippines] . . . was issued last night. . . . We

31. The peace treaty was not signed in Paris until 10 December. However, the insurgents were openly hostile to impending developments that were clearly inevitable.

32. See, however, Christner's letters of 5 January and 16 February 1899.

33. The Volunteers, having enlisted for two years *or the duration of the war*, were entitled to be mustered out when the peace treaty was adopted. Already, all but four of the other Pennsylvania units had been discharged, six of the regiments as much as two months earlier. But with the Philippine situation growing tense, military necessity dictated retention of the volunteers in the islands until regulars could be redeployed to replace them.

think it is . . . the only proper move. . . . We as well as the Officers in command here think the insurgents will lay down their arms when called upon to do so, and if they do not we are in a position to make them do so, as I think we will have them completely surrounded by the time the proclamation is read to them. . . .³⁴ At present the two armies are lying right in front of each other but we Americans are well prepared for any emergency and are not uneasy about which Flag will float if we come to battle. We don't know any thing about coming home now and will hear nothing more until this Philippine question is settled.

We were paid yesterday. We have never recd any Christmas boxes yet. They have never come to Manila. I was mistaken when I said they were down at the wharf. . . .

Frenzied negotiations by the American high command, under instructions to preserve peace if at all possible, brought some easing of tension. By 17 January Christner was able to report:

To day the order came to reduce the number of cartridges in our belts from forty-five rounds to ten and to dress in the white regulation uniform instead of the fighting clothes of brown which we have been wearing for the last two weeks, being daily in expectation of an attack by the insurgents. We now think the trouble is averted for a time. . . . We have been kept close in quarters for quite a while and was just left out to run around again this evening. We think now that providing we have no trouble with the Philipinos we will soon be relieved. . . .

Despite continuing minor clashes, Christner's optimism persisted. On 22 January he wrote:

Things appear to be quiet now among the Philipinos. We have to kill one or two of the treacherous ones every night. They try to cut the boys' throats with their machetes and generally get a bullet soused in to them for their pains. I suppose we will be home by May or June if we have no further troubles.

34. Actually, the high command was only too aware that all of Luzon, not to mention the rest of the archipelago, was dominated by insurgent leaders uncompromisingly devoted to independence, and that insurgent forces were rapidly arming and deploying.

Two weeks later, "further troubles" began with a vengeance. On the night of 4 February, hostilities flamed following a shooting incident between outposts on the eastern flank of MacArthur's division. Rifles soon blazed along the entire line. The regiments in the city moved quickly to support the outposts in each sector. Three assaults on the 10th Pennsylvania's sector were driven off by the outpost alone, with only one man wounded.³⁵ In contrast to the performance of 31 July, the main body of the regiment (as, significantly, Col. Hawkins stressed in his official report) did not fire a shot.³⁶

At dawn on 5 February MacArthur sent his three right-flank regiments against the enemy positions on their front, which were soon overrun. Shortly after noon he attacked from his center and left.

In the center, where the 10th Pennsylvania held the lines with the 1st Montana on its left and the 1st South Dakota on its right, the situation was more difficult. To the front, beyond a two-mile stretch of broken swamp, was La Loma Hill, a steep, broad feature. Around its base was a dense bamboo thicket, and the slope facing the Pennsylvanians was given over to a Chinese cemetery, cluttered with thousands of headstones. Terracing the hill were lines of Filipino trenches, protected with barbed wire. Part way up the hill was a Chinese hospital, garrisoned and fortified. At the crest, surrounded by a stone fence, was La Loma Church, also built of stone and now converted into a fortress. Nearby was a Chinese church, similarly fortified, and beyond the churches was a blockhouse.

The attack began with a 30-minute artillery preparation. Then the 10th Pennsylvania charged to its front while the 3d Artillery and the 1st Montana drove toward the hill from the left. Despite the shelling, the Filipinos met the advancing Americans with heavy volleys. The men of the 3d Artillery and the 1st Montana, bogged down in the swamp, took considerable losses before they extricated themselves and pushed ahead. The Pennsylvanians were luckier, for on their front the fire was high and wild. Only two men were hit, neither fatally. As the regiment charged to within 200 yards of the Filipino line, the insurgents fell back, leaving the Americans in possession of the Chinese hospital.

Colonel Hawkins ordered the shacks surrounding the hospital to be set ablaze, then directed a further advance. The troops moved unopposed for some 600 yards before coming under heavy fire from

35. *Official History of the Tenth Pennsylvania Infantry*, p. 27.

36. Stewart, *Record of Pennsylvania Volunteers*, p. 438.

the Chinese church. More Pennsylvanians began to fall. Also, because the regiment angled too far to the left, a substantial gap developed between the right flank and the adjacent regiment. To plug this, Colonel Hawkins sent Lieutenant Colonel Barnett (back with the regiment since September) with Company H and Christner's Company E. Barnett soon reported that two companies were not enough, so the whole regiment angled to the right, as far as the lower wall of the Chinese cemetery, where the men took cover.

While the infantry sheltered, artillery put continuous fire on the enemy defenses along the crest of the hill. Then Hawkins sent his men through the cemetery, firing as they advanced. When the line of troops had inched to within 300 yards of the enemy position the men dashed forward. The Filipinos abandoned their trenches and fled. Flowing around La Loma Church, the main body of the regiment was joined by Barnett's detachment, driving in from the right. The whole force moved on beyond the blockhouse, now abandoned, and Colonel Hawkins began forming a new line for a further advance. At this juncture General MacArthur arrived. Units on the flanks had gone as far as they could, so he halted the Pennsylvanians and told them to establish contact with the regiments on their right and left and set up a defense.

Four Filipinos had been captured and the bodies of forty-two dead insurgents were found.³⁷ One Pennsylvanian had been killed and six wounded.³⁸ Full-scale hostilities had commenced. The opening battle had been a rousing victory. Christner, writing on 11 February, was exultant.

Our reg charged two of their strongholds on the 5th and took them both. We fought under a murderous fire, the enemy being fortified behind stone walls, and we had to fight in the open field, but when we charged them with fixed bayonets and that old Pennsylvania yell they run like if the devil was chasing them. You should see us once, a line half a mile long sweeping up the hill, every one yelling like Indians and Pap Hawkins cheering his boys on to victory. The old man is very proud of his boys; don't think he would change places with McKinley.

The Philipinos are very poor marksmen and the American loss has been miraculously small, about 45 killed and 250 wounded in six days' fighting. The enemy has an estimated

37. Ibid., pp. 438-440.

38. *Official History of the Tenth Pennsylvania Infantry*, passim.

loss of killed, wounded and captured between 7 and 10 thousand. . . .³⁹ Our reg has lost as yet [since February 4] but one killed and 3 or 4 wounded. Considering the hot places we have been in, we think we are certainly wached over by the Great one Above.

In another letter of the same date he dwells more on the current situation:

The fight started on the 4th and there has been incessant fighting ever since [actually, after 5 February, except for an action on the left to capture Caloocan and not involving the 10th Pennsylvania, there had been only random and intermittent exchanges of fire.] They are fighting a hard fight but we are giving them their medicine every time. . . . They are 30 or 40 thousand strong and we are 18 thousand but they can't stand the terrible fighting of the Americans and the awful yells the boys give when they charge. . . .

We are now stationed in a [Chinese] cemetery, having taken it from the enemy. . . . About 15 yards from where I am laying . . . is a pen walled in and I suppose there is the bones of a thousand Philipinos lying there bleaching in the sun. They have been taken out of the vaults and thrown in there when the rent was not promptly paid. We lay down among the tombs at night and sleep as peacefully as if we were at home and on a bed of down, for our work is hard now and when we get a chance we can sleep any place. We never get to sleep all night, for the enemy is sure to get whacking away at us and we have to get up and knock the tar out of them.

Your own son Bill is tough as a raw hide and has been in it from the start. I have good health and when the battles are on Bill and his squad try to knock over their share of niggers.⁴⁰ Don't be the least oneasy about me. I have got through without a scratch so far and I don't hardly think I was born to be killed by a nigger. We have taken the most of their strongly fortified places now and I don't think it will be a great while yet. . . .

39. On 4-5 February, American losses were fifty-nine killed and 278 wounded. Official estimates of enemy losses were 3,000. American troops buried 612 insurgent dead.

40. Soldier-slang for Filipinos—in this context, the 1899 equivalent of "gooks."

American strength was still inadequate for a sustained offensive. For over six weeks the troops held their positions, waiting for reinforcements. With the stabilizing of the situation, demands on the troops eased somewhat. On 15 February, Christner wrote:

For the last few days now we are not doing much but lay and watch the enemy, whose lines are about half a mile from ours. There is a little fighting going on now on the right of the line but we are not in that. We are looking for a general [American] attack now any time and I don't think it will last very long any more as we have whipped the tar out of them every place we have fought. . . . They only have one very strong place yet between Manila and Malolos, their capitol, which I think it will not take us very long to capture. We have killed over 5 thousand of them since we started fighting them, and how many is wounded it is impossible to find out, but 'tis a great number. . . . I suppose when we have all the insurgents killed or captured we can come home, but as they are putting up a rather stubborn fight it may be quite a while yet. But the longer we stay the better the apple sauce, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, and rye coffee will taste when we do get back.

We have never got any Christmas boxes yet. If there was any sent we may get them for the 4th of July. Then we will have a big time with the contents—it will be so good, being on the road six months.

Christner's next letter, dated 20 February, continued to reflect confidence:

We are looking for more troops to arrive in two or three days; then I suppose we will go at them afresh. Our lines now are extended about twenty five miles and with only about fifteen thousand troops in the field it does not make a very heavy fighting line. . . . There is fighting every day and night somewhere along the line, but as is to be expected, the Philipinos always get the worst of it. . . .

It is getting most devilish hot here. There hottest weather is in the months of March and April and she is beginning to come.

Not until 13 March did Christner write again:

We are still facing the Enemy, but our reg has had no fighting for several days. . . . We had a communication presented

to us, asking us if we were willing to stay here six months after the ratification of the peace treaty and were asked to vote on it. As we considered the question was not a fair one, we did not vote either way, nor do we intend to. We are ready to come home when they are ready to relieve us but we don't care about coming until we have the insurgents whipped.⁴¹ I don't think it will take long after the rest of the troops arrive. . . . The insurgents are about 45 thousand strong but we are very confident as to the result of the war and hope it will soon be over.

Four days after that was written the Filipinos launched a two-hour assault on the 10th Pennsylvania's position. Three men were wounded (two of them in Company E) but the attack was driven off with comparative ease. On 19 March, Christner told about it:

We are laying here on one side of a large rice field and the insurgents on the other side. They attacked our lines on the 17th, coming out in the field. We met them with a few volleys, killing 7 or 8 and wounding several. . . .

We hear the Peace Treaty is ratified by Spain. If that is the case we will be returned home [as] soon as we maul the Philipinos, and if they let us go at them it won't take us long to do it; but mind, they make it mighty interesting for us. Whenever we tangle up with them they fight like devils but we have killed an awful bunch of them. Well, we don't know when we will come home, but don't care as long as we have our health.

On 22 March, Christner began a letter, but did not get around to finishing it until a day later, for a reason which he brings out in his addendum:

We are still laying in the trenches facing the insurgents [he began] but have had no fighting for a few days now. 'Tis getting very warm now and very uncomfortable during the day. 'Tis not so bad at night but it is not cool by any means.

Well, we don't expect to get home for six or seven months yet and would not be surprised if we were kept our two years. We

41. The authorities' problem was to maintain minimally adequate forces in the field until additional Regular units could be deployed. In the upshot the Pennsylvanians and the other Volunteer regiments agreed (not all of them with good grace, to extend their service. Some units would leave for home by mid-June, and the last sailed early in October.

know that we will be kept here until the Philippine war is over, and how long that will be we have no means of knowing. . . . The rebels are massing in front of us and we hear they are going to attack tomorrow. We are ready for them if they don't number over a million.

The next day he resumed:

Well, we are going to advance in the morning. I don't know when I will get a chance to write again but will write at the first opportunity. This will be the greatest advance that has been made yet and we will go against the flower of the Philippine army, so if they can do any good fighting we will give them a chance, for we are starting right toward their capitol.

Reinforcements had brought American strength to a level sufficient to support a major offensive. MacArthur's division was to attack up the Manila-Dagupan railroad, which led generally northward for about fifteen miles from the American positions, then turned westward for about ten miles to reach Malolos, where the insurgents had established a capital and a munitions depot. Malolos was the division's objective, and the advance was to begin on 24 March. For the 10th Pennsylvania, breakfast that morning was at 3 A.M., although the men were too excited to eat much. The Operation Order had specified that "there will be no bugle calls, loud commands or shouting," so the men moved quietly into position at 5 A.M. Half an hour later they moved out, soon meeting heavy if sporadic resistance.

The day quickly became very hot. The ground was rough and rocky, broken by thick patches of woods. Regiments were unable to maintain contact; and even within regiments, companies became separated. Fortunately, there was no sustained opposition, the Filipinos only occasionally making brief stands and then falling back again. By the time dark was approaching the 10th had reached the Tuliahan River. After halting there for their evening meal, the Pennsylvanians moved across to bivouac for the night two miles beyond.

On the following morning the advance continued, meeting no opposition until after noon. The dust and the steaming heat took their toll, however, and many of the Pennsylvanians collapsed. Then, as the Americans neared the Meycauayan River, they came under heavy rifle fire. The Filipinos' Mausers had substantially greater range than the Model 1869 Springfields with which the

Volunteers were armed, so the Americans were unable to reply.⁴² Doggedly, for several hundred yards the Pennsylvanians advanced in the face of this fusillade. As soon as they came close enough for their rifles to reach the enemy, they laid down a hail of musketry of their own, and drove ahead to rout the insurgents from their trenches and on through the village of Bando and the town of South Meycauyan, on the river bank.

Twenty-seven March brought some relief, as the 10th was placed in reserve, and on the following day the entire division was halted to be resupplied. But 29 March brought the Pennsylvanians the hardest fighting they had seen. Late in the afternoon they approached the Guiguinto River. The stream was too deep to ford but a railroad bridge was still standing. In column of files, the 10th Pennsylvania moved across the right side of the bridge with the 20th Kansas taking the left. There was no sign of the enemy, and the advance guard drew no fire. As the leading elements of the two regiments began to clear the bridge, however, a storm of bullets burst upon them, coming from both flanks as well as the front. At the double, the men raced across the bridge, the Pennsylvanians deploying in a skirmish line to the right and the Kansans in one to the left. Once again the Americans had to drive ahead in the face of Mauser fire for a considerable distance before they were close enough to bring their Springfields to bear. Artillery was manhandled forward to help. The Filipinos, now beginning to take losses of their own, withdrew toward Malolos. The Americans bivouacked on the field. At noon on 30 March, in a blinding rainstorm, the troops once more took up the march, meeting only spotty resistance. By evening the division had come to within about two miles of Malolos.

Everyone expected the next day to bring a major battle. Consequently, the men got little sleep despite their fatigue.⁴³ The actuality proved to be an anticlimax. At dawn the American artillery opened a half-hour bombardment. Then, at 6:30, the infantry moved out. There was no resistance, the insurgents fleeing the town, which they left burning behind them.

MacArthur now received orders to halt. Throughout the campaign, the 2d Division had lost only fifty-six killed and 478 wounded,⁴⁴

42. Supplies of the modern Krag-Jørgensen rifles had been adequate only to issue to Regular units.

43. *Official History of the Tenth Pennsylvania Infantry*, p. 20.

44. Sexton, *Soldiers in the Philippines*, p. 88.

but heat and illness had taken a heavy toll. In the 10th Pennsylvania, for example, only 256 men were still present for duty⁴⁵ out of the approximately 750 who had begun the campaign a week before.⁴⁶ The other regiments, several of which had sustained heavier combat losses,⁴⁷ were in similar condition. Thus, although the insurgents were reeling, pursuit was considered infeasible.

Christner, true to form, lost no time in getting off a letter home.

We captured Malolos, the rebel capitol, this morning. Very few lives lost. . . . The insurgents retreated after burning the public buildings.

[We] have been fighting for seven days steadily as every yard of ground was stubbornly contested by the insurrectos. . . . They tell us we will rest here for a day or so. The men are very nearly fagged out as it has been a terrible hard campaign and very hot. It was fighting in a jungle for fully thirty miles, that being the distance from Manila. . . . I have been standing the trip well. None of the nigger bullets has found me yet. My squad of seven men and myself have been living pretty good on this campaign. They are made of good fighting stuff and are terrors to hustle around after chickens and pigs. We had four chickens for dinner and they have a pig on cooking now. I can eat six times a day, and drink three gallons of muddy water. The Philippine army is all smashed to the devil but I guess they will hunt the last one of them down. . . .

I am as dirty as I can handy get but thank God I am well and if I don't get to eat it will be because it is not in the country.

Christner's predicted rest "for a day or so" stretched considerably longer. On 9 April, when he next wrote, the regiment was still at Malolos:

While you are heaping coals on the fire to keep from freezing we are dressing as lightly as possible and keeping as much as possible in the shade to keep from suffocating. . .

We do not know whether we are to move any farther or not.

45. *History of the 10th Pennsylvania*, p. 75.

46. *Annual Report of the Major General Commanding the Army to the Secretary of War for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1899* (Washington, D.C., 1899), Vol. I, Part 5; 377.

47. The 10th Pennsylvania's total casualties 24–31 March were six killed and thirty-two wounded; the 20th Kansas, on the 10th's immediate left, lost during the same period thirteen killed and fifty-one wounded.

We have the enemy driven back five miles beyond Malolos and their Army is broken and scattered. Our march from Manila to Malolos was made in seven days, a distance of twenty six miles, although the ground was every inch stubbornly contested by the rebels, but they could not stand the charges of the American troops and we took line after line of the strongest earthworks ever built. . . . Our scouts inform us that just beyond the river they are strongly intrenched and I suppose we will have another go at them in the near future.

There has been a great many lives lost but the insurgents' loss has been enormous. 'Tis impossible to tell the exact loss of the enemy as they, having all the advantages, can get their dead and wounded back unless they are pressed very closely, and as we were compelled to wade swamps and ford rivers and the ground being strange, we were necessarily compelled to move with great caution to avoid ambush and traps of all kinds, which the rebels are masters at planning. My opinion is that the war with these people is about at an end . . . the insurrectos are greatly discouraged. . . . We don't hear anything about going home now, and when there is exciting times like at present the boys have little time to study about going home. There has been quite a few of our boys killed and wounded but they have been in the thickest of the fighting since the trouble began and there is plenty of fight left in them yet.

Apparently the high command had less confidence in the amount of "fight" left in the 10th Pennsylvania. The regiment had never been at full strength. Although its loss rate had been relatively light, the impact of those losses had been substantially greater than was the case with larger units.⁴⁸ Beyond this, Colonel Hawkins' health was rapidly failing. MacArthur now decided to replace the 10th Pennsylvania with the 51st Iowa, a fresh unit which had been providing rear area security, and on 14 April the two regiments exchanged duties, the Pennsylvanians going south of Manila to garrison the Cavite Military District. Reporting the reassignment, Christner wrote on 24 April:

48. From the outset, the 10th Pennsylvania had only eight companies instead of the prescribed ten. Also, since 2 December 1898, two of its companies had been detached to guard the convalescent hospital at Corregidor. Thus, it fought through the Malolos campaign at only sixty percent of the strength of most of the other 2d Division regiments.

We have been taken off the fighting line for a short rest after having been on the line for 74 days without relief. We are doing provost duty in the town of Cavite. The duty is not very hard and we have fairly good quarters.

The fighting is still going on in a desultory fashion but I think the hardest battles are over [actually, the same day that Christner was writing, MacArthur was resuming his drive northward]. In one battle yesterday the Americans had one Colonel, three Lieutenants and nine privates killed and about 30 wounded.⁴⁹ There is troops arriving here every day or so now and it is rumored that the volunteers are to be relieved, but I don't expect it until our two years are expired. . . .

This is a nice, clean little town. The navy yard is situated here and Dewey is on shore about every day. The Battle Ship *Oregon* is here and she is shurely the pride of the American Navy.

On 1 May he wrote again:

We are now ordered to the Iland of Corregidor about thirty miles from here and expect to move in a few days.⁵⁰ I guess it is a better place than this. They say there is no large, 4-pronged mosquitoes there, and that will be quite a relief, for the mosquitoes, Ants, and niggers all seem to be in league against the white man.

Well, I guess the niggers are whipped at last. They have asked Gen. [Elwell S.] Otis [who had replaced General Merritt as the senior Army commander] for time to consider terms of surrender and the general opinion here is that we will soon have peace in the Iland of Luzon at least.⁵¹ I suppose that when this affair is settled they will surely release the vols. . . .

Strawberries will be ripe till you get this. We have plenty of fruit here: mangoes, bananas, oranges, etc.

Still at Cavite, Christner wrote another letter on 8 May:

49. The colonel was John M. Stotsenburg, 1st Nebraska Volunteers. The troops involved also included the 51st Iowa, the 10th Pennsylvania's replacement.

50. On 14 May, Companies E and H changed places with the two Pennsylvania companies which had been at Corregidor since early December.

51. On 29 April, insurgent authorities had requested a 15-day truce. General Otis refused, lest the insurgents use the time as, indeed, events proved they intended to manufacture more munitions with which to resume hostilities.

We are still doing heavy guard duty, being on about every other day. The weather is very warm now and the rainy season is commencing earlier than usual. Fighting is still going on but the rebels are loosing ground very fast and will soon be compelled to give up.

I just got over another siege of malaria fever. Half the reg was sick with fever contracted while fighting in the swamps on our way to Malolos. . . .

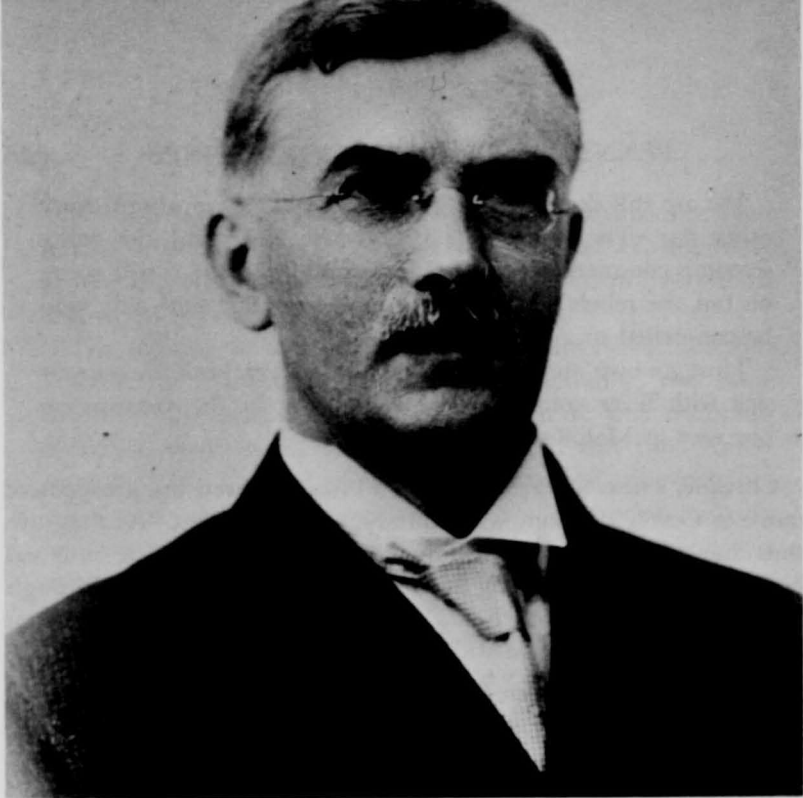
Christner's next letter, written on 13 May, viewed the prospective move to Corregidor somewhat darkly, observing that "As they are thus changing us around it will not be likely that we will be returned home very soon," but adding that "I don't care a great deal, although the weather is getting very hot. . . ." Ten days later, when he wrote on 23 May, his feelings were still mixed:

We are now on Corregidor Island. . . . We are getting along fairly well but . . . it is very disagreeable living in tents. It has been raining steadily now for over two days and is very stormy on the sea which, as this is a very small Iland, you can see on every side.

I see by the papers we get from the States that the people are raising quite a row about the President not sending us home. Well, I suppose he will take us home when they can dispense with our services here, and until then I am willing to stay, . . . as much as I would like some apple sauce and nice sweet potatoes.

Events, however, were starting to move. A month after Christner's letter from Corregidor the 10th Pennsylvania received orders to return home, and on 29 June the regiment began boarding the transport *Senator*, which sailed on 1 July. There was a five-day halt at Nagasaki, of which Christner wrote that, " 'Tis a very interesting place and of course I have been all over it." Then the *Senator* steamed through the Inland Sea to Yokohama, where the troops once more had a chance to go ashore before their departure, on 16 July, for San Francisco.

Two days out of Yokohama, on 18 July, Colonel Hawkins died. The *Senator's* flag was lowered to halfmast, and remained so until the arrival at San Francisco on 1 August. "We had a fair voyage," Christner wrote that same day, "but were unfortunate enough to loose our Colonel. He died on board the ship. Don't know when we will be mustered out but hope soon. Then we will be home fast as steam can carry us."



THE 10TH PENNSYLVANIA PASSING IN REVIEW BEFORE PRESIDENT MCKINLEY ON
ITS RETURN FROM THE PHILIPPINES, SCHENLEY PARK, PITTSBURGH, 28 AUGUST 1899.
Courtesy U.S. Army Military History Research Collection, Carlisle Barracks.

As it worked out, almost three weeks passed before the regiment could be mustered out. Christner kept his family posted in one short note, written 17 August:

Will be discharged on the 22nd and expect to be home by the 29th or 30th. You had better come to meet me with the spring wagon, as I will have a pretty large box to take home."

Muster-out did in fact take place on 22 August. A special train, complete with sleeping cars, had been furnished by public subscription. It brought the regiment steaming into Pittsburgh during the afternoon of 28 August. There was an enthusiastic reception as the troops marched to Schenley Park, where they were treated to a banquet and no less a personage than President McKinley delivered a welcoming address. At the end of these ceremonies, the regiment disbanded, the men going directly to their homes.