

### **Mark Twain, "Incident in the Philippines" (1924)**

*This is an excerpt from Mark Twain's autobiography, a haphazard affair that was undertaken in 1906 but was not printed until Twain's manuscripts were compiled by A. B. Paine and published in 1924. In this piece Twain reported some of the horrors reported from the Philippines, where U.S. soldiers responded to a guerrilla war by destroying property, attacking civilians, and raping Filipino women.*

. . . This incident burst upon the world last Friday in an official cablegram from the commander of our forces in the Philippines to our government at Washington. The substance of it was as follows:

A tribe of Moros, dark-skinned savages, had fortified themselves in the bowl of an extinct crater not many miles from Jolo; and as they were hostiles, and bitter against us because we have been trying for eight years to take their liberties away from them, their presence in that position was a menace. Our Commander, General Leonard Wood, ordered a reconnaissance [*sic*]. It was found that the Moros numbered six hundred, counting women and children; that their crater bowl was in the summit of a peak or mountain twenty-two hundred feet above sea level, and very difficult of access for Christian troops and artillery. . . . Our troops climbed the heights by devious and difficult trails, and even took some artillery with them. . . . [When they] arrived at the rim of the crater, the battle began. Our soldiers numbered five hundred and forty. They were assisted by auxiliaries consisting of a detachment of native constabulary in our pay - their numbers not given - and by a naval detachment, whose numbers are not stated. But apparently the contending parties were about equal as to number - six hundred men on our side, on the edge of the bowl; six hundred men, women, and children in the bottom of the bowl. Depth of the bowl, 50 feet.

General Wood's order was, "Kill or capture the six hundred."

The battle began - it is officially called by that name - our forces firing down into the with their artillery and their deadly small arms of precision; the savages furiously returning the fire, probably with brickbats - though this is merely a surmise of mine, as the weapons used by the savages are not nominated in the cablegram. Hereto fore the Moros have used knives and clubs mainly; also ineffectual trade-muskets when they had any.

The official report stated that the battle was fought with prodigious energy on both sides during a day and a half, and that it ended with a complete victory for the American arms. The completeness of the victory is established by this fact: that of the six hundred Moros not one was left alive. The brilliancy of the victory is established by this other fact, to wit: that of our six hundred heroes only fifteen lost their lives.

General Wood was present and looking on. His order had been, "Kill or capture those savages." Apparently our little army considered that the "or" left them authorized to kill or capture according to taste, and that their taste had remained what it has been for eight years, in our army out there - the taste of Christian butchers. . . .

Let us now consider two or three details of our military history. In one of the great battles of the Civil War ten per cent of the forces engaged on the two sides were killed and wounded. At Waterloo, where four hundred thousand men were present on the two sides, fifty thousand fell, killed and wounded, in five hours, leaving three hundred and fifty thousand sound and all right for further adventures. Eight years ago, when the pathetic comedy called the Cuban War was played, we summoned two hundred and fifty thousand men. We fought a number of showy battles, and when the war was over we had lost two hundred sixty-eight men out of our two hundred and fifty thousand, in killed and wounded in the field, and just fourteen times as many by the gallantry of the army doctors in the hospitals and camps. We did not exterminate the Spaniards - far from it. In each engagement we left an average of two per cent of the enemy killed or crippled on the field.

Contrast these things with the great statistics which have arrived from that Moro crater! There, with six hundred engaged on each side, we lost fifteen men killed outright, and we had thirty-two wounded.... The enemy numbered six hundred - including women and children - and we abolished them utterly, leaving not even a baby alive to cry for its dead mother. This is incomparably the greatest victory that was ever achieved by the Christian soldiers of the United States.