

As an indication of what is already going on, it may be stated that there are seven bids before the council of Ponce for a street railroad franchise, between the city and the port—a distance of two and a half miles. The bid offers \$10,000 outright, with forfeitures at the end of twenty years. The plans include every known form of motor, and one provides for a swinging car to be run on a single rail.

The postal department has recently established stations all over the island, and bids for carrying the mails to various points have been called for. It is said that a Philadelphia went by the last steamer to the United States to purchase machinery for an ice plant, to be set up at a town called Maya, by American syndicates in Porto Rican tobacco and coffee lands.

Ponce is the largest city of the island, with a population in normal times of perhaps 38,000. It is a rich old town, exceptionally clean for Spanish-America, and well built. Its dwelling houses are mostly of wood, with iron balconies, green jealousies and windows without glass, while the public buildings are of brick and stone. The latter are grouped around a palm-wood plaza and include a Roman Catholic cathedral and an Episcopal church, besides the usual "palacio," theater and casino. There are half a dozen other churches, of course all Romish, a well-kept hospital, public library and reading room, two colleges and a military school. The wide, well-paved streets are lighted with gas, by an English company. The next town in point of population is San German, which has about 30,000, according to the latest census. A very interesting place to visit is Mayaguez, on the west coast, with a population of 50,000. It is a garrison town with clubs and gas works and the best hotel on the island. A fine iron bridge, completed some six years ago, connects the town with its port; but, unfortunately, the harbor is accessible only to vessels drawing not more than sixteen feet.

This is our last day in Porto Rico, and tomorrow we sail for Jamaica, en route to Habana.

FANNIE BRIGHAM WARD.

#### LETTER FROM MANILA.

Manila, Oct. 6, 1898.—I wish some of the "News" readers could drop down in Manila some day, and see for themselves the queer and quaint sights of this crooked old town. I wish they would come to the Quartel de Meisic, the present barracks and lodging house of the famous Utah Batteries A and B, and see how the soldier boys of their fair state, annihilate time, and lend a helping hand in rolling on the weeks and months between now and the time of mustering out. Soldiers are world-beaters at time-killing. Congress even is not in it with them.

After a few months of barracks life, the longest day is too short to accomplish anything in of more importance than to get outside of the government rations, register the usual daily "kick" against the commissary department, and indulge in an after-dinner nap. And the nights, from taps to reveille, are of not enough consequence for special mention. "An idle brain," it has been said, "is the devil's workshop," and it will be a source of much joy and gratification, no doubt, to the folks at home, to learn that his "Satanic Majesty" has no workshops in the army. There are no idle brains here. When soldiers are not sleeping they are either trying to, or they are eating, or else they are actively devising ways and means of

escaping guard duty, drills or kitchen work.

I knew a soldier once, who spent some time each day reading and storing his mind with information, and no doubt there are, or have been, others. Of course eating and sleeping, though by far the most important and engaging, are not the only duties to be performed by soldiers in times of peace. It devolves upon them to answer the roll-call once or twice a day, to seek shelter when it rains to and to perform guard duty eight hours a week. Besides this, a soldier is supposed to keep himself clean, to take a bath at least once a month, and report to the hospital when sick; but I don't think this is compulsory. There are soldiers, however, who are so awake and alive to the duties devolving upon them, that they report on the sick list about seven days to the week. They are of that school, I suppose, which holds that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure; and besides, being on the sick list, exempts one from yelling here! at the reveille and retreat roll calls.

Guard duty though, is the bug-a-boo, the thing to be avoided by all veteran soldiers, as it requires them to keep awake two hours at a time, and allowst hem but four hours rest between watches. Many amusing things happen in the course of guard duty, where the guard is new and green, especially the latter, as the following little incident, which happened a few nights since, will show. Willie, that's not his real name, was guard No. 6, third re-velle. His post was in front of our officer's quarters, a block and a half from the barracks, and his instructions were to admit no one to the quarters above mentioned except officers, and to halt all suspicious characters and call the corporal of the guard. Lieutenant Critchlow was officer of the day, and had turned in for a few moments rest after his rounds. All was peaceful and well. It was about midnight and Willie, true soldier that he was, and still is, paced his beat up and down, constantly alert, his eagle eye ever pealed, soon espied a white uniform coming up the road.

"Halt! who comes there?"

"I am an officer and a friend," came the reply from the white uniformed person at least forty feet from the sentry.

"Advance one step and be recognized," commanded the guard. The idea of advancing one step to be recognized when forty feet away, no doubt amused the officer, for it was Captain \_\_\_\_\_ of the Third United States artillery, who is quartered in the same house with the Utah officers; but what happened afterwards was not so funny at least to him. Willie could not recognize him and began to lustily yell for the corporal in the barracks, so far away he never would have heard. In vain the captain protested against being held up in front of his own house, of being kept standing in the road at midnight waiting for the corporal to come and call the sentry off.

"I stand here, but not because I love to," he excitedly yelled, "I do it on account of the army regulations and discipline. What! you going to keep me here till that corporal comes? Why, it's absurd, it's a violation of your orders and I don't propose to stand it." But Willie stood there, revolver in hand, forbidding the captain to move till the corporal came and in the meantime other stragglers happened along and were duly halted, among them privates in the Third artillery to whom the sight of their now thoroughly aroused and wrathful captain, detained against his will near his own quarters, by a sentry, was a novel experience. "Corporal of the guard, post 6!" Willie shouted with the full strength of his Rocky Mountain lungs. What the

captain said would scorch the paper if I attempted to write it. After a time, Officer of the Day Critchlow, who with Lieutenant Grow had been enjoying the scene from an upper window, came down and straightened matters out.

"What orders do you give your sentry here?" demanded the enraged captain.

"To stop all suspicious characters," replied the officer of the day, whereat the detained captain leaped into space and with an ejaculation that aroused the entire neighborhood, demanded to know if he was a suspicious character; and then, 'midst the peals of laughter that shook the walls of the Third artillery barracks just across the street, he went snorting and puffing like a steam locomotive to his quarters.

The blame was not all "Willie's," for the captain was without sword or shoulder straps to denote rank, still one ounce of good horse sense would have enabled the sentry to have seen his mistake; and to have passed the, under ordinary circumstances, genial and happy captain.

Majors Young and Grant are pleasantly spending a well earned vacation in a trip to Hongkong. Bugler Joe Grant accompanied his father, the major.

First Lieutenant Wedgwood of battery B, has rejoined his command here in Manila; having arrived Monday last from San Francisco on the S. S. Scandia.

The health of the Utah batteries is good, notwithstanding there is considerable sickness in the American army stationed here. The Utah men are comfortably located and very stringent health regulations are in force. The great majority of the men here are more than anxious to return to their homes, now that all is so peaceful. A number of Utah men are desirous of taking their discharge here as soon as they can get it. They contemplate forming a party to explore the interior, to the end of discovering gold. So far as I can see, I believe the prevailing sentiment here among the troops to be in favor of the United States retaining possession of her newly acquired interests in this part of the world.

NOD RESSUM.

#### INGERSOLL IN BOSTON.

Col. Robert G. Ingersoll delivered at the Boston Theater last Sunday night his new lecture on Superstition. The oratory and arguments of the speaker were the same as in his previous lectures, yet he had the undivided attention of his hearers. In the East here, Colonel Ingersoll has many admirers, yet the greater masses of the intelligent people do not take any stock in his arguments. Perhaps at no other time has the great American agnostic taken such a radical stand against the idea of a beneficent Creator as he does today. In the course of his remarks he said that he failed to find any evidence of God in the designs of nature; and pronounced our giving thanks to the Creator for our victories over Spain as an expression of superstition that still linger in the hearts of the race. He said in the course of his lecture:

"Superstition wears a robe of pictured imagery, stained with tears and lined with woven lies. Superstition is to believe without evidence, to explain one mystery with another, to disregard the real relation between cause and effect, to believe that matter was created by mind, to trust in miracles, charms and dreams. Superstition is the child of ignorance and the mother of misery. In the age of ignorance men thought disease was caused by the devil; now all men, I mean all intelligent men, know there is no devil. You may think I am impugning the honesty of the