

FOLLOWING our Camp-Fire custom, Clyde B. Hough, rises and introduces himself on the occasion of his first story in *Adventure*:

Regarding my story, "Darcy Deserts." The anthill torture referred to was, on several occasions, meted out to American soldiers by the insurgents. In the early days of the insurrection a certain officer (I don't remember his name) was captured by the Filipinos and held for several months. In writing up his experience in one of the magazines he expressed the belief that he would have been executed had it not been for a large cross tattooed on his chest. The natives seemed to fear him on that account. Otherwise my story is purely imaginary.

ABOUT myself there is not much to tell. I was born on a small farm in Anson County, N. C. I think I was born with the wanderlust boiling in my blood. At any rate the farm was too small, too slow or something. So at the ripe old age of fourteen I drove the cows to pasture one Sunday morning, turned them in, fastened the gate and kept going.

The next few years were divided between going to sea, hoboing and working in cotton-mills. It was my boast that I never worked in any one mill longer than two weeks.

One of my hobo trips took me to the Everglades in Florida, where I stayed awake all night, one night, keeping a fire going to prevent a somewhat insistent panther from

making its evening meal on the body of my mother's son.

AT NINETEEN I lied my way past a recruiting officer and joined the Eleventh Cavalry, a new regiment then being formed at Fort Myer, Va. After some preliminary training the Eleventh was sent, via Suez Canal to the Philippines.

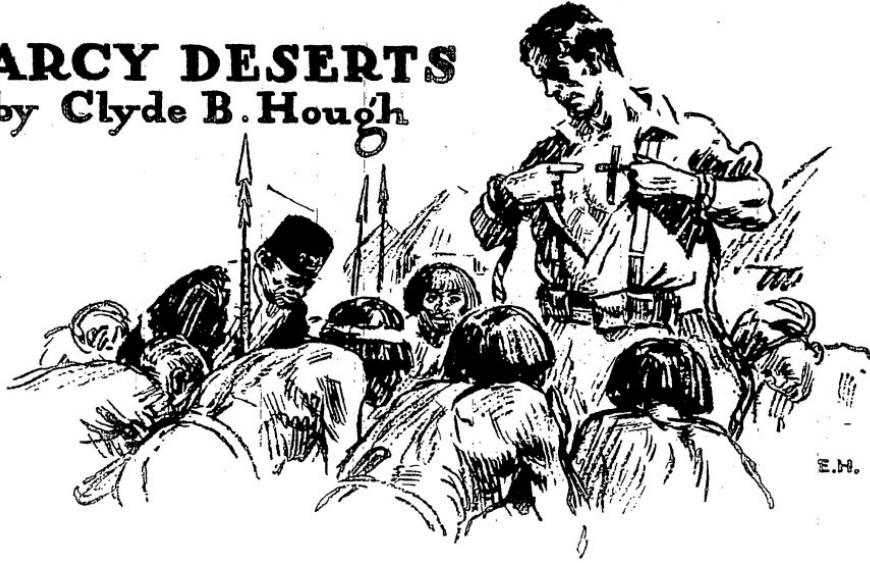
For the next two years I graced the hills of Luzon and played tag with the little Brown Men. At the expiration of my enlistment in the cavalry I returned to the States, put on the brakes at St. Louis long enough to see the Fair and then re-enlisted in the Marine Corps. Did guard duty, as a marine, in San Francisco during the fire and earthquake and, believe me, that was the nastiest little party I ever attended. I succeeded in making the officers of the Marine Corps think I was a good sergeant. But was finally discharged on account of a heart that refuses to recognize, speed laws.

SINCE then I have been in California making a living in ways too numerous to mention. And by the way, my name is pronounced just as though it was spelled Huff. No, I am not German. My forefathers came from Holland in 1600.

I think that's about all so I'm going to roll a smoke and crawl under the blanket. *Buenos noches, hombres.*

DARCY DESERTS

by Clyde B. Hough



NOW Darcy was a peaceable man. That is, more peaceable than an Irishman or a soldier is apt to be. But one afternoon, in barracks at Vigan, "Bully" Willets called him a name—a name that means fight—and when the Bully next found himself he found, also, that he was minus two front teeth.

The next morning at "office hours" Colonel Brady sentenced Darcy to pull weeds or the parade-ground with his bare hands for three days.

"I will not tolerate disorderly conduct in quarters," the colonel concluded and turned to his morning mail.

Darcy went back to his squad-room and to add to his humiliation learned that Willets had gone free; no charge having been made against him. Then Darcy, in his anger at the injustice of the whole affair, swore by all his Irish ancestors that he'd pull not a weed. But discipline is a mighty factor in the army, so when, half an hour later, the police sergeant told Darcy it was time to go to work he donned his brown fatigue uniform and went.

All morning the low-hanging, yellow sun seared his bent back and gripped at the base of his brain. His thoughts ran to mutiny.

In his ears still rang the tantalizing chorus of snickers and chuckles that had been flung after him as he left the squad-room. At noon he avoided his roommates and ate at the guard-table, sullen, silent.

The afternoon heat was even greater than that of the morning and Darcy's grouch grew apace. His hands were sore and he was beginning to see red. In the squad-room, that night, he got all the "ragging" he had expected and bore it without visible resentment. He had done what he had sworn not to do and felt that he deserved the "ragging." Nevertheless it was hard to stand even for one evening.

Some time that night, flat on his stomach, Darcy wormed his way past the line of sentries. He took with him, a belt, a revolver, one hundred rounds of ammunition and enough to eat for two days. Less than a mile from town, in an open field, he hid in the shed of an old cane mill, knowing that absolute safety lay in his very nearness to the barracks. Here he remained two days, waiting for any possible searching party to become discouraged and return to quarters.

About ten o'clock on the third night of his desertion, Darcy left the shed and started south. He was making his way slowly and

carefully through tall grass along the bank of a great ravine not four hundred yards from an outpost where he had often done duty. Suddenly he stopped, tensed, and stood dead still. Had he heard some one move? He was not sure—not until it was too late—until something sailed out of the grass, lasso-fashion, and jerked him off his feet.

All he was sure of then, was that his mouth was full of hair. They had thrown a dogskin over his head and face and drawn it tight. A half dozen or more hands laid hold of him from all sides. His belt and revolver were peeled off. His arms and legs were bound with rough grass-rope. Then they carried him into the jungle. He knew it was the jungle for he felt the branches slash his hands as the “gugus” ran. He did not know how far they went—it seemed like miles to him for he was slowly suffocating—before they dropped him to the ground and one of them hissed in his ear—

“*No hablar.*”

And as they untied the dogskin he felt the keen, cold edge of a bolo laid lightly against his jugular vein. Had he been of a mind to cry out, he needed no other warning. The sight of other butchered soldiers was still fresh in his memory and he had no inclination to have them practise their skill on him. He knew now that he was in the hands of Malavete’s notorious *ladrones*. So he thanked God for the chance to breathe pure air again and lay quiet.

For two or three minutes an ape-looking Igorot, the leader, stood over him fondling a naked bolo that flashed and shimmered in the moonlight. And Darcy tried to think of a plan—some scheme—some trick to outwit those dog-eating pygmies, but his brain could not work, it was frozen with fear—not fear of death but hours of slow torture staked out on an ant-hill with his body gashed all over.

Then the ice in his brain melted and

the idea came like a shock. Yell as loud as he could—that was the only thing to do. It would bring the bolo down on his throat and end the whole nasty business. A few moments before he had kept silent so they would not kill him then and there. But then he had not realized; now he had and he wanted just that.

He drew in his breath to yell, and as he did, the man with the bolo stooped and cut the rope that bound his legs. This action checked the cry on his lips. Why it did is hard to tell. Perhaps it was not the action. Perhaps—well, would they kill him if he did *hablar*? Or would it merely serve, to bring the guard and a term in prison and, after that a “yellow discharge?” Anyway he of the bolo motioned Darcy to get to his feet and he did.

The gugus formed in single file with Darcy in the center and moved off through the dense jungle. The leader walked directly behind the prisoner with his drawn bolo threateningly near. And Darcy promised himself with each step that at the next he would take a chance and cry the alarm. But like tomorrow the next step never came and soon he heard the leader’s bolo rattle home in its bamboo sheath. Then he knew they were out of hearing of the barracks and that he had lost his only hope of dying a white man’s death.

As well as he could judge it was then about eleven o’clock, and they traveled the rest of the night without a halt. Their way lay over foot-wide trails, around steep mountainsides, down deep ravines and along the dry beds of rivers that would be raging torrents when the rainy season came on.

Darcy had been in the mountains and jungles most of his time in the Islands, and with his regiment had made some record-breaking hikes. But those wiry little devils with their skinny bow-legs and bare feet, could hike rings around anything he had ever seen. He was all in when they finished the trip with a two-hundred foot climb and raised their

heads above the brink of a straight-up-and-down cliff. It was just before sunup and there before them stood Malavete's *barrio*, ragged and dirty against the red-streaked eastern sky.

Usually things look cleaner and better in the early morning. It is then that a shabby frame house can be dreamed a castle, and a common yard-fence the castle walls. But no poet's fancy could have changed that huddle of *nipa* shacks. It stood out offensively on the clean mountain-top like a running sore on a beautiful face. And the stench of it was sickening.

But the gugus had not brought Darcy there to see the sights. They marched him straight through the *barrio* to Malavete's *casa*. And the whole gibbering breech-clouted tribe tumbled out of their shacks and followed behind. In his *casa* Malavete sat cross-legged on the bamboo floor and chewed betel-nut and smoked a cigaret. He looked at Darcy with cunning eyes that peered out from a face which might have been carved from the rough, brown bark of a dead oak tree. Then he raised a *vin*o-palsied hand and spoke in the dialect of his tribe.

"Ah," he said, "the saints have sent a stranger amongst us. May the saints be praised."

Then to Darcy:

"The señor is a soldier. May we ask what is the señor's rank?! Not, that we would be impertinent, but that we may entertain the señor according to his station."

"*No sabe*," and Darcy shook his head.

Malavete knew that Darcy understood what he had said as well as Darcy knew that Malavete was making sport of him for amusement.

"It is unfortunate," he resumed, "that the señor does not understand our speech. Who knows? we might become congenial friends?"

There had been humor of a sort in the play-acting but, evidently, Malavete was tired

of it now. He spit out his betel-nut viciously, threw away the burned-out cigaret and lit a fresh one. That meant business and he went straight to the point, though the same devil's politeness was still in evidence.

"Perhaps," he said, "there is a pack train coming up from Vigan soon. The señor would likely know when. Or better still, the señor may know the easiest and safest way to reach the stores at the big American barracks. And remember, señor, only the truth will count in these matters. If our people are ill-advised—well, the señor has probably heard of other soldiers who lived many hours longer than they wished. But if the señor gives honest and faithful information, the señor shall come to no harm—what say you, señor?"

FOR a few brief seconds Darcy hesitated. Then came the thought of old Jerry Darcy. Some two hundred years ago old Jerry had put in quite a little unpleasant time on the wheel, all because he refused to gossip with the English about matters concerning Ireland. And young Darcy said to himself:

"The Darcys of today can stand just as much as could the Darcys of two hundred years ago."

So he answered Malavete not at all, but stared, in silence, with the blankest look he could assume.

Malavete rose, walked to the back of the room and opening a door turned to Darcy.

"Will the señor look?"

It was a command in the guise of a question.

Darcy was led across the room to the open door. Three walls and a roof had been joined onto the main house. There was no floor and no windows. But by the little light that drifted in through crevices he saw three white men lying on the bare ground. Except for an old shirt on each they were naked. And where spots of light fell on their bodies the skin showed chalky as though there was no blood

underneath. The joints were the largest parts of their limbs. They made no move or sound and Darcy wondered if they were dead.

“They live,” said Malavete divining the other’s thought, “and yet they wish not to live. You Americans are a curious people. Why, we dare not leave a bolo or anything sharp in their reach,”—a silence and then—“come, señor, what say you?”

As before, Darcy gave no answer. Malavete understood the prisoner’s silence and merely waved his men to take him away; and Darcy knew what that meant.

They took him into the dirty little center square of the *barrio*, lashed him to a coconut tree and went back to their chief. The women and children stood around gaping and giggling, but Darcy was too tired even to be annoyed by them, and soon fell into sleep or some sort of harassed unconsciousness. And when he awoke the sun was high in the eastern sky at frying heat. The gugas were driving two-forked posts in the ground about the length of a man apart.

This finished they laid a pole in the forks from one post to the other. Then they brought a clay pot filled with ashes, tied it to the pole so that it hung about four feet from the ground. Next they poured water on the ashes; and by the time the water soaked through and dripped from a small hole in the bottom of the pot, it was strong lye. When all was ready they staked Darcy out, face down, with the back of his neck under the drip.

Living God! He had expected the anti-hill, but not this. This was pure, raw hell—a torture to make men curse the mothers who bore them and the fathers who begat them.

Malavete had directed the proceedings, standing under his big sunshade which was held over him by two servants. But now he came near and bent over so that Darcy would be sure to hear.

“When the señor has discovered the easiest and safest way to reach the stores at the

big American barracks, the lye will cease to drip. If the señor; does not discover the way, later we will remove the señor’s shirt and let the lye drip on other parts of the señor’s naked back.”

With that he shambled away toward his *casa*, the servants carrying the big sunshade over him. The lye, accelerated by the sun, began to bite in. Darcy tried to move his head a little so that the drip would miss his neck, but it was no use. The stakes on either side held like a vise. Then he began to think of the “easiest and safest way.”

Why not? What were the army or its affairs to him? The next instant he hated himself for the thought and remembered old Jerry. No! By the saints, he might be a deserter but never a traitor. Old Jerry had stood the gaff; and he had as much nerve as old Jerry any day.

The lye was dripping with monotonous regularity now, and the sun was driving each drop deeper and deeper. Once Darcy cried out with all the strength he had. But after that he took his tongue between his teeth and nearly bit the end of it off trying to keep it still. Minutes were eternities to him, though he had been there less than an hour when Malavete returned and asked:

“Has the señor discovered the way?” Darcy made no answer and Malavete ordered his men to loosen the stakes and ropes, stand the prisoner up and take off his shirt. To do this, they cut the ropes that had bound his hands since the night before.

“Ah, señor,” said Malavete, “is it not good to be unbound and free from the sting of the lye?”

The wily old devil motioned his men back and waited for his remark to sink in. But Darcy did not even hear. A little ivory cross that hung from Malavete’s throat and rested on his bare chest had given the soldier an idea. He knew that the Quiangan Igorots feared and worshiped the cross and that their superstition

was boundless? He had often seen them cringe in terror when some angry priest raised his cross with a threatening gesture.

With sudden swiftness Darcy opened the front of his shirt and pointed to his own chest where a large cross was tattooed. The gugus slunk back in abject fear, and crossed themselves fervently. Even Malavete was bowed to the ground and crossing himself like mad. It needed no prophet to know that this was Darcy's chance. He raised his hands as though calling down the special wrath of Heaven. The gugus groveled lower and the two servants dropped the sunshade.

This sunshade was about twice the size, and of the same shape as an ordinary umbrella. The cover was made of strong bamboo splits, wattled like a basket. It did not open and shut; the ribs were straight strips, tied at one end to the center-staff and tied at the other to the edge of the cover, But on the whole it looked strong enough to use as a parachute.

Darcy had never used a parachute, neither had he ever jumped from a cliff two hundred feet high. But he still felt the sting of raw lye on the back of his neck. So he took up the sunshade and walked deliberately to the brink of the cliff and jumped over. The thing held, he drifted slowly down and landed safely

at the bottom.

He looked up and saw a score or more of black heads gaping down at him, their hands still busy with the crossing business. To them it was a feat that only a god could accomplish. And so as not to lose the prestige he had gained, Darcy stalked into the jungle with a dignified nonchalance that he did not feel.

Darcy was again free, with a much-blistered neck, and two courses open to him. At one end, court-martial, hard work, disgrace. At the other? But he did not even stop to make a decision. He simply turned his face toward Vigan and hiked.

A LITTLE past ten o'clock the next day, bare-headed and exhausted, scratched, torn and without a coat, Darcy staggered into Colonel Brady's office and panted out his story.

The colonel dispatched an orderly for a certain captain and sat looking at Darcy. The captain reported and was told to take a detachment and rescue three white men held at Malavete's *barrio*. The captain left at once to carry out his orders.

"Darcy," said the colonel, "you said you deserted? You're a —— liar Darcy. Report to your first sergeant for duty."