

History of Negro Soldiers in the Spanish-American War, and Other Items of Interest

Edward A. Johnson

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[Illustration: WILLIAM McKinley.]

HISTORY OF NEGRO SOLDIERS

IN THE

SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR,

AND

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST.

BY

EDWARD A. JOHNSON, Author of the Famous School History of the Negro Race in America.

1899

BY EDWARD A. JOHNSON, RALEIGH, N.C.

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CHAPTER I.

THE CAUSE OF THE WAR WITH SPAIN.

Many causes led up to the Spanish-American war. Cuba had been in a state of turmoil for a long time, and the continual reports of outrages on the people of the island by Spain greatly aroused the Americans. The "ten years war" had terminated, leaving the island much embarrassed in its material interests, and woefully scandalized by the methods of procedure adopted by Spain and principally carried out by Generals Campos and Weyler, the latter of whom was called the "butcher" on account of his alleged cruelty in attempting to suppress the former insurrection. There was no doubt much to complain of under his administration, for which the General himself was not personally responsible. He boasted that he only had three individuals put to death, and that in each of these cases he was highly justified by martial law.

FINALLY THE ATTENTION OF THE UNITED STATES was forcibly attracted to Cuba by the Virginius affair, which consisted in the wanton murder of fifty American sailors--officers and crew of the Virginius, which was captured by the Spanish off Santiago bay, bearing arms and ammunition to the insurgents--Captain Fry, a West Point graduate, in command.

Spain would, no doubt, have received a genuine American thrashing on this occasion had she not been a republic at that time, and President Grant and others thought it unwise to crush out her republican principles, which then seemed just budding into existence.

The horrors of this incident, however, were not out of the minds of the American people when the new insurrection of 1895 broke out. At once, as if by an electric flash, the sympathy of the American people was enlisted with the Insurgents who were (as the Americans believed) fighting Spain for their liberty. Public opinion was on the Insurgents' side and against Spain from the beginning. This feeling of sympathy for the fighting Cubans knew no North nor South; and strange as it may seem the Southerner who quails before the mob spirit that disfranchises, ostracises and lynches an American Negro who seeks his liberty at home, became a loud champion of the Insurgent cause in Cuba, which was, in fact, the cause of Cuban Negroes and mulattoes.

GENERAL FITZHUGH LEE, of Virginia, possibly the most noted Southerner of the day, was sent by President Cleveland to Havana as Consul General, and seemed proud of the honor of representing his government there, judging from his reports of the Insurgents, which were favorable. General Lee was retained at his post by President McKinley until it became necessary to recall him, thus having the high honor paid him of not being changed by the new McKinley administration, which differed from him in politics; and as evidence of General Fitzhugh Lee's sympathy with the Cubans it may be cited that he sent word to the Spanish Commander (Blanco) on leaving Havana that he would return to the island again and when he came he "would bring the stars and stripes in front of him."

BELLIGERENT RIGHTS TO THE INSURGENTS OR NEUTRALITY became the topic of discussion during the close of President Cleveland's administration. The President took the ground that the Insurgents though deserving of proper sympathy, and such aid for humanity's sake as could be given them, yet they had not established on any part of the island such a form of government as could be recognized at Washington, and accorded belligerent rights or rights of a nation at war with another nation; that the laws of neutrality should be strictly enforced, and America should keep "hands off" and let Spain and the Insurgents settle their own differences.

[Illustration: GENERAL FITZHUGH LEE.]

MUCH MONEY AND TIME was expended by the United States government in maintaining this neutral position. Fillibustering expeditions were constantly being fitted up in America with arms and ammunition for the Cuban patriots. As a neutral power it became the duty of the American government to suppress fillibustering, but it was both an unpleasant and an expensive duty, and one in which the people had little or no sympathy.

SPAIN TRIES TO APPEASE public sentiment in America by recalling Marshal Campos, who was considered unequal to the task of defeating the Insurgents, because of reputed inaction. The flower of the Spanish army was poured into Cuba by the tens of thousands—estimated, all told, at three hundred thousand when the crisis between America and Spain was reached.

WEYLER THE "BUTCHER," was put in command and inaugurated the policy of establishing military zones inside of the Spanish lines, into which the unarmed farmers, merchants, women and children were driven, penniless; and being without any visible means of subsistence were left to perish from hunger and disease. (The condition of these people greatly excited American sympathy with the Insurgents.) General Weyler hoped thus to weaken the Insurgents who received considerable of supplies from this class of the population, either by consent or force. Weyler's policy in reference to the reconcentrados (as these non-combatant people were called) rather increased than lessened the grievance as was natural to suppose, in view of the misery and suffering it entailed on a class of people who most of all were not the appropriate subjects for his persecution, and sentiment became so strong in the United States against this policy (especially in view of the fact that General Weyler had promised to end the "Insurrection" in three months after he took command) that in FEBRUARY, 1896, the United States Congress took up the discussion of the matter. Several Senators and Congressmen returned from visits to the island pending this discussion, in which they took an active and effective part, depicting a most shocking and revolting situation in Cuba, for which Spain was considered responsible; and on April 6th following this joint resolution was adopted by Congress:

"_Be it Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the

United States of America_, that in the opinion of Congress a public war exists between the Government of Spain and the Government proclaimed and for some time maintained by force of arms by the people of Cuba; and that the United States of America should maintain a strict neutrality between the contending powers, according to each all the rights of belligerents in the ports and territory of the United States."

"_Resolved further_, that the friendly offices of the United States should be offered by the President to the Spanish government for the recognition of the independence of Cuba."

THE INSURGENTS gained by this resolution an important point. It dignified their so-called insurrection into an organized army, with a government at its back which was so recognized and treated with. They could buy and sell in American ports.

[Illustration: GENERAL ANTONIO MACEO.]

GENERAL ANTONIO MACEO about this time was doing great havoc along the Spanish lines. He darted from place to place, back and forth across the supposed impassable line of Spanish fortifications stretching north and south across the island some distance from Havana, and known as the _trocha_. Thousands of Spaniards fell as the result of his daring and finesse in military execution. His deeds became known in America, and though a man of Negro descent, with dark skin and crisp hair, his fame was heralded far and wide in the American newspapers. At a public gathering in New York, where his picture was exhibited, the audience went wild with applause—the waving of handkerchiefs and the wild hurrahs were long and continued. The career of this hero was suddenly terminated by death, due to the treachery of his physician Zertucha, who, under the guise of a proposed treaty of peace, induced him to meet a company of Spanish officers, at which meeting, according to a pre-arranged plot, a mob of Spanish infantry rushed in on General Maceo and shot him down unarmed. It is said that his friends recovered his body and buried it in a secret place unknown to the Spaniards, who were anxious to obtain it for exhibition as a trophy of war in Havana. Maceo was equal to Toussaint L'Overture of San Domingo. His public life was consecrated to liberty; he knew no vice nor mean action; he would not permit any around him. When he landed in Cuba from Porto Rico he was told there were no arms. He replied, "I will get them with my machete," and he left five thousand to the Cubans, conquered by his arm. Every time the Spanish attacked him they were beaten and left thousands of arms and much ammunition in his possession. He was born in Santiago de Cuba July 14, 1848.

THE SPIRIT OF THE INSURGENTS did not break with General Maceo's death. Others rose up to fill his place, the women even taking arms in the defence of home and liberty. "At first no one believed, who had not seen them, that there were women in the Cuban army; but there is no doubt about it. They are not all miscalled amazons, for they are warlike women and do not shun fighting. The difficulty in employing them being that they are insanely brave. When they ride into battle they become exalted and are dangerous creatures. Those who first joined the forces on the field were the wives of men belonging in the army, and their purpose was rather to be protected than to become heroines and avengers. It shows the state of the island, that the women found the army the safest place for them. With the men saved from the plantations and the murderous bandits infesting the roads and committing every lamentable outrage upon the helpless, some of the high spirited Cuban women followed their husbands, and the example has been followed, and some, instead of consenting to be protected, have taken up the fashion of fighting."--_Murat Halsted_.

JOSE MACEO, brother of Antonio, was also a troublesome character to

the Spaniards, who were constantly being set upon by him and his men.

WEYLER'S POLICY AND THE BRAVE STRUGGLE of the people both appealed very strongly for American sympathy with the Insurgent cause. The American people were indignant at Weyler and were inspired by the conduct of the Insurgents. Public sentiment grew stronger with every fresh report of an Insurgent victory, or a Weyler persecution.

MISS EVANGELINA COSIO Y CISNERO'S RESCUE helped to arouse sentiment. This young and beautiful girl of aristocratic Cuban parentage alleged that a Spanish officer had, on the occasion of a raid made on her home, in which her father was captured and imprisoned as a Cuban sympathizer, proposed her release on certain illicit conditions, and on her refusal she was incarcerated with her aged father in the renowned but filthy and dreaded Morro Castle at Havana.

[Illustration: MISS EVANGELINA COSIO Y CISNEROS.]

Appeal after appeal by large numbers of the most prominent women in America was made to General Weyler, and even to the Queen Regent of Spain, for her release, but without avail, when finally the news was flashed to America that she had escaped. This proved to be true--her release being effected by Carl Decker, a reporter on the New York Journal--a most daring feat. Miss Cisneros was brought to America and became the greatest sensation of the day. Her beauty, her affection for her aged father, her innocence, and the thrilling events of her rescue, made her the public idol, and gave Cuba libre a new impetus in American sympathy.

SPAIN AND HAVANA felt the touch of these ever spreading waves of public sentiment, and began to resent them. At Havana public demonstrations were made against America. The life of Consul General Lee was threatened. The Spanish Minister at Washington, Senor de Lome, was exposed for having written to a friend a most insulting letter, describing President McKinley as a low politician and a weakling. For this he was recalled by Spain at the request of the American government.

Protection to American citizens and property in Havana became necessary, and accordingly the BATTLE SHIP MAINE was sent there for this purpose, the United States government disclaiming any other motives save those of protection to Americans and their interests. The Maine was, to all outward appearances, friendly received by the Spaniards at Havana by the usual salutes and courtesies of the navy, and was anchored at a point in the bay near a certain buoy designated by the Spanish Commander. This was on January 25, 1898, and on February 15th this noble vessel was blown to pieces, and 266 of its crew perished--two colored men being in the number. This event added fuel to the already burning fire of American feeling against Spain. Public sentiment urged an immediate declaration of war. President McKinley counseled moderation. Captain Siggsbee, who survived the wreck of the Maine, published an open address in which he advised that adverse criticism be delayed until an official investigation could be made of the affair.

The official investigation was had by a Court of Inquiry, composed of Captain W.T. Sampson of the Iowa, Captain F.C. Chadwick of the New York, Lieutenant-Commander W.P. Potter of the New York, and Lieutenant-Commander Adolph Marix of the Vermont, appointed by the President. Divers were employed; many witnesses were examined, and the court, by a unanimous decision, rendered March 21, 1898, after a four weeks session, reported as follows: "That the loss of the Maine was not in any respect due to the fault or negligence on the part of any of the officers or members of her crew; that the ship was destroyed by the explosion of a submarine mine which caused the partial explosion

of two or more of her forward magazines; and that no evidence has been obtainable fixing the responsibility for the destruction of the Maine upon any person or persons."

Responsibility in this report is not fixed on any "person or persons." It reads something like the usual verdict of a coroner's jury after investigating the death of some colored man who has been lynched,--"he came to his death by the hands of parties unknown." This report on the Maine's destruction, _unlike_ the usual coroner's jury verdict, however, in one respect, was not accepted by the people who claimed that Spain was responsible, either directly or indirectly, for the explosion, and the public still clamored for war to avenge the outrage.

[Illustration: U.S.S. MAINE]

CONGRESS ALSO CATCHES the war fever and appropriated \$50,000,000 "for the national defence" by a unanimous vote of both houses. The war and navy departments became very active; agents were sent abroad to buy war ships, but the President still hesitated to state his position until he had succeeded in getting the American Consuls out of Cuba who were in danger from the Spaniards there. Consul Hyatt embarked from Santiago April 3, and Consul General Lee, who was delayed in getting off American refugees, left on April 10, and on that day the PRESIDENT SENT HIS MESSAGE TO CONGRESS. He pictured the deplorable condition of the people of Cuba, due to General Weyler's policy; he recommended that the Insurgent government be not recognized, as such recognition might involve this government in "embarrassing international complications," but referred the whole subject to Congress for action.

CONGRESS DECLARES WAR ON APRIL 13 by a joint resolution of the Foreign Affairs Committee of both houses, which was adopted, after a conference of the two committees, April 18, in the following form:

Whereas, the abhorrent conditions which have existed for more than three years in the island of Cuba, so near our own borders, have shocked the moral sense of the people of the United States, have been a disgrace to Christian civilization, culminating as they have in the destruction of a United States battle ship, with 266 of its officers and crew, while on a friendly visit in the harbor of Havana, and cannot longer be endured, as has been set forth by the President of the United States in his message to Congress of April 11, 1898, upon which the action of Congress was invited: therefore,

Resolved, by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled--

First, that the people of the island of Cuba are, and of right ought to be, free and independent.

Second, that it is the duty of the United States to demand, and the government of the United States does hereby demand, that the government of Spain at once relinquish its authority and government in the island of Cuba, and withdraw its land and naval forces from Cuba and Cuban waters.

Third, that the President of the United States be, and he hereby is, directed and empowered to use the entire land and naval forces of the United States, and to call into the actual service of the United States the militia of the several states to such extent as may be necessary to carry these resolutions into effect.

Fourth, that the United States hereby disclaims any disposition or intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction or control over said island, except for the pacification thereof, and asserts its

determination when that is completed to leave the government and control of the island to its people.

THE PRESIDENT SIGNED THIS RESOLUTION at 11:24 A.M. on the 20th of April, 1898. The Spanish Minister, Senor Luis Polo y Bernarbe, was served with a copy, upon which he asked for his passports, and "immediately left Washington."

"This is a picture of Edward Savoy, who accomplished one of the most signal diplomatic triumphs in connection with recent relations with Spain. It was he who outwitted the whole Spanish Legation and delivered the ultimatum to Minister Polo."

"Edward Savoy has been a messenger in the Department of State for nearly thirty years. He was appointed by Hamilton Fish in 1869, and held in high esteem by James G. Blaine."

"He was a short, squat, colored man, with a highly intelligent face, hair slightly tinged with gray and an air of alertness which makes him stand out in sharp contrast with the other messengers whom one meets in the halls of the big building."

[Illustration: EDDIE SAVOY.]

"Of all the men under whom 'Eddie,' as he is universally called, has served he has become most attached to Judge Day, whom he says is the finest man he ever saw."

"Minister Polo was determined not to receive the ultimatum. He was confident he would receive a private tip from the White House, which would enable him to demand his passports before the ultimatum was served upon him. Then he could refuse to receive it, saying that he was no longer Minister. It will be remembered that Spain handed Minister Woodford his passports before the American representative could present the ultimatum to the Spanish Government."

"Judge Day's training as a country lawyer stood him in good stead. He had learned the value of being the first to get in an attachment."

"The ultimatum was placed in a large, square envelope, that might have contained an invitation to dinner. It was natural that it should be given to 'Eddie' Savoy. He had gained the sobriquet of the nation's 'bouncer,' from the fact that he had handed Lord Sackville-West and Minister De Lome their passports."

"It was 11:30 o'clock on Wednesday morning when 'Eddie' Savoy pushed the electric button at the front door of the Spanish Legation, in Massachusetts avenue. The old Spanish soldier who acted as doorkeeper responded."

"'Have something here for the Minister,' said Eddie."

"The porter looked at him suspiciously, but he permitted the messenger to pass into the vestibule, which is perhaps six feet square. Beyond the vestibule is a passage that leads to the large central hall. The Minister stood in the hall. In one hand he held an envelope. It was addressed to the Secretary of State. It contained a request for the passports of the Minister and his suite. Senor Polo had personally brought the document from the chancellery above."

"When the porter presented the letter just brought by the Department of State's messenger, Senor Polo grasped it in his quick, nervous way. He opened the envelope and realized instantly that he had been outwitted. A cynical smile passed over the Minister's face as he

handed his request for passports to 'Eddie,' who bowed and smiled on the Minister."

"Senor Polo stepped back into the hall and started to read the ultimatum carefully. But he stopped and turned his head toward the door."

"'This is indeed Jeffersonian simplicity,' he said."

"'Eddie' Savoy felt very badly over the incident, because he had learned to like Minister Polo personally."

"'He was so pleasant that I felt like asking him to stay a little longer,' said 'Eddie,' 'but I didn't, for that wouldn't have been diplomatic. When you have been in this department twenty-five or thirty years you learn never to say what you want to say and never to speak unless you think twice.'"

"Wherefore it will be seen that 'Eddie' Savoy has mastered the first principles of diplomacy."--_N.Y. World._

A COPY OF THE RESOLUTION BY CONGRESS was also cabled to Minister Woodford, at Madrid, to be officially transmitted to the Spanish Government, fixing the 23d as the limit for its reply, but the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs had already learned of the action of Congress, and did not permit Minister Woodford to ask for his passports, but sent them to him on the evening of the 21st, and this was the formal beginning of the war.

[Illustration: JOSE MACEO.]

A FATAL STEP WAS THIS FOR SPAIN, who evidently, as her newspapers declared, did not think the "American pigs" would fight. She was unaware of the temper of the people, who seemed to those who knew the facts, actually thirsting for Spanish blood--a feeling due more or less to thirty years of peace, in which the nation had become restless, and to the fact also that America had some new boats, fine specimens of workmanship, which had been at target practice for a long time and now yearned for the reality, like the boy who has a gun and wants to try it on the real game. The proof of the superiority of American gunnery was demonstrated in every naval battle. The accurate aim of Dewey's gunners at Manilla, and Sampson and Schley's at Santiago, was nothing less than wonderful. No less wonderful, however, was the accuracy of the Americans than the inaccuracy of the Spaniards, who seemed almost unable to hit anything.

WHILE ACCREDITING THE AMERICAN NAVY with its full share of praise for its wonderful accomplishments, let us remember that there is scarcely a boat in the navy flying the American flag but what has a number of COLORED SAILORS on it, who, along with others, help to make up its greatness and superiority.

CHAPTER II.

THE BEGINNING OF HOSTILITIES.

A COLORED HERO IN THE NAVY.

History records the Negro as the first man to fall in three wars of America--Crispus Attacks in the Boston massacre, March 5, 1770; an

unknown Negro in Baltimore when the Federal troops were mobbed in that city _en route_ to the front, and Elijah B. Tunnell, of Accomac county, Virginia, who fell simultaneously with or a second before Ensign Bagley, of the torpedo boat _Winslow_, in the harbor of Cardenas May 11, 1898, in the Spanish-American war.

Elijah B. Tunnell was employed as cabin cook on the _Winslow_. The boat, under a severe fire from masked batteries of the Spanish on shore, was disabled. The Wilmington came to her rescue, the enemy meanwhile still pouring on a heavy fire. It was difficult to get the "line" fastened so that the _Winslow_ could be towed off out of range of the Spanish guns. Realizing the danger the boat and crew were in, and anxious to be of service, Tunnell left his regular work and went on deck to assist in "making fast" the two boats, and while thus engaged a shell came, which, bursting over the group of workers, killed him and three others. It has been stated in newspaper reports of this incident that it was an ill-aimed shell of one of the American boats that killed Tunnell and Bagley. Tunnell was taken on board the Wilmington with both legs blown off, and fearfully mutilated. Turning to those about him he asked, "Did we win in the fight boys?" The reply was, "Yes."

He said, "Then I die happy." While others fell at the post of duty it may be said of this brave Negro that he fell while doing _more_ than his duty. He might have kept out of harm's way if he had desired, but seeing the situation he rushed forward to relieve it as best he could, and died a "volunteer" in service, doing what others ought to have done. All honor to the memory of Elijah B. Tunnell, who, if not the first, certainly simultaneous with the first, martyr of the Spanish-American war. While our white fellow-citizens justly herald the fame of Ensign Bagley, who was known to the author from his youth, let our colored patriots proclaim the heroism of Tunnell of Accomac. While not ranking as an official in the navy, yet he was brave, he was faithful and we may inscribe over his grave that "he died doing what he could for his country."

War between the United States and Spain began April 21, 1898. Actual hostilities ended August 12, 1898, by the signing of the protocol by the Secretary of State of the United States for the United States and M. Cambon, the French Ambassador at Washington, acting for Spain.

The war lasted 114 days. The Americans were victorious in every regular engagement. In the three-days battle around Santiago, the Americans lost 22 officers and 208 men killed, and 81 officers and 1,203 men wounded, and 79 missing. The Spanish loss as best estimated was near 1,600 officers and men killed and wounded.

Santiago was surrendered July 17, 1898, with something over 22,000 troops.

General Shatter estimates in his report the American forces as numbering 16,072 with 815 officers.

CHAPTER III.

SERGEANT-MAJOR PULLEN OF THE 25TH INFANTRY DESCRIBES THE CONDUCT OF THE NEGRO SOLDIERS AROUND EL CANEY.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH U.S. INFANTRY--ITS STATION BEFORE THE SPANISH AMERICAN WAR AND TRIP TO TAMPA, FLORIDA--THE PART IT TOOK IN THE FIGHT

AT EL CANEY.

When our magnificent battleship Maine was sunk in Havana harbor, February 15, 1898, the 25th U.S. Infantry was scattered in western Montana, doing garrison duty, with headquarters at Fort Missoula. This regiment had been stationed in the West since 1880, when it came up from Texas where it had been from its consolidation in 1869, fighting Indians, building roads, etc., for the pioneers of that state and New Mexico. In consequence of the regiment's constant frontier service, very little was known of it outside of army circles. As a matter of course it was known that it was a colored regiment, but its praises had never been sung.

Strange to say, although the record of this regiment was equal to any in the service, it had always occupied remote stations, except a short period, from about May, 1880, to about August, 1885, when headquarters, band and a few companies were stationed at Fort Snelling, near St. Paul, Minnesota.

[Illustration: SERGEANT FRANK W. PULLEN, Who was in the Charge on El Caney, as a member of the Twenty-fifth U.S. Infantry.]

Since the days of reconstruction, when a great part of the country (the South especially) saw the regular soldier in a low state of discipline, and when the possession of a sound physique was the only requirement necessary for the recruit to enter the service of the United States, people in general had formed an opinion that the regular soldier, generally, and the Negro soldier in particular, was a most undesirable element to have in a community. Therefore, the Secretary of War, in ordering changes in stations of troops from time to time (as is customary to change troops from severe climates to mild ones and vice versa, that equal justice might be done all) had repeatedly overlooked the 25th Infantry; or had only ordered it from Minnesota to the Dakotas and Montana, in the same military department, and in a climate more severe for troops to serve in than any in the United States. This gallant regiment of colored soldiers served eighteen years in that climate, where, in winter, which lasts five months or more, the temperature falls as low as 55 degrees below zero, and in summer rises to over 100 degrees in the shade and where mosquitos rival the Jersey breed.

Before Congress had reached a conclusion as to what should be done in the Maine disaster, an order had been issued at headquarters of the army directing the removal of the regiment to the department of the South, one of the then recently organized departments.

At the time when the press of the country was urging a declaration of war, and when Minister Woodford, at Madrid, was exhausting all the arts of peace, in order that the United States might get prepared for war, the men of the 25th Infantry were sitting around red-hot stoves, in their comfortable quarters in Montana, discussing the doings of Congress, impatient for a move against Spain. After great excitement and what we looked upon as a long delay, a telegraphic order came. Not for us to leave for the Department of the South, but to go to that lonely sun-parched sandy island Dry Tortugas. In the face of the fact that the order was for us to go to that isolated spot, where rebel prisoners were carried and turned loose during the war of the rebellion, being left there without guard, there being absolutely no means of escape, and where it would have been necessary for our safety to have kept Sampson's fleet in sight, the men received the news with gladness and cheered as the order was read to them. The destination was changed to Key West, Florida, then to Chickamauga Park, Georgia. It seemed that the war department did not know what to do with the soldiers at first.

Early Sunday morning, April 10, 1898, Easter Sunday, amidst tears of lovers and others endeared by long acquaintance and kindness, and the enthusiastic cheers of friends and well-wishers, the start was made for Cuba.

It is a fact worthy of note that Easter services in all the churches in Missoula, Montana, a town of over ten thousand inhabitants, was postponed the morning of the departure of the 25th Infantry, and the whole town turned out to bid us farewell. Never before were soldiers more encouraged to go to war than we. Being the first regiment to move, from the west, the papers had informed the people of our route. At every station there was a throng of people who cheered as we passed. Everywhere the Stars and Stripes could be seen. Everybody had caught the war fever. We arrived at Chickamauga Park about April 15, 1898, being the first regiment to arrive at that place. We were a curiosity. Thousands of people, both white and colored, from Chattanooga, Tenn., visited us daily. Many of them had never seen a colored soldier. The behavior of the men was such that even the most prejudiced could find no fault. We underwent a short period of acclimation at this place, then moved on to Tampa, Fla., where we spent a month more of acclimation. All along the route from Missoula, Montana, with the exception of one or two places in Georgia, we had been received most cordially. But in Georgia, outside of the Park, it mattered not if we were soldiers of the United States, and going to fight for the honor of our country and the freedom of an oppressed and starving people, we were "niggers," as they called us, and treated us with contempt. There was no enthusiasm nor Stars and Stripes in Georgia. That is the kind of "united country" we saw in the South. I must pass over the events and incidents of camp life at Chickamauga and Tampa. Up to this time our trip had seemed more like a Sunday-school excursion than anything else. But when, on June 6th, we were ordered to divest ourselves of all clothing and equipage, except such as was necessary to campaigning in a tropical climate, for the first time the ghost of real warfare arose before us.

ON BOARD THE TRANSPORT.

The regiment went aboard the Government transport, No. 14--Concho--June 7, 1898. On the same vessel were the 14th U.S. Infantry, a battalion of the 2d Massachusetts Volunteers and Brigade Headquarters, aggregating about 1,300 soldiers, exclusive of the officers. This was the beginning of real hardship. The transport had either been a common freighter or a cattle ship. Whatever had been its employment before being converted into a transport, I am sure of one thing, it was neither fit for man nor beast when soldiers were transported in it to Cuba. The actual carrying capacity of the vessel as a transport was, in my opinion, about 900 soldiers, exclusive of the officers, who, as a rule, surround themselves with every possible comfort, even in actual warfare. A good many times, as on this occasion, the desire and demand of the officers for comfort worked serious hardships for the enlisted men. The lower decks had been filled with bunks. Alas! the very thought of those things of torture makes me shudder even now. They were arranged in rows, lengthwise the ship, of course, with aisles only two feet wide between each row. The dimensions of a man's bunk was 6 feet long, 2 feet wide and 2 feet high, and they were arranged in tiers of four, with a four inch board on either side to keep one from rolling out. The Government had furnished no bedding at all. Our bedding consisted of one blanket as mattress and haversack for pillow. The 25th Infantry was assigned to the bottom deck, where there was no light, except the small port holes when the gang-plank was closed. So dark was it that candles were burned all day. There was no air except what came down the canvass air shafts when they were turned to the breeze. The heat of that place was almost unendurable. Still our Brigade Commander issued orders that no

one would be allowed to sleep on the main deck. That order was the only one to my knowledge during the whole campaign that was not obeyed by the colored soldiers. It is an unreported fact that a portion of the deck upon which the 25th Infantry took passage to Cuba was flooded with water during the entire journey.

Before leaving Port Tampa the Chief Surgeon of the expedition came aboard and made an inspection, the result of which was the taking off of the ship the volunteer battalion, leaving still on board about a thousand men. Another noteworthy fact is that for seven days the boat was tied to the wharf at Port Tampa, and we were not allowed to go ashore, unless an officer would take a whole company off to bathe and exercise. This was done, too, in plain sight of other vessels, the commander of which gave their men the privilege of going ashore at will for any purpose whatever. It is very easy to imagine the hardship that was imposed upon us by withholding the privilege of going ashore, when it is understood that there were no seats on the vessel for a poor soldier. On the main deck there were a large number of seats, but they were all reserved for the officers. A sentinel was posted on either side of the ship near the middle hatch-way, and no soldier was allowed to go abaft for any purpose, except to report to his superior officer or on some other official duty.

Finally the 14th of June came. While bells were ringing, whistles blowing and bands playing cheering strains of music the transports formed "in fleet in column of twos," and under convoy of some of the best war craft of our navy, and while the thousands on shore waved us godspeed, moved slowly down the bay on its mission to avenge the death of the heroes of our gallant Maine and to free suffering Cuba.

The transports were scarcely out of sight of land when an order was issued by our Brigade Commander directing that the two regiments on board should not intermingle, and actually drawing the "color line" by assigning the white regiment to the port and the 25th Infantry to the starboard side of the vessel. The men of the two regiments were on the best of terms, both having served together during mining troubles in Montana. Still greater was the surprise of everyone when another order was issued from the same source directing that the white regiment should make coffee first, all the time, and detailing a guard to see that the order was carried out. All of these things were done seemingly to humiliate us and without a word of protest from our officers. We suffered without complaint. God only knows how it was we lived through those fourteen days on that miserable vessel. We lived through those days and were fortunate enough not to have a burial at sea.

OPERATIONS AGAINST SANTIAGO.

We landed in Cuba June 22, 1898. Our past hardships were soon forgotten. It was enough to stir the heart of any lover of liberty to witness that portion of Gomez's ragged army, under command of General Castillo, lined up to welcome us to their beautiful island, and to guide and guard our way to the Spanish strongholds. To call it a ragged army is by no means a misnomer. The greater portion of those poor fellows were both coatless and shoeless, many of them being almost nude. They were by no means careful about their uniform. The thing every one seemed careful about was his munitions of war, for each man had his gun, ammunition and machete. Be it remembered that this portion of the Cuban army was almost entirely composed of black Cubans.

After landing we halted long enough to ascertain that all the men of the regiment were "present or accounted for," then marched into the jungle of Cuba, following an old unused trail. General Shafter's orders were to push forward without delay. And the 25th Infantry

has the honor of leading the march from the landing at Baiquiri or Daiquiri (both names being used in official reports) the first day the army of invasion entered the island. I do not believe any newspaper has ever published this fact.

There was no time to be lost, and the advance of the American army of invasion in the direction of Santiago, the objective point, was rapid. Each day, as one regiment would halt for a rest or reach a suitable camping ground, another would pass. In this manner several regiments had succeeded in passing the 25th Infantry by the morning of June 24th. At that time the 1st Volunteer Cavalry (Rough Riders) was leading the march.

THE FIRST BATTLE.

[Illustration: Charge on El Caney--Twenty-Fifth Infantry.]

On the morning of June 24th the Rough Riders struck camp early, and was marching along the trail at a rapid gait, at "route step," in any order suitable to the size of the road. Having marched several miles through a well-wooded country, they came to an opening near where the road forked. They turned into the left fork; at that moment, without the least warning, the Cubans leading the march having passed on unmolested, a volley from the Spanish behind a stone fort on top of the hill on both sides of the road was fired into their ranks. They were at first disconcerted, but rallied at once and began firing in the direction from whence came the volleys. They could not advance, and dared not retreat, having been caught in a sunken place in the road, with a barbed-wire fence on one side and a precipitous hill on the other. They held their ground, but could do no more. The Spanish poured volley after volley into their ranks. At the moment when it looked as if the whole regiment would be swept down by the steel-jacketed bullets from the Mausers, four troops of the 10th U.S. Cavalry (colored) came up on "double time." Little thought the Spaniards that these "smoked yankees" were so formidable. Perhaps they thought to stop those black boys by their relentless fire, but those boys knew no stop. They halted for a second, and having with them a Hotchkiss gun soon knocked down the Spanish improvised fort, cut the barb-wire, making an opening for the Rough Riders, started the charge, and, with the Rough Riders, routed the Spaniards, causing them to retreat in disorder, leaving their dead and some wounded behind. The Spaniards made a stubborn resistance. So hot was their fire directed at the men at the Hotchkiss gun that a head could not be raised, and men crawled on their stomachs like snakes loading and firing. It is an admitted fact that the Rough Riders could not have dislodged the Spanish by themselves without great loss, if at all.

The names of Captain A.M. Capron, Jr., and Sergeant Hamilton Fish, Jr., of the Rough Riders, who were killed in this battle, have been immortalized, while that of Corporal Brown, 10th Cavalry, who manned the Hotchkiss gun in this fight, without which the American loss in killed and wounded would no doubt have been counted by hundreds, and who was killed by the side of his gun, is unknown by the public.

At the time the battle of the Rough Riders was fought the 25th Infantry was within hearing distance of the battle and received orders to reinforce them, which they could have done in less than two hours, but our Brigade Commander in marching to the scene of battle took the wrong trail, seemingly on purpose, and when we arrived at the place of battle twilight was fading into darkness.

The march in the direction of Santiago continued, until the evening of June 30th found us bivouacked in the road less than two miles from El Caney. At the first glimpse of day on the first day of July word was passed along the line for the companies to "fall in." No bugle call

was sounded, no coffee was made, no noise allowed. We were nearing the enemy, and every effort was made to surprise him. We had been told that El Caney was well fortified, and so we found it.

The first warning the people had of a foe being near was the roar of our field artillery and the bursting of a shell in their midst. The battle was on. In many cases an invading army serves notice of a bombardment, but in this case it was incompatible with military strategy. Non-combatants, women and children all suffered, for to have warned them so they might have escaped would also have given warning to the Spanish forces of our approach. The battle opened at dawn and lasted until dark. When our troops reached the point from which they were to make the attack, the Spanish lines of entrenched soldiers could not be seen.

[Illustration: CORPORAL BROWN. (Who was killed at a Hotchkiss gun while shelling the Spanish block-house to save the Rough Riders.)]

The only thing indicating their position was the block-house situated on the highest point of a very steep hill. The undergrowth was so dense that one could not see, on a line, more than fifty yards ahead. The Spaniards, from their advantageous position in the block-house and trenches on the hill top, had located the American forces in the bushes and opened a fusillade upon them. The Americans replied with great vigor, being ordered to fire at the block-house and to the right and left of it, steadily advancing as they fired. All of the regiments engaged in the battle of El Caney had not reached their positions when the battle was precipitated by the artillery firing on the block-house. The 25th Infantry was among that number. In marching to its position some companies of the 2d Massachusetts Volunteers were met retreating; they were completely whipped, and took occasion to warn us, saying: "Boys, there is no use to go up there, you cannot see a thing; they are slaughtering our men!" Such news made us feel "shaky," not having, at the time, been initiated. We marched up, however, in order and were under fire for nine hours. Many barbed-wire obstructions were encountered, but the men never faltered. Finally, late in the afternoon, our brave Lieutenant Kinnison said to another officer: "We cannot take the trenches without charging them." Just as he was about to give the order for the bugler to sound "the charge" he was wounded and carried to the rear. The men were then fighting like demons. Without a word of command, though led by that gallant and intrepid Second Lieutenant J.A. Moss, 25th Infantry, some one gave a yell and the 25th Infantry was off, alone, to the charge. The 4th U.S. Infantry, fighting on the left, halted when those dusky heroes made the dash with a yell which would have done credit to a Comanche Indian. No one knows who started the charge; one thing is certain, at the time it was made excitement was running high; each man was a captain for himself and fighting accordingly. Brigadier Generals, Colonels, Lieutenant-Colonels, Majors, etc., were not needed at the time the 25th Infantry made the charge on El Caney, and those officers simply watched the battle from convenient points, as Lieutenants and enlisted men made the charge alone. It has been reported that the 12th U.S. Infantry made the charge, assisted by the 25th Infantry, but it is a recorded fact that the 25th Infantry fought the battle alone, the 12th Infantry coming up after the firing had nearly ceased. Private T.C. Butler, Company H, 25th Infantry, was the first man to enter the block-house at El Caney, and took possession of the Spanish flag for his regiment. An officer of the 12th Infantry came up while Butler was in the house and ordered him to give up the flag, which he was compelled to do, but not until he had torn a piece off the flag to substantiate his report to his Colonel of the injustice which had been done to him. Thus, by using the authority given him by his shoulder-straps, this officer took for his regiment that which had been won by the hearts' blood of some of the bravest, though black, soldiers of Shafter's army.

The charge of El Caney has been little spoken of, but it was quite as great a show of bravery as the famous taking of San Juan Hill.

A word more in regard to the charge. It was not the glorious run from the edge of some nearby thicket to the top of a small hill, as many may imagine. This particular charge was a tough, hard climb, over sharp, rising ground, which, were a man in perfect physical strength he would climb slowly. Part of the charge was made over soft, plowed ground, a part through a lot of prickly pineapple plants and barbed-wire entanglements. It was slow, hard work, under a blazing July sun and a perfect hail-storm of bullets, which, thanks to the poor marksmanship of the Spaniards, "went high."

It has been generally admitted, by all fair-minded writers, that the colored soldiers saved the day both at El Caney and San Juan Hill.

Notwithstanding their heroic services, they were still to be subjected, in many cases, to more hardships than their white brother in arms. When the flag of truce was, in the afternoon of July 3d, seen, each man breathed a sigh of relief, for the strain had been very great upon us. During the next eleven days men worked like ants, digging trenches, for they had learned a lesson of fighting in the open field. The work went on night and day. The 25th Infantry worked harder than any other regiment, for as soon as they would finish a trench they were ordered to move; in this manner they were kept moving and digging new trenches for eleven days. The trenches left were each time occupied by a white regiment.

On July 14th it was decided to make a demonstration in front of Santiago, to draw the fire of the enemy and locate his position. Two companies of colored soldiers (25th Infantry) were selected for this purpose, actually deployed as skirmishers and started in advance. General Shafter, watching the movement from a distant hill, saw that such a movement meant to sacrifice those men, without any or much good resulting, therefore had them recalled. Had the movement been completed it is probable that not a man would have escaped death or serious wounds. When the news came that General Toral had decided to surrender, the 25th Infantry was a thousand yards or more nearer the city of Santiago than any regiment in the army, having entrenched themselves along the railroad leading into the city.

The following enlisted men of the 25th Infantry were commissioned for their bravery at El Caney: First Sergeant Andrew J. Smith, First Sergeant Macon Russell, First Sergeant Wyatt Huffman and Sergeant Wm. McBryar. Many more were recommended, but failed to receive commissions. It is a strange incident that all the above-named men are native North Carolinians, but First Sergeant Huffman, who is from Tennessee.

The Negro played a most important part in the Spanish-American war. He was the first to move from the west; first at Camp Thomas Chickamauga Park, Ga.; first in the jungle of Cuba; among the first killed in battle; first in the block-house at El Caney, and nearest to the enemy when he surrendered.

Frank W. Pullen, Jr.,

Ex-Sergeant-Major 25th U.S. Infantry

Enfield, N.C., March 23, 1899.

BUFFALO TROOPERS, THE NAME BY WHICH NEGRO SOLDIERS ARE KNOWN.

They Comprise Several of the Crack Regiments in Our Army-The Indians Stand in Abject Terror of them-Their Awful Yells Won a Battle with the Redskins.

"It is not necessary to revert to the Civil war to prove that American Negroes are faithful, devoted wearers of uniforms," says a Washington man, who has seen service in both the army and the navy. "There are at the present time four regiments of Negro soldiers in the regular army of the United States-two outfits of cavalry and two of infantry. All four of these regiments have been under fire in important Indian campaigns, and there is yet to be recorded a single instance of a man in any of the four layouts showing the white feather, and the two cavalry regiments of Negroes have, on several occasions, found themselves in very serious situations. While the fact is well known out on the frontier, I don't remember ever having seen it mentioned back here that an American Indian has a deadly fear of an American Negro. The most utterly reckless, dare-devil savage of the copper hue stands literally in awe of a Negro, and the blacker the Negro the more the Indian quails. I can't understand why this should be, for the Indians decline to give their reasons for fearing the black men, but the fact remains that even a very bad Indian will give the mildest-mannered Negro imaginable all the room he wants, and to spare, as any old regular army soldier who has frontiered will tell you. The Indians, I fancy, attribute uncanny and eerie qualities to the blacks."

"The cavalry troop to which I belonged soldiered alongside a couple of troops of the 9th Cavalry, a black regiment, up in the Sioux country eight or nine years ago. We were performing chain guard, hemming-in duty, and it was our chief business to prevent the savages from straying from the reservation. We weren't under instructions to riddle them if they attempted to pass our guard posts, but were authorized to tickle them up to any reasonable extent, short of maiming them, with our bayonets, if any of them attempted to bluff past us. Well, the men of my troop had all colors of trouble while on guard in holding the savages in. The Ogalallas would hardly pay any attention to the white sentries of the chain guard, and when they wanted to pass beyond the guard limits they would invariably pick out a spot for passage that was patrolled by a white 'post-humper.' But the guards of the two black troops didn't have a single run-in with the savages. The Indians made it a point to remain strictly away from the Negro soldiers' guard posts. Moreover, the black soldiers got ten times as much obedience from the Indians loafing around the tepees and wicklups as did we of the white outfit. The Indians would fairly jump to obey the uniformed Negroes. I remember seeing a black sergeant make a minor chief go down to a creek to get a pail of water--an unheard of thing, for the chiefs, and even the ordinary bucks among the Sioux, always make their squaws perform this sort of work. This chief was sunning himself, reclining, beside his tepee, when his squaw started with the bucket for the creek some distance away. The Negro sergeant saw the move. He walked up to the lazy, grunting savage."

"'Look a-yeah, yo' spraddle-nosed, yalluh voodoo nigguh,' said the black sergeant--he was as black as a stovepipe--to the blinking chief, 'jes' shake yo' no-count bones an' tote dat wattuh yo'se'f. Yo' ain' no bettuh to pack wattuh dan Ah am, yo' heah me.'"

"The heap-much Indian chief didn't understand a word of what the Negro sergeant said to him, but he understands pantomime all right, and when the black man in uniform grabbed the pail out of the squaw's hand and thrust it into the dirty paw of the chief the chief went after that bucket of water, and he went a-loping, too."

[Illustration.]

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