

“WELL THE HELP OF GOD AND A FEW MARINES”

By Brigadier-General A.W. Catlin, Commanding Sixth Regiment of Marines at Chateau-Thierry.

CHAPTER XIV—Continued.

AFTER that we left for Guantanamo and sent the tug in to cut the cable there. That happened to be just the day before Cervera steamed into Santiago bay; we had missed him again. A Spanish gunboat lurked behind the point—the cable-cutting came out and opened fire on the tug with her three-inch Krupp. The little three-pounder on the tug could not reach her and she was pouring in a shower of shells. So Captain Goodrich was obliged to recall the Wompatuck before the cable could be cut. Later on the Spaniards were obliged to sink the Sandoval in Guantanamo bay.

At Santiago, again, on July 31, marines served the secondary batteries and were given credit for inflicting more damage on the enemy than the larger guns.

The first American troops to set foot on Cuban soil after war had been declared were marines and I only regret that I cannot give an eye-witness account of their remarkable exploit. It was necessary to establish at once a naval base on the shores of Cuba and the Bay of Guantanamo was selected for this purpose—a splendid harbor where American war ships have made their home ever since. A battalion of marines—about 400 men under Colonel Huntington—was landed on June 10, 1898, at 3 P. M. They engaged about 3000 Spaniards, drove them inland, and, under the protection of the guns of the ships, established and held a base on the point at the entrance of the bay.

This base, however, was not secure from attack. Spanish troops, estimated at 6000, lined the shores of the bay and the marines were exposed to their fire. It appeared necessary to drive out the Spaniards at least from the side of the bay on which the base had been established and they were protected by a cover of wooded hills.

Colonel Huntington learned from his scouts that the only water supply of the Spaniards on that side of the bay was what was known as Cusco Well, which was located about two miles inland from the point and a small detachment under Colonel (now General) Elliott was detailed to go in against superior numbers and capture Cusco Well.

It was a difficult task, but the marines lost no time in engaging the Spaniards. They had to cross hills and ravines and there were a hundred spots where large numbers of the enemy might be lying in ambush. Progress, not to be foolhardy, was necessarily slow.

The Marblehead had taken up a position in the harbor to assist the landed troops by shelling the well or the enemy's main position when it could be located, but at first they had no means of knowing what to shoot at.

It was then that Sergeant Major John Quick, who was afterward with me in France, pulled off the stunt that won him a medal of honor. By means of a tireless tree-to-tree fighting, our men had advanced far enough to be reasonably sure of the location of the well and the troops that guarded it. To push on in the face of such odds meant heavy casualties and possible failure. The support of the Marblehead's guns was essential.

Half-way to the well there was a high hill that the Spaniards had quickly volunteered to go up this hill and signal to the ship. He stalked up the slope in full view of the enemy, and there at the top he stood with his arms raised to them, while Spanish bullets peppered the ground all around him and calmly disregarded to the Marblehead the position of the enemy. The Spaniards then ran for cover, and the Marines, when the woods were cleared, romped in and took Cusco Well. This gave Colonel Huntington command of the entire side of the bay and the naval base was established and held for the fleet.

It is in this sort of fighting that appeals to the imagination more than the tedious gnawing of trench warfare or the ponderous movements of great armies. The average American has been brought up on stories of Indian warfare, and it is just this sort of fighting that the Marines are trained to do. They have been obliged to do on numerous occasions—the whole force engaged in concerted action to a definite end, and yet each man had his own part to play, and each man was responsible for his own share of the success. This sort of experience helped us when we went in against the highly modernized soldiers of the Philippines. General Balleau has already been pointed out in the account of that battle.

Meanwhile, in May, the Marines were with Dewey at Manila. After the battle of Manila bay, marines were landed from the fleet at Cavite to hold the fort and keep the Spaniards out. More marines were sent to Manila at once, and later marines served with the navy in some of the southern islands. At the close of the war, the Marines were left in the Philippines to assist in the work of pacification.

Since that time, though the United States has not until now been actually at war with any nation, the marines have seen plenty of service, not only in the Philippines and in Mexico, but elsewhere.

The name of General L. W. T. Waller, now in command of the advance base brigade at Manila, is one to be remembered with among the marines. It was Waller, then a major, who, at the outbreak of the Boxer uprising in China, in 1900, was rushed over to the Philippines with two battalions of marines—between 800 and 1000 men—to cooperate with the army in the safeguarding of American lives and interests. Later they were reinforced by marines sent from the United States. They participated in the battle of Tien Tsin, the march on Peking, and the relief of the besieged American legation. Here is the story as printed in the Indianapolis Star.

It was in the campaign of the allies against the Moans in 1900. They had captured Tien Tsin, but three days before a conference had been called at the commanders to discuss the question of advancing on Peking. The United States representative, Major General Waller, was ill, and Major Littleton W. T. Waller was the junior officer of the representatives of many nations in the conference.

One by one the older men gave their opinion that there was no pressing need of the advance army. The troops must have several more days of recuperation. Finally Major Waller's opinion was asked, and he stood up and said:

"Gentlemen, I don't know what the rest of you mean to do, but the marines start for Peking at once. In the market for the marines did start at 6 o'clock in the morning to march on Peking. It was a wild country where no white troops had ever before been, filled with hostile savages, and much cut up by streams and jungles. They were guided by their native guides, were lost in the wilderness, and suffered untold privations. A number of men died on that march, but Waller brought his battalions through, marching clear across the island.

Meanwhile I was leading a quiet life. I went to the Philippines in 1902, established the post in Honolulu in 1904, and came home in 1904. But the marines were not idle. There were troubles in Africa, Korea, Santo Domingo, and Panama that required attention. About 1905 things got pretty messy in the West Indies, and some troops from Panama were sent over to Santo Domingo. In May, 1905—I was a major then—I was sent down with a battalion of marines to relieve these troops. I remember



"They Acted as Military Police in Various Places, Policed the Villages and Cafes and Guarded Lines of Communication."

ber I was in New York at the time, on duty in the navy yard. At 11 o'clock one night I received orders to report in Philadelphia the next afternoon, and that evening we were putting out to sea on the Dixie. Things had quieted down a bit and we were not obliged to make any landings. We stuck around until matters had been straightened out, and were about ready to return home when the revolution broke out in Cuba.

Again the marines were first on the job, and the troops from the Dixie were the first to set foot on Cuban soil. In September four battalions of marines were rushed down to hold things steady until the army of Cuban pacification could be got ready. The first of the marines were landed at Cienfuegos; later others went to Havana. By the time the army got there we had established our bases and I had detached myself along the railroad and the situation well in hand.

There were 2000 marines in Cuba when the army came. Then half of them were withdrawn, leaving one regiment of about 1000 men which served with the army throughout the occupation until January, 1903. I was among those who remained. I was stationed at Santo Domingo, in Santa Clara province, in the center of the island, and our job was to disarm insurgents and keep things quiet.

One incident in connection with the first period of the occupation is worth recording as illustrative of the resourcefulness and fighting spirit of the marines. It was in the last days of November, 1900, after our landing in Cuba. The Newark, of the battleship fleet, was sent to the port of Nuevitas and marines were landed. Captain (now lieutenant-colonel) Harlow, with a detachment of marines, worked his way up to Camaguey, a town in the interior of the island, where a rebel general with 3000 troops was reported to be operating outside the town.

The frightened mayor of Camaguey sent word that the insurgents had been shooting up the town and terrorizing the inhabitants. Captain Harlow took 25 men and went in to clean it up. He sent his little force into the streets, stopping and disarming parties of rebels wherever he met them, no matter what their numbers might be. The twenty-five marines took care of several hundred insurgents in this way, and not only without assistance, but with a will. A willful-looking negro captain came riding up on horseback at the head of a band of his ruffians. The sergeant in command of the squad of marines stepped up and ordered him to dismount and disarm. By way of reply the captain drew back and coaxed his sergeant. The sergeant promptly clubbed his rifle and smashed the stock over the rebel's head, and the party threw down their arms. Captain Harlow gathered in a pile of machetes as high as his waist, and sent back the report that the trouble was over.

After the government had been turned back to the Cubans, and just before the American troops were withdrawn, I took a leading part in a memorable ceremony. We were drawn up in the public square of the town for a sort of farewell tableau. The mayor and town council came out with great dignity and made speeches, and then they impressively presented me with a huge diploma, gorgeous with gilt, in which it was certified that I had been adopted as an adopted son of Santo Domingo, Cuba. That diploma is today one of my valued possessions. Marines were used during the next few years in Panama, Nicaragua, China and elsewhere. In March, 1911, at the beginning of the Mexican crisis, a brigade of marines under Colonel Waller was sent to Guantanamo at the same time the army was sent to the border. I commanded a battalion in one of the two regiments sent down. Another regiment was landed from the fleet, making about 2100 men in all.

During those anxious days people at home were criticizing the government for taking a foolish risk and were worrying over the apparent lack of protection. I wonder how many of them knew that as large a force of fighting marines as had ever been gathered together in one body was right there on the job, ready to jump into Vera Cruz at a moment's notice. And I wonder how many Americans realized how capable those marines were of coping with a situation which

seemed fraught with such peril to our arms. A landing at Vera Cruz was not deemed necessary at that time, however, and so but little was heard of the marines. The chief interest was with the boys who were sent down to the border. We spent four months at practice, sham battles and general training, and then we came home.

In September, 1911, I started on a three-years' cruise with the North Atlantic fleet, visiting European waters in 1912. During that time I missed some rather interesting affairs in Nicaragua, Haiti and elsewhere, of which I think I should speak more at length, but before my cruise period was ended I was fortunate enough to have some of our troops in the occupation of Vera Cruz in 1914.

CHAPTER XV.

Vera Cruz and War Outbreak.

Of the activities of the marine during my absence on cruise, a few seem worth telling here. They had some exciting times in Cuba during the colored revolution of 1912-13. In February, 1913, the fleet went down to look things over and a brigade of marines was landed at Guantanamo under Colonel Karmann. They engaged in some lively skirmishes with the rebels among the iron mines and plantations at Santiago de Cuba and returned in May.

It must be remembered that such events took place while the United States was at peace and her people were largely interested in economic questions and domestic politics. I sometimes wonder how many Americans realize that hardly a year has passed during which the marines have not been fighting somewhere under trying circumstances, perhaps dying under the tropic sun, to uphold the honor of the flag. The marines, at least, have never for long suffered from the debilitating effects of peace, and when the great war came their sword was sharpened and unsheathed.

Did you know, for example, that four good American lives were lost and several United States marines were wounded in Nicaragua in 1912? The revolutionary attitude in that country had become acute and American life and property were unsafe. So they sent the marines. They fought and they pacified the country. Major Butler took a battalion over to Corinto, Nicaragua, from Panama, and Colonel Pendleton was sent down with a regiment from the states to join him. For the rather stirring events of that campaign I am indebted to the following account which appeared in the New York Sun:

"Early in August of 1912 a battalion of marines, consisting of ten officers and 338 men, under Colonel Joseph H. Pendleton, U. S. M. C., was ordered from Panama to Nicaragua, then in the throes of a revolution that menaced the lives of American citizens and other peaceful foreigners in that country. That expeditionary force of marines had to struggle against all the handicaps of a tropical climate, dense forests and a foe that offered a good deal of stubborn resistance.

"They participated in the bombardment of Managua, the capture of the city, the surrender of General Mena and his rebel army at Granada, the surrender of the rebel gunboats

were at least 600 Mexican troops in the town, in addition to the garrison and other attaches of the naval academy there. The Mexicans have always been free and armed all the convicts in the vicinity, and there was no way of estimating the number of armed and desperate ruffians abroad.

The custom house was taken over quietly and without great difficulty by this landing force. Soon, however, the Mexican troops and civilians opened fire, and it became necessary to send reinforcements.

The fleet arrived in the harbor at 2 A. M. on April 22, and the marines and sailor battalions were immediately landed. I was in command of the marines, numbering 100 men, and Captain E. A. Anderson, U. S. N., was in command of the sailors.

The fire of the Mexicans became more intense, and on the morning of the 23d we were ordered to take Vera Cruz and drive the Mexicans out. At 7:30 we commenced to clean up the town. The battalion of marines under Major Butler, which had been sent up from the ship early in the morning and took part in the occupation of the city. The second advance base regiment, under Lieutenant-Colonel C. G. Long, arrived and was landed during the forenoon, so that we had some 2000 marines ashore, besides the sailors. About ten American ships lay in the harbor.

I don't know how fully that engagement has been reported to American readers. It was a hot fight while it lasted. The enemy was well supplied with machine guns and the house-tops were alive with snipers. It looked like a dive into a hailstorm of bullets, but we took a reef in our belts and started in.

The sailors got it worse than we did, for they started on a rush through the streets, swept by the enemy's fire, and their casualties were numerous. The marines, with their training in urban warfare, took another course. Since the open streets were dangerous we promptly decided to go through the houses and our chief weapon was the pick-ax.

The streets of Vera Cruz are lined with rows of old-fashioned houses of adobe with flat roofs and with their fronts picturesquely stained in various colors. The walls of some of them were two or three feet thick, but that did not deter us. We would place a machine gun at the end of a street to keep it clear of Mexicans and then start in at the first house and go right up the line, breaking through the walls of one house after another and cleaning each one up as we got to it.

There were Mexicans on the flat house-tops that extended the length of the street, but we sent men up to engage them from behind the parapets. This double form of attack, from in front and below, was not to their liking and we soon had them running for safe cover. When we got to a cross street we rushed across to the house on the opposite side and began again, putting Greasers as we went. It proved to be an effective method, for we cleared out our share of the town that day and in the morning's fighting we had only one man killed.

By 8 o'clock that night he had control of the town and on April 23 the whole of Vera Cruz was in the hands of the Americans, though there was a considerable sniping from the house-tops for several nights. Five lives were lost in the fighting of those two days and a number of men wounded.

Colonel J. A. Lejeune arrived and took command of all marines on shore. The town was divided into districts, with the sailors in charge of part of the town and my regiment the remainder. The two advance base regiments took charge of the outskirts, one battalion going to Tejar, where the water supply of the city was located. This was about eight miles from the city on the narrow gauge railroad.

Ten days later the army arrived, and with them another regiment of marines under command of Colonel F. J. Moses. The sailors and fleet marines then returned on board their ships, most of which remained in the harbor all summer. Colonel Waller remained about this time and took command of the marine brigade and Colonel Lejeune and Mahoney took command of the two advance base regiments. Marines took part in all the subsequent military activities incident to the American occupation, the three regiments under Colonel Waller remaining on duty with about 5000 army troops until Vera Cruz was evacuated in November. I came north in September, having won my medal of honor.

During this period other marines were watchfully waiting on the west coast. Colonel Pendleton arrived at the port of San Francisco, and the fourth regiment of the marine base at Mare Island, Cal., and embarked on the South Dakota, West Virginia and Jupiter for duty off the Mexican coast, but conditions did not require a landing.

In operations of this sort the marines are generally given two chief duties to perform. Because of their mobility and training they are usually the first to make a landing and pave the way for the soldiers or sailors, and this skirmish work requires speed, energy and resourcefulness. It is difficult, perhaps, for the civilian to picture such a situation as long as he has not had the experience of the marines. The ships steam into the harbor with orders to straighten out the difficulties existing on shore, to protect American lives and property and to take such action as the commanding officer judges to be necessary. But accurate information as to conditions on shore is not always available. The strength and disposition of the enemy or the trouble makers is not definitely known. So marines are landed to make the necessary reconnaissance. They proceed unflinchingly in the face of the unknown, confident of their ability to do what marines have done before. Often this reconnaissance is sufficient to quell the disturbance and the report goes back to Washington, "The marines have landed and have the situation well in hand." Those few words may cover a tale of bloodshed as thrilling as a page of Dumas, but all the American news-

paper reader knows is that Uncle Sam's policemen have again somehow managed to break up one of those bouffé disorders somewhere south of Key West and he goes to bed with a sense of security undisturbed.

Thus the marines are landed, and when the situation is well in hand they proceed to the second of their duties, which is that of provost and patrol work. Naval and army officers have learned by experience that the one can do that like the marines and the marines are nearly always assigned to the important, if not always glorious, task of keeping order. That is what they did in Vera Cruz during the summer of 1914. And it is not merely the fractious native that needs restraint; Jack ashore is often a troublesome handful. The sailor will fight the soldier who interferes with his liberties, but he will usually submit to arrest at the hands of a marine without resistance, for the marine is his brother-in-arms. The sailor calls the marine a leatherneck, but he loves him just the same.

When the war broke out in Europe in August, 1914, the United States marines were not among those who were slumbering in perilous unpreparedness. They were busy on both coasts of Mexico, two regiments were in Santo Domingo and Haiti and the whole corps was mobilized and growing. During that same year, 1914, Colonel Charles A. Doyne had the fifth regiment of marines under arms on board the transport Hancock, which remained in Santo Domingo waters until December, during a period of lawlessness and an unfortunate island. Again, in April, 1916, marines were sent down to Santo Domingo and cleaned out the rebels with the loss of several officers and men. Colonel Pendleton was placed in command of a brigade of marines which established a sort of military protectorate over the government of the island.

A similar expedition was sent to Haiti in the summer of 1915 under General Walter. He landed with a brigade of marines in the midst of one of the most serious revolutions in the history of the United States. He discovered that the northern part of the island was in the hands of bandit chieftains who used the people for their own ends and the government was powerless to restore order. It appeared necessary to wipe out these robber barons and Walter did it. The war was still there at this writing, having formed the Haitian constabulary of natives under officers of the United States marines.

Both Santo Domingo and Haiti were clean jobs, well done. Doubtless some of the marines down there would give a year's pay to let the boys in France, but a marine learns his duty is duty, whether he is picked to serve as a runner under fire on the Marne or is faced to serve as an officer at a marine headquarters in Washington. It's all in his day's work.

(To be continued next Sunday.)

FLORIDA PHOSPHATE MINES

(Continued From First Page.)

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