

WITH LAWTON AT EL CANEY.¹

BY FRANK NORRIS.



PHOTOGRAPHED BY HOLLINGER & CO.

MAJOR-GENERAL WILLIAM R. SHAFTER, U. S. A.

THE regiment whose fortunes I had elected to follow, and, incidentally, whose rations I had hoped to share, had landed and gone on ahead the day before. I delayed in Daiquiri only long enough to readjust my pack,

then pushed on after it. At Siboney I caught up with it, rolling on the grass and kicking its heels under a grove of cocoanut-palms, after the long days of cramped quarters on shipboard. For a week or more nothing extraordinary happened. We marched and countermarched, broke camp

¹ For General Shafter's personal account of "The Capture of Santiago," see the February CENTURY.—EDITOR.

and pitched it. One morning we heard sounds of firing off in the hills, and ten hours later knew that Guasimas had been fought. Then we moved forward by easy marches to a point on the Santiago road about three miles south of El Pozo. For three days we lay there, trying to keep dry, and devising new methods of frying mangoes in bacon-grease. Brigades and whole divisions went on ahead of us in such numbers that, instead of being in the lead, we found ourselves in the rear. Already there were rumors of a surrender, and we began to believe that there would be no fighting around Santiago after all.

Then all at once every man in the brigade seemed to understand that on the morrow there was going to be a battle. For the first time we heard a new name. Somebody had pronounced the word "Caney."

When Capron's battery came along the bugles began to call. At five in the afternoon the brigade (it was Ludlow's) moved off in the battery's wake. By the time it was fairly dark the column had begun to climb the slopes of the foot-hills that encircle Santiago. The column, consisting of Lawton's division, went forward through the night by fits and starts, now doubling when the word was passed back to close up, now halting in mud up to its legging-tops, for no assignable reason, now moving forward at snail's pace, and now breaking up completely, when the tired men eased belt and blanket-roll and dropped into the drenched grass by the roadside for a moment's rest. The march had not been long, but it had been wearisome; for on Cuban trails the men must march in single file, and the column is always elongating or contracting. No two companies went the same gait; there was none of the swing and heave of marching that on better roads picks a man up like an undertow and carries him along in spite of all fatigue.

There was no talking in the ranks, but on ahead we could hear the battery trundling along. Then there was the monotonous squash of many boots churning up the mud of the road, the click of swinging cups against bayonet scabbards, the indefinable murmur of a moving army that recalls the noise of the sea or of forests. There was a moon somewhere, but rather low as yet. To our left, far down the valley, was a cluster of pin-points in a faint white glow as of a nebula. Santiago was there, and from mountain-top to mountain-top the Spanish signal-fires were flashing.

VOL. LVIII.—36.

We went into camp toward ten o'clock, under orders to light no fires, nor even pipes, and to talk no louder than a whisper. One wondered at this until, some half-hour later, when we were eating our supper of hardtack, cold bacon, and water, we heard through the silence the long-drawn *centinela alerta* of the enemy's pickets, not a quarter of a mile away. By the time we turned in we knew that the battery would open fire upon the town of El Caney, which lay to the front of us, at daybreak the following morning. The next morning, when I looked in the direction in which our field-guns were pointing, Caney was plainly visible—red roofs, a white wall or two, the twin towers of the church, a blockhouse of unusual size on a sugar-loaf knoll just outside the town, and, yes, on its one salient tower a flame-colored tongue of bunting, the flag of Spain. By five o'clock Capron's battery was astir. Overnight the guns had been placed in position, and by the time we had gulped our breakfast the battery lieutenants were pottering about with their little brass range-finders and getting the distance of the blockhouse by triangulation. The four guns stood out upon the crest of the hill, the caissons in the rear, the horses picketed in the bushes farther down the slope, while the soldiers who were the support of the battery, the Cuban camp-followers, and the correspondents formed a great crowd back of the caissons.

It was about sunrise, and the range-finding was still going on, when I happened to turn my glasses upon an open meadow on the left of the town. Cavalry at a slow trot was moving there, leaving the town. I told the news to the man at my elbow, and in a twinkling all the battery knew it. But the commanding officer could not see the cavalry, nor could his lieutenants, and while we pointed and danced with impatience the troops slowly passed out of sight behind a hill. The range-finding was resumed. In all the landscape below us there was no sign of a human being—nothing but trees, open fields, the red roofs of Caney, and the flame-colored flag on the blockhouse.

Suddenly there was a noise which split the silence of the early tropic morning. It began as corn begins to pop, irregularly and with pauses. Then it gathered volume and rippled and rolled and spread till it awoke a great echo somewhere up in a little gully of the hills. Every one cried out at the same time. We knew that Ludlow had opened on the left. The firing of rifles on the battle-field is not loud; it is not even sharp when heard

at a distance. The rifles sputter, as hot grease sputters, the shots leaping after one another in straggling sequence, sometimes in one-two-three order, like the ticking of a clock, sometimes rushing confusedly together, and sometimes dropping squarely in the midst of an interval of silence, always threatening to stop, yet never quite stopping; or again coming off in isolated rolls when volley-firing is the order. But little by little the sputtering on our left gathered strength, and settled down at length to steady hammer-and-tongs work.

"There they are! Look, quick, there they are again! See 'em over there!" shouted an artillery sergeant standing on a caisson, with his glasses to his eyes. The cavalry column was emerging from behind a line of hills, and this time everybody, the officer in command as well, made them out. Capron shelled the column. I confess to a certain amount of surprise and a little disappointment. I had imagined the handling of a battery in actual battle to be more business-like, that the orders would be given with more precision. The captain was on foot, his coat and waistcoat were off, and at every movement he hitched his suspenders over his shoulders. The men did not hurry in serving the guns. They went to the caissons, groped among the ammunition, and talked excitedly while they were cutting the fuses. It was something like this:

"Where are those beggars?" This was from the captain, holding his field-glasses to his eyes with one hand and hitching up his suspenders with the other.

"There, there! Don't you see them, in line with those palms; don't you see, right where I'm pointing!"

"That's so! Now, men, hurry up—with shrapnel now! That's about twenty-six hundred yards; hurry up, now! What are you waiting for? What's the trouble? They'll be out of sight in a minute. *Everybody stop talking!* Everybody that does n't belong to the battery get back!"

The shells were locked into the breeches, the pieces aimed, and one after another the gunners jumped to one side after sighting, and all down the line one could hear: "Number three, ready!" "Number two, ready!" "Number one, ready!" "Number four, ready!"

Meanwhile the captain had gone to one side, studying the town and the moving column through his glasses; everybody was talking at once, and the correspondents and an attaché or two were dodging in and out, note-books and kodaks in hand.

"What's the matter?" cried the captain, angrily. "Why don't you begin?"

"All ready here, sir. Number four, ready!"

"Well, fire it, then! Go ahead!"

"Number four, ready!" began the lieutenant. "Fire!"

After the report came a piercing, ear-shattering sound as the shell took the air and tore across the valley. All of us went tumbling to the left of the battery's position, to get out of the way of the smoke and to see the explosion when the shell should burst. There was a silence for about ten seconds, while a hundred eyes watched the moving column and the mass of green bush and hill and pale-blue sky above it. Then suddenly a little ball of white cotton popped out against the blue of the distant landscape; the crowd relaxed its breath.

"Too high!"

"What's the matter with you fellows?" shouted the captain. "You're a hundred yards too high. Is number two ready? Go ahead and shoot! I want to tear 'em all up! I want 'em cut *all to pieces!*"

Numbers two and three fired, and then number one, and by the time the dense curtain of white smoke thinned we could see that the range had been found and the column was scattered and galloping. Twice more the battery fired, but it was only at the spot where the column had been. We began to hear the sputtering of rifles again, this time on the right, where Chaffee's brigade was moving toward the Santiago road. To the left, where Ludlow was, the sputtering was fiercer than ever, till soon there was a continuous, nervous ripple of discharges, extending across the entire front of our line. We began to look at one another and nod our heads.

"By Jove, it's getting hot down there!"

"Look! there they are, firing from the blockhouse—the big one on the hill. I *knew* that so long as the flag was up, there would be troops there!"

A faint blue haze was curling up from the summit of the hill just below the blockhouse.

"Now, then!" cried the captain. "At the blockhouse, at twenty-four hundred yards, with percussion-shell!"

An interval of scrambling and confusion ensued, then one by one: "Number four, ready!" "Number one, ready!" "Number two, ready!"

"Here, what's the matter with you men? Is n't number three ready?"

"Number three, ready!"

"Fire number four, there!"

"Number four, ready! Fire!"

Such gunnery as we witnessed that morning I never again expect to see equaled. It could not be surpassed, for it was well-nigh perfect. Not only did the gunners reach the blockhouse whenever they pleased, but they reached whichever corner or angle they picked out beforehand. The first one or two shots went wide; then the shells began to creep in closer and closer, and great fountains of brown earth spouted from the location of the trenches and rifle-pits, and pinwheels of smoke, mortar-dust, brick, and stone whirled off the surface of the fort as the great projectiles struck. With every successful shot the crowd of watchers on the hilltop cheered. And now the flag was down.

"Look out, now!" cried the battery captain. "There 'll probably be a man come out to set it up again; get him with shrapnel if you can."

A man did come out; we could see him dodge from an embrasure around an angle of the fort.

"He 'll be on top in a minute; get him now with shrapnel. Who 's ready there? Whichever gun is ready, fire!"

Number four fired. The shell was still screaming when we caught sight of the man scrambling upon the ledge of the blockhouse near the broken staff. Then, right over the fort, right over the staff, and over the Spanish soldier's head, the little ball of white cotton leaped into view. "Got him!" shouted the entire battery, as the bursting shrapnel wiped the man from the wall of the blockhouse as a sponge would wipe a slate. Still the Spaniards hung on. To one new to the grim game that was being played that day at El Caney it did not appear credible that men in their senses would endure and endure and endure, in those rifle-pits, under the bursting shells. Had the fire been wild, had a few shells missed the mark, had there been a chance of escape, we should have marveled less; but we knew—could, in fact, see—that of every six shells the battery fired, five went straight to the mark, exploding in the very trenches themselves. We shall remember these Spanish soldiers of El Caney, for not until late in the afternoon, after ten hours of intermittent shelling, did they finally consent to leave—what was left of them.

Meanwhile the battle went forward. Again and again we searched the valley with our field-glasses for moving troops, but all to no effect. The enemy was close within

his fort and blockhouses; our brigades kept under cover. The valley was empty of life. Toward high noon and the heat of the day the unexpected happened. The fire slackened and ceased. It was time for lunch, and for upward of two hours the fight waited on the camp-fire. The men would fight; also they must be fed.

It was along toward three in the afternoon that we first made out our troops—a part of Ludlow's brigade, no doubt,—a dozen tiny specks scattered out in an irregular line in a grain-field, moving across it by degrees, stopping now and then to fire. They were far off, and were soon gone from view, but the sight of them sent the blood galloping through the veins and made us draw our breath more quickly. Then far to the left more specks in an opening between the trees, running about like excited ants, advancing always, while the sputtering came suddenly to a great climax and ran from end to end of our lines, from right and left and back again, like the current over a live wire. The battery held its fire now; our men were too close to the enemy. The end was beginning, and the lines that all day long had been moving in toward Caney and its fort began suddenly to concentrate.

The crowd on the hill around the battery was beyond all control now; it surged forward to the crest of the hill, swarming over cannon and caisson, taking possession of every elevation, eager to see the last move in the game, and it shouted and talked aloud regardless of answer. A German count, an attaché of legation, wrangled with a company cook over a question of distance; a brigade commander asked meek questions of a private standing on an upturned cracker-box; colonels, majors, correspondents, soldiers, Cubans, photographers, crowded together, rubbing elbows, gesticulating, advancing opinions, contradicting one another, all beside themselves in the tension of the moment.

Then suddenly the charge began, full in view now, far off at the base of the sugar-loaf hill with its battered, shrapnel-shattered blockhouse. There they were, our soldiers, our men, crowding forward, crowding upward, the moving specks converging into a mass, a great wedge-shaped mass that pushed up and up and up the slope of the hill. We could hear them cheering, so at least we thought, and we ourselves cheered—no, it was not cheering; we yelled inarticulately, just a primitive bellow of exultation, an echo of the stone age!

The blockhouse was taken by the assault, but the town still held on, and far to the left the rifles were yet talking. At once the battery moved forward, followed by its supporting regiment. But I went on ahead as fast as my little horse could carry me, left him with the Cuban guide in a grove of cocoanut-palms, and following in the wake of the charge, climbed the sugar-loaf hill and gained the blockhouse and its lines of rifle-pits. The blockhouse was a horror, the trenches beyond description. The first Spaniard I saw was lying at the bottom of a trench. He was a young fellow,—they were all young fellows,—his face the color of wax; one poor, dirty hand hooked like a buzzard's claw; his arm was doubled under him, and—but the rest is not for words. A bullet-wound is one thing, but shrapnel smashes its man, flings him down, and drives and dints him into the dirt. The dead were everywhere; they were in the trenches, in the fields of pineapple, in corners of the blockhouse, and in grisly postures half-way down the slope of the hill. The air was full of smells—the smell of stale powder, of smoke, of a horse's carcass two days unburied, of shattered lime and plaster in the blockhouse, and the strange, acrid, salty smell of blood. Our soldiers set about burying the dead and carrying off the wounded, and we turned our attention to the town.

El Caney lay, a spread of red-tiled, fluted roofs, surmounted by a cathedral tower just on the other side of a deep gully where ran a stream. On its outskirts there was a blockhouse or two. At first glance the town looked deserted; a solitary, unperturbed white mule nosed calmly in his fodder in a courtyard by the church. But while we looked, a woman and two men, not soldiers, came to the door of one of the cottages. At that time I stood on the slope of the hill below the blockhouse with a corporal, five enlisted men, and a San Francisco correspondent. We called to these people of the town to come out and come over to us, and, in what little Spanish we knew, told them we were *amigos*. They came hesitatingly, stopping and calling every five steps, then, gaining confidence, came boldly out of the town, the woman carrying a bundle on her head. In five minutes the town was alive with people, men, women, and little naked pot-bellied children, who came pouring out from every door and every street, forming in one long line and filing up toward us upon the hillside. Most of them were women trembling on the verge of hysteria. Such as were not half crazed were stupefied, gazing

slowly about them with unseeing eyes, permitting themselves to be herded like so many sheep. Some few were crying; one, who was choking with sobs, was at the same time eating sardines from a tin as fast as she could handle the fork, and with no consciousness of what she was doing. The children were for the most part intensely amused, excited, but very interested and pleased. For them it was a new kind of picnic. But there was plenty of misery among these people. A beautiful woman, whose husband, a Cuban, had been killed by one of our shells, was filling the air with her cries, sobbing and groaning and biting her hands in her excess of grief, till it broke one's heart to listen to her. An old woman of sixty-five, hardly able to walk, was carrying, by means of her wrists drawn over her shoulders like the draw-strings of a grain-sack, another woman of surely more than ninety, a woman so old as to be blind and deaf and all but senseless. She was in her sleeping-gown, just as she had been hurried from her bed, which perhaps she had not left for years.

We hurried on, crossed the gully and stream, and entered the town. The corporal was under orders to look for Spanish soldiers, wounded and otherwise, who might still be in hiding. It was not work that six men should have been detailed to do, and looking back upon the affair, I see that we correspondents were foolhardy in going along. We found the houses still intact; our batteries had shelled the trenches, but not the village. We cocked our revolvers and went through the narrow, deserted lanes and streets and into the larger houses, the jail, the hospital, the church, the mayor's residence, and into most of the houses on the plaza. It was uncanny work to let one's self unbidden into these houses, pushing open the street door and entering the dark and silent interiors, with unfamiliar furnishings and strange smells, never knowing what we should find across the next threshold. In the mayor's house I came suddenly upon the body of a plain-looking girl, lying on the floor, her hair across her face like a drift of seaweed. She had not been shot; she had been stabbed! Some dead we found, men who had crawled away in corners to die. In one of the larger buildings on the plaza we found some forty wounded men with no fight left in them, one of them a most pitiable object. Two Spanish soldiers in a blockhouse, and unhurt, gave themselves up to me, thinking perhaps that I was some sort of officer. I had them

walk in front of me, and allowed myself a full breath only when I was once more under the cover of our own rifles. Afterward I saw one of them in the stockade at Siboney. We recognized each other simultaneously, and shook hands as old friends, across the barbed wire, genuinely glad to meet again.

It was growing dark when we regained the blockhouse, and the brigades were on the move again. We were afraid lest we should miss our horses and the Cuban guide in the darkness and the crowd, and worked our way back to them. Then in the twilight we marched on through a wild confusion of regiments, companies, and brigades, and litter-bearers carrying the dead and wounded, to join the regiment to which we had been assigned, and which had gone on three miles down the Santiago road.

And then upon that day of many sensations a curious thing occurred. Our army had won a victory, had fought from dawn to dark and had defeated the enemy. It was

the time for triumph, for exultation. Instead of that, a feeling of depression lay upon us, and upon the soldiers with whom we were marching. There was no great talk. It was a sorrowful army marching through the twilight after victory. At a turn of the road, just before it got very dark, I came upon a brigade adjutant. We knew each other only slightly, yet for some reason we gripped hands, so glad to see each other that the right words would not come, and standing in the mud of the road, talked until the marching troops, like an onrushing current, forced us apart; even then we waved good-by to each other across the maze of shouldered rifles. It was dark now. The army was moving to new positions; artillery was trundling heavily on the road; the clicking of cups and scabbards was like the chirp of a vast swarm of crickets. Somewhere off to the southward heavy guns were speaking at lazy intervals. It was ten o'clock at night when we again set our faces toward Santiago.

OUT OF DOORS IN TEXAS.

BY E. S. NADAL,

Author of "Notes of a Professional Exile," etc.



ON the cold spring morning on which, years ago, I started by stage from Abilene to San Angelo, it had been raining all night. One of the fiercest storms peculiar to those latitudes had attacked the country, and left it in a damaged condition. A chill and mournful wind, which fortunately was on our backs and not in our faces, was blowing from the north. The stage had a high seat outside for the driver, which on this occasion I did not venture to share with him. Inside it was a kind of covered carryall, with two seats facing each other, and had, for curtains, flaps which could be rolled up in good weather, but were of course now down. I was the only occupant, although I should rather have liked a passenger or two, my sense of the loneliness of the journey being increased by the fact that the stage had been robbed some seven times within the past two months. I half rolled up one of the blinds so that I could see out. The journey got more and more monotonous as the stage advanced. The cold wind that blew from the north was monoto-

nous, as was the leaden sky which everywhere overhung the vast landscape. The country was slightly rolling, and I think you get an impression of greater vastness from a slightly rolling than from a perfectly flat country. The wide tops of the knolls, to which the immense pastures ascend with a slight swell and a long, resistless sweep like that of the sea, are points by which to measure the country. The few horses and cattle which you see grazing far and near (the distant ones, for some reason, appear to be of unusual height) serve the same purpose. The characteristics of the scenery are monotonous. You pass wide spaces in which there is scarcely anything but grass and cactus. The only tree is the mesquit, which is, to speak roughly, about as big as a peach-tree. You pass miles and miles of these, every sixth or seventh tree containing among its branches a dark-green sphere of mistletoe about a foot in diameter. The pastures, filled with the mesquit-trees, look not unlike peach-orchards. The country thus has an appearance of cultivation, and this fact, taken together with your knowledge that it lies just