

Story of The Fighting Tenth

Continuation of Major Frank Keck's History of the Tenth, as Published in the New York Sun.

The Tenth, as the need for fighting grew less, took on more of the functions of mounted police and yet, such was the pride of tradition, war service was the ideal that was always uppermost in the minds of every member. Many of the original recruits remained as long as the Government would let them, for they hated to retire. So it was that the Tenth in peace had in reserve its deadly efficiency, and it went into the Spanish war with veteran officers and many a grizzled sergeant who was himself a tower of strength.

It seems only yesterday that there rang through the country the call for us to take up arms against the power of Spain. I was a captain in the Seventy-first New York and, when war was declared, was made junior major. Standing a few days ago in the armory of the Seventy-first, talking with the officers and watching the signs of preparation for departure to the border, there came to me vividly the scenes of haste and anxiety and work which preceded the fighting on Cuban soil. If in spite of two years' talk about preparedness, the militia is not now equipped for service in the field, what was it in 1898, when the National Guard set forth with antiquated arms to meet a foe on foreign soil?

Not so with the Tenth, which is ever ready for fight or frolic. When orders came for it to move it was mostly at Fort Keogh in Montana. It went

to Chickamauga and then to the camps in Florida.

When the time came for it to join our forces which were to invade Cuba it left all animals behind. The lack of transportation and the fact, then reported, that the country about Santiago was too rough for horses, sent the Tenth to battle as dismounted cavalry. There were horses with troop M, which made a daring landing in Cuba under Second Lieut. C. P. Johnson and joined the army of General Gomez, the revolutionary leader, but the Tenth as a whole ceased to be centaurs. To the well disciplined and adaptable troopers this was no drawback, for every unit of the command has initiative which overrides routine and custom.

The movement of the American forces in Cuba was beset by many difficulties. It is not my purpose, at this late day, to write in any spirit of carping criticism; yet I feel that, owing to the spectacular leadership of one volunteer organization, the Tenth has never had full recognition from the public for its work in Cuba, although no meed of official praise has ever been withheld, as the records of the war department show.

The achievements of the Tenth were the admiration of foreign military observers who accompanied our expedition, and they were impartial witnesses. They did not hesitate to assert their belief that the dismounted Colored troopers were the very backbone of the American attack.

Certain it is that the Tenth got the rough riders out of a bad hole at Las Guasimas. Their timely arrival avoided a greater disaster to the Rough Riders in the first land engagement near Santiago.

The charge of the Tenth up the steep and tangled slope of San Juan Hill will always have a place in the military annals of the world. That

exploit was a big moment of American history. One of the strong features of the conduct of the Tenth at San Juan was its fine sense of discipline, of self-control, and its exhibition of repression under the most trying conditions.

It kept raw troops from firing on their comrades in the distance, for the Tenth was used to wars of ambush. What an example of obedience was that when, for an hour and a quarter, one of its troops stood within sight of the Spaniards at a spot where the enemy had the exact range and never fired a shot so that they might not risk the lives of other American soldiers.

Note the sight, too, of a gray haired sergeant of the Tenth leading troops,

for the mortality among commissioned officers was high, and, as cool as a cucumber, posting his men, calling each by name.

(To be continued next issue.)

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