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The Landing of the Army

THERE are three places in the West Indies where Columbus is said to have first landed; one of them is at Santiago. Some hundreds of years from now there will probably be a great dispute as to where the American troops first landed when they came to drive the Spaniard across the sea and to establish the republic of Cuba. There were two "first landings" of the army of invasion; but before it came to Cuba soldiers of the regular army were put ashore at Arbolitas Point when they acted as an escort to the Gussie expedition. On this occasion a Spanish lieutenant and several of his soldiers were killed, and on the American side a correspondent was shot through the arm. Still another landing was made before the regulars came in force, this time by marines, at Guantanamo Bay; and as they established a camp there and remained on shore, the credit of first raising the American flag on Cuban soil, and of keeping it in its place, belongs to them and through them to the navy. The first American flag raised temporarily was put up on a block-house near Cardenas by Lieutenant Miller, also of the navy.

When the army came at last, sixteen thousand strong, in thirty-one transports, and with an escort of fourteen warships, it made two landings: a preliminary one on June 20th, when only twenty people went ashore at Aserradero, and on June 22d at Baiquiri, when all through the day there was a continuous going and coming of shore-boats from the transports, each carrying from twenty to thirty men, and following after each other as swiftly as cable cars on Broadway.

The preliminary landing was made by General Shafter and Admiral Sampson without any escort or protection from United States troops. They landed to confer with General Garcia, and had the three commanders been captured by the Spaniards and cut off from their ships, the conduct of the war might have been considerably altered. As it was, the long-boat, in which General Shafter and Admiral Sampson were rowed from the ship, was met at the shore by a mounted force of Cuban officers, who gave them their protection. It was one of the most striking pictures of the war, and one of the most dramatic ever witnessed in any part of the world. The sun was blazing over a brilliant blue sea, great grim mountains rose straight before us, and at the edge of the water a grove of cocoanut-palms made a background for the Cuban troops. As the blue-jackets drove the long boat toward the shore, the Cubans dashed into the water up to their waists and came toward us, cheering and shouting, and the officers on horseback surrounded the boat, splashing and churning up the water, and saluting the two men whose coming meant for them the freedom and independence of their island.

The landing in force took place the second day after this at nine o'clock in the morning. All we had been told was that the landing would take place at daybreak, and at that hour we woke to find the transports drawn up in their usual disorder opposite the town of Nueva Salamanca, which lies eighteen miles east of Santiago. Just above this village is the river Baiquiri, and it was this river and not the town that gave its name to the landing-place. We watched the landing from the docks of the Seguranca, the headquarters ship of the transports

which carried General Shafter, and which, in order that he might the better direct the landing, was the ship that ran in closest to the shore. To better understand what followed, the reader might know what we did not know, the plan of operations as it was prepared beforehand. The full plot is given in the bulletin from the flagship New York, issued on the day before the landing, which the newspapers have already frequently printed. Some of its most important orders were as follows:

NORTH ATLANTIC STATION,
U. S. FLAGSHIP NEW YORK (1st Rate),

Off Santiago de Cuba, June 21, 1898.

Order of Battle.

1.—The Army Corps will land tomorrow morning, the entire force landing at Baiquiri. The landing will begin at daylight, or as soon thereafter as practicable. General Castillo, with a thousand men coming from the eastward of Baiquiri, will assist in clearing the way for an unopposed landing, by flanking out the Spanish forces at that point.

2.--Simultaneously with the shelling of the beach and blockhouses at Baiquiri, the Ensenada de los Altares, and Aguadores, both to the eastward of Santiago, and the small Bay of Cabanas, about two and one-half miles to the westward of Santiago, will be shelled by the ships stationed there for that purpose.

3.--A feint in force of landing at Cabanas will be made, about ten of the transports, the last to disembark their forces at Baiquiri, remaining during the day, or greater part of the day, about two miles to the southward of Cabanas, lowering boats and making apparent preparations for disembarking; a large body of troops; at the same time General Rabi with 500 Cuban troops will make a demonstration on the west side of Cabanas.

4.--The following vessels are assigned to bombard the four points mentioned above:

At Cabanas, the Scorpion, Vixen, and Texas.

At Aguadores, the Eagle and Gloucester.

At Ensenada de los Altares, the Hornet, Helena, and Bancroft.

At Baiquiri, the Detroit, Castine, Wasp, and New Orleans, the Detroit and Castine on the westward flank, the Wasp and New Orleans on the eastern flank. All the vessels named will be in their position at daylight.

6.--The Texas and Brooklyn will exchange blockading stations, the Texas going inside to be near Cabanas. The Brooklyn, Massachusetts, Iowa, and Oregon will retain their blockading positions, and will keep a vigilant watch on the harbor mouth. The Indiana will take the New Orleans's position in the blockading line east of Santiago, and between the flagship New York and the shore. This is only a temporary assignment for the Indiana, to strengthen the blockading line during the landing, and avoid any possibility of the enemy's breaking through should he attempt to get out of the port.

7.--The Suwanee, Osceola, and Wompatuck will be prepared to tow boats. Each will be provided with two five- or six inch lines, one on each quarter; each long enough to take in tow a dozen or more boats.

8.--These vessels will report at the New York at 3.30 AM on June 22nd, prepared to take in tow the ships' boats which are to assist in the landing of troops and convey them to Baiquiri.

9.—The Texas, Brooklyn, Massachusetts, Iowa, Oregon, New York, and Indiana will send all their steam-cutters and all their pulling boats, with the exception of one retained on board each ship, to assist in the landing. These boats will report at the New York at 3.00 a. m.

10.—Each boat, whaleboat, and cutter will have three men; each launch five men, and each steam-cutter its full crew and an officer for their own management. In addition to these men, each boat will carry five men, including one capable of acting as coxswain to manage and direct the transports' boats. Each steam-launch will be in charge of an officer, who will report to Captain Goodrich. Care will be taken in the selection of boat-keepers and coxswains, to take no men who are gun-pointers or who occupy positions of special importance at the battery.

The attention of Commanding Officers of all vessels engaged in blockading Santiago de Cuba is earnestly called to the necessity of the utmost vigilance from this time forward—both as to maintaining stations and readiness for action, and as to keeping a close watch upon the harbor mouth. If the Spanish Admiral ever intends to attempt to escape, that attempt will be made soon.

WILLIAM T. SAMPSON, Rear Admiral, Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Naval Force, North Atlantic Station.

At Baiquiri are the machine-shops and ore-dock of the Spanish-American Iron Company. The ore-dock runs parallel with the coastline, and back of it are the machine-shop and the company's corrugated zinc-shacks and rows of native huts thatched with palm-leaves. Behind these rise the mountains, and on a steep and lofty spur is a little Spanish blockhouse with a flagpole beside it. As the sun rose and showed this to the waiting fleet it is probable that every one of the thousands of impatient soldiers had the same thought, that the American flag must wave over that blockhouse before the sun sank again.

The morning broke cool and clear. There was no sign of life in the village, and, except that the machine-shop and one of a long row of ore-cars on the ore-pier were on fire and blazing briskly, we would have thought that the place was deserted. Until nine o'clock nothing happened, and then from Siboney came the first sounds of bombardment. It is probable that to ninety percent of the soldiers it was the first shot they had ever heard fired in anger. There was another long wait while the launches sped from ship to ship with shore-boats rocking in tow on cable behind them, and in time they were filled, but not without much mirth and a few accidents.

It was delightful to see the fine scorn of the coxswains as the "doughboys" fell and jumped and tumbled from the gangway ladder into the heaving boats, that dropped from beneath them like a descending elevator or rose suddenly and threw them on their knees. It was much more dangerous than anyone imagined, for later in the day when two men of the Twenty-fifth Regiment were upset at the pier, the weight of the heavy cartridge-belt and haversack and blanket-roll carried them to the bottom. Soon the sea was dotted with rows of white boats filled with men bound about with white blanket-rolls and with muskets at all angles, and as they rose and fell on the water and the newspaper yachts and transports crept in closer and closer, the scene was strangely suggestive of a boat-race, and one almost waited for the starting gun.

It came at last, though in a different spirit, from the New Orleans, and in an instant the Detroit, the Castine, and the little Wasp were enveloped in smoke. The valleys sent back the reports of the guns in long thundering echoes that reverberated again and again, and the mountainside began at once to spurt up geysers of earth and branches of broken bushes, as though someone had stabbed it with a knife and the blood had spurted from the wound. But there were no answering shots, and under the cover of the smoke the longboats and launches began to

scurry toward the shore. Meanwhile, the warships kept up their fierce search for hidden batteries, tearing off the tin roofs of the huts, dismantling the blockhouses, and sending the thatched shacks into bonfires of flame. The men in the boats pulled harder at the oars, the steam-launches rolled and pitched, tugging at the weight behind them, and the first convoy of five hundred men were soon bunched together, racing bow by bow for the shore. A launch turned suddenly and steered for a long pier under the ore-docks, and the waves lifted it to the level of the pier, and a half-dozen men leaped through the air and landed on the pierhead, waving their muskets above them. At the same moment two of the other boats were driven through the surf to the beach itself, and the men tumbled out and scrambled to their feet upon the shore of Cuba. In an instant a cheer rose faintly from the shore, and more loudly from the war-ships. It was caught up by every ship in the transport fleet, and was carried for miles over the ocean. Men waved their hats, and jumped up and down, and shrieked as though they themselves had been the first to land, and the combined cheering seemed as though it must surely reach to the walls of Santiago and tell the enemy that the end was near. But the cheers were whispers to what came later, when, outlined against the sky, we saw four tiny figures scaling the sheer face of the mountain up the narrow trail to the highest blockhouse—they were bunched together there for a moment at the side of the Spanish fort, and then thousands of feet above the shore the American flag was thrown out against the sky, and the sailors on the men-of-war, the Cubans and our own soldiers in the village, the soldiers in the longboats, and those still hanging to the sides and ratlines of the troop-ships, shouted and cheered again, and every steam-whistle on the ocean for miles about shrieked and tooted and roared in a pandemonium of delight and pride and triumph.

Baiquiri, June 23, 1898.