

*New York Herald*  
June 28, 1898

***Rough Riders Gave Spaniards A Sample of American Pluck.***

***Instead of Falling Back When a Storm of Bullets Was Poured Into Them from Ambush, They Pushed Steadily Forward and by Sheer Grit Forced Twice Their Number to Turn and Flee When They Expected a Far Different Result***

The first report sent to you of Colonel Wood's fight was written immediately after the firing ceased. It has since been possible to obtain fuller details from a Spaniard who was in the fight and was later captured by Cubans. This prisoner said of the volunteers:

"They did not fight as other soldiers. When we fired a volley they advanced instead of going back. The more we fired the nearer they came to us. We are not used to fighting with men who act so."

This comment touches the most gratifying feature of the engagement. Five hundred volunteers, surprised in a narrow trail, successfully drove back four times their number, under a fire which killed or wounded every tenth man. This is what is called a decimating fire, and one under which, according to military tactics, troops are expected to retreat. Credit for the engagement, therefore, is all the greater, for the reason that instead of a retreat there was a steady, cool advance, which only ceased when the enemy's base had been taken and the Spaniards were seen retreating, carrying their wounded. Forty dead Spaniards have since been found.

*Aided by the Regulars*

The charge of the Tenth cavalry of regulars and the First cavalry, who, coming up by another trail, cleared a ridge upon which the enemy was intrenched, assisted equally in the repulse.

The Spaniards had selected their position with care. Two trails from Siboney approached La Quasimas like the two halves of a wishbone, the Spanish position being at the meeting point. The enemy, accordingly, was so placed that the men were able to see down the valley and cover the approach of the Americans whichever way they came.

General Young arranged to meet Colonel Wood at this spot, and as his trail was longer he started from Siboney with the regulars half an hour in advance of the volunteers. His scouts saw the Spaniards on the ridge long before those in the brush were discovered by Colonel Wood, and the losses in killed and wounded were for that reason greater among the volunteers because of the ambush, which brought them to within thirty to fifty yards of the enemy.

*Spirit of the Men*

One feature of the fight which illustrates the spirit shown by the men was that when one fellow dropped out wounded three or four others did not fall out to help him to the rear—a service which is, as a rule, the most popular. On the contrary, the wounded were left lying where they dropped, unattached except by the hospital corps.

In three cases men wounded in an arm or leg cared for others who were fatally wounded. There was no one else to help them, for no one of the volunteers who was able to shoot did anything else.

The spirit of Mr. Marshall, correspondent of the *New York Journal*, was as admirable as that of any soldier on the field. He was shot in the first firing line, and though the bullet passed within an inch of his spine and threw him into frequent and terrible convulsions, he continued in his intervals of consciousness to write his account of the fight and gave it to a wounded soldier to be forwarded to his paper.

This devotion to duty by a man who knew he was dying was as fine as any of the many courageous and inspiring deeds that occurred during the two hours of breathless desperate fighting.

### *Every Man a Hero*

The conduct of all the men in the fight cannot be overpraised. It must be remembered that not for one minute during the two hours did the strain slacken nor did the officers call a halt. The movement was fast and incessant, as at a ball match.

The ground was uneven, and the advance was impeded by vines an inch thick, trailing bushes, and cactus plants known as Spanish bayonets, which tear the flesh and clothes. Through this the men fought their way, falling, stumbling, wet with perspiration, panting for breath, but obeying Colonel Wood's commands instantly.

They disproved all that had been said in criticism of them when the organization was formed. The cowboys observed perfect discipline, and the Eastern element in Troop K, from clubs and colleges, acted with absolute coolness and intelligence.

Cowboy Rowland, from Deming, N. M., was shot through the thigh, the bullet entering at the side and going out at the back. He limped to the hospital on the trail and was told nothing could be done for him. That moment accordingly he walked to the front and crawled along on his belly, firing volleys with the rest.

Colonel Wood, who was at the front throughout the entire action, saw a trooper apparently skulking fifty feet in the rear of the firing line and ordered him sharply to advance. The boy rose, hurried forward, limping. As he took his place and raised his carbine he said: "My leg was a little stiff, sir."

Colonel Wood looked and saw that a bullet had ploughed alongside the trooper's leg for twelve inches.

One man had three bullets pass so close to him as to leave marks in three distinct places, as though a hot poker had been drawn across the flesh and blistered it.

### *Bullets Through the Flag*

Color Sergeant Wright, of Omaha, who walked close to Colonel Wood, carrying the flag, had his hair clipped in two places and his neck scorched. Three bullets passed through the flag.

Two officers standing on either side of Colonel Wood were wounded, but nothing seemed able to reach him. He was cool and deliberate always, but more concerned than his serious manner indicated when he made the move that won the fight, which was a piece of American bluff pure and simple.

The Spanish position was an old ruined distillery, shut in by impenetrable bushes. In advance of the bushes there were a hundred yards of open ground covered with high grass. At the edge of this grass Colonel Wood ordered the line to cease firing, rise and charge across. The men did so under a heavy but, fortunately, misdirected fire of the Spaniards. It looked like a skirmish line thrown out in advance of a regiment. The Spaniards could not believe so few men would advance with such confidence unless supported in force, so they turned and ran.

What had looked to the enemy like an advance line was every man Colonel Wood had at his disposal.

As the Spanish fire slackened and ceased those far on the left saw them retreating, and the men cheered—a long, parting cheer.

This was the charge led by Lieutenant Colonel Roosevelt, some twenty feet in advance, and Colonel Wood that ended the fight.

Today at the place where the two trails meet and on ground the volunteers won from the enemy were buried the bodies of nine of the volunteers.

Captain Capron was taken to the coast alive. He died at Siboney.

The bodies of the others were placed side by side in a deep grave, wrapped above and below in leaves of the royal palm. The place of each body was carefully recorded and the spot itself clearly marked.

#### *Where Heroes Are Buried*

No man could ask to lie in a more lovely place. It is the highest point. To the left the valley can be seen for many miles around. Grass grows high all about the place. The sun smiles upon it. Fresh, cool breezes sweep across unceasingly, moving great trees and royal palms so that they bend low above it.

The regiment stood in close ranks about the grave as the muffled figures were lowered gently, the chaplain calling out the names of each. He called the names of mule packer, salesman, cowboy and, last of all, Hamilton Fish, Jr., the young sergeant who was carried to the front to die, and whose watch bore the crests of Alexander Hamilton and Nicholas Fish and the motto “God will give.”

God gave him a noble death—a quick and painless death in the first rank of battle—and his comrades gave him a noble burial by the side of his men in soil they had won from an enemy and which they had died to set free.

*(Source: FultonHistory.com,*

*<http://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%2014/New%20York%20NY%20Herald/New%20York%20NY%20Herald%201898/New%20York%20NY%20Herald%201898%20-%205325.pdf>*