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### *Captured Mausers for Volunteers*

Gen. Shafter's Headquarters, July 7—To men who have studied recent fighting in Cuba there is one point that occurs constantly and with increasing weight, and that point relates to the arms of the volunteers. The Springfield, 1873, was undoubtedly a good weapon in its time and certainly it is even now a very strong shooting rifle, but if we are conducting a modern war on modern lines we may just as well understand once for all that black powder will not do.

We cannot without cruel injustice send men using black powder into action against men who use a fair grade of smokeless. If any one wishes to learn more let him ask the Seventy-first New York or the Second Massachusetts or the Thirty-third Michigan.

The last-named regiment in particular has learned all the joys of being badly cut up by a force that they have never seen—whose positions they could not even suspect.

On July 1 the regiment was ordered to march on Aguadores and make an attack, which, it was hoped, would draw off a reinforcement from the Santiago trenches and make the work easier for Wheeler, Kent and Lawton. The men were marched up the railroad track, which is the only practicable road between Siboney and Aguadores. Dense thickets were upon either side.

The action was opened by a Spanish battery, which had been placed so as to rake the railway track. This battery used smokeless powder. A moment later Spanish infantry opened a heavy fire. The infantry, too, used smokeless powder. The Thirty-third Michigan became then involved in one of those battles with specters which is so hard on the nerves of the oldest soldiers. What force was hidden in the chaparral they could not estimate. They could tell nothing save that they were losing men.

On the other hand, their position and everything that they did was always perfectly clear to the Spaniards. If they deployed a line of skirmishers to the left and opened fire the Spaniards were able not only to locate this line exactly but to estimate from the puffs of smoke how many men were engaged. In a word, the proceedings of the enemy were all shrouded in mystery, while the movements of the Americans were always hopelessly palpable. So much for the Thirty-third Michigan and black powder.

The experiences of the Seventy-first at San Juan and of the Second Massachusetts at El Caney are better known. Every time they opened fire they called down a volley from every Spanish rifle within range. It is a mistake to contend—as many of our men now do—that the Spaniards shoot well. The individual Spaniard rarely, if ever, shoots well. But two or three thousand Spaniards armed with Mausers and each man having from five hundred to a thousand cartridges at hand, are bound to hit at most everything when the enemy begins to cross open ground in their front.

It is destruction by volume of fire; not by individual accuracy. If the Americans do not cross open ground, but use black powder from the thickets, that is just as good for the Spaniards.

It is plain reasoning that we have not armed the volunteers with Krag-Jorgensens because we have not enough Krag-Jorgensens, and ordinarily there would be small use in scolding about it, but upon the fall of Santiago we should come into the possession of about ten or maybe fifteen thousand Mauser rifles in good condition and these should immediately go into the hands of our volunteers.

The Mauser is a more simple rifle than the Krag-Jorgensen and in a good many respects it is a better arm. The volunteers could learn its use easily and quickly, and in a trice their effectiveness would be increased fourfold.

At the battle of San Juan it was not unusual to see, when a regular fell, some volunteer throw away an old Springfield and possess himself of the regular's Krag-Jorgensen and ammunition. The men find out what is good for them quickly enough. They would welcome the Mausers, and it is to be hoped they will get them. If there turns out to be not enough Mauser ammunition to last them any great length of time let us set to work and make it. In war anything is justified save killing your own men through laziness or gross stupidity.