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The Rough Riders: The Return Home

TWO or three days after the surrender the cavalry division was marched back to the foothills west of El Caney, and there went into camp, together with the artillery. It was a most beautiful spot beside a stream of clear water, but it was not healthy. In fact no ground in the neighborhood was healthy. For the tropics the climate was not bad, and I have no question but that a man who was able to take good care of himself could live there all the year round with comparative impunity; but the case was entirely different with an army which was obliged to suffer great exposure, and to live under conditions which almost insured being attacked by the severe malarial fever of the country. My own men were already suffering badly from fever, and they got worse rather than better in the new camp. The same was true of the other regiments in the cavalry division. A curious feature was that the colored troops seemed to suffer as heavily as the white. From week to week there were slight relative changes, but on the average all the six cavalry regiments, the Rough Riders, the white regulars, and the colored regulars seemed to suffer about alike, and we were all very much weakened; about as much as the regular infantry, although naturally not as much as the volunteer infantry.

Yet even under such circumstances adventurous spirits managed to make their way out to us. In the fortnight following the last bombardment of the city I enlisted no less than nine such recruits, six being from Harvard, Yale, or Princeton; and Bull, the former Harvard oar, who had been back to the States crippled after the first fight, actually got back to us as a stowaway on one of the transports, bound to share the luck of the regiment, even if it meant yellow fever.

There were but twelve ambulances with the army, and these were quite inadequate for their work; but the conditions in the large field hospitals were so bad, that as long as possible we kept all of our sick men in the regimental hospital at the front. Dr. Church did splendid work, although he himself was suffering much more than half the time from fever. Several of the men from the ranks did equally well, especially a young doctor from New York, Harry Thorpe, who had enlisted as a trooper, but who was now made acting assistant-surgeon. It was with the greatest difficulty that Church and Thorpe were able to get proper medicine for the sick, and it was almost the last day of our stay before we were able to get cots for them. Up to that time they lay on the ground. No food was issued suitable for them, or for the half-sick men who were not on the doctor's list; the two classes by this time included the bulk of the command. Occasionally we got hold of a wagon or of some Cuban carts, and at other times I used my improvised pack-train (the animals of which, however, were continually being taken away from us by our superiors) and went or sent back to the sea-coast at Siboney or into Santiago itself to get rice, flour, cornmeal, oatmeal, condensed milk, potatoes, and canned vegetables. The rice I bought in Santiago; the best of the other stuff I got from the Red Cross through Mr. George Kennan and Miss Clara Barton and Dr. Lesser; but some of it I got from our own transports. Colonel Weston, the Commissary-General, as always, rendered us every service in his power. This additional and

varied food was of the utmost service, not merely to the sick but in preventing the well from becoming sick. Throughout the campaign the Division Inspector-General, Lieutenant-Colonel Garlington, and Lieutenants West and Dickman, the acting division quartermaster and commissary, had done everything in their power to keep us supplied with food; but where there were so few mules and wagons even such able and zealous officers could not do the impossible.

We had the camp policed thoroughly, and I made the men build little bunks of poles to sleep on. By July 23d, when we had been ashore a month, we were able to get fresh meat, and from that time on we fared well; but the men were already sickening. The chief trouble was the malarial fever, which was recurrent. For a few days the man would be very sick indeed; then he would partially recover, and be able to go back to work; but after a little time he would be again struck down. Every officer other than myself except one was down with sickness at one time or another. Even Greenway and Goodrich succumbed to the fever and were knocked out for a few days. Very few of the men indeed retained their strength and energy, and though the percentage actually on the sick list never got over twenty, there were less than fifty per cent. who were fit for any kind of work. All the clothes were in rags; even the officers had neither socks nor underwear. The lithe college athletes had lost their spring; the tall, gaunt hunters and cow-punchers lounged listlessly in their dog-tents, which were steaming morasses during the torrential rains, and then ovens when the sun blazed down; but there were no complaints.

Through some blunder our march from the intrenchments to the camp on the foothills, after the surrender, was made during the heat of the day; and though it was only some five miles or thereabouts, very nearly half the men of the cavalry division dropped out. Captain Llewellen had come back, and led his troop on the march. He carried a pick and shovel for one of his sick men, and after we reached camp walked back with a mule to get another trooper who had fallen out from heat exhaustion. The result was that the captain himself went down and became exceedingly sick. We at last succeeded in sending him to the States. I never thought he would live, but he did, and when I met him again at Montauk Point he had practically entirely recovered. My orderly, Henry Bardshar, was struck down, and though he ultimately recovered, he was a mere skeleton, having lost over eighty pounds.

Yellow fever also broke out in the rear, chiefly among the Cubans. It never became epidemic, but it caused a perfect panic among some of our own doctors, and especially in the minds of one or two generals and of the home authorities. We found that whenever we sent a man to the rear he was decreed to have yellow fever, whereas, if we kept him at the front, it always turned out that he had malarial fever, and after a few days he was back at work again. I doubt if there were ever more than a dozen genuine cases of yellow fever in the whole cavalry division; but the authorities at Washington, misled by the reports they received from one or two of their military and medical advisers at the front, became panic-struck, and under the influence of their fears hesitated to bring the army home, lest it might import yellow fever into the United States. Their panic was absolutely groundless, as shown by the fact that when brought home not a single case of yellow fever developed upon American soil. Our real foe was not the yellow fever at all, but malarial fever, which was not infectious, but which was certain, if the troops were left throughout the summer in Cuba, to destroy them, either killing them outright, or weakening them so that they would have fallen victims to any disease that attacked them.

However, for a time our prospects were gloomy, as the Washington authorities seemed determined that we should stay in Cuba. They unfortunately knew nothing of the country nor of the circumstances of the army, and the plans that were from time to time formulated in the Department (and even by an occasional general or surgeon at the front) for the management of

the army would have been comic if they had not possessed such tragic possibilities. Thus, at one period it was proposed that we should shift camp every two or three days. Now, our transportation, as I have pointed out before, was utterly inadequate. In theory, under the regulations of the War Department, each regiment should have had at least twenty-five wagons. As a matter of fact our regiment often had none, sometimes one, rarely two, and never three; yet it was better off than any other in the cavalry division. In consequence it was impossible to carry much of anything save what the men had on their backs, and half of the men were too weak to walk three miles with their packs. Whenever we shifted camp the exertion among the half-sick caused our sick-roll to double next morning, and it took at least three days, even when the shift was for but a short distance, before we were able to bring up the officers' luggage, the hospital spare food, the ammunition, etc. Meanwhile the officers slept wherever they could, and those men who had not been able to carry their own bedding, slept as the officers did. In the weak condition of the men the labor of pitching camp was severe and told heavily upon them. In short, the scheme of continually shifting camp was impossible of fulfilment. It would merely have resulted in the early destruction of the army.

Again, it was proposed that we should go up the mountains and make our camps there. The palm and the bamboo grew to the summits of the mountains, and the soil along their sides was deep and soft, while the rains were very heavy, much more so than immediately on the coast—every mile or two inland bringing with it a great increase in the rainfall. We could, with much difficulty, have got our regiments up the mountains, but not half the men could have got up with their belongings; and once there it would have been an impossibility to feed them. It was all that could be done, with the limited number of wagons and mule-trains on hand, to feed the men in the existing camps, for the travel and the rain gradually rendered each road in succession wholly impassable. To have gone up the mountains would have meant early starvation.

The third plan of the Department was even more objectionable than either of the others. There was, some twenty-five miles in the interior, what was called a high interior plateau, and at one period we were informed that we were to be marched thither. As a matter of fact, this so-called high plateau was the sugar-cane country, where, during the summer, the rainfall was prodigious. It was a rich, deep soil, covered with a rank tropic growth, the guinea-grass being higher than the head of a man on horseback. It was a perfect hotbed of malaria, and there was no dry ground whatever in which to camp. To have sent the troops there would have been simple butchery.

Under these circumstances the alternative to leaving the country altogether was to stay where we were, with the hope that half the men would live through to the cool season. We did everything possible to keep up the spirits of the men, but it was exceedingly difficult because there was nothing for them to do. They were weak and languid, and in the wet heat they had lost energy, so that it was not possible for them to indulge in sports or pastimes. There were exceptions; but the average man who went off to shoot guinea-hens or tried some vigorous game always felt much the worse for his exertions. Once or twice I took some of my comrades with me, and climbed up one or another of the surrounding mountains, but the result generally was that half of the party were down with some kind of sickness next day. It was impossible to take heavy exercise in the heat of the day; the evening usually saw a rain-storm which made the country a quagmire; and in the early morning the drenching dew and wet, slimy soil made walking but little pleasure. Chaplain Brown held service every Sunday under a low tree outside my tent; and we always had a congregation of a few score troopers, lying or sitting round, their strong hard faces turned toward the preacher. I let a few of the men visit Santiago, but the long

walk in and out was very tiring, and, moreover, wise restrictions had been put as to either officers or men coming in.

In any event there was very little to do in the quaint, dirty old Spanish city, though it was interesting to go in once or twice, and wander through the narrow streets with their curious little shops and low houses of stained stucco, with elaborately wrought iron trellises to the windows, and curiously carved balconies; or to sit in the central plaza where the cathedral was, and the clubs, and the Café Venus, and the low, bare, rambling building which was called the Governor's Palace. In this palace Wood had now been established as military governor, and Luna, and two or three of my other officers from the Mexican border, who knew Spanish, were sent in to do duty under him. A great many of my men knew Spanish, and some of the New Mexicans were of Spanish origin, although they behaved precisely like the other members of the regiment.

We should probably have spent the summer in our sick camps, losing half the men and hopelessly shattering the health of the remainder, if General Shafter had not summoned a council of officers, hoping by united action of a more or less public character to wake up the Washington authorities to the actual condition of things. As all the Spanish forces in the province of Santiago had surrendered, and as so-called immune regiments were coming to garrison the conquered territory, there was literally not one thing of any kind whatsoever for the army to do, and no purpose to serve by keeping it at Santiago. We did not suppose that peace was at hand, being ignorant of the negotiations. We were anxious to take part in the Porto Rico campaign, and would have been more than willing to suffer any amount of sickness, if by so doing we could get into action. But if we were not to take part in the Porto Rico campaign, then we knew it was absolutely indispensable to get our commands north immediately, if they were to be in trim for the great campaign against Havana, which would surely be the main event of the winter if peace were not declared in advance.

Our army included the great majority of the regulars, and was, therefore, the flower of the American force. It was on every account imperative to keep it in good trim; and to keep it in Santiago meant its entirely purposeless destruction. As soon as the surrender was an accomplished fact, the taking away of the army to the north should have begun.

Every officer, from the highest to the lowest, especially among the regulars, realized all of this, and about the last day of July, General Shafter called a conference, in the palace, of all the division and brigade commanders. By this time, owing to Wood's having been made Governor-General, I was in command of my brigade, so I went to the conference too, riding in with Generals Sumner and Wheeler, who were the other representatives of the cavalry division. Besides the line officers all the chief medical officers were present at the conference. The telegrams from the Secretary stating the position of himself and the Surgeon-General were read, and then almost every line and medical officer present expressed his views in turn. They were almost all regulars and had been brought up to life-long habits of obedience without protest. They were ready to obey still, but they felt, quite rightly, that it was their duty to protest rather than to see the flower of the United States forces destroyed as the culminating act of a campaign in which the blunders that had been committed had been retrieved only by the valor and splendid soldierly qualities of the officers and enlisted men of the infantry and dismounted cavalry. There was not a dissenting voice; for there could not be. There was but one side to the question. To talk of continually shifting camp or of moving up the mountains or of moving into the interior was idle, for not one of the plans could be carried out with our utterly insufficient transportation, and at that season and in that climate they would merely have resulted in aggravating the sickness of the soldiers. It was deemed best to make some record of our opinion, in the shape of a letter or

report, which would show that to keep the army in Santiago meant its absolute and objectless ruin, and that it should at once be recalled. At first there was naturally some hesitation on the part of the regular officers to take the initiative, for their entire future career might be sacrificed. So I wrote a letter to General Shafter, reading over the rough draft to the various Generals and adopting their corrections. Before I had finished making these corrections it was determined that we should send a circular letter on behalf of all of us to General Shafter, and when I returned from presenting him mine, I found this circular letter already prepared and we all of us signed it. Both letters were made public. The result was immediate. Within three days the army was ordered to be ready to sail for home.

As soon as it was known that we were to sail for home the spirits of the men changed for the better. In my regiment the officers began to plan methods of drilling the men on horseback, so as to fit them for use against the Spanish cavalry, if we should go against Havana in December. We had, all of us, eyed the captured Spanish cavalry with particular interest. The men were small, and the horses, though well trained and well built, were diminutive ponies, very much smaller than cow ponies. We were certain that if we ever got a chance to try shock tactics against them they would go down like nine-pins, provided only that our men could be trained to charge in any kind of line, and we made up our minds to devote our time to this. Dismounted work with the rifle we already felt thoroughly competent to perform.

My time was still much occupied with looking after the health of my brigade, but the fact that we were going home, where I knew that their health would improve, lightened my mind, and I was able thoroughly to enjoy the beauty of the country, and even of the storms, which hitherto I had regarded purely as enemies.

The surroundings of the city of Santiago are very grand. The circling mountains rise sheer and high. The plains are threaded by rapid winding brooks and are dotted here and there with quaint villages, curiously picturesque from their combining traces of an outworn old-world civilization with new and raw barbarism. The tall, graceful, feathery bamboos rise by the water's edge, and elsewhere, even on the mountain-crests, where the soil is wet and rank enough; and the splendid royal palms and cocoanut palms tower high above the matted green jungle.

Generally the thunder-storms came in the afternoon, but once I saw one at sunrise, driving down the high mountain valleys toward us. It was a very beautiful and almost terrible sight; for the sun rose behind the storm, and shone through the gusty rifts, lighting the mountain-crests here and there, while the plain below lay shrouded in the lingering night. The angry, level rays edged the dark clouds with crimson, and turned the downpour into sheets of golden rain; in the valleys the glimmering mists were tinted every wild hue; and the remotest heavens were lit with flaming glory.

One day General Lawton, General Wood and I, with Ferguson and poor Tiffany, went down the bay to visit Morro Castle. The shores were beautiful, especially where there were groves of palms and of the scarlet-flower tree, and the castle itself, on a jutting headland, overlooking the sea and guarding the deep, narrow entrance to the bay, showed just what it was, the splendid relic of a vanished power and a vanished age. We wandered all through it, among the castellated battlements, and in the dungeons, where we found hideous rusty implements of torture; and looked at the guns, some modern and some very old. It had been little hurt by the bombardment of the ships. Afterward I had a swim, not trusting much to the shark stories. We passed by the sunken hulks of the Merrimac and the Reina Mercedes, lying just outside the main channel. Our own people had tried to sink the first and the Spaniards had tried to sink the second, so as to block the entrance. Neither attempt was successful.

On August 6th we were ordered to embark, and next morning we sailed on the transport Miami. General Wheeler was with us and a squadron of the Third Cavalry under Major Jackson. The General put the policing and management of the ship into my hands, and I had great aid from Captain McCormick, who had been acting with me as adjutant-general of the brigade. I had profited by my experience coming down, and as Dr. Church knew his work well, although he was very sick, we kept the ship in such good sanitary condition, that we were one of the very few organizations allowed to land at Montauk immediately upon our arrival.

Soon after leaving port the captain of the ship notified me that his stokers and engineers were insubordinate and drunken, due, he thought, to liquor which my men had given them. I at once started a search of the ship, explaining to the men that they could not keep the liquor; that if they surrendered whatever they had to me I should return it to them when we went ashore; and that meanwhile I would allow the sick to drink when they really needed it; but that if they did not give the liquor to me of their own accord I would throw it overboard. About seventy flasks and bottles were handed to me, and I found and threw overboard about twenty. This at once put a stop to all drunkenness. The stokers and engineers were sullen and half mutinous, so I sent a detail of my men down to watch them and see that they did their work under the orders of the chief engineer; and we reduced them to obedience in short order. I could easily have drawn from the regiment sufficient skilled men to fill every position in the entire ship's crew, from captain to stoker.

We were very much crowded on board the ship, but rather better off than on the Yucatan, so far as the men were concerned, which was the important point. All the officers except General Wheeler slept in a kind of improvised shed, not unlike a chicken coop with bunks, on the aftermost part of the upper deck. The water was bad—some of it very bad. There was no ice. The canned beef proved practically uneatable, as we knew would be the case. There were not enough vegetables. We did not have enough disinfectants, and there was no provision whatever for a hospital or for isolating the sick; we simply put them on one portion of one deck. If, as so many of the high authorities had insisted, there had really been a yellow-fever epidemic, and if it had broken out on shipboard, the condition would have been frightful; but there was no yellow-fever epidemic. Three of our men had been kept behind as suspects, all three suffering simply from malarial fever. One of them, Lutz, a particularly good soldier, died; another, who was simply a malingerer and had nothing the matter with him whatever, of course recovered; the third was Tiffany, who, I believe, would have lived had we been allowed to take him with us, but who was sent home later and died soon after landing.

I was very anxious to keep the men amused, and as the quarters were so crowded that it was out of the question for them to have any physical exercise, I did not interfere with their playing games of chance so long as no disorder followed. On shore this was not allowed; but in the particular emergency which we were meeting, the loss of a month's salary was as nothing compared to keeping the men thoroughly interested and diverted.

By care and diligence we succeeded in preventing any serious sickness. One man died, however. He had been suffering from dysentery ever since we landed, owing purely to his own fault, for on the very first night ashore he obtained a lot of fiery liquor from some of the Cubans, got very drunk, and had to march next day through the hot sun before he was entirely sober. He never recovered, and was useless from that time on. On board ship he died, and we gave him sea burial. Wrapped in a hammock, he was placed opposite a port, and the American flag thrown over him. The engine was stilled, and the great ship rocked on the waves unshaken by the screw, while the war-worn troopers clustered around with bare heads, to listen to Chaplain Brown read

the funeral service, and to the band of the Third Cavalry as it played the funeral dirge. Then the port was knocked free, the flag withdrawn, and the shotted hammock plunged heavily over the side, rushing down through the dark water to lie, till the Judgment Day, in the ooze that holds the timbers of so many gallant ships, and the bones of so many fearless adventurers.

We were favored by good weather during our nine days' voyage, and much of the time when there was little to do we simply sat together and talked, each man contributing from the fund of his own experiences. Voyages around Cape Horn, yacht races for the America's cup, experiences on foot-ball teams which are famous in the annals of college sport; more serious feats of desperate prowess in Indian fighting and in breaking up gangs of white outlaws; adventures in hunting big game, in breaking wild horses, in tending great herds of cattle, and in wandering winter and summer among the mountains and across the lonely plains—the men who told the tales could draw upon countless memories such as these of the things they had done and the things they had seen others do. Sometimes General Wheeler joined us and told us about the great war, compared with which ours was such a small war—far-reaching in their importance though its effects were destined to be. When we had become convinced that we would escape an epidemic of sickness the homeward voyage became very pleasant.

On the eve of leaving Santiago I had received from Mr. Laffan of the Sun, a cable with the single word "Peace," and we speculated much on this, as the clumsy transport steamed slowly northward across the trade wind and then into the Gulf Stream. At last we sighted the low, sandy bluffs of the Long Island coast, and late on the afternoon of the 14th we steamed through the still waters of the Sound and cast anchor off Montauk. A gun-boat of the Mosquito fleet came out to greet us and to inform us that peace negotiations had begun.

Next morning we were marched on shore. Many of the men were very sick indeed. Of the three or four who had been closest to me among the enlisted men, Color-Sergeant Wright was the only one in good health. Henry Bardshar was a wreck, literally at death's door. I was myself in first-class health, all the better for having lost twenty pounds. Faithful Marshall, my colored body-servant, was so sick as to be nearly helpless.

Bob Wrenn nearly died. He had joined us very late and we could not get him a Krag carbine; so I had given him my Winchester, which carried the government cartridge; and when he was mustered out he carried it home in triumph, to the envy of his fellows, who themselves had to surrender their beloved rifles.

For the first few days there was great confusion and some want even after we got to Montauk. The men in hospitals suffered from lack of almost everything, even cots. But after these few days we were very well cared for and had abundance of all we needed, except that on several occasions there was a shortage of food for the horses, which I should have regarded as even more serious than a shortage for the men, had it not been that we were about to be disbanded. The men lived high, with milk, eggs, oranges, and any amount of tobacco, the lack of which during portions of the Cuban campaign had been felt as seriously as any lack of food. One of the distressing features of the malarial fever which had been ravaging the troops was that it was recurrent and persistent. Some of my men died after reaching home, and many were very sick. We owed much to the kindness not only of the New York hospitals and the Red Cross and kindred societies, but of individuals, notably Mr. Bayard Cutting and Mrs. Armitage, who took many of our men to their beautiful Long Island homes.

On the whole, however, the month we spent at Montauk before we disbanded was very pleasant. It was good to meet the rest of the regiment. They all felt dreadfully at not having been in Cuba. It was a sore trial to men who had given up much to go to the war, and who rebelled at

nothing in the way of hardship or suffering, but who did bitterly feel the fact that their sacrifices seemed to have been useless. Of course those who stayed had done their duty precisely as did those who went, for the question of glory was not to be considered in comparison to the faithful performance of whatever was ordered; and no distinction of any kind was allowed in the regiment between those whose good fortune it had been to go and those whose harder fate it had been to remain. Nevertheless the latter could not be entirely comforted.

The regiment had three mascots; the two most characteristic—a young mountain lion brought by the Arizona troops, and a war eagle brought by the New Mexicans—we had been forced to leave behind in Tampa. The third, a rather disreputable but exceedingly knowing little dog named Cuba, had accompanied us through all the vicissitudes of the campaign. The mountain lion, Josephine, possessed an infernal temper; whereas both Cuba and the eagle, which have been named in my honor, were extremely good-humored. Josephine was kept tied up. She sometimes escaped. One cool night in early September she wandered off and, entering the tent of a Third Cavalry man, got into bed with him; whereupon he fled into the darkness with yells, much more unnerved than he would have been by the arrival of any number of Spaniards. The eagle was let loose and not only walked at will up and down the company streets, but also at times flew wherever he wished. He was a young bird, having been taken out of his nest when a fledgling. Josephine hated him and was always trying to make a meal of him, especially when we endeavored to take their photographs together. The eagle, though good-natured, was an entirely competent individual and ready at any moment to beat Josephine off. Cuba was also oppressed at times by Josephine, and was of course no match for her, but was frequently able to overawe by simple decision of character.

In addition to the animal mascots, we had two or three small boys who had also been adopted by the regiment. One, from Tennessee, was named Dabney Royster. When we embarked at Tampa he smuggled himself on board the transport with a 22-calibre rifle and three boxes of cartridges, and wept bitterly when sent ashore. The squadron which remained behind adopted him, got him a little Rough Rider's uniform, and made him practically one of the regiment.

The men who had remained at Tampa, like ourselves, had suffered much from fever, and the horses were in bad shape. So many of the men were sick that none of the regiments began to drill for some time after reaching Montauk. There was a great deal of paper-work to be done; but as I still had charge of the brigade only a little of it fell on my shoulders. Of this I was sincerely glad, for I knew as little of the paper-work as my men had originally known of drill. We had all of us learned how to fight and march; but the exact limits of our rights and duties in other respects were not very clearly defined in our minds; and as for myself, as I had not had the time to learn exactly what they were, I had assumed a large authority in giving rewards and punishments. In particular I had looked on court-martials much as Peter Bell looked on primroses—they were court-martials and nothing more, whether resting on the authority of a lieutenant-colonel or of a major-general. The mustering-out officer, a thorough soldier, found to his horror that I had used the widest discretion both in imposing heavy sentences which I had no power to impose on men who shirked their duties, and, where men atoned for misconduct by marked gallantry, in blandly remitting sentences approved by my chief of division. However, I had done substantial, even though somewhat rude and irregular, justice—and no harm could result, as we were just about to be mustered out.

My chief duties were to see that the camps of the three regiments were thoroughly policed and kept in first-class sanitary condition. This took up some time, of course, and there were other matters in connection with the mustering out which had to be attended to; but I could

always get two or three hours a day free from work. Then I would summon a number of the officers, Kane, Greenway, Goodrich, Church, Ferguson, McIlhenny, Frantz, Ballard and others, and we would gallop down to the beach and bathe in the surf, or else go for long rides over the beautiful rolling plains, thickly studded with pools which were white with water-lilies.

Sometimes I went off alone with my orderly, young Gordon Johnston, one of the best men in the regiment; he was a nephew of the Governor of Alabama, and when at Princeton had played on the eleven. We had plenty of horses, and these rides were most enjoyable. Galloping over the open, rolling country, through the cool fall evenings, made us feel as if we were out on the great Western plains and might at any moment start deer from the brush, or see antelope stand and gaze, far away, or rouse a band of mighty elk and hear their horns clatter as they fled.

An old friend, Baron von Sternberg, of the German Embassy, spent a week in camp with me. He had served, when only seventeen, in the Franco-Prussian War as a hussar, and was a noted sharp-shooter—being “the little baron” who is the hero of Archibald Forbes’s true story of “The Pig-dog.” He and I had for years talked over the possibilities of just such a regiment as the one I was commanding, and he was greatly interested in it. Indeed I had vainly sought permission from the German ambassador to take him with the regiment to Santiago.

One Sunday before the regiment disbanded I supplemented Chaplain Brown’s address to the men by a short sermon of a rather hortatory character. I told them how proud I was of them, but warned them not to think that they could now go back and rest on their laurels, bidding them remember that though for ten days or so the world would be willing to treat them as heroes, yet after that time they would find they had to get down to hard work just like everyone else, unless they were willing to be regarded as worthless do-nothings. They took the sermon in good part, and I hope that some of them profited by it. At any rate, they repaid me by a very much more tangible expression of affection. One afternoon, to my genuine surprise, I was asked out of my tent by Lieutenant-Colonel Brodie (the gallant old boy had rejoined us), and found the whole regiment formed in hollow square, with the officers and color-sergeant in the middle. When I went in, one of the troopers came forward and on behalf of the regiment presented me with Remington’s fine bronze, “The Bronco-buster.” There could have been no more appropriate gift from such a regiment, and I was not only pleased with it, but very deeply touched with the feeling which made them join in giving it. Afterward they all filed past and I shook the hands of each to say good-by.

Most of them looked upon the bronze with the critical eyes of professionals. I doubt if there was any regiment in the world which contained so large a number of men able to ride the wildest and most dangerous horses. One day while at Montauk Point some of the troopers of the Third Cavalry were getting ready for mounted drill when one of their horses escaped, having thrown his rider. This attracted the attention of some of our men and they strolled around to see the trooper remount. He was instantly thrown again, the horse, a huge, vicious sorrel, being one of the worst buckers I ever saw; and none of his comrades were willing to ride the animal. Our men, of course, jeered and mocked at them, and in response were dared to ride the horse themselves. The challenge was instantly accepted, the only question being as to which of a dozen noted bronco-busters who were in the ranks should undertake the task. They finally settled on a man named Darnell. It was agreed that the experiment should take place next day when the horse would be fresh, and accordingly next day the majority of both regiments turned out on a big open flat in front of my tent—brigade head-quarters. The result was that, after as fine a bit of rough riding as one would care to see, in which one scarcely knew whether most to wonder at the extraordinary viciousness and agile strength of the horse or at the horsemanship and courage of

the rider, Darnell came off victorious, his seat never having been shaken. After this almost every day we had exhibitions of bronco-busting, in which all the crack riders of the regiment vied with one another, riding not only all of our own bad horses but any horse which was deemed bad in any of the other regiments.

Darnell, McGinty, Wood, Smoky Moore, and a score of others took part in these exhibitions, which included not merely feats in mastering vicious horses, but also feats of broken horses which the riders had trained to lie down at command, and upon which they could mount while at full speed.

Toward the end of the time we also had mounted drill on two or three occasions; and when the President visited the camp we turned out mounted to receive him as did the rest of the cavalry. The last night before we were mustered out was spent in noisy, but entirely harmless hilarity, which I ignored. Every form of celebration took place in the ranks. A former Populist candidate for Attorney-General in Colorado delivered a fervent oration in favor of free silver; a number of the college boys sang; but most of the men gave vent to their feelings by improvised dances. In these the Indians took the lead, pure bloods and half-breeds alike, the cowboys and miners cheerfully joining in and forming part of the howling, grunting rings, that went bounding around the great fires they had kindled.

Next morning Sergeant Wright took down the colors, and Sergeant Guitilias the standard, for the last time; the horses, the rifles, and the rest of the regimental property had been turned in; officers and men shook hands and said good-by to one another, and then they scattered to their homes in the North and the South, the few going back to the great cities of the East, the many turning again toward the plains, the mountains, and the deserts of the West and the strange Southwest. This was on September 15th, the day which marked the close of the four months' life of a regiment of as gallant fighters as ever wore the United States uniform.

The regiment was a wholly exceptional volunteer organization, and its career cannot be taken as in any way a justification for the belief that the average volunteer regiment approaches the average regular regiment in point of efficiency until it has had many months of active service. In the first place, though the regular regiments may differ markedly among themselves, yet the range of variation among them is nothing like so wide as that among volunteer regiments, where at first there is no common standard at all; the very best being, perhaps, up to the level of the regulars (as has recently been shown at Manila), while the very worst are no better than mobs, and the great bulk come in between. 1 The average regular regiment is superior to the average volunteer regiment in the physique of the enlisted men, who have been very carefully selected, who have been trained to life in the open, and who know how to cook and take care of themselves generally.

Now, in all these respects, and in others like them, the Rough Riders were the equals of the regulars. They were hardy, self-reliant, accustomed to shift for themselves in the open under very adverse circumstances. The two all-important qualifications for a cavalryman, are riding and shooting—the modern cavalryman being so often used dismounted, as an infantryman. The average recruit requires a couple of years before he becomes proficient in horsemanship and marksmanship; but my men were already good shots and first-class riders when they came into the regiment. The difference as regards officers and non-commissioned officers, between regulars and volunteers, is usually very great; but in my regiment (keeping in view the material we had to handle), it was easy to develop non-commissioned officers out of men who had been round-up foremen, ranch foremen, mining bosses, and the like. These men were intelligent and resolute; they knew they had a great deal to learn, and they set to work to learn it; while they

were already accustomed to managing considerable interests, to obeying orders, and to taking care of others as well as themselves.

As for the officers, the great point in our favor was the anxiety they showed to learn from those among their number who, like Capron, had already served in the regular army; and the fact that we had chosen a regular army man as Colonel. If a volunteer organization consists of good material, and is eager to learn, it can readily do so if it has one or two first-class regular officers to teach it. Moreover, most of our captains and lieutenants were men who had seen much of wild life, who were accustomed to handling and commanding other men, and who had usually already been under fire as sheriffs, marshals, and the like. As for the second in command, myself, I had served three years as captain in the National Guard; I had been deputy sheriff in the cow country, where the position was not a sinecure; I was accustomed to big game hunting and to work on a cow ranch, so that I was thoroughly familiar with the use both of horse and rifle, and knew how to handle cowboys, hunters, and miners; finally, I had studied much in the literature of war, and especially the literature of the great modern wars, like our own Civil War, the Franco-German War, the Turco-Russian War; and I was especially familiar with the deeds, the successes and failures alike, of the frontier horse riflemen who had fought at King's Mountain and the Thames, and on the Mexican border. Finally, and most important of all, officers and men alike were eager for fighting, and resolute to do well and behave properly, to encounter hardship and privation, and the irksome monotony of camp routine, without grumbling or complaining; they had counted the cost before they went in, and were delighted to pay the penalties inevitably attendant upon the career of a fighting regiment; and from the moment when the regiment began to gather, the higher officers kept instilling into those under them the spirit of eagerness for action and of stern determination to grasp at death rather than forfeit honor.

The self-reliant spirit of the men was well shown after they left the regiment. Of course, there were a few weaklings among them; and there were others, entirely brave and normally self-sufficient, who, from wounds or fevers, were so reduced that they had to apply for aid—or at least, who deserved aid, even though they often could only be persuaded with the greatest difficulty to accept it. The widows and orphans had to be taken care of. There were a few light-hearted individuals, who were entirely ready to fight in time of war, but in time of peace felt that somebody ought to take care of them; and there were others who, never having seen any aggregation of buildings larger than an ordinary cow-town, fell a victim to the fascinations of New York. But, as a whole, they scattered out to their homes on the disbandment of the regiment; gaunter than when they had enlisted, sometimes weakened by fever or wounds, but just as full as ever of sullen, sturdy capacity for self-help; scorning to ask for aid, save what was entirely legitimate in the way of one comrade giving help to another. A number of the examining surgeons, at the muster-out, spoke to me with admiration of the contrast offered by our regiment to so many others, in the fact that our men always belittled their own bodily injuries and sufferings; so that whereas the surgeons ordinarily had to be on the look-out lest a man who was not really disabled should claim to be so, in our case they had to adopt exactly the opposite attitude and guard the future interests of the men, by insisting upon putting upon their certificates of discharge whatever disease they had contracted or wound they had received in line of duty. Major J. H. Calef, who had more than any other one man to do with seeing to the proper discharge papers of our men, and who took a most generous interest in them, wrote me as follows: "I also wish to bring to your notice the fortitude displayed by the men of your regiment, who have come before me to be mustered out of service, in making their personal declarations as to their physical conditions. Men who bore on their faces and in their forms the traces of long

days of illness, indicating wrecked constitutions, declared that nothing was the matter with them, at the same time disclaiming any intention of applying for a pension. It was exceptionally heroic.”

When we were mustered out, many of the men had lost their jobs, and were too weak to go to work at once, while there were helpless dependents of the dead to care for. Certain of my friends, August Belmont, Stanley and Richard Mortimer, Major Austin Wadsworth—himself fresh from the Manila campaign—Belmont Tiffany, and others, gave me sums of money to be used for helping these men. In some instances, by the exercise of a good deal of tact and by treating the gift as a memorial of poor young Lieutenant Tiffany, we got the men to accept something; and, of course, there were a number who, quite rightly, made no difficulty about accepting. But most of the men would accept no help whatever. In the first chapter, I spoke of a lady, a teacher in an academy in the Indian Territory, three or four of whose pupils had come into my regiment, and who had sent with them a letter of introduction to me. When the regiment disbanded, I wrote to her to ask if she could not use a little money among the Rough Riders, white, Indian, and half-breed, that she might personally know. I did not hear from her for some time, and then she wrote as follows:

“MUSCOGEE, IND. TER., December 19, 1898.

“MY DEAR COLONEL ROOSEVELT: I did not at once reply to your letter of September 23d, because I waited for a time to see if there should be need among any of our Rough Riders, of the money you so kindly offered. Some of the boys are poor, and in one or two cases they seemed to me really needy, but they all said no. More than once I saw the tears come to their eyes, at thought of your care for them, as I told them of your letter. Did you hear any echoes of our Indian war-whoops over your election? They were pretty loud. I was particularly exultant, because my father was a New Yorker and I was educated in New York, even if I was born here. So far as I can learn, the boys are taking up the dropped threads of their lives, as though they had never been away. Our two Rough Rider students, Meagher and Gilmore, are doing well in their college work. “I am sorry to tell you of the death of one of your most devoted troopers, Bert Holderman, who was here serving on the Grand Jury. He was stricken with meningitis in the jury-room, and died after three days of delirium. His father, who was twice wounded, four times taken prisoner, and fought in thirty-two battles of the civil war, now old and feeble, survives him, and it was indeed pathetic to see his grief. Bert’s mother, who is a Cherokee, was raised in my grandfather’s family. The words of commendation which you wrote upon Bert’s discharge are the greatest comfort to his friends. They wanted you to know of his death, because he loved you so. “I am planning to entertain all the Rough Riders in this vicinity some evening during my holiday vacation. I mean to have no other guests, but only give them an opportunity for reminiscences. I regret that Bert’s death makes one less. I had hoped to have them sooner, but our struggling young college salaries are necessarily small and duties arduous. I make a home for my widowed mother and an adopted Indian daughter, who is in school; and as I do the cooking for a family of five, I have found it impossible to do many things I would like to. “Pardon me for burdening you with these details, but I suppose I am like your boys, who say, ‘The Colonel was always as ready to listen to a private as to a major-general.’ “Wishing you and yours the very best gifts the season can bring, I am,

“Very truly yours,

“ALICE M. ROBERTSON.”

Is it any wonder that I loved my regiment?