

FORT THOMAS, KY.,
September 2, 1898.

The ADJUTANT-GENERAL OF THE ARMY,
War Department, Washington, D. C.

GENERAL: I have the honor to make the following supplementary report of the operations of the Sixth United States Infantry, under my command as lieutenant-colonel of that regiment, on July 1, 1898, at the battle of Santiago de Cuba, and to request that it be filed with my first report if that has been received at your office, and if not received that this be accepted as my original report. The first report was written by me while in field hospital, wounded, and was in pencil. At that time I could not be in possession of all the particulars herein set down:

On June 30 the regiment was in the brigade camp, a field about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Santiago, from which we started for the battlefield at 5 a. m. on July 1, in the following order: The Sixth Infantry leading, followed by the Sixteenth Infantry and Seventy-first New York Volunteers. After proceeding on the road to Santiago about 2 miles the brigade was halted and massed until 8.30 a. m. in a field, and heard the beginning of the combat at El Caney. Resuming the march, and followed by the Third Brigade and the Second Brigade, we about 9 a. m. reached a point where the road forked, the right arm leading to El Caney and the left to the harbor of Aguadores. The division took the road to Aguadores, the Sixth leading, and halted at the foot of El Poso Hill, where our batteries were having a duel with those of the Spaniards on the San Juan Hill, the shells passing harmlessly over our heads. Continuing our advance on the Aguadores road, I caused the men to remove and pile their blanket rolls by the side of a creek, so that they now stood ready for action, with only canteen, haversack, campaign hat, blue shirt, canvas leggings, canvas trousers, and 200 rounds of ammunition per man. When within 200 yards of a ford on a branch of the San Juan River the division was halted to permit the dismounted cavalry division to pass, which most of it did, and, turning off to the right of the road, formed line opposite a hill northeast of the San Juan Hill and engaged its defenders.

It was now getting on in the morning and was very hot. Before the cavalry had fully passed Lieutenant Manning, aid to General Hawkins, my brigade commander, rode up and told me that the general wanted me to bring the Sixth Infantry up to him at once. Pushing everything out of the way, I led the column forward on the road to the ford above mentioned, where I found General Hawkins and staff. From this point we could get a partial view of the San Juan Hill, and this ford was, as I learned afterward, swept by the Spanish fire, but at this time it was peaceful.

General Hawkins said: "Somewhat beyond here you can get an enfilade fire on those works, and Lieutenant Ord will show you where to go in." As this order is the keynote of the desperate fight waged by the Sixth Infantry against the San Juan intrenchments, I give it as literally as I can remember. As I wished to keep the regiment from picking its way across the stream, here knee-deep, I dismounted and walked through, followed closely by the two battalions of the Sixth, in column of fours.

On this Aguadores road, just beyond this stream, I found three Hotchkiss mountain rifles and the dynamite gun, pointed toward the San Juan Hill, dimly visible through the undergrowth and about 800 yards away. Lieutenant Ord explained to me how the general wanted me to fire on the hill, and turned me over to Major Lebo, who showed me where the left of his regiment rested, it being the left regiment of the cavalry line, and in a millet field to the right of the road. I was to go in on the left of the cavalry, so advancing along the Aguadores road about 100 yards farther, which brought us about opposite the San

Juan Hill, I moved the regiment by fours-right into this millet field, the gun being up to the neck. This placed us between the Aguadores road and the enemy. The Hotchkiss guns now opened over our heads on the San Juan Hill, to which the Spaniards replied. This lasted about five minutes.

As this field had never been examined by anyone, and as, owing to the height of the grain, one could not see any distance through it, I rested the regiment, accompanied by the regimental adjutant, Lieutenant Bennett, and Lieutenant Atkinson, the quartermaster, went out and reconnoitered it to the left front.

We found the battlefield to be a quadrilateral of about 800 yards from the Aguadores road, on which we had advanced to the trenches and blockhouses on the San Juan Hill and its ridge, and about three-quarters of a mile in length. It was so overgrown by the grain that we could see nothing to our immediate front, but on the left, at some distance, appeared a height and some of the gaudily painted houses of this region. I knew that our cavalry was on the right, and from the houses many shots were whistling through the grain, apparently directed against the left flank of the cavalry.

Before entering the grain field I had been erroneously informed that a cavalry screen or picket line was in my front somewhere; therefore, returning to the regiment, I ordered out two companies, B and E, from Captain Crowell's First Battalion, and two, G and H, from Major Miner's Second Battalion, as skirmishers to reinforce the cavalry screen and stop the fire from the houses and vicinity. These companies encountered a heavy fire from the left flank and front. Lieutenant Robertson, an excellent young officer, First Sergeant Farrell, and a number of men were wounded; and, as no cavalry could be found in our front, two of the companies returned to the regimental line, while the other two, E and H, remained out in our front.

Just then I perceived a battalion of the Sixteenth Infantry approaching in line from the direction of the ford, through the high grain. Seeing that all of my force would be needed for the work in hand, I at once advanced the Sixth Regiment to the front in line of battle, which was effected in handsome style, notwithstanding the annoying flank fire from the left. Traversing the grain field the regiment entered a heavy belt of large trees and undergrowth, in which we unexpectedly came upon the San Juan River flowing between high banks across our front. The regiment halted on the bank while I, taking with me Company E, Captain Kenon commanding, plunged into the stream waist deep, crossed, and clambered up the farther bank and through the brush, at the outer edge of which I came to a road parallel to the river and a very stiff wire fence outside the road, the San Juan Hill fortifications being in plain view about 400 yards distant, while to our right and in prolongation of the road on which we stood was another hill surmounted by a large painted house. This is the hill subsequently captured by the cavalry division and opposite to which their lines extended, though they were not in sight from the road.

Returning to the river bank, I called to the regiment to come over, which they did with impetuosity, officers and men leaping down the steep bank and wading across and so up through the undergrowth, until I had assembled at the wire fence the Sixth Regiment and one and a half companies of the Sixteenth, commanded, if I remember rightly, by Captain Whittall, Sixteenth Infantry. The remainder of that regiment which had been sent by General Hawkins to support the Sixth, passed unknowingly, because of the thicket, by the point where we had crossed, and continuing down the river beyond our left flank, crossed considerably below, as I afterwards learned.

This was the first opportunity offered to efficiently carry out General Hawkins's order to enfilade the San Juan Hill, upon which my regiment and the detachment of the Sixteenth now opened a hot fire, to which the trenches responded, and this continued for an hour. It will be observed that, except for Captain Whittall's detachment of the Sixteenth, the Sixth was now entirely alone in its attack on the San Juan Hill.

The remainder of the Sixteenth had passed far beyond my left and was now being prepared by General Hawkins for the charge to be subsequently mentioned; and the remainder of the division, deterred from crossing the ford on the Aguadores road, where we had first crossed it and where I saw the dynamite gun, by a very heavy fire directed by the Spaniards on that ford, had taken a trail 200 yards to the left of the Aguadores road, and, making a circuit thereby, was not yet nearly in range of the hill. Even on this trail the troops were greatly annoyed by the fire of the enemy coming from the heights far over beyond my left, which continuously swept the valley in rear of my line, and caused the loss of a most promising young officer, Lieutenant Benchley, Sixth Infantry, whom I had sent back across the river to bring up any men who might have scattered in the underbrush. He was shot dead.

Lieutenant Parker, a most efficient officer of the Thirteenth Infantry, had meanwhile brought up four Gatling guns to the position of the dynamite gun on the Agudadores road, about 400 yards in our rear; but, as we were hidden from him by the trees on the river, he did not know we were in action, and did not open fire until the final charge.

Here the Sixth remained contending with the hill for about an hour; but, as we were partially hidden by the hedge and protected by a road trench, our casualties were not heavy. At the same time I was not satisfied with our position on the road, which, being oblique to the hill, gave only an oblique and comparatively not effective fire. I therefore concluded to advance the regiment into the field of high grass and weeds lying between our present position and the San Juan blockhouse. As we had no materials for cutting the stiff wire fence, I availed myself of the services of a Cuban negro soldier who had found his way alone into this place and who with his machete cut quite a number of openings. This brave fellow, in the subsequent capture of the hill, went forward firing with the Sixth and was killed near the summit. I now advanced my regiment through these openings into the field in front, some 50 paces, and formed line directly facing the hill at about 350 yards distance, where we opened a steady and concentrated fire upon the fortifications, some of the companies firing by file and others by volley. This sustained fire from a force partially hidden by the grass seemed at first to stun the enemy. Their fire slackened, and I began to entertain high hopes. But the Spaniard is a foe to be respected behind breastworks. Suddenly the blockhouse and trenches burst out with cannon and musketry, and the whole fire of the hill was developed on my regiment at short range. Here was to be seen the value of discipline. Our line was torn with shot and shell; men were falling everywhere. Captain Walker, commanding the right-center company, and his lieutenant, Gross; Captain Torrey, commanding the left-center company, and his lieutenant, Purdy; Lieutenant Turman, of Company F, and one-quarter of my men were down in ten minutes from the time the heavy fire of the Spaniards commenced. Yet no one flinched, and all kept steadily firing without any thought of stopping until the order should come. This it now became my reluctant duty to give. I saw that the force on the hill, in its intrenched position, was entirely too strong for mine, and that if we remained another ten minutes the regiment would be destroyed. I therefore, with my adjutant, Lieutenant Bennett, walked along the line and cautioned the company commanders to move by the flank quietly but rapidly to the road again, which was done in excellent order, carrying our dead and wounded along with us. As soon as we had bestowed these in safety under the overhanging bank of the river, we resumed the fire from the road, and here it was that the brave and efficient aid of General Hawkins, Lieut. Dennis Michie, Seventeenth Infantry, was killed in my line.

We were now unexpectedly reenforced. Lieutenant Parker, made aware by the heavy fire from the hill that a conflict was going on in his front, opened fire with his Gatlings most effectively on the intrenchments, while from far down on my left I heard cheering and shouts, and saw coming up the slope toward us a multitude of skirmishers. As they drew nearer we distinguished the tall figure of General Hawkins, with his aid, Lieutenant Ord, Sixth Infantry, charging at the head of the skirmishers and waving their hats. When the charge came up nearly abreast of where the Sixth stood in the road, I ordered the companies out through the gaps in the wire fence to join in it, and they complied with the same alacrity and enthusiasm as they had displayed in entering this bloody field. The Gatlings redoubled their fierce grinding of bullets on the Spanish, despite which there still came a savage fire from the blockhouse and trenches. Here the gallant Captain Wetherill, Sixth Infantry, fell, shot through the forehead, at the head of his company, and I received a Mauser bullet through the left lung, which disabled me. But the blood of the troops was now up, and no loss of officers or men could stop them. They charged up the incline until, coming to a steep rise near the top, they were brought to a stand by the hail of bullets from the Gatlings against the summit. As soon as this could be stopped by a signal the mingled troops of the Sixth, Sixteenth, Thirteenth, and Twenty-fourth swept up and over the hill and it was won, Capt. Charles Byrne's company, F, and Capt. Kennon's company, E, of the Sixth, being among the foremost, if not actually the very first, on the summit, Lieutenant Ord, Sixth Infantry, being shot dead in advance of the charge near the blockhouse, and Lieutenant Simons wounded shortly after its capture.

What has been said of the English, "that they never fight better than in their first battle," I believe I may justly claim for the Sixth Infantry, very few of whom had ever before been under fire; yet they acted from first to last of this trying day like veterans of many battles. Neither at Gettysburg nor in the lines of Spottsylvania Court-house have I ever but once seen as hot a fire as the ten minutes in the

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grass field when the Sixth entered it the first time, and when the regiment sustained most of its loss, the highest in percentage of any regiment in the army in invasion; yet officers and men fought with a steady and determined valor worthy of their country and race. The regiment took into action 463 officers and men, and its loss was 11 officers and 114 men.

Again referring to the officers of this regiment who fell in this action—Capt. Alexander M. Wetherill, First Lieut. Jules G. Ord, Second Lieut. Reuben S. Tamm, and Second Lieut. Edmund N. Benchley—it would seem to me a benefit to the country if a fitting monument could be erected in memory of their valor and that of the officers and men of other organizations.

The following first sergeants: Thomas Farrell, Company B; Harold M. Halman, Company A; James Bennett, Company E; Dick Carter, Company F; William Wyley, Company D; John Murray, Company C; and William J. Brown, Company H, served with bravery and efficiency. As I am no longer with the regiment, I can not obtain the names of the many noncommissioned officers and men who deserve special recommendation, but I desire to mention my orderly, Private James Mullen, of Company F, who rendered valuable service, and by his entire indifference to danger offered a most excellent example. He was killed at my side.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

HARRY C. EGBERT,
*Colonel Twenty-second Infantry, late Lieutenant-Colonel Sixth Infantry,
Commanding Regiment at battle of Santiago.*
