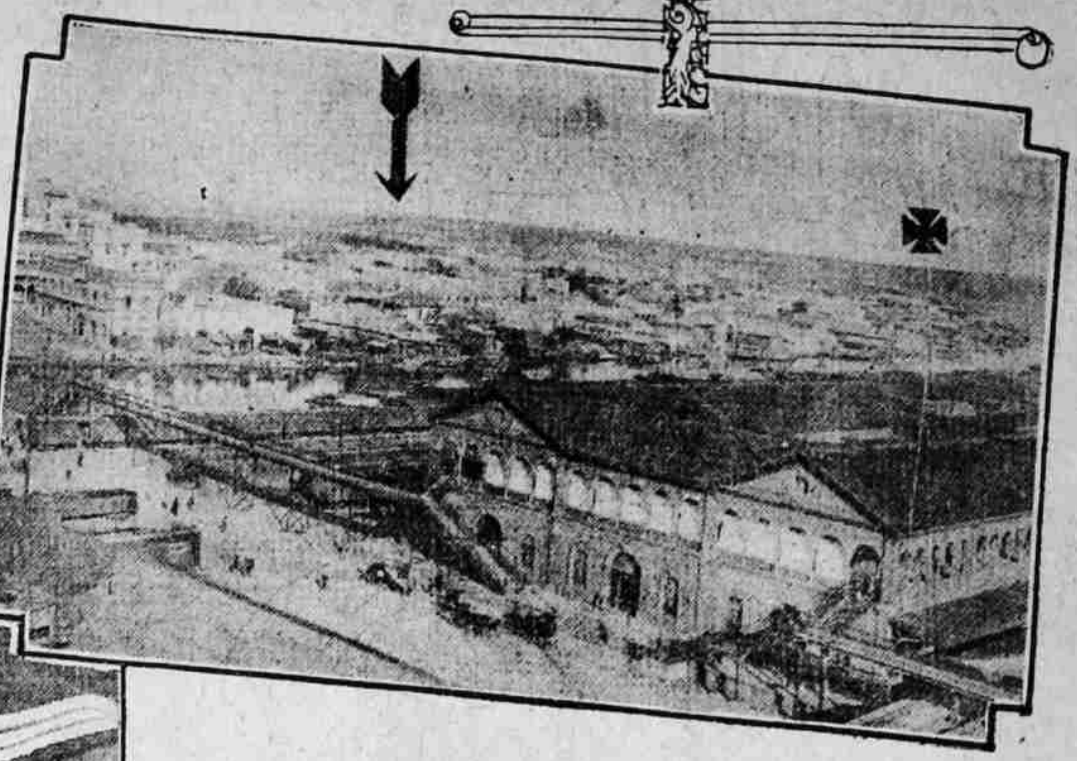


A MEXICAN BATTLE from the CROW'S NEST



This vivid description of the battle of Tampico was written by Edmund J. Flynn, second class yeoman on the cruiser Tacoma. Flynn formerly was a newspaper reporter. He has been in the navy three years and is 24 years old. He was born in newspaper atmosphere, as his father, Joseph Flynn, now living in Los Angeles, Cal., was for many years a newspaper man in Missouri.

As young Flynn watched the fighting from his boat, he kept saying to himself over and over again: "Wouldn't this make a bully story for the newspapers."

This is his story.

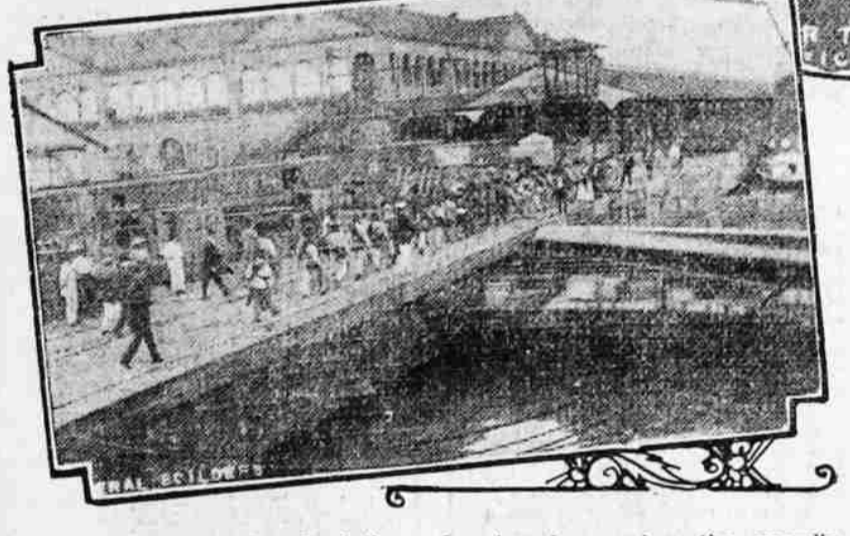
BY EDMUND J. FLYNN.

At daybreak trainloads of Federal reinforcements began to arrive. They came in freight cars jammed full inside and covered with straw on top, where as many as could find places to sit or stand were crowded, and in flat cars packed like sardines. There were five trainloads in all, and as they crawled in at sunrise with their cargo of about 2,000 red-blanketed soldiers, the morning being rather chilly, they presented a more picturesque than imposing appearance. Later it was learned that these troops were being driven in from small outlying towns by the advance of the rebels.

The Admiral and his staff came on board shortly after breakfast and the Tacoma then became the flag ship of the detached squadron of the Atlantic fleet. Shortly afterward the Mexican gunboat Bravo, which lay about a quarter of a mile below us in the bend of the river



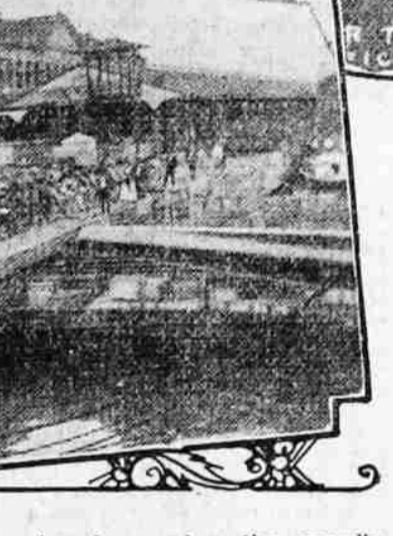
EDMUND J. FLYNN, center. Upper left, central section of Tampico, cross showing Waters Pierce Oil Company Building and arrow showing where American flag's appearance ended firing of the Bravo. Upper right, eastern end of the city, arrow showing position of Chester and arrow showing position of Bravo. Middle left, a house ruined by bullets. Middle right, hauling the dead away, Flynn standing near wagon. Lower left, Federal reinforcements disembarking. Lower right, U. S. S. Tacoma.



at the lower (eastern) end of the city, was reported cleared for action and the Federal troops were reported entrenching themselves at the opposite end of the city, where a small, ancient fort is located, which was the direction from which the attack was expected to come, as there are only two other vulnerable points, one a large bluff across the river from the eastern end of the city, which, if gained by the rebels, with any kind of artillery would have placed the city entirely at their mercy, but which was protected by the Bravo, and the other by way of the railroad, which crosses from a bridge a short distance out from the northeastern end of the city, but which was made inaccessible when the bridge was burned by the Federals, who had been driven across it that morning.

At about 11:30 a. m., simultaneous with the receipt of a report that the rebel advance guards had become engaged with the Federal outposts, rifle fire was heard in the direction of the Federal entrenchments. At about the same time a merchant steamer came up the river and went alongside the dock flying the English man-o-war flag. She had been chartered by the British cruiser Hermlone, which had arrived off the mouth of the river that morning to take English refugees on board. An oil steamer dropped anchor across the river from the city and displayed Holland man-o-war colors, and another merchant steamer was chartered by the German cruiser Bremen, and with the German man-o-war ensign at her staff tied up at the dock near the English steamer. Flags began to appear over the roofs of buildings in the city.

A large concrete building, owned by the Waters-Pierce Oil Company floated the Stars and Stripes, it having been appointed as rendezvous



for Americans when the consul's place proved inadequate. The flags of the French, English, Holland and Spanish consuls could be seen in a row near the center of the city, and away out near the firing line on a hill in plain view were two large two-story buildings, over which floated the German colors. A guard of Federal soldiers were drawn up around these two buildings. Late in the afternoon the firing, which up to this time had consisted of the irregular cracking of rifles, became heavier and from the increase in tone seemed to be drawing nearer.

MEXICAN BATTLESHIP BEGINS TO FIRE.

Finally it developed into heavy volleys punctuated by the deeper intonations of artillery as the fort opened fire, the flashes from its cannonry being visible from where we lay. The rifle reports continued to draw nearer, however, and it was evident that the rebels were driving the Federals back to their entrenchments. Then the Bravo's guns began to bark. From her position at the bend in the river she could throw shrapnel across the lower end of the city into an open field which the rebels would have to cross to take the Federal fortifications. Although she could not see where her shells were landing she was connected up by telephone with her shots were falling short or overreaching their mark she could check her range accordingly.

In addition to the sounds of fighting things now began to assume the aspect of a battle. The fort's guns were flashing and roaring at regular intervals at one end of the city, the Bravo's doing the same at the other and occasionally over the field of battle, high in the air, appeared the flare and puff of smoke accompanying the premature explosion of shrapnel.

The Admiral now decided to go alongside the dock and take American refugees on board. We immediately began to make preparations for the receipt of them and notification was sent the American Consul that all who came seeking refuge must be able to produce evidences of their citizenship, otherwise we would have been flooded with every one in the city who could speak a smattering of English and would have been utterly unable to provide for one-third of them. As it was we were no sooner alongside, ship after darkness had settled, and the glare of the bursting war implements became more vivid, when throngs of Americans began to crowd over the gangway. Mostly women and children and nearly all bringing nothing more with them than the wearing apparel they had on.

Imagine if you can the task of trying to take care of this bunch on board a man-of-war where space is at a premium. Where the sleeping accommodations, with the exceptions of the few staterooms aft for the officers, and cots of the marine guard, are the hooks attached to the overhead from which the crew suspend their hammocks each night and take down again in the morning. Already nearly all the available space was taken up by the members of the ship's regular complement, the increase with the Admiral and his staff and the seventy additional marines. As many as was possible of the women who had babies to care for were provided with the few remaining unoccupied staterooms. The rest of the women and children were forced to sleep on the decks of the lower passage ways and warrant officer's mess-room on the bedding which the officers and crew had given up for them. The men had to be left to shift for themselves as best they could, but were taken care of by the crew who willingly shared with them what few blankets and mattresses remained amongst them.

The first night was a night of horror for the already overworked crew. Utterly fatigued with their extra exertions and the excitement of the day and forced to find a resting place for the night in some cases on the bare decks of the topside, sleep was still denied them. How could a sailor, who has been accustomed to the utter silence which ordinarily falls over a ship as the last sound of "taps" dies away, sleep with what occurred that night? Scarcely would he have closed his eyes and heaved a deep breath of relief as he prepared to

seek much needed rest in slumber when he would suddenly be startled by a piercing shriek which ended up in a long drawn out howl as some lusty lunked infant voiced its protest against the unusual surroundings or a presumptuous safety pin, or perhaps in aversion to wearing a piece of hastily improvised under clothing, some of which had been gracefully tended to anxious mothers by chief petty officers who had torn up some of their old shirts for that purpose.

The firing quieted down during the night only occasional rifle shots being heard from the direction of the firing line, although the Bravo continued to boom away at regular intervals dropping shells into the open field to prevent a rebel sordidness had settled, and the glare of the bursting war implements became more vivid, when throngs of Americans began to crowd over the gangway. Mostly women and children and nearly all bringing nothing more with them than the wearing apparel they had on.

The next morning dawn reached us that the rebels had received reinforcements during the night and shortly after day-break the attack was renewed with increased fury. The confusion in the city now became emphasized. Foreigners who had not left during the night, carried in their hands the flag of the country to which they belonged as they traversed the streets. Other non-combatants carried flags of truce. The streets were patrolled by "rurales" (Mexican mounted police). Several of us were leantchie, the rail razing in the direction of the fighting when some one directed my attention to a place in the city about three blocks away, where a "rurale" was apparently arguing with a native who stood across the street from him.

Judging from the movements of their arms the native was protesting against an order given him, when the "rurale" suddenly drew a revolver, shot him, wheeled his horse and rode off unconcernedly, leaving the body lay where it fell. Later a couple of men passing by picked it up and carried it into a neighboring building. This, which we chanced to witness, was probably only one of several similar scenes occurring throughout the city. These "rurales" are the most dreaded military organizations in Mexico, it is said of them that they never take a prisoner.

AMERICAN REFUGEES TAKEN ON BOARD.

In the "crow's nest" on our foretopmast, we had a lookout station who could signal from there with the Chester, which was around the bend of the river from us, and could report anything occurring which could not be seen below. It was learned by this means that the Chester was also overcrowded with American refugees, who had swarmed in from the small towns in the oil districts further down the river. Later in the day I made my way up to this

lookout station and viewed the battle with a long glass. Several Federal entrenchments could be seen near the fort lined with men, but of the rebels there was not a sign.

The open field previously mentioned terminates into a heavy fringe of trees at the top of a rise and it was from the concealment of these that the rebels seemed to be directing their fire. Shells could occasionally be seen bursting over these trees or in the field in front of them, but most of them seemed to settle in the depression beyond, where their results could not be determined. Happening to have the glass on one clump of trees just as a shell burst amongst them, I saw four men dash out into the field and two of them sprang over to the lookout, who said that the other two had dragged them back and when I looked again they were gone. At another time I saw a riderless horse dash out near where another shell had exploded, but with these exceptions no evidence of the casualties occurring were visible. The rebels appeared to be adhering to Indian tactics in fighting from the concealment of trees, whereas the Federals had in their favor all the natural advantages offered by the controversy of the country in addition to the earthworks which they had thrown up in anticipation.

Evidently rebels had been reported gathering on a small bluff across the river near the burned railroad bridge as the Bravo began to favor it with a few shots. On the summit of this hill was a small collection of thatched-roof houses and soon one of these burst into flames. As I gazed at it through the glass an American flag was run up on a dead tree and the Bravo immediately ceased firing in that direction.

That night passed similar to the previous one and on the next morning a report reached us that the rebels who had up to this time been trying to draw the Federals out from the city and now realized the futility of this endeavor had determined to attack in earnest and take the city by storm. The Admiral after a conference with the officers of the English and German ships, issued a bulletin to be published by the counsel warning all non-combatants to leave the city. The Wheeling (one of our gunboats) came up the river and we transferred all of our refugees to her. The Chester did the same. The Wheeling then steamed out-

strength of the Bravo for she was undoubtedly the deciding factor in favor of the Federals. Although it was claimed that she was killing more of her own men than rebels without her aid the rebels would in all probability have captured the city.

Just before noon this attempt by the rebels was apparently being made as the firing suddenly increased into rapid volleys and the Bravo's guns commenced banging away almost incessantly. It was of short duration, however, and as the rebels were repulsed the sounds gradually diminished and finally settled down to scattering shots again.

That afternoon another Mexican gunboat, the Vera Cruz, stood up the river and after disembarking a load of Federal reinforcements continued up stream and came to anchor in a position where if the rebels attempted another assault they would be caught in a cross fire between her guns and those of the Bravo. The rebels must have recognized this fact for, although irregular firing continued all that afternoon and night, when the Bravo dropped a few shells over their positions in the morning no response was made and at about noon it was reported that they had withdrawn.

That afternoon a third Mexican gunboat, the Zaragoza, arrived with more troops.

During the fight all business had been suspended in the city, and school houses and other public buildings had been converted into temporary hospitals where the wounded who had been coming in steadily were being cared for mostly by women who had volunteered their services, amongst them being

some of the less timid Americans who had not taken advantage of the opportunity offered them to leave.

It was not until two days later that I had an opportunity to go ashore. In company with a couple of chief petty officers I drove out to the battle field. Along the road as we neared the fort were groups of federal soldiers lounging about in the enclosure around the fort and in several neighboring houses and yards they were crowded around inactive. Yet, when we reached the scene of the fighting we found that little attempt had been made to search it for bodies, although over forty-eight hours had passed since the last shot was fired. Some of the dead were lying without anything having been done for them; others were piled up in the trenches where they had fallen, and in most cases only partially buried.

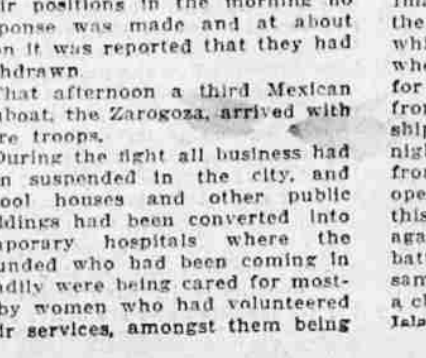
Everywhere was evidence of the fearful struggle which had taken place. One house directly between the firing lines was riddled with bullet holes. It had been converted into a veritable sieve. There was scarcely a square inch of this building which had not been perforated. In one of the rooms I heard the sound of mourning and thinking that some dead had been found in there by relatives I would not venture in, but could not restrain the curiosity which prompted me to peek through one of the windows. In a semicircle around a mantelpiece was a group of men of the type of American adventurers found in these Central American countries uttering walls of lament. Before them on the mantel, under a sign which read, "The most terrible calamity of the whole war," was a quart whisky bottle with the seal intact, but which had two bullet holes through it and was entirely empty.

Near a cemetery we came upon a cart which contained a couple of wooden boxes and three bodies which had just been picked up in a field further on. Most of the tombstones in the graveyard were shattered. Orange groves were torn and ripped to pieces where shells had exploded. Dead cattle and horses were lying all about in the fields. Iron telephone poles had bullets sticking in them from top to bottom. Along a street car track which ran out in that direction we

came upon a spot where a dynamite car had been exploded.

The rails here swerved out suddenly around a large excavation made by the explosion in which were piled twisted axles and wheels, all that was left of the car. Nearby in one of the trenches big brown spots were discernible where pools of blood had soaked in, and scattered all about were blood stained garments. Near here also was another scarcely recognizable mass of ashes and charred flesh amongst which could be distinguished the bones of humans and horses.

The horrors of war and the brutal and uncivilized methods of this special war were fully impressed upon me here. And these horrors are far from being confined to the forces engaged in conflict. Imagine the feelings of the peace-loving citizens who have been forced to flee in terror and return to find their homes, their cultivated fields and cultured orchards, results of years of patience and labor, utterly destroyed. Penniless, homeless and without food, their cattle and their horses, which are now dead, confiscated for use by the ones who have wrought this ruin. Imagine the suffering of some of the women who fled to the ships which offered them protection, where the best that could be done for them could not prevent them from enduring unaccustomed hardships. The morning following the night the refugees were transferred from our ship to the Wheeling in open cutters, the only way in which this transfer could be effected, and again from the Wheeling to the battleships on the open sea in the same manner, it was reported that a child had been born on the Rhode Island.



side the river and distributed them among the battleships.

The lookout reported that the Federals had just hanged a man to a telegraph pole. I went aloft later and with the aid of the long glass counted six bodies hanging to poles and trees near the fort. It was said at first that these were Federals who had attempted to desert, but we found out later that they were rebels who had been caught attempting to sneak through the Federal lines during the night.

The rebels' strength was now estimated between 6,000 and 7,000 and it was thought that with a determined effort they would be able to take the city. They as well as every one else, however, seemingly underestimated the fighting