

CHAPTER III. A WAR FOR HUMANITY'S SAKE

- The nation as it issued from the Civil war*
- The sorrows of Cuba*
- Causes of the revolution in Cuba*
- Sufferings of the Cuban people*
- The causes of their sufferings*
- Declaration of war against Spain by the United States*
- Reasons for the war*
- Not for the increase of territory*
- Forcible annexation, criminal aggression*

The "mighty scourge" of the Civil war bathed the fair fields of the sunny South in torrents of crimson life-blood drawn from the veins of her strongest sons, and the wealth piled up by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil was sunk in that terrible effort of Herculean strength to obliterate forever the principles of the immortal Declaration of Independence. But at last the long shadows of the evening of the weary day of strife drew o'er the land. Once more the saber sought its scabbard, and the sword its sheath. With the springtide of 1865 came the angel of peace with healing in her wings, and God gave sweet rest to the tired Republic. {1899 PTM, PRUS 31.1}

From first to last the struggle had been an awful one. Aside from the contending forces of men, clad in their uniforms of blue and of gray, unseen powers, angels and demons, had been at work with all the intensity of their supernatural attributes. The Confederate States were humbled in the dust. In the North also there was deep sadness, for the fairest flowers of many homes lay sleeping 'neath the Southern sod; and the rustling of the grass as the winds with their invisible feet swept o'er the soldiers' sepulchers seemed only to make soft sighing in unison with the stifled and suppressed sobbing in many a Northern home where mothers, sisters, and sweethearts wept for the loved ones of whom they had been bereft. {1899 PTM, PRUS 31.2}

Nevertheless the dire contest had not been for naught. Towering and grand, above the wrecks of war rose the principles over which it had been fought. For them, there had been a second baptism of blood, and in the crimson streams of that fearful strife the nation's record had been washed and made spotlessly white. In the innocence and strength which purity alone can beget, the United States once more went aloft upon her flagstaff, and gloriously rewrote on the folds of freedom's flag: "All men are created equal," and "Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed." Many a people caught up the hallowed strain, and to thousands of oppressed, rent by the schisms caused by caste and class, the blessed words became but a prelude to the angel's song of peace on earth, good-will toward men. {1899 PTM, PRUS 31.3}

From the close of the Civil war until 1898 profound peace brooded over our land. Locked in the embraces of the great twin oceans, absolutely secure from foreign attack, we grew and prospered. A period of national felicity almost unparalleled in the history of nations was our happy lot. So long was the reign of tranquillity that our people had almost come to believe that war for them was a thing of the past. {1899 PTM, PRUS 32.1}

Nevertheless while Providence favored the United States with blessings innumerable, Cuba, the Pearl of the Antilles, torn, bleeding, and distracted by internecine strife, suffered travail untold almost beneath the shadows of our shores. As day by day the waves of the narrow strip of sea separating us from the unfortunate island, lashed and beat upon our coasts, throwing their silvery spray upon our sands and soil, it almost seemed as if old ocean were bearing on his crest, and throwing toward us from imploring hands, numberless tears, the distilled agony and anguish of the souls of our fellow men. {1899 PTM, PRUS 32.2}

The revolution just ended in Cuba began in 1895, but it was only the successor of other similar insurrections against the monarchy of Spain which have before occurred in Cuba. These had extended over a period of nearly half a century. As a result, this fair and fertile island was lying desolate. If crops were planted, one or the other of the contending armies would destroy them before the time of reaping. To homes both haughty and humble the ruthless torch was applied, and an Eden was soon turned into a wilderness. The gaunt specter of famine stalked through the land, and pinching want did its dire work. Many were homeless, and thousands died for want of food. {1899 PTM, PRUS 32.3}

Little by little the efforts of Spain were increased. A terrible policy of devastation and concentration was inaugurated by the captain-general's bando of Oct. 21, 1896. The poor peasants of the lands were by this decree driven into the garrisoned towns, or to the wild and desolate places held by the throne of Madrid. Well has it been said that this was not civilized warfare, but only extermination; and that the only peace it could beget was that of the wilderness and the grave. {1899 PTM, PRUS 32.4}

Fitzhugh Lee, the American consul-general at Havana, in an enclosure with one of his despatches to the department of state, gives an awful pen-picture of the sufferings of this reconcentrado class, sufferings so terrible that they almost beggar description:- {1899 PTM, PRUS 33.1}

"The public rumor of the horrible state in which the reconcentrados of the municipal council of Havana were found in the focos (ditches) having reached us, we resolved to pay a visit there, and we will relate to you what we saw with our own eyes:- {1899 PTM, PRUS 33.2}

"Four hundred and sixty women and children thrown on the ground, heaped pell-mell as animals, some in a dying condition, others sick, and others dead; without the slightest cleanliness, or the least help, not even to give water to the thirsty; with neither religious nor social help, each one dying wherever chance laid him. For this limited number of reconcentrados the deaths ranged between forty and fifty daily, giving relatively ten days of life for each person, with great joy to the authorities, who seconded fanatically the policy of General Weyler to exterminate the Cuban people; for these unhappy creatures received food only after having been eight days in the focos, if during this time they could feed themselves with the bad food which the dying refused. {1899 PTM, PRUS 33.3}

"On this first visit we were present at the death of an old man who died through thirst. When we arrived, he begged us, for God's sake, to give him a drink. We looked for it, and gave it to him, and fifteen minutes afterward he breathed his last, not having had even a drink of water for three days before. Among the many deaths we witnessed there was one scene impossible to forget. There is still alive the only living witness, a young girl of eighteen years, whom we found seemingly lifeless on the ground; on her right-hand side was the body of a young mother, cold and rigid, but with her young child still alive clinging to her dead breast; on her left-hand side was also the corpse of a dead woman holding her son in a dead embrace; a little farther on a poor dying woman having in her arms a daughter of

fourteen, crazy with pain, who after five or six days also died, in spite of the care she received. {1899 PTM, PRUS 33.4}

"In one corner a poor woman was dying, surrounded by her children, who contemplated her in silence, without a lament or the shedding of a tear, they themselves being real specters of hunger, emaciated in a horrible manner. This poor woman augments the catalogue, already large, of the victims of the reconcentration in the focus. {1899 PTM, PRUS 33.5}

"The relation of the pictures of misery and horror which we have witnessed would be never-ending were we to narrate them all. {1899 PTM, PRUS 34.1}

"It is difficult and almost impossible by writing to express the general aspect of the inmates of the focus, because it is entirely beyond the line of what civilized humanity is accustomed to see; therefore no language can describe it. {1899 PTM, PRUS 34.2}

"The circumstances which the municipal authorities could relieve there are the following: complete accumulation of bodies dead and living, so that it was impossible to take one step without walking over them; the greatest want of cleanliness, want of light, air, and water; the food lacking in quality and quantity what was necessary to sustain life, thus sooner putting an end to these already broken-down systems; complete absence of medical assistance; and what is more terrible than all, no consolation whatever, religious or moral. {1899 PTM, PRUS 34.3}

"If any girl came in anywise nice looking, she was infallibly condemned to the most abominable of traffics. {1899 PTM, PRUS 34.4}

"At the sight of such horrible pictures, the two gentlemen who went there resolved, in spite of the ferocious Weyler, who was still captain-general of the island, to omit nothing to remedy a deed so dishonorable to humanity, and so contrary to all Christianity. They did not fail to find persons animated with like sentiments, who, putting aside all fear of the present situation, organized a private committee with the exclusive end of aiding materially and morally the reconcentrados. This neither has been nor is at present an easy task. The great number of the poor and the scarcity of means make us encounter constant conflicts. The conflict is more terrible with the official elements, and in a special manner with the mayor of the city and the civil authorities, who try by all means to annihilate this good work. The results of the collections are very insignificant, if we bear in mind the thousands of people who suffer from the reconcentrations; but it serves for some consolation to see that in Havana some one hundred and fifty-nine children and eighty-four women are well cared for in the asylum erected in Cadiz Street, No. 82, and ninety-three women and children are equally well located in a large saloon erected for them in the second story of the focus, with good food and proper medical assistance, as also everything indispensable to civilized life. {1899 PTM, PRUS 34.5}

"According to the information which we have been able to acquire since August until the present day, one thousand seven hundred persons have entered the focus, proceeding from Jaruco, Campo Florido, Guanabo, and Tapaste, in the Province of Havana, Of these, only two hundred and forty-three are living now, and are to be found in Cadiz Street-eighty-two in the saloon already mentioned, and sixty-one in the Quinta del Roy and the Hospital Mercedes, the whole amounting to about three hundred and ninety-seven; and of these a great many will die on account of the great sufferings and hunger they have gone through. {1899 PTM, PRUS 35.1}

"From all this we deduce that the number of deaths among the reconcentrados has amounted to seventy-seven per cent." 1 {1899 PTM, PRUS 35.2}

Could humans be called upon to suffer greater agonies than these? And it must be remembered that the above figures refer only to the conditions in the city of Havana, and that the death-rate there was only about fifty per cent of that in other places in the island; and when it is further borne in mind that there were several hundred thousands of these non-combatant reconcentrados, or pacificos, mainly women and children concentrated under General Weyler's order, some idea can be formed of the mortality among them. {1899 PTM, PRUS 35.3}

In the Pinar del Rio Province there were at one time about forty thousand of these unfortunate reconcentrados. Of this number fifteen thousand were children, and the most of them orphans. To make matters worse, they were unequally distributed throughout the different towns in the province. In the capital city there were only four hundred and sixty, while in some of the small towns there were over four thousand. As the majority of the taxpayers in these towns had been ruined by the war, it was next to impossible to collect anything by means of imposts with which to care for this added burden. In many places food was so scarce that even cats were eaten, selling for thirty cents apiece. {1899 PTM, PRUS 35.4}

The relief offered by the authorities was relief in name only. On this point one United States consul wrote as follows:- {1899 PTM, PRUS 35.5}

"I have personally visited (on several occasions) head masters of distributing stations. Two thousand rations were given out for a few days only to eight thousand persons. . . . There are more than twelve thousand starving people in this city to-day. One out of four (or six) received the following ration: two ounces rice, one and one-half ounces tassajo (jerked beef), and sometimes a small piece of bread, per diem. Imagine starving people being relieved by such rations! Even this ration of food has been discontinued since the 11th inst. Death-rate has diminished somewhat; now about sixty-three daily. There are less people to die. {1899 PTM, PRUS 36.1}

"The scenes of misery and distress daily observed are beyond belief. Here is one out of hundreds. In a family of seventeen living in an old lime-kiln, upper part of city limits, all were found dead except three, and they barely alive." 2 {1899 PTM, PRUS 36.2}

Still another United States consul wrote that in his district there was a starving, struggling mass, whose constant cry was, "Bread, or I perish." His consulate was besieged to an extent that blocked the entrance, and greatly retarded business. Men, women, and children, homeless and naked, roamed the streets; they begged of every one they met and at every door they passed, and at night they slept wherever they could find a spot upon which to lay their weary frames. {1899 PTM, PRUS 36.3}

Whence sprang this sorrow? Whence came such awful suffering? From whence this terrible mortality? Why the thunder of artillery and the desolating rattle of the deadly Mauser? What hellish cause gave birth to this emaciated army of reconcentrados? Came they from catacomb or tomb?-Nay! From whence then? {1899 PTM, PRUS 36.4}

Go to the twilight of history for the answer. Turn back the wheels of time, and journey through the doctrines of the Dark Ages. Read upon the pages of the great ledger of things which have happened under the sun, and there be enlightened. Yes, find it upon the records that God keeps with the nations.

There it is charged to the account of those two theories that "all men are not created equal, and governments do not derive their just powers from the consent of the governed." There is where it is written, and there it belongs. From these pernicious principles sprang the Cuban insurrections. {1899 PTM, PRUS 36.5}

The people of Cuba pleaded for their inalienable rights and liberties. Spain was determined that they should not have them, and their pleas were met with mockings and with war. To the end that she might not enjoy her liberties and her rights, Spain made war upon her unfortunate and unhappy daughter. To prevent the peaceable enjoyment of these two things, Spain marshalled her armies and mobilized her fleets. In the defense of these evil doctrines she spilled the blood of her sons, and sank her ships. But these efforts were like the final struggles of the man who vainly tries to chain the last fierce flicker of the spark of life. They were her death throes. {1899 PTM, PRUS 37.1}

It was during the height of the death grapple between mother and daughter that the voice of the American republic was heard in resolute tones. Impregnable in the rocky strength of the conviction that "all men are created equal," and that "governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed," the people of the United States spoke forth. {1899 PTM, PRUS 37.2}

The declaration of war against the kingdom of Spain was adopted on the 18th of April, 1898, by a vote of 42 to 35 in the Senate, and 311 to 6 in the House. It clearly sets forth the policy of the government at that time:- {1899 PTM, PRUS 37.3}

"First. That the people of the island of Cuba are, and of right ought to be, free and independent. {1899 PTM, PRUS 37.4}

"Second. That it is the duty of the United States to demand, and the government of the United States does hereby demand, that the government of Spain at once relinquish its authority and government in the island of Cuba, and withdraw its land and naval forces from Cuba and Cuban waters. {1899 PTM, PRUS 37.5}

"Third. That the president of the United States be, and he hereby is, directed and empowered to use the entire land and naval forces of the United States, and to call into the actual service of the United States the militia of the several States, to such extent as may be necessary to carry these resolutions into effect. {1899 PTM, PRUS 37.6}

"Fourth. That the United States hereby disclaims any disposition or intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction, or control over said islands, except for the pacification thereof, and asserts its determination when that is accomplished to leave the government and control of the island to its people." {1899 PTM, PRUS 37.7}

This declaration of war is significant in itself. Its first resolution clearly and forcibly voices the principles and sentiment of the Declaration of Independence. The one says, "These United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States;" and the other asserts, "The people of the island of Cuba are, and of right ought to be, free and independent." {1899 PTM, PRUS 38.1}

Moreover the declaration of war demands that the Cubans shall be free and govern themselves, on the ground of right, when it states that the people of the island of Cuba are, and of right ought to be free

and independent. In short, it demands freedom for the people of Cuba on the same ground that the fathers demanded freedom for the people of these United States. {1899 PTM, PRUS 38.2}

When the resolutions were passed by Congress, the United States, to all appearances at least, rose above that selfishness to which nations are so prone. From the executive mansion, in Senate and House, on the platform, in the press, and even from out the Christian pulpit, it was everywhere noised abroad that the war upon which the United States entered was wholly and solely "for humanity's sake." {1899 PTM, PRUS 38.3}

In his message to Congress, April 11, 1898, President McKinley said:- {1899 PTM, PRUS 38.4}

"The grounds for such intervention may be briefly summarized as follows:- {1899 PTM, PRUS 38.5}

"First. In the cause of humanity, and to put an end to the barbarities, bloodshed, starvation, and horrible miseries now existing there, and which the parties to the conflict are either unable or unwilling to stop or mitigate. It is no answer to say this is all in another country, belonging to another nation, and is therefore none of our business. It is especially our duty, for it is right at our door." {1899 PTM, PRUS 38.6}

Other nations declared that America had sinister designs. Such insinuations were repudiated with contempt. Daily was defiance hurled at all maligners. We boldly told the world that this was not a war for territorial aggrandizement; that we wanted nothing save only that a suffering people should go free. Even as late as last October, at the Peace Jubilee in Chicago, President McKinley said:- {1899 PTM, PRUS 38.7}

"The war with Spain was undertaken, not that the United States should increase its territory, but that the oppression at our doors should be stopped. This noble sentiment must continue to animate us, and we must give to the world a full demonstration of the sincerity of our purpose." {1899 PTM, PRUS 38.8}

Continually and all the time we denied for ourselves, just as much as for others, the right to Cuban or any other soil, save only by and with the consent of the governed. The most forcible statement of this was by the chief magistrate of the Republic in his message to Congress of Dec. 6, 1897:- {1899 PTM, PRUS 39.1}

"Of the untried measures there remain only recognition of the insurgents as belligerents, recognition of the independence of Cuba, neutral intervention to end the war by imposing a rational compromise between the contestants, and intervention in favor of one or the other party. I speak not of forcible annexation, for that can not be thought of. That, by our code of morality, would be criminal aggression." {1899 PTM, PRUS 39.2}

In these words a noble and thoroughly American principle is laid down. The idea of "forcible annexation" is expressly repudiated. And more than this, it is repudiated on the ground that "by our code of morality [it] would be criminal aggression." But where is "our code of morality"? In what part of that code is it declared that "forcible annexation" would be "criminal aggression"? What document contains it? On what pages can it be found? {1899 PTM, PRUS 39.3}

Once more the answer must be given that in the Declaration of Independence it is written, not only that "governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed," but that these United States

have "full power to do all acts and things which independent States may of right do." {1899 PTM, PRUS 39.4}

It was with these sacred principles burning upon every lip, flying from the peak of every ship of war, and floating upon the folds of all our battle standards, that we entered upon the contest with Spain "in the cause of humanity." {1899 PTM, PRUS 39.5}

In all of this the nation only reaffirmed the principles of the Declaration of Independence, and told to all mankind that still its holy fire kindled in our breasts; that now, as ever before, we believed these truths to be good for, and applicable to, not only ourselves, but all humanity. Not since the days of Rome, that other great republic of the West, had the world listened to such lofty and unselfish national sentiments. {1899 PTM, PRUS 39.6}

Victory crowned our arms. It was everywhere the same. One harmonious strain of triumph pealed forth from Dewey on the whispering waters of Manila Bay, from the forces of Sampson, Schley, and Shafter at Santiago, and from the Rough Riders of Colonel Roosevelt at San Juan Hill. {1899 PTM, PRUS 40.1}

With the destruction of Admiral Montojo's fleet, and the annihilation of Cervera's squadron; with the surrender of Santiago, and the results of the heroism at San Juan, there came to an end the colonial system of a nation whose history is at once profoundly interesting and pregnant with instruction. To-day the death certificate of Spain's colonial system stands signed; yea, even now that system is arraigned at history's bar. {1899 PTM, PRUS 40.2}