

CUBA AND THE CUBANS

George Kennan

Abstract This chapter contains an edition of George Kennan's (1845–1924) lecture “Cuba and the Cubans”, which the famous journalist and travel writer presented throughout the United States since 1899. The document is an important source on the U.S. perception of Cuba in the aftermath of the Spanish–American War (1898) and provides an insight into American attitudes towards the Caribbean neighbor and into arguments that were summoned during the later discussion about the political future of the island.

Keywords Cuba and the Cubans · Spanish–American War
George Kennan

George Kennan Papers. Manuscripts and Archives Division. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations, Box 3, Series III. Writings, speeches, publications and notes, 1866–1922, 1963, n.d., 3.13 Cuba and the Cubans, lecture, n.d. The lecture is handwritten with pencil on 140 numbered pages.

I would like to thank the staff members of the Brooke Russell Astor Reading Room for Rare Books and Manuscripts at the New York Public Library for the support during my research there.

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In view of all that has recently been said and written about Cuba and the Cubans,² I almost hesitate to ask your attention to a subject which must seem to you so hackneyed and overdone; But perhaps, after all, it is not so hackneyed as it seems. Most of the political questions raised by the Spanish-American War are still unsettled; We don't yet know exactly what we are going to do with the island that we have set free; and there are still a good many differences of opinion with regard to the character and capacity of their [sic!]

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inhabitants. It is possible, therefore, that I may be able to tell you something about Cuba and the Cubans that will have interest and value, even if it be not absolutely new.³

I shall confine myself, for the most part, to the eastern end of the island—partly because it is much less known than the western end, and partly because it would be extremely difficult to cover the whole country in a single lecture and pack six months experience into an hour and a half. Havana, Matanzas, and Santa Clara are doubtless familiar enough to you all, but the wild mountain vastnesses of Eastern Cuba, which lie off all the regular routes of travel,

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have seldom been visited or described.⁴

I went to Cuba the first time on the Red Cross steamer *State of Texas* at the beginning of the war, and landed in the little village of Siboney, twelve miles east of Santiago, on the 25th of June (1898).⁵ Gen Shafter's⁶ forces

¹The numbers in brackets refer to the original manuscript pagination.

²Kennan often uses "&" instead of "and", however, for a uniform reproduction, all have been switched to "and".

³Originally Kennan used paragraphs after almost every sentence. To provide a better structure to the manuscript this has been adjusted by the editor.

⁴This and the following marked sections (deletions) were crossed out in the original manuscript. It seems likely that Kennan erased such parts to shorten the overall lecture. If he, however, just changed a single word or two, the final version of the lecture manuscript is presented here.

⁵Additions to the text by the editor were put in parentheses.

⁶William Rufus Shafter (1835–1906). For his life and work see Paul H. Carlson, "*Pecos Bill*": *A Military Biography of William R. Shafter* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1989).

were still disembarking, and I arrived just in time to see the Cuban army of General García⁷ march out of Siboney and start for the front by the Santiago trail. We have had at various times, a good many different and conflicting reports with regard to the size, appearance, and fighting capacity of Cuban armies.

Let me give you

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my first impressions of the army of the East — General García's command — as it marched out of Siboney on its way to the front. It consisted of about 1500 men, and was the most dirty, ragged assemblage of armed tatterdemalions⁸ that I had ever seen or imagined. In the 1st place at least four fifths of the common soldiers were colored or black and one fifth of them were boys. In the second place they were dressed — or perhaps undressed — in the lightest, airiest, most thoroughly ventilated costumes ever worn by man since Adam was turned out of Eden. Falstaff⁹ declared, with humorous exaggeration, that there was only a shirt and a half in all his company. There must have been three or 4 whole shirts and a good many half shirts in a Cuban company to say nothing of straw hats and drawers; but they had

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all been torn by jungle storms and stained with jungle mud, until they looked worse than the cast-off garments which an American farmer hangs up on a stick to scare the crows. There was hardly a suggestion of a uniform in the whole command; and if the men's rifles and cartridge belts had been taken away from them, I should have thought they were a horde of dirty Cuban beggars and ragamuffins on the tramp.

I don't mean to say that these ragamuffins were not good soldiers and brave men. They may have been both, in spite of their disreputable appearance.

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A singed cat is often a good mouse catcher, and a soldier may fight like a hero in a ragged shirt and one-legged drawers; but I must say nevertheless, that the result of my first sight of a Cuban army was disillusion and disenchantment.

⁷ Calixto García (1839–1898). For works on the general, who was involved in all major Cuban revolutionary wars during the 19th century, see Dolores Rovirosa, *Calixto García: A Tentative Bibliography* (Miami, FL: Ediciones Universal, 1980).

⁸ "Tatterdemalions" basically means something like ragged tramps.

⁹ It is unclear if Kennan refers to a real person or the literary figure at this point.

It seemed to me in the highest degree improbable that such soldiers as these would ever have driven the Spaniards out of Cuba.

Having made the acquaintance of a part of the Cuban people by inspecting the army of Gen Garcia, I proceeded to make the acquaintance of Cuban mountains and jungles by going in search of the Rough Riders, who

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had just had their first fight at Guasimas and were said, vaguely, to be somewhere at the front. I don't know how Gen'l Wood¹⁰ and Colonel Roosevelt¹¹ managed it, but the Rough Riders seemed to be always¹² in front. After the capture of Santiago I heard three or four soldiers of the Sixth Regulars discussing this remarkable fact and one of them said "In front? Of course they get in front! They're too damn fresh! At the battle of San Juan Teddy was ordered to support our regiment; and how d'ye suppose he supported us? Marched right around our flank and got ahead of us! Damn the Rough Riders!" After walking 8 or 9 miles over a jungle trail in a blazing sun, without

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seeing a sign of Col Roosevelt or his men, I felt about the Rough Riders very much as the soldier did. But we found them at last — camped in a field of high wild grass only about a cannon shot from Santiago.

In the course of this walk to Col Roosevelt's headquarters, I had an opportunity to see, for the first time, a Cuban jungle; and I frankly confess that I didn't like it. With all due contempt for the Spaniards I was forced to admit that in such a wilderness, as that between Siboney and Santiago, they had some excuse for not making good roads. From the point where we left the Siboney valley to the summit of the Sevilla divide, we never had an unobstructed outlook in any direction.

¹⁰Leonard Wood (1860–1927). On Wood's life and military career see Jack C. Lane, *Armed Progressive: General Leonard Wood* (San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1978).

¹¹Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919). Wood and Roosevelt had organized the 1st Volunteer Cavalry regiment that served during the war and became publicly known as the Rough Riders. Kennan will later also make a reference to this regiment in the lecture. On the Rough Riders see Roosevelt's own description of the events in Theodore Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1899). On the relationship between Wood and Roosevelt, a recent publication is definitely worth reading. John S. D. Eisenhower, *Teddy Roosevelt and Leonard Wood: Partners in Command* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2014).

¹²Emphasis in the original.

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Dense torpical forests, almost impenetrable to the eye, closed in on the narrow trail, and when the sea breeze was cut off and the sun stood vertically overhead, we could hardly guess in what direction we were going.

Of scenery, in the proper sense of that word, there was hardly a suggestion. Scenery implies distance, perspective and atmospheric effect, but down at the bottom of that mere slit in the primeval forest we seemed to be in a sort of narrow canyon, whose hundred-foot walls of dark green foliage stood less than 20 feet apart and rose out of an impenetrable jungle of vines, cactuses, pinyon bushed an the sharp lacerating blades of the Spanish bayonet.

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To get through that jungle, without a machete or an axe, seemed to me absolutely impossible; and the more I saw of it the more I wondered at the feebleness of the resistance which the Spaniards offered to our advance by this route.

There were at least half a dozen places which, with a little entrenchment, might have been made as strong as the pass of Thermopylae; and if General Chaffee¹³ or General Lawton,¹⁴ with a single brigade of American regulars, had held that trail, — a whole army corps of Spaniards wouldn't have fought their way through to Santiago in three months. Instead of fighting, however, at every point of vantage, and this detaining our army until the deadly climate

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had had time to get in its work, the Spaniards abandoned their strong position at Guasimas after a single engagement, and retreated almost to Santiago without striking another blow. It was great luck for General Shafter, but it was not war. If we had been fighting the South African Boers instead of the Spaniards, we never should have taken Santiago by the Siboney road.

By the time we reached the Rough Riders' camp it was late in the afternoon; and as we had a return march of 8 or 9 miles to make before

¹³Adna Chaffee (1842–1914). There is only an older biography from 1917 that deals with the later Military Governor of the Philippines. William H. Carter, *The Life of Lieutenant General Chaffee* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1917).

¹⁴Henry Lawton (1843–1899).

dark, we cut short an interesting talk with Col Roosevelt, took a couple of letters to mail for the Secretary of War and started back. On the battlefield of Guasimas, where we stopped a few moment to rest, there

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were still to be seen a lot of rags, bandages and fragments of clothing, which were stained or sooked with blood of the wounded and the dead. On or about these bloody rags, I saw for the first time Cuban land crabs; and formed the opinion, which subsequent experience only confirmed, that they are the most uncanny, loathsome and disgusting things that the Almighty, in His infinited wisdom has ever created.

They resemble the common marine crab in form, and vary in size from the diam(e)ter of a saucer to that of a large dinner plate. Instead of being gray or brown however, like their marine relatives, they are highly colored in diversified shades of red, scarlet, light yellow, orange and black. Sometimes one tint prevails, sometimes another; and occasionally all of these colors are fantastically blended in a single specimen. The creature has two long fore-claws or pinchers; small eyes

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mounted like round berries, on the end of short stalks; and a mouth that sums to be formed by two horny, beak-like mandiblers; It walks or runs with considerable rapidity in any direction — backwards, sidewise or straight ahead — and is sure to go in the direction you least expect. If you approach one, it throws itself into what a defensive attitude, raises aloft its long fore claws, looks at you intently for moment, and then backs or slides away on its hind legs, gibbering noiselessly at you with the horny mandibles of its impish mouth, and waving its arms distractedly in the air, like a frighthened and hysterical woman.

All of these crabs are scavengers by profession and

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night prowlers by habit, and they don't emerge from their lurking places in the jungle until the sun gets low in the West. Then they come out by the hundred — if not by the thousand — and as it begins to grow dark, the still atmosphere of the deep lonely forest is filled with the rustling, crackling noise that they make as they scramble through the bushes, or climb over the stiff dry blades of the Spanish bayonet.

Colonel Roosevelt told me that nothing interfered so much at first with his sleep in the field as the noise made by these crabs in the bushes. It was so much like the noise that would be made by a party of guerillas or bushwhackers, stealing up to the camp under cover of

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darkness, that it might well keep army man [sic!] awake. Cuban land crabs, like Cuban vultures, are haunters of battlefields; but the crabs seek the dead at night, while the vultures drink the eyes or tear off the lips of an unburied corpse in the broad light of the day.

On the battlefield of Guasimas, however, while the sun was still above the horizon, I saw, crawling over a little pile of bloody rags a huge crab whose pale waxy-yellow body suggested the idea that he had been feeding on a yellow-fever corpse and had absorbed its color. At my approach he backed slowly off the rags, opening and shouting his mouth noiselessly and waving his fore claws toward me in the air with what seemed like

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impish intelligence, as if he were saying "Go away! What business have you here? Blood and the dead are mine." There may be something more repulsive and uncanny than such a performance by a huge corpse-colored land-crab, but if so I have never happened to see it. It made me feel as if I should like to do as the Russian peasant does in similar cases — spit and cross myself.

We reached Siboney about half past five and got on board the State of Texas in time for dinner after a walk of 16 or 18 miles. It is not my purpose, of course, in this lecture, to go over the often described and familiar ground of the Santiago campaign;

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but I must say a few words with regard to one feature of that campaign which has attracted comparatively little attention and which I as an officer of the Red Cross had an exceptionally good opportunity of seeing — and that is the behavior of our wounded soldiers in the field hospital during and immediately after the battle of San Juan.

The newspapers just now are filled with stories of British gallantry and British heroism in front of Kimberley, Ladysmith and Mafeking. I want to describe to you American heroism in front of Santiago. Scores of war correspondents have told you how our soldiers fought. Let me tell you how they suffered and died. On the 1st of July,

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when the two days battle in front of Santiago began, the field hospital of the First Division — the only field hospital we had — consisted of a few units of tent-flies pitched in a field of high Guinea grass, about a mile and a half back of the firing line. It had five surgeons, three ambulances, six or eight operating tables, and perhaps a dozen stretchers, for a whole army corps of 1600 men.

When Dr. Egan¹⁵, a Red Cross surgeon, and I reached the hospital, after a hurried march of ten miles from Siboney the battle was in progress. The first wounded began to come back from the firing line about 9 o'clock.¹⁶ As the hot tropical day advances, the number constantly increased, until, at nightfall, long rows of disabled men were lying on the ground in front

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of the operating tents awaiting examination and treatment.

Although the small force of field surgeons worked heroically, and with a devotion that I have never seen surpassed, they were completely overwhelmed by the great bloody wave of human agony which rolled back, in ever increasing volume from the battle line. When one of our metropolitan surgeons has performed two serious operations he thinks he has done a good days work. Every one of our surgeons in that field hospital performed thirty operations between nine o'clock and dark, and then lighted candles and kept it all night. They stood at their operating tables, wholly without sleep and almost without food, for twenty one consecutive hours; and yet, in spite of their tremendous exertions, hundreds of wounded men lay on

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the ground from two to four hours before they received the least surgical attention or care. Late in the evening, division and regimental surgeons began to come back from the first aid bandaging stations at the front,

¹⁵Dr. E. Winfield Egan received a telegram from the Cuban Relief Committee on February 16, 1898 that simply stated "Barton wants you in Havana." Clara Barton papers, 1805–1958, Library of Congress, Red Cross File, 1863–1957, American National Red Cross, 1878–1957; Relief operations; Spanish-American War; Correspondence; Special; Egan, E. Winfield, 1898–1902, undated, MSS11973, box: 135; Microfilm reel: 97. He eventually served as surgeon for the Red Cross during the war.

¹⁶Kennan usually uses "oclock" instead of "o'clock." This had been adjusted due to the editing process.

and the operating force was increased to ten. More tables were set out in front of the tents, and the surgeons worked at them all night, partly by moonlight and partly by the dim light of a few flaming candles.

Fortunately the weather was clear and still and the moon nearly full. There were no lanterns in the camp, except one that I carried there in my hand, and if the night had happened to be dark, windy or rainy four fifths of the wounded would have had no surgical aid until the next day.

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But the absence of lanterns was not so unfortunate as the absence of clothing and blankets. Many of our soldiers, had either stripped off their upper clothing themselves on going into action, or had had it cut off by the surgeons at the bandaging stations, so that they came into the hospital half naked.

We had no clothing or blankets to give them, and all that a litter-squad could do with a man, when they lifted him off the operating table Friday night, was to carry him away, half naked as he was, and lay him down on the water-soaked ground under the stars. You may say that it didn't matter much because the nights were warm; but the nights were not warm.

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At noon on both days of the battle, my thermometer in the sunshine stood at 130 but at night it grew damp and cool so rapidly that before two o'clock my clothes were wet with the heavy dew and I was almost in a chill.

I cannot imagine anything more cruelly barbaous than to bring a badly wounded man back 2 or 3 miles in a rolling army wagon; let him lie 3 or 4 hours on the ground without shelter from sun or dew;

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rack him with agony on the operating table, and then carry him away, weak and helpless, lay him down in the high wet grass, without shelter, blankets, pillow food or drink and leave him there to suffer alone all night. And yet I saw this done with hundreds of men as brave and heroic as any that ever stood in a battle line. It might not have been so — it ought not to have been so — but so it was; and in that hospital there were no means whatever of preventing it.

When the sun rose Saturday morning, the sufferings of the wounded who had lain out all night in the grass were intensified rather than relieved, because with

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sunshine came heat, thirst and surgical fever. We tried to protect some of them by putting up awnings and thatched roofs of bushes and grass; but about seven o'clock more wagons loaded with wounded began to arrive from the battle line, and the whole hospital force turned its attention to them, leaving the men in the grass almost uncared for. The scenes of Saturday were like those of the previous day, but with added details of misery and horror.

Some of the scenes that I was compelled to witness seem, even now, to be etched on my memory in lines of blood. I shall not describe them to you or even refer to them. They will always be a ghastly nightmare to me, but there is no reason why they

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should be to you. Vereshchagin¹⁷ may paint some things that is not expedient to put into words, and all I aim to do is to describe as much of the dark environment as may be necessary in order to throw into relief the character of the soldiers by whose heroism it was illumined. Many of the wounded who were brought in Saturday afternoon from the extreme right-wing of the army at Caney had had nothing to eat or drink in more than 24 hours and were in a state of collapse.

Some, who had been shot through the mouth or neck, were unable to swallow, and we had to push a rubber tube down through the bloody froth that filled their throats and pour water into their stomachs through that. Some were paralyzed from the neck

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down or the waist down as a result of injury to the spine; some were delirious from thirst, fever and exposure to the sun; while some were in a state of complete unconsciousness, and made no reply or sign of life when I offered them water or bread.

I well remember one smooth faced American soldier about 30 years of age who had been shot in the head and also wounded by a fragment of a shell in the body. He was naked to the waist, and his whole right side, from the arm-pit to the hip, had turned a purplish-blue color from the

¹⁷Vasily Vasilyevich Vereshchagin (1842–1904) was a Russian war artist, whose internationally recognized paintings, like *The Apotheosis of War* (1871), also depicted the cruelties of war.

bruising blow of the shell. Blood had run down from under the bandage that was tied around his head, and had then dried, covering his swollen

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face and closed eyelids with a dull red mask. On this bloody mask had settled a swarm of flies which he was too weak to brush away or in too much pain to notice. I thought at first that he was dead; but when I spoke to him and offered him water, he opened his bloodshot, flyencircled eyes, looked at me for a moment in a dull agonized way, and then closed them and faintly shook his head. Whether he lived or died I do not know.

All the wounded, as they came in, were placed on the ground in a long closely packed row, a few bushes or pieces of canvas were put over them to shelter them a little from the blazing Cuban sun, and there they lay for two, three, sometimes four hours

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before the surgeons could even examine their injuries. A more splendid exhibition of patient uncomplaining fortitude, and heroic self-control the world has never seen; and never will see.

Many of these men as appeared from the chalky faces, gasping breath and bloody vomiting, were in the last extremity of mortal agony; but I did not hear a groan, a murmur or a complaint once an hour. Occasionally a Rough Rider under the knife of the surgeon would swear, or a beardless Cuban boy would shriek and cry *O mi madre mi madre* as the surgeons reduced a compound fracture of the former and put his leg in splints; but from the long rows of wounded on the ground there came no sound or sign of weakness.

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They were suffering — some of them were dying — but they held their grip!

Many a man whose mouth was so dry and parched with thirst that he could hardly articulate, would insist on my giving water first, not to him, when it was his turn, but to some comrade who was more badly hurt or had suffered longer. It is said that intense pain and the fear of impending death bring out the selfish animal characteristics of man; but such is not the case with the highest type of man. Not a single American soldier in all my experience in that field hospital, ever asked to be examined or treated out of his regular turn and account of the severity, painful nature or critical state of his wound.

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On the contrary, they repeatedly gave way to one another, saying "Take this one first — he's shot through the body. I've only got a smashed foot and I can wait." And in that valley of the shadow of death even the courtesies of life were not forgotten.

If a man could speak at all, he always said "Thank you" or "I thank you very much" when I gave him hard bread or water. One beardless youth who had been shot through the throat, and who told me in a husky whisper that he had no water in 30 hours, tried to take a swallow when I lifted his head. He strangled, coughed up a bitter bloody froth and then whispered "Thank you; it's no use; I can't; never mind."

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Our Red Cross surgeon Dr Egan afterwards gave him water through a stomach-tube. If there was any weakness, or selfishness, or behavior not up to the highest level of heroic manhood among the American soldiers in that hospital during those first three terrible days, I failed to see it.

As one of the army surgeons said to me, with tears in his eyes, "When I look at those fellows and see what they stand, I am proud of being an American and I glory in the stock. The world has nothing finer." I remained in the field hospital at the front until the 10th of July, and then, as most of the wounded had been carried to the sea coast and put on board the hospital ships

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I returned to Siboney.

Six days later Santiago surrendered, and on the day of the capitulation the Red Cross steamer *State of Texas* steamed into the beautiful harbor, our women nurses singing "My Country 'Tis of Thee"¹⁸ on the forecandle while

¹⁸Samuel Francis Smith (1808–1895) wrote this popular American song in 1831. 1. My country, 'tis of thee, / Sweet land of liberty, / Of thee I sing; / Land where my fathers died, / Land of the pilgrims' pride, / From every mountainside / Let freedom ring! 2. My native country, thee, / Land of the noble free, / Thy name I love; / I love thy rocks and rills, / Thy woods and templed hills; / My heart with rapture thrills, / Like that above. 3. Let music swell the breeze, / And ring from all the trees / Sweet freedom's song; / Let mortal tongues awake; / Let all that breathe partake; / Let rocks their silence break, / The sound prolong. 4. Our father's God to Thee, / Author of liberty, / To Thee we sing. / Long may our land be bright, / With freedom's holy light, / Protect us by Thy might, / Great God our King.

the rest of us gathered on the hurricane deck and exchanged cheers with the soldiers of Gen Kent's division who were scattered along the shore.

Although there was said to be very little yellow fever in Santiago, Miss Barton¹⁹ and the Captain of the State of Texas decided to quarantine the steamer against the city, and gave notice to all on board that if any person left the ship

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he could not return to it. This made going ashore rather a serious matter; because the city had been in a state of famine for weeks, and it was not likely that one could find anywhere a mouthful to eat. However, I didn't propose to be cooped up in the ship if there was any alternative, so filling my canteen with water and putting a few cakes of hard bread in my pockets I bade everybody goodbye and went ashore.

The first impression made by Santiago upon the newcomer in July 1898 was one of dirt, disorder, neglect and foulness unspeakable. It always had the reputation of being the dirtiest city in Cuba

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and at the time of the surrender it was at its worst. The houses were all shut up; dead men and dead horses were rolling in the streets; mango-skins, old bones, filthy rags and refuse of all sorts lay scattered over the rough broken pavements; little rills of stinking water trickled into the open gutters from the courtyards and cess-pools [sic!] of the deserted houses; and when the sea breeze died away at night, the whole atmosphere of the city seemed to be pervaded by a sickly indescribable odor of corruption and decay.

In a long and tolerably varied experience in Russia, the Caucasus, Asia Minor, European Turkey and other out of the way corners of the world I have never encountered such a variety of insupportable stenches as were to

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be found in some of the streets of Santiago on the day of the surrender. It made me wish that I could breathe as well as drink out of a canteen. The problem of supplying myself with food and drink in the famine-stricken and almost deserted city, after the steamer had been quarantined against me, proved to be even more serious than I had anticipated.

¹⁹Clara Barton (1821–1912).

I walked the streets pretty much all day and failed to discover anything eatable except a few half-ripe mangoes which would undoubtedly produce cholera before they satisfied hunger.

There did not seem to be any encouraging probability that I should be fed by Cuban ravens or nourished by manna from the blazing Cuban skies;

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and in the absence of some such miraculous interposition of Providence, it became perfectly evident to me that I should either have to go with a tin cup to the Red Cross soup-kitchen and beg for a portion of soup on the ground that I was a destitute and starving reconcentrado, or else return to the pier where the State of Texas lay, hail somebody on deck, and ask to have food lowered to me over the ships side. I could certainly drink a cup of coffee and eat a plate of hash on the dock without any serious danger of infecting the ship; and if the captain should object to my being fed in that way, on the ground that the ships dishes might be contaminated by my feverish touch, I was fully prepared to put my pride in my pockets and meekly receive my rations in an old tomato can, or a paper bag tied to the end

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of a string.

I resolved therefore to go to the pier, swear with uplifted hand that I was not suffering from yellow fever, typhus fever, remittent fever, malarial fever, pernicious fever, cholera or small pox, and ask somebody to lower to me over the ships side a cup of coffee in an old beer-bottle and a mutton chop at the end of a fishing line. I was ready to promise that I would immediately furnigate the fishing line and throw the bottle into the Bay, so that the State of Texas shouldn't run the slightest risk of becoming infected with the diseases that I didn't have. About the middle of the afternoon, having exhausted all the provisions that I had brought ashore with me, I walked down to

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the State of Texas, hailed a sailor on deck. I asked him to call Mrs J. Addison Porter, wife of President McKinley's private secretary, who had come to Cuba with Miss Barton to see the war.

When Mrs Porter's surprised but sympathetic face appeared over the steamer's rail, I explained the situation, and asked if she would not please

have the table-steward Tommy lower me something to eat over the ships side. In five minutes Tommy appeared in the starboard gangway of the main deck, and lowered down to me on a tray a most appetizing lunch of bread and butter, cold meats, fried potatoes, preserved peaches, ice-water and coffee.

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As the temperature in the fierce sunshine which beat down on my back was at least 130, the cold meals were immediately warmed up; the butter turned to a yellowish fluid which could have been applied to bread only with a paint brush; and perspiration ran off my nose into my coffee-cup [sic!] as I drank; but the coffee and fried potatoes kept hot, and I emptied the glass of ice-water before it had time to come to a boil.

All the rest of that week I took my meals on the pier — Mrs Porter keeping me abundantly supplied with food, while I tried to make my society an equivalent for my board by furnishing her, 3 times a day with the news of the city.

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In the course of a week I succeeded in getting an oil stove, some dishes, and a small supply of oat-meal and beans, and with this outfit I began light housekeeping in my room at the Anglo-American Club. 10 days later I was taken with malarial fever, as a result of exposure in the field hospital at the front, and after partly recovering and then suffering a relapse, I became so weak that I could no longer be of any use in Cuba, and on the 12th of August I sailed for New York.²⁰

Three months in Nova Scotia and the Adirondacks²¹ partially restored my health, and early in December I returned to the

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island, steamed once more into the beautiful harbor of Santiago, and landed again at the very same pier where I had eaten my daily bread in the sweat of my brow under the flag of the Red Cross. At first glance there seemed to be absolutely no change in the appearance of the city;

²⁰Kennan had added the remark "Click 1" here, probably showing some photographs during the lecture.

²¹The Adirondack Mountains in Upstate New York.

and as I walked up Hagóoey Street to the Anglo-American Club, I felt as if my recent impressions of Nova Scotia²² and the Adirondacks were merely recollections of a vivid dream; and as if I were looking up my old Santiago life again exactly where I left it that hot sunny morning in August, when I walked feebly down the pier in a paroxysm of fever, was put on board

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a steamer and dreamed that I went home.

Strong, however, as this impression was at first, it yielded gradually to the evidences of change and progress which presented themselves at every step as I walked about the city. The streets were the same that I remembered, but they had suddenly become clean. There were no emaciated pariah dogs nosing about heaps of rotting garbage besides the curbstones; no streams of filthy water trickling into the gutters; and no stenches of decomposition even in the narrowest and least-frequented back alleys.

The Christina Boulevard along

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the water front was as free from dirt and litter as any street in New York; the great central market on Marina Street, which I remembered as a foul, sickening pest-hole [sic!], had become as fresh and neat a place as Center Market in Washington; the city seemed to be full of U.S. hotels, Chicago restaurants, and Arizona saloons; and when a ragged little Cuban boot-black shouted in my ear “Shine? Shine ‘em up”, I felt as if there were new heavens and a new earth and the former things had passed away.

I left Santiago a sinkhole of foulness and corruption. I found it, on my return, the cleanest Spanish American

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city in all the Western hemisphere.²³ In order to get some acquaintance with the interior of Cuba, I determined, soon after my arrival in Santiago, to make a horseback trip across the island; and about the

²²The Kennans owned a summer house in Nova Scotia, where George would usually spend time to recover from his yearly lecture series.

²³Kennan showed additional images at this spot (Click 2–3 and 4).

middle of December, I proceeded by steamer to Guantanamo, where, it seemed to me, I could best make a start. Guantanamo is a town of about 6000 inhabitants, and is chiefly noteworthy on account of the straits to which its inhabitants were reduced toward the close of the Spanish-American War. From hunger, they suffered far more than the Santiago people did; and at the last they kept themselves

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alive for weeks, only by catching and eating land-crabs.

When crabs became scarce in the neighborhood of the town, and the people were too weak to walk six or eight miles in search of them, the Caimanera Railroad Co. ran a free train out into the woods for the special use of the crab-hunters; and that train used to carry three to six hundred people every day. In all the history of transportation, I think there is no other recorded instance of a land-crab accomodation, run every day by a railroad company in order to keep 6000 starving people alive. At Guantanamo with the

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assistance of Col Ray,²⁴ I got together a camp equipment; engaged a negro soldier of the Cuban Civil Guard named Hulio as guide; and with Lieut Blunt of the 3rd Georgia Volunteers²⁵ as traveling companion, started on horseback for a ride of 140 miles to Baracoa.²⁶

For the first twelve miles the road ran through an open country between long monotonous stretches of abandoned and weed-overgrown sugar cane; but just beyond the little village of San Antonio, where Col Ray had his last picket, we crossed a low divide, and plunged suddenly into the wildest, darkest most tangles tropical forest that I had

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ever seen outside of Nicaragua.²⁷ The spreading tops of the immense, closely-set trees met over the narrow trail so as to shut out the sun

²⁴I assume that this is Alfred M. Ray (c1849–1917).

²⁵On this unit see Patrick M. Sherry, "A Brief History of the 3rd Georgia Volunteer Infantry," <http://www.spanamwar.com/3rdGeorgia.htm> (last access, November 12, 2016).

²⁶"Click 5" is inserted here, this time mentioning that the photograph would show "Palms at Guantanamo."

²⁷"Click 6" was supposed to show a "Cascade" here.

and fill the woods with a gloomy greenish twilight; long slender lianas, as smooth and even as deep-sea fishing lines, hung from the leafy roof above to the jungle of ferns, cactuses and broad-leaved herbaceous plants below; curious blossoming parasites which looked like huge red spiders crawling out of clumps of Spanish-bayonet grew in thousands on the trunks and lower limbs of all the trees; and here and there a colony of rampant vines had so overrun a thicket or a clump of small trees as to turn it into a great mound of solid greenery 30 feet in

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height and more than 50 feet across.

Most of the trees that made up this great forest were unknown to me even by sight; but among the few that I recognized were cocoanut and royal palms; mahogany's *lignum vitae*, bread-fruit trees, mango trees; wild limes, and wild bananas. The trail in most places was fairly good; but after the sun set and the short twilight faded, the forest became a carve of Egyptian darkness through which Julio [sic!]²⁸ seemed to find his way by a sort of miraculous intuition. Although there was a bright moon above the great leafy canopy which hid the sky; its rays pierced the foliage

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only at long intervals, and fell upon the trail in small spots of intensely white light which merely confused the eye and intensified by contrast the impenetrable gloom of the jungle. But darkness was not our only trouble.

Along the trail that we were following, the Spaniards, some years before had erected a telegraph line to connect Guantanamo with Baracoa. In order to save labor, they strung the wire on trees; sometimes parallel with the trail, and sometimes zigzagging irregularly across it. Then when the insurgents destroyed the line, as they

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eventually did, they cut the wire every 2 or 300 yards, and either snarled it up and threw it in a tangle on the ground, or left a slackened length or two hanging from tree to tree across the trail, at a suitable height to catch an unwary rider under the chin and drag him off his horse.

²⁸Kennan switched to the spelling "Julio" at this point.

I won't undertake to say how many times in the course of our night ride Hulio or Lieut Blunt shouted back to me through the darkness — "Look out! Telegraph wire!" But how could I look out for telegraph wire when I didn't know whether it was on the ground or overheads, and couldn't see it in either case. I always ducked or dodged in obedience to the

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warning, and kept my head below the level of my horses ears until I thought I had passed the point of peril; but I generally misjudged the distance and straightened up just in time to catch it in the neck. If however I escaped this misadventure, it was only to have my horse dance a quickstep under me with 10 or 15 fathoms of tangled wire around his hind legs.

Then I'd have to dismount and extricate him; and if there is anything worse than disentangling 75 or 100 feet of bent and twisted telegraph wire from the hind legs of a frightened horse in the depths of a tropical forest at night — I don't want to have anything to do with it.

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About ten o'clock that evening — and, by the way, it was Christmas Eve — we camped in a little opening in the forest, on the bank of the Yateras River.

~~Early the next morning we followed the river down to the sea coast — still on the Southern side of the island — rode 20 or 30 miles in terrific heat along a desert-like beach sprinkled with Arizona cactuses; and camped the second night in the yard of a peasant farmer near the mouth of the River Irnias. In this horseback ride through the eastern part of the island I was struck many times by the incapacity — not to say stupidity shown by~~

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the average Cuban farmer in the management of his farm, and in the treatment of his domestic animals. His cart, for example, is the rudest, clumsiest two-wheeled vehicle that I have ever known to be made by any one except perhaps a six-year-old boy. Instead of putting the axletree and wheels under the middle of the cart, where they would support the load, the Cuban puts them at the extreme rear end of the floor or platform, just as a small boy would make a toy cart by pulling an axle through an empty spool from his mother's work basket, and then tying sticks to the ends of this axle for thills. The bottom or floor of the

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Cuban cart is on the thill, in front of the wheels. The weight of the load therefore is divided between the wheels and the horse, so that the unfortunate animal has to carry one half of it on a chronically sore back and drag the other half.

In all his dealings with horses, mules and oxen the Cuban is equally stupid. He rides his horse with a brutal long-shanked curb-bit which tortures to no purpose; and if he packs a horse or a mule, he cinches the heavy pack on with a single girth of rather thin webbing hardly two inches wide. This girth

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wrinkles to a width of one inch when wet and then saws back and forth the swaying of the pack, until it cuts a bloody gash in the animal's belly. The idea of using a broad girth of heavy leather, which would neither wrinkle nor cut, seems never to have occurred to him. He yokes his oxen, always and everywhere, by lashing a heavy beam across their horns; and then he fastens this beam rigidly to the pole, so that every lurch of the wagon gives a violent yirk²⁹ and shock to the animals heads. He says they don't mind it; but I should like to yoke him up in that way once,

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as an experiment, and drive him 8 or 10 miles over a Cuban road. It might not change his practice, because he doesn't care a soumarkee³⁰ whether an animal suffers or not; but it would afford great satisfaction to me — even if it didn't break his neck.

In his domestic economy, generally, the Cuban shows no more intelligence or ingenuity than is required to thatch a roof with palm leaves; fashion a gourd into a drinking cup; or make a rude trail out of a section of bamboo. He has no cottage industries; he shows no skill or art in the working of metals; his machete is "made in Germany" or New England; and his

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hoe, which he makes himself, is shaped like an adze, has a handle about two feet and a half long, and breaks the back of the user. Most peasants

²⁹A variation of "to yerk," which means to strike of whip.

³⁰A sou marqué is a French colonial coin that was quite common in the West Indies and North America during the 18th century.

and country people in Europe, and even our own Western Indians, show considerable skills in working silver, and fashioning it into ornaments; but the only silver objects made by the Cuban are small silver teeth, ears, noses or stomachs which he hangs as votive offerings before the shrines of his saints, in order that the latter may relieve him of toothache, earache, stomach-ache or nosebleed.

These anatomical models may be good for the saints; but as evidences of intelligence, skil(l)ful handiwork

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~~or artistic taste, they leave much to be desired. In view of what I have said it seems hardly necessary to add, that the country Cuban, as I saw him on the ride to Baracoa and as I afterward saw him in many other places was, intellectually, a disappointment. He may be able to govern his island with the wisdom of a Socrates; but he doesn't manage his domestic affairs with the intelligence of an Eskimo.~~³¹

About noon on the third day of our journey we reached the mouth of the River Imias and there, in a little clearing among the palms, we found what is known in Cuba as a cantina — a sort of country grocery where the

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peasant farmers of the neighborhood can purchase supplies; or exchange their farm products for sugar, coffee, Tobacco and rum. The proprietor of this cantina — a sallow young Cuban in a gauze undershirt and a pair of drawers — welcomed us with effusive hospitality; treated everybody to drinks; declared that the Cubans and the Americans were a holy band of brothers; waved a Cuban flag enthusiastically over Blunt's head; and finally begged us to do him the honor of taking a Cuban breakfast with him.

There was no resisting such fraternal and patriotic hospitality as this, so we all gathered about a dirty wooden table in front of the counter to eat yams, boiled rice and beans.

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It was in some respects, one of the most remarkable breakfast parties I ever had the pleasure of attending. Lieut Blunt, in the uniform of the

³¹At the end of the crossed out part Kennan makes another picture reference, namely "Click 8 (Road house)."

American Army, sat side by side with a coal-black negro in the uniform of the Cuban Civil Guard; the lecturer of the evening, in an old Red Cross jacket, passed the beans to a Cuban groceryman in a transparent gauze undershirt; two kinky-haired barfooted negroes for whom there were no chairs, stood up on the other side of the table and helped themselves, with dirty hands, to everything they could reach; while half a dozen customers of the canteen, who had not been invited to the feast stood around in a free

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and easy way, casting covetous eyes at the beef and beans and taking part socially in the table talk.

Lieut Blunt who was a representative did not seem to be as happy and hilarious as such company and such environment should have made him, and when breakfast was over and the Cuban guests had duly wiped their mouths on their shirt-sleeves and their hands on their trousers, he rose from his chair and silently left the room. I found him a few moments later, smoking and meditating in a hammock which our guide had slung between two posts of the horse-shed at the end of the house.

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When I casually remarked that he had not seemed to enjoy his breakfast, he said slowly, and with an air of settled gloom "That's the first time I ever sat down to breakfast with a nigger!" The spring of life was poisoned for him!

We began the last stage of our journey at the mouth of the Hoho River on Tuesday. We were then nearly opposite Baracoa on the Southern side of the island; and as it was no longer possible to avoid or get around the mountains which occupy the whole interior of Santiago province, we forded the Hoho River, turned northward up its left

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bank, and plunged into the wild labyrinth of the Churchillas — an unmapped chaos of crowded peaks, domes, and sharp-edged ridges, whose steep sides were clothed from base to summit with a great mantle of vine-langled forest and jungle. The Hoho River, whose water had the clearness and the delicate greenish tint of a fine aquamarine, blowed, for a distance of four or five miles above its mouth, through a chain of gorges and mountain amphitheatres of extraordinary wildness and beauty.

Every five or ten minutes we would come out of a narrow ravine into what looked like a great mountain-walled sink-hole, or well, in which the

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river seemed to have its birth, and out of which I could see no possible way of escape; but just as I would shout to my companion "I don't see how we are ever going to get out of this!" a sharp turn in the trail would disclose another deep wild ravine, through which, either in the bed of the stream or along a narrow rocky ledge, we would ride into another great mountain amphitheatre higher up. We passed through six of these splendid amphitheatres and forded the Hoho River thirteen times in less than two hours.

I despair of being able to convey

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in words any adequate idea of the extraordinary luxuriance of the vegetation; the beauty and variety of the flowers; and the wonderful grandeur of the scenery as we ascended height after height from the mouth of the Hoho River to the summit of the wild pass that leads across the range. In the presence of such landscapes the most expert word-painter might as well lay down his dictionary and simply say as Columbus said when he first saw this scenery from Baracoa four centuries ago, "This is the most beautiful land ever beheld by human eyes."

I have said nothing thus far about the road across the mountains as regarded from the point

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of view of a horseman; but it is remarkable enough, and perilous enough to deserve at least twice as much time as I have given to the scenery. I think I have never ridden, in any part of the world, over a trail which, for twenty miles together, was so utterly, hopelessly and irredeemably bad, as the trail across what the Spaniards aptly call "The Knife-blades of Baracoa." Properly speaking it isn't a trail at all.

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It's nothing but a devious, zigzag, back-and-forth, up-and-down route by which an acrobatic Cuban pony, at the peril of his own and his rider's life can climb, jump, slide and scramble from one side of the range to the other.

Not a stroke of work has ever been done on that trail since Columbus discovered America. It climbs mountains as sleep as the Chilcoot Pass³²; it secends the beds of dry torrents at an inclination of 3000 feet to the mile; it runs along narrow cornices, through steep rocky corridors, over

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shelving masses of wet iron ore as slippery as a toboggan-slide paved with banana-peel, and finally it drops over the edge of a precipice and tumbles into the valley of Baracoa like a zigzag flight of steps down into a thousand foot well!

I'm not particularly nervous on horseback at great heights, but I want no more Baracoa trails. From the time we left the level of the Caribbean Sea on one side until we got down to the level of the Atlantic on the other I never had a feeling of perfect security for ten consecutive minutes. The only thing that could make a man feel safe on that trail would be a good reliable

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parachute. The result of my experience was to give me a feeling of profound respect for the Cuban mountain pony as the best all-around-jumper, climber and scrambler in the world. If Cuban men were half as intelligent as Cuban horses, I should never doubt their capacity for self government. Late Wednesday afternoon, tired hungry and splashed from head to foot with mud, we dashed at a gallop into the town of Baracoa after a ride of 140 miles.³³

As seen from the encircling mountains, Baracoa appears to stand on what was once a flat-topped coral reef between an outer and an inner bay. The outer bay

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with its long curving line of snowy surf, is bounded on the east by a steep, densely wooded mountain; while the circular inner bay, which is fringed with cocoanut and royal palms, is almost overhung on its eastern

³²The Chilcoot Pass runs through the Coast Mountains, and is thereby connecting Alaska and British Columbia. For a historical analysis of this region see Kathryn Taylor Morse, *The Nature of Gold: An Environmental History of the Klondike Gold Rush* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003).

³³"Click 9" was supposed to show an image of Baracoa at this point.

side by the precipitous vine-draped crag upon which stands the blue-walled building now known as Fort Wood.³⁴ Back of the inner bay is a chaos of foothills and mountains, shaggy with tropical vegetation, through which a swift clear river makes its way in a deep blue ravine to the sea; and in the middle distance rises a huge, square, forest-clad mesa, 3000 feet in height, known as the “anvil of Baracoa.” This gigantic cube of rock forms the most striking landmark on the coast, and can be seen from a distance of 40 or 50 miles.³⁵

In whatever direction one looks from the crest of the hill behind Baracoa, the scenery is wild and

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picturesque in the extreme. ~~The mountains that encircle the town on the south are not so high as the great peaks in the vicinity of Santiago, but they are much more diversified in form; their sides are more precipitous; the valleys that separate them are narrower and deeper; and the mantle of vegetation that clothes them is far richer, greener, and more luxuriant than that (of) the arid southern slopes of the mountains between Santiago and Guantanamo.~~ In fact I doubt whether in all the West Indies there is a more beautiful combination of dark blue ocean, snowy surf, tranquil palmfringed bay, perennial verdure, and diversified mountain scenery than is to be found in the vicinity of Baracoa.

The next Sunday after our arrival in Baracoa was New Years Day, and thinking that I should probably see the whole population in holiday attire at church,

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I attended divine service in a dilapidated old building on the plaza. To my great surprise the congregation on New Year Sunday in a town of 6500 inhabitants consisted of only 40 or 50³⁶ women and fifteen men. Evidently the Cubans didn't take kindly to religion. The service was conducted by a single priest, and did not differ much from the Roman Catholic service in our own churches except that the languages used were Latin and Spanish instead of Latin and English.

³⁴“Click 10” was supposed to show another image of the area.

³⁵“Click 11” (Baracoa).

³⁶Originally Kennan had referred to “seventy five” attendants.

The music however was rather remarkable, inasmuch as it was furnished by a big brass horn, a guitar, a saxophone, a kettle-drum and a gourd rattle. About 11 o'clock the small congregation was dismissed, and most of the young girls, with a few of the men and the whole ecclesiastical

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orchestra marched across the street to the house of the priest, where they were going to have a holiday dance. A dance at 11 o'clock Sunday morning in the house of the priest, with the church choir and orchestra to furnish music, was an entertainment novel enough, I thought, to justify me in breaking the Sabbath — at least to the extent of looking on — so I followed the congregation.

So far as one could judge from attendance, the priests' dance was a good deal more popular than his church service.

When I arrived the front parlor was crowded with dancers, while in the back parlor the priest himself, with presuming face, was smoking a cigarette and opening bottles of beer while he talked, laughed and joked hilariously with his parishioners. At his urgent solicitation I refreshed myself with a

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bottle of lukewarm beer and then took a seat behind the kettle-drum to watch the proceedings.

Whatever may be the capabilities of the Cubans in other directions, they certainly can not dance.

I have seen greater freedom and grace of movement, better observation of time, and far more dash, spirit and abandon at a negro-cake-walk in Tennessee than in all the Cuban balls and dances that I ever attended. When I went in, the Baracoa congregation was dancing what seemed to be an ordinary waltz; but their movements were sliff, awkward and constrained, and they showed no more exhilaration or enjoyment than they would have shown had they been performing some tiresome religious rite on the floor of a chilly cathedral. Or at the end of the waltz there was a solemn walk-around, after which the

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guitar, the kettle-drum, the gourd rattle and the scratch-gours struck up the queer, barbaric music of the Cuban danzon — a round dance

something like a waltz, but with greater irregularity of movement, and with a peculiar swaying of the body suggestive of the “hooche-cooche” and other Oriental dances of the Midway Plaisance.

If I were asked to describe the Cuban danzon in a single sentence, I should say that it is a tropical combination of a two-step waltz with an ecstatic wiggle-waggle, and is danced in a jerky unrythmical way within the limits of an 8 foot circle. Regarded from the point of view of a spectator, it has neither grace nor dignity, and it was interesting to me only because it showed, both in movement and in music, the influence that the negro, in Cuba, has had over the Spaniard.

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The music, especially, with its queer broken time, the sharp staccato click of its gourd rattle, and the half-mufled intermittent thunder of its deep-toned drum, is as unmistakably [sic!] African as anything to be heard on the upper Nile or in a jungle on the banks of the Congo.

Why the danzon should be preferred to the waltz — as it everywhere is in Cuba — I don’t know, unless it be for the reason that the music is more wild and passionate, and the dance itself more in harmony with the ardent, sensual nature of the half-Spanish, half-negro population. When I had satisfied my curiosity I bade the priest good bye and went home; but dancing continued there all the afternoon and evening; and the last sounds I heard before I fell asleep that night were the peculiar click of the cratch-gourd and the faint distant rumble of the drum. The Sunday church service

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had occupied about three quarters of an hour. The Sunday dance lasted eleven hours and a half and broke my dance record.

It is said that a certain historian, in writing a history of the Emerald Isle, put in a chapter entitled “The Snakes of Ireland.” The whole chapter consisted of only six words — “There are no snakes in Ireland.” When I write a history of Cuba my chapter on “the religion of the Cubans” will also be limited to six words — “There is no religion among Cubans.”

After staying about two weeks in Baracoa, I returned to Santiago by water, around the eastern end of the island; then went by steamer to Havana; and spent several months or more in constant travel through the provinces of Havana, Matanzas, Santa Clara and Pinar del Rio.

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Coming from Santiago to Havana in Febuary was like coming from a quiet Wisconsin village to Chicago on the eve of a Presidential convention. The square in front of the Inglaterra Hotel was ablaze with gas gits and electric lights, which illuminated brilliantly the hinted fronts of the clubs, theatres and hotels that stood about it; scores of lighted hacks were dashing hither and thither with a continous rattle over the cobblestone pavements; the sidewalks of the great tree-set boulevard known as the Prado were so crowded with laughing chattering pedestrians that one could hardly make one's way along them, while the spacious bar room of the Inglaterra was filled with an inarticulated

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roar of voices from a great crowd of Cubans and Americans, most of whom were shouting and questioning as excitedly as if they were delegates at a national political convention in Chicago or St Louis.

On the day after our arrival Mr Gray, my interpreter and I, took a drive through the city, I found it as clean, at least superficially, as Santiago. ~~In the vicinity of the old Spanish postoffice, and here and there along the water front, there were foul sickly ordors that seemed to come from choked or neglected sewers; but in all the higher parts of the city the air seemed fresh and pure.~~ It was perfectly evident that even in a single month Gen Ludlow and Major Davis had made a great change for the better in

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the sanitary condition of the place.³⁷

The most unpleasant, but at the same time the most interesting thing I saw in Havana was the Christopher Colon cemetery. Up to the time when I left Cuba, all the consecrated burial places on the island were the property of the Roman Catholic Church, and were under the direct and exclusive control of the clergy. Private individuals might lease plots of ground in them, and might renew such leases from time to time by making fresh payments; but they could not buy³⁸ these lots, nor obtain such little to them as would ensure perpetual possession.

³⁷Kennan added here the note "Begin Havana pictures", which indicates that the further part of the lecture must have been supported by photographs he had taken in the Cuban capital.

³⁸Emphasis in the original.

If a lease were not renewed when it expired, the priests, who

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virtually owned the ground, had a night to remove the occupant of the grave and put another corpse in his place — just as they would eject the occupant of a house who had failed to pay his rent and put in another tenant. As the people of Havana die at the rate of 150 or 200 a week, as they must all be buried in this cemetery, and as the priests can turn them out of their graves and put other corpses in their places as soon as their relatives stop paying rent, the Christopher Colon cemetery is a source of large revenue to the Cuban Church.

Commercially it is precisely equivalent to a big block of tenement houses, except that when living³⁹ tenants are ejected for non-payment of rent they take care of themselves; whereas dead tenants, when exhumed, must be in some

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way disposed of. This difficulty the priests have overcome by establishing in every large cemetery a corpse-destroying house and a bone pit. When a dead man's relatives are too poor to rent a grave, or when, if they have rented one, they default in the payment of rent, the priests dig the body up, take it to the corpse-destroying house, eat the flesh off the bones with quick lime, and then throw the skeleton into the bone pit.

When we visited the Christopher Colon cemetery there was a guard of American soldiers at the gate and one of them offered to act for us in the capacity of guide. "I'll show you" he said with indignation "how these blankety-blank Cuban priests treat their⁴⁰ dead. They're a sweet lot they are! Imperial cannibals I call 'em." "Don't they have funeral ceremonies at

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the grave?" I inquired. "Ceremonies!" Not much. If the relatives of a dead man can pay a dollar or two the priest at the gate comes out with

³⁹Emphasis in the original.

⁴⁰Emphasis in the original.

a basin and a clothes brush and slings a little holy water at the hearse as it goes in, and that's all the ceremony there is." Most times they just put the coffin in a hole and nobody says nothing. And then when they want the grave for another corpse they dig the first one up and take him to the lime-box and the bone-pit. I'll show you the whole thing, How's your nerve" so you mind seeing a stiff put in a lime box after he's been buried a week and dug up? I replied that I didn't go around looking for sights of that kind, but that I had come to the cemetery to see all there was to be seen, and if he could stand it I thought I could.

"You can't most away tell" he said reflectively "how it'll

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strike people. I brought an American lady here to see it one day last week, and described it all to her beforehand..."⁴¹

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Apparently the work of their day had not begun and if there were any bodies in the process of conversions into skeletons, they were hidden in the closed part of the house. There was a faint odor of corruption in the air, and the place was full of ghastly suggestions; but to my secret relief and the soldier's great disappointment there was nothing repulsive to be seen.

From this house we went to the bone pit. Just before we reached it we met another soldier coming from it with a double handful of human teeth, which he had just extracted from a lot of Cuban skulls. He exhibited them to us with pride as he passed and said that he was going to send them to his friends in the States as souvenirs. The bone pit proved to be a rectangular

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excavation in the ground, 40 or 50 feet square and of unknown depth, surrounded with a low brick wall. It was filled nearly to the level of the ground with dismembered human skeletons of both sexes and all ages, lying heaped together in the utmost disorder and confusion.

⁴¹Page 84 of the manuscript is mostly unreadable, since the paper darkened and makes it hard to identify the words that had been written with pencil on it. The edition therefore continues with the last sentence on page 83, turning to page 85, which describes the cemetery tour itself.

In one place some of our soldiers had piled up 12 or 15 skulls in such a manner as to suggest half buried skeletons, crawling up out of the mass of bones to stare at us over one another's heads. How deep this bone pit was, and how many thousands of human skeletons it contained, I had no measure of finding out; but in one corner, where somebody apparently had been trying to dig to the bottom, I could see to a depth of 12 or fifteen feet. As far

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down as that the bones extended in a solid mass, and the bottom of the pit was perhaps 15 or 20 feet lower still. As I did not care to collect any souvenirs in the shape of a teeth, not to get myself photographed with a skull under each arm and a thigh bone in each hand, as our guide said he had already had himself photographed, I looked at the great mass of human remains for a moment and then walked back to the center of the cemetery. The practice of digging up and removing corpses whose grave rent has not been paid, explains the absence in most Cuban burial grounds of old graves and old gravestones.

The town of Baracoa has been in existence nearly four centuries, but I could not find in its cemetery a single

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monument or grave stone that bore an earlier date than 1850, and I saw very few that were earlier than 1870. All bodies buried there before the middle of the century had probably been dug up and thrown into the bone pit. For the priests of Cuba, as a class, I have very little respect; but I don't know anything that is more discreditable to them than their treatment of the bodies of their dead parishioners when no more rent can be collected from the ground in which such bodies lie.

If they would only cremate the bodies that they dig up it would not be so ghastly; but to destroy the flesh with quicklime and then throw the bones into an open pit [sic!] to bleach in the sun and rain seems unnecessarily heartless and brutal. There seems to be a

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great reluctance in Cuba to completely destroy the human body. The priests discountenance cremation, of course, because it would deprive them of their graveyard rents; but the common people are quite as much opposed to it; and their opposition seems to (be) based on a vague fear that if the body is completely reduced to its original elements, the angel

of resurrection never will be able to get it together again. With a skeleton to build on, they seem to think that he can reconstruct it, even although all its softer parts have entered into new combinations with lime; but in the absence of a framework what can he do?

I am glad to say that after I left Cuba, Gov Gen Brooke⁴² issued a decree declaring that all cemeteries in Cuba

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should henceforth be regarded as the property of the municipalities; and if the clergy desired to maintain their claim to ownership, they must do so in the courts of justice. This, of course, will deprive the priests of their power to exploit grave rent from the relatives of the dead, and will prevent them from digging up the remains of persons whose rent is in arrears.

It is to be hoped that the municipalities will then abolish the bone pits and allow the bodies of the dead to remain undisturbed in their places of burial.

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I did not fully realize the extent to which Cuba had been devastated by war, and depopulated by the brutal reconcentration policy of Gen Weyler, until I went from Havana to Matanzas.

Outside of the two fortified towns of Haroóko and Antonio, there was hardly a vestige of human habitation or life on the whole route. Now and then one might see a neglected orange grove, a little unfenced patch of bananas, or the shattered walls and fire-blackened machinery of a ruined sugar mill; but there was not a single peasant village left standing; nor a new crop of any kind left growing; nor an acre of ground cleared and plowed for planting; and the houses — when there were any houses at all — stood from 5 to 10 miles apart. Generally speaking, the

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country was a mere waste of wild grass and weeds, with a few half-choked rows of sugar cane here and there to show what the land had once produced. There is no longer a shadow of doubt that in enforcing the policy of concentration, it was the deliberate intention of Gov Gen Weyler, to destroy the whole Cuban population. His plan in Havana and the other western

⁴²John R. Brooke (1838–1926).

provinces was to send out a raiding column of 4 or 5000 soldiers — a column too strong for the insurgents to cope with — and drive the whole rural population into the fortified towns — burning their houses and agricultural implements; destroying their growing crops; killing or camping off their cattle, and reducing the country as nearly as possible

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to an inproductive and uninhabited desert.

In the vicinity of a single Cuban settlement for example, — the settlement of Sancti Spiritus in the province of Puerto Principe — one of Weyler's raiding columns slaughtered 30,000 Cuban cattle and left their carcasses to rot on the ground. The Cubans who were driven into the towns had no means of supporting themselves there; they were huddled together in glimsy shacks of palm-leaves and bark where the sanitary conditions of life were murderous; and of course they died in starvation and disease like rotten sheep.⁴³ The sufferings of the Cuban reconcentrados in the cental and western provinces of the island have never been exaggerated or overdrawn. On the contrary, the half has

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not been told.

Mr George W. Hyatt, our Red Cross agent in the town of Guanabacoa said to me "When I left here Mr Kennan at the outbreak of the war in April 1898, I was feeding with Cuban Relief supplies from the U.S. about 7500 people. When I returned in November — only six months later — more than 3000 of those people were dead; they were dying at the rate of 400 a month, and I found 42 naked corpses, in various stages of decomposition, lying unburied in the cemetery. The air, in all parts of the town when I first got back was so terrible that I could not sleep nights. In the civil hospital I found the sick, two in a bed,

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wallowing in their own filth and the air there was absolutely insupportable. I have cleaned the town up as far as possible, but the reconcentrados, whom I employ as street cleaners are so sick and weak that they can't do much. We are feeding here now about 3500 people — three

⁴³A "Click" at this point was supposed to show a photograph of a "Reconcentrado village."

fourths of them women and children. Many of them have no homes and no shelter, and lie out of doors on old provision sacks that I save and give to them. How near starvation they have been, even since I came, you can imagine when I tell you that I have seen women and children eating vulture's food from the sewers and garbage barrels."

As I listened to this ghastly story of our own Red Cross agent, and then

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went out of doors and looked at the great throng of pale and emaciated people — whom he was feeding, I could not help wishing that ex Governor-general Weyler might be stripped of his rank and wealth, put into one of the palm-thatched shacks of his own reconcentrados, and fed for the rest of his unnatural life with vulture's food from the sewers and garbage barrels of Guanabacoa. That is the only punishment for him that would come anywhere near satisfying the demands of equity and justice. In all the parts of Central and Western Cuba that I had visited, the condition of the reconcentrados was or had been substantially the same.

In Santa Clara, for example, Mr Warner, our Red Cross

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agent was feeding about 3000 people, of whom only 163 were men. In Sancti Spiritus, a town of 13,000 inhabitants from which he had just come, 11,000 people were suffering for food; they were dying at the rate of 40 a day, and hundreds of unburied corpses were lying in the neighboring fields and woods. Of the 11,000 people whom he fed there only 1200 were men, and of these 1200 men 600 were too ill to walk or stand. In Matanzas, where I spent about a week, I found the American military authorities feeding 8000 destitute reconcentrados, 2000 of whom were sick. In some of the reconcentrado houses that I visited with Major Ives — Genl Sanger's chief surgeon — in Matanzas, the people were

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living in a state of destitution and misery that have never seen equalled elsewhere in the world.

Their places of habitation were little better than wild beast lairs, without floors other than the damp soggy ground; without beds except perhaps a pile of dirty rags in one corner, without chairs, tables, dishes, or

any of the so-called necessities of life. In one place we found nineteen women and children and one sick man living on the bare ground in a palm-thatched shack not more than 12 feet by 15, without a single article of house furniture except one old iron kettle out of which they ate by turns with their fingers. All the food I could find in the house was a little half-burned rice at the bottom of the kettle.

It was touching and pathetic to see that even in such destitution

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and misery as this, the women had tried to brighten their environment by growing in front of their shack a little patch of flowers — balsams, marigolds and verbenas — from seed which they had doubtless brought with them when they were driven into the city from their distant country homes. They must have torn up the tough sod with their bare hands, and pulverized the earth with their fingers, because they had no implements of any kind. I doubt whether, at that time, there could have been found anywhere else in all the world, a little garden patch of cultivated flowers, growing in front of a house which did not contain a single article of human manufacture except one old iron kettle.⁴⁴

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After spending about three months in constant travel through the provinces of Santiago, Havana, Matanzas, Santa Clara and Pinar del Río, I was taken again with Cuban jungle fever — an attack from which I have not yet⁴⁵ recovered — and was compelled to return to the United States.

In a fragmentary and imperfect way I have tried to describe to you some of the scenes and incidents of my Cuban experience. ~~I will now tell you briefly what I think of the Cuban people and of the future of the island.~~

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In a speech made to the trustees of the Cuban Orphan Fund in the N(ew) Y(ork) Chamber of Commerce on the 29th of June 1899, Major General Leonard Wood, then military governor of Santiago, now governor-general, expressed his view of the Cuban problem as follows. “We are going

⁴⁴Another “Click” would show the photograph of “Emaciated children.”

⁴⁵The term “not yet” is a replacement for the original “only just.”

to be held responsible for the island gentlemen, whether Cuba is made independent or becomes a part of ourselves.”

If this statement of Gen Wood be true — and there is no doubt whatever in my mind that it ^{is}⁴⁶ true — the most important practical question suggested by it is a question of character — namely, what are the hereditary and acquired traits, habits and capacities of the people for whose actions we, as a

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nation and a government are to be held responsible. It is of course impossible, in such a lecture as this, to make a complete and exhaustive analysis of the Cuban character, or to give a very great number of cases and examples.

I shall limit myself therefore to a few of the Cuban most noticeable characteristics, and shall begin with what seems to me the best of them; namely his strict temperance in the use of intoxicating liquor. One of the first things that attracts the attention of the observant traveler in Cuba is the remarkable

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fact that although the whole native population drinks, nobody ever seems to get drunk. I had been on the island almost six months before I ever saw a Cuban perceptibly under the influence of liquor; and yet there was not a day, in the whole course of that time, that I did not see Cubans by the dozen, talking, smoking and drinking in the restaurants and cafes with which their towns abound. All Cubans drink, but they are the most temperate people nevertheless that I have ever known. Even in hours of triumph and periods of great emotional excitement, when over-indulgence might be expected if not excused, the Cuban seldom

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loses his head to such an extent as to become noisy, disorderly or offensive.

I witnessed in Santa Clara, Cienfuegos and Havana three great popular demonstrations in honor of Gen Gomez; when there were reunions of old army comrades, celebrations of victories won by Cuban arms, and scenes of almost unparalleled excitement and passion; but I did not

⁴⁶Emphasis in the original.

notice in the crowded cafes, or in the surging throngs on the streets, a single intoxicated Cuban soldier or civilian.

Drunken American⁴⁷ soldiers I have seen in Cuba by the score if not by the hundred; but all the drunken Cuban soldiers I have ever seen I can count on my thumbs.

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In many parts of the island and at many different times, my national and racial pride was deeply wounded — not to say humbled — by the glaring contrast between American intemperance and Cuban sobriety. In Baracoa one afternoon I happened to see three or four drunken American soldiers staggering down the street toward the post-office under the eyes of a dozen or more sober and observant Cubans. In the faces of the Cubans there was a half-pitying half-contemptuous expression which seemed to say “How is it possible for human beings to make such beasts of themselves?”

There was justification enough perhaps for the

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expression; but it irritated me nevertheless. In courage, in honesty, in capacity and in all that goes to make up true manhood, those American soldiers were infinitely superior to the Cubans who stood clear-eyed and sober on the sidewalk and looked after them with disgust and contempt. I had no doubt whatever that three fourths of those very Cubans would lie without scruple and steal if they had a good opportunity, and go contentedly for three months without a bath; but drunkenness didn’t happen to be their vice. That the average Cuban has more self control than the average American in the presence of intoxicating liquor, is an

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indisputable fact; but in defence of the American it may at least be said that when he is sober he has his senses, while the Cuban often loses his senses without being drunk.

What effect American example will have upon the drinking methods and habits of the Cubans, I am unable even to conjecture; but I sincerely hope that they won’t adopt an imported American vice without at least

⁴⁷Emphasis in the original.

learning a few compensating American virtues. If strict moderation in the use of intoxicating liquors be put at the head of the list of Cuban virtues, untrustworthiness in word and deed, must certainly head the list of Cuban vices.

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The chief representative of one of the oldest foreign mercantile houses in Cuba — a house which has been in business there for a period that covers three or four generations — summed up for me one day, in the following words, the firms long experience with its Cuban customers and employees; “When my grandfather died, the last advice that he gave my father with regard to the management of the business was ‘Never trust a Cuban!’ When my father died the last injunction he laid upon me was ‘Never trust a Cuban!’ When I hand over the business to my successor, I shall pass along the advice which I received from my father, and which he received from his

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father — ‘Never trust a Cuban!’.” Individual testimony could hardly be more emphatic or more conclusive than this.

Three successive generations of upright business men had found the average Cuban so untruthful and so unreliable, that they had adopted and handed down in the firm as a business maxim the significant words “Never trust a Cuban”. The untrustworthiness of the Cubans is by no means confined to clerks, traders and the uneducated lower class. If the testimony of American officers and administrators is worthy of belief, Cuban lawyers, physicians and professional men are tarred with the same brush.

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In a talk one day about the character of the Cubans, the Sanitary Inspector of the U.S. Marine Hospital Service at Havana said to me “I have been here Mr Kennan a number of years. It is a part of my business, at certain seasons, to keep Cuban yellow fever and small pox out of the U.S.; and in discharge of this duty I require every Cuban who leaves here for an American port to furnish me with satisfactory evidence that he has had yellow fever and small pox, or, in the case of the latter disease, that he has been vaccinated. At first I began to accept as evidence the certificates of reputable Cuban physicians in this

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city. I soon discovered, however, that I was being imposed upon; and that certain doctors were furnishing non-immune Cubans with false certificates. Then I began to keep a black list of Cuban physicians whose certificates were not to be trusted. This list kept constantly growing, until finally it became so long that I abandoned it, and began to make a white list of the few Cuban physicians that I thought I could⁴⁸ trust."

"I pledge you my professional word Mr. Kennan," he said in conclusion, "that if you were to take 50 centennes (¢5, Spanish gold pieces) and go to 50 of the best known and most

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reputable physicians in the city of Havana, you could bribe 45 of them, with a centenne apiece, to give you a certificate that you had had any disease you chose to name, at any time that suited your purposes."

If well known and reputable Cuban physicians deal in this way with sanitary matters involving issues of life and death, what protection are our Southern cities likely to have when we withdraw from the Pearl fo the Antilles altogether and leave Cuba to the Cubans? How soon will yellow fever be stamped out on the island when Cuban Boards of Health, composed in whole or in part of such physicians, take charge of sanitary work in the city of Havana, and sell false health certificates to

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comers at the rate of ¢5 a piece? It would be easy, if there were time, to furnish many well authenticated cases of the use by Cubans of false weights and measures; of the procurement of Red Cross supplies to groceries at less than their market value in N.Y.; of the placing of fictitious names, by Cuban foremen, on the pay-rolls of street-cleaning gangs; of attempts to bribe administrative officers of the U.S.; of corrupt and fraudulent identification of sham soldiers by Cuban army officers in the distribution of Pres'd Mc Kinley's \$3,000,000 award; and of fraud, deception, embezzlement and untrustworthiness among all classes and in almost every conceivable form.

Now there must be some reason

⁴⁸Emphasis in the original.

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for this wide prevalence of dishonesty in the private, official and commercial life of the Cuban people; and the question naturally arises "What is the reason?" An answer may be found, I think, in the address of General Wood to the Trustees of the Cuban Orphan Fund from which I have already quoted. He said to them "We have got to remember, gentlemen, that we are dealing with a people whose whole disposition has been perverted by a system which compelled deceit, dishonesty and subterfuge in every department of life." In other words the Cuban is untrustworthy because he is the product of a corrupt and vicious system of training, conducted and enforced for three hundred years by corrupt and vicious rulers.

Whatever Spanish army officers

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may have been in Spain, they were in Cuba grasping, avaricious, untruthful, and notoriously dishonest. To expect that colonists of the same race, and natural inheritors of the same characteristics, would undergo this demoralizing intensive training, generation after generation, and come out of it honest, upright or trustworthy, would be to expect a stupendous miracle. In the words of the homely but pregnant Spanish proverb — "The children of the cats catch mice." ~~Next to untrustworthiness the most noticeable characteristic of the average Cuban is uncleanness. It may perhaps be thought that uncleanness, in comparison~~

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with untrustworthiness, is an unimportant if not a venial fault; and that it has no practical bearing upon the welfare of any one except the unclean person and his neighbors. This perhaps is true; but, unfortunately, we are the Cuban's neighbors; and not only our welfare, but even our lives, may depend upon the sanitary condition of (t)his back yard.

It is therefore a practical, as well as a pertinent question, whether there is anything in his character and habits upon which we may base a reasonable expectation that when we leave the island he will continue the work that we have begun.

Will the Cuban cities that we have cleaned be kept clean, and will the

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death rate that we have everywhere reduced be kept down, when the people of the island are left to their own devices? Any one who has read the report of the late Colonel Waring upon the sanitary condition of Havana must still have in mind a sufficiently clear idea of the urban Cuban as he was. Is there any good reason to believe that the leopard has changed his spots, or that he will keep himself spotless when no longer forced to do so by American control? When Mr Gray and I came from Santiago to Havana on the Spanish steamer *Maria Herrera*, we could get no better accommodation than a six-by-eight stateroom, which we shared with two first Cuban passengers.

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One of these gentlemen was a Cuban planter, about 60 years of age, rich enough to afford a loss of \$40 or \$50 every night at cards; and the other was a young lieutenant in the Cuban army. If either of these men had a tooth-brush, a comb, a hair-brush or a piece of soap, I never once caught sight of it. If either of them washed his face or his hands, in the four days that we spent at sea, I never happened to catch him in the act, and never found any evidence in the stateroom that the act had been performed. Both of them had the unpleasant habit of cleaning their throats and spitting on the floor at all hours of the night, and the condition of the floor became such that Mr Gray and

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I dared not get out of our berths in the morning without first putting on our trousers.

When we reached Havana, I asked Dr Brunner the sanitary inspector of the U.S. Marine Hospital Service, whether such untidiness as this was common. His reply was, "I can take you Mr Kennan to private houses of wealthy Cubans in this city — houses that cost 40 or 50,000 dollars to build — where there are all modern improvements, including sanitary plumbing, bath-rooms and closets on every floor, but where nevertheless the occupants neglect the closets and resort to practices which can only be vaguely described as primitive. More than once wealthy Cuban women, wearing four or five hundred dollars worth of diamonds, have

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come to my office to get health certificates or permits to visit the U.S., and upon being required to show their vaccination marks have exposed arms grimy with dirt.”

It will be easy of course, for an affronted Cuban, or an admirer of the Cubans, to jump on me indignantly with the charge that I am basing an indictment of a whole people upon a few exceptional facts or cases. But such is not my meaning or intention. I do not believe — still less assert — that all Cubans travel without toilet requisites, neglect bathrooms, or wear diamonds on dirty arms.

I am merely giving from personal observation or trustworthy testimony, a few illustrations of the general tendency of the Cuban people to

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disregard dirt and ignore the most elementary principles of sanitary science. That there is such a tendency, even the Cubans themselves will hardly deny.

My only object in calling attention to an unfortunate national characteristic and dwelling upon an unpleasant subject is to emphasize the immense practical importance of the impending question “What will be the attitude of the Cuban people toward sanitary reform when we withdraw wholly from the island and leave them to work out their own destiny?” Will they keep Santiago and Havana as clean as Gen Wood and Gen Ludlow have made them? Are they likely to spend in the latter city the 10 or 12 million dollars that

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Col Waring estimated it would cost to construct a proper system of sewerage? Finally is there any reasonable probability that they will ever stamp out that smouldering fire of the tropics — yellow fever — which, from first to last, has cost us Americans far more, in life and treasure than the whole Spanish-American War?

My own answer to all of these questions is unhesitatingly no! What then are we going to do about it? It seems to me that in view of the sacrifices we have made, the blood we have spilled and the money we have spent to free the Cuban people, we are at least equitably entitled to demand that

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Cuba shall be put, and henceforth kept, in such sanitary condition that yellow fever, from *that* source, shall never again menace our Southern coast. If the Cubans will not do this work, we are fully justified in doing it ourselves at their expense; and if we withdraw from Cuba without reserving and asserting our right to supervise and control all sanitary work on the island, we shall make a serious, as well as a foolish mistake. Although untrustworthiness and uncleanness is perhaps the worst fault of the average Cuban, he has several other characteristics which, although less blameworthy from a moral point of view are even more dangerous politically; and these are his excitability

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his disposition to act on hasty unconsidered impulse, and his ineradicable tendency to exaggeration. These may seem like separate and disconnected characteristics, but in reality they are all linked together. If the Cuban were not so excitable, he would not act so often on hasty impulse; and if he were not so impulsive he would be half as likely to exaggerate.

Illustrations of these characteristics, in all its various phases, are so abundant that I hardly know what to select. A typical case perhaps may be found in the discreditable row at the funeral of late Gen Garcia in Havana on the 11th of February (1899).⁴⁹

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In accordance with arrangements made by a Cuban committee, Major Gen Brooke, who represented not merely the U.S. but the only de facto government on the island, was requested to ride in the funeral procession directly behind the members of Gen Garcia's family. Accompanied by the officers of his staff he took the position assigned him, and the procession started from the palace.

A few moments later a Cuban officer, acting under direction of Mr Freyre Andrade,⁵⁰ President of the Cuban Assembly, rode up to the

⁴⁹Garcia died during a diplomatic mission to the United States in New York on December 11, 1898 and his remains were brought to Cuba later.

⁵⁰Fernando Freyre de Andrade (1863–1929).

column and ordered Gen Brooke's staff to fall back and give place to Cuban soldiers. Gen Brooke, very properly, declined to be separated from

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his staff, whereupon Mr Andrade ordered all Cuban officers and soldiers to withdraw from the procession and take no further part in the ceremonies. The Cuban army, as well as the members of the Assembly, did withdraw, amid cries of "Viva Cuba Libre", "Out with the Yankees" and "Hurrah for Aguinaldo" and many of the Cuban officers, including several generals, proceeded to the bar room of the Hotel Inglaterra, where, according to the Cuban newspaper *La Lucha*, they "sat in prominent positions, drinking champagne while Garcia's body was passing."

~~The only comment which it seems necessary to make upon this extraordinary performance, is that made by the Havana newspaper just quoted which said "The whole affair is particularly unfortunate~~

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~~as being indicative of the childish and impetuous nature which is possessed by many of the prominent men of the island." "Childish and impetuous" are not exactly the words that I should use in describing such conduct at such a time; but they are the words of a Cuban editor and they will do.~~

The proceedings of the Cuban Assembly in connection with President Mc Kinley's gift of \$3,000,000 to the Cuban army, would have been regarded as childish and disgraceful by the 12-year-old boys in the Congress of the George Junior Republic. Gen Sanguilly, amid applause, described parts of the message of Gen Gomez to the Cuban army and people as "deliberate lies."

Generals Aguero and Protuondo

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referred to it as a "lying statement." General Maria Rodriguez⁵¹ called Gomez and Quesada⁵² "traitors," and both of the latter gentlemen were forthwith expelled or dismissed, without a hearing and by unanimous vote.

⁵¹José María Rodríguez (1849–1903).

⁵²Manuel de Quesada (1871–1939).

Then the Junta of Cuban generals got together and dismissed twenty four other generals of the Assembly faction en bloc, while the friends of Gen Gomez declared that the elections which gave the members of the Assembly their seats were voidable for illegality and political jobbery. About the same time a Cuban officer named Hernandez wrote a letter to the Havana newspaper *La Lucha* in which he denounced Gen Gomez as a “despot.” Gomez retorted with the countercheck

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quarrelsome that Hernandez was a “coward.” Hernandez thereupon proceeded to get even by publishing alleged incidents of a discreditable nature in Gomez’s private life. All these charges, counter-charges and exchanges of abusive epithets suggest, you will observe, the preliminary stages of a semi-annual revolution in one of the mongrel republics of Central America.

I have referred to them however not for that reason, but merely for the purpose of showing the excitability which almost always hurries them into misstatement, exaggeration or untruthfulness. When Juan Gualberto Gomez,⁵³

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a member of the Cuban Assembly, declared in a speech at a public banquet in Havana that “the Americans are worse than the Spaniards,” he did not say what he really believed, but simply let himself be carried off his feet by the rush of a hasty, passionate impulse. When General Collazo⁵⁴ said, in a letter to Luesada that “the American authorities in Cuba calmly enter private houses without any other excuse than that of scrubbing the furniture” he simply let himself be carried away by the Cuban disposition to oppose sanitary reform and exaggerate facts. When General Avelino Rosas,⁵⁵ one of Garcia’s

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generals, published a signed article in the *Diario de la Marina*, in which he said that “the American government is worse than Weyler’s” and that the “inhuman blockades established by the U.S. exterminated the reconcentrados,” he was simply telling what he knew to be a plain, straight Cuban lie.

⁵³Juan Gualberto Gómez (1854–1933).

⁵⁴Enrique Collazo y Tejada (1848–1921).

⁵⁵Avelino Rosas (1856–1901).

Now the natural and inevitable drift of all this personal abuse, reckless statement, gross exaggeration and intentional falsehood, is not on the direction of social and political order, but rather in the direction of complete anarchy. Men who treat social and political questions in this crazy way are sure to sepearate

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into embittered and irreconcilable factions which will fight one another at the drop of a hat. It is idle to say this will not happen, because it has already happened. When I left Cuba there were no less than twelve factional Cuban parties already in existence including the "Cuban National Party", the "National Republican Party", the "Veterans' League", the "Annexation Party", and the "Party of Independence or death" — each with its own newspaper organ.

The Russians, whose natural tendency is in the direction of association and general cooperation,

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and who have little sympathy with the factional spirit, say proverbially of their Polish cousins that where there are two Poles there are three parties. If they knew the Cubans they would carry the exaggeration a little further and declare that where there are three Cubans there are six parties — five of them in the woods. If defeated and disgruntled factions in Cuba would submit to the expressed will of the majority and subordinate their own desires to the welfare of the nation as a whole, the factional spirit would not be so dangerous.

But this is

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exactly what the Cuban will not do and never has been trained to do. If he cannot have exactly the place he wants in Garcia's funeral possession, he acts the spoiled child who won't play. If he does not get the position he seeks in the government, he won't have anything to do with that government, and the chief representative of it immediately becomes, in his disordered and uncontrolled imagination a "tyrant" or a "despot."

Then he and his faction work themselves into a white heat of wrat, by means of exaggeration,

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misstatement, and pyrotechnical oratory and if the existing government tries to quiet or restrain them, they forthwith take to the woods, and there you have at once all the elements of an incipient revolution. The danger to the State at this stage of the proceedings is greatly heightened by the ignorance of the common people, their proneness to act in unconsidered impulse, and their peculiar susceptibility to the charm of eloquent speech. The average Cuban is easily managed for good if treated with firmness and tact by a man of stronger and better disciplined character; but he is also easily managed for evil by a Cuban general of the Avelino Rosas

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type, who combines selfish ambition with political dishonesty, and who knows how to create a stable lie with the vaporous rhetorical bubbles of impassioned oratory. In view of the opinions I have expressed it is hardly necessary to add that

I do not believe the Cubans at present are either fit for or capable of intelligent self government. That there are on the island honest and capable men, I do not for a moment question, but that such men form a majority, or even a considerable part of the Cuban population, is not only improbable but incredible. The comparatively fair and temperate Havana

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newspaper *La Lucha*, said recently, in an editorial on this subject "Cuba must convince the world that she has enough sane men to control the lunatics." I heartily agree with this statement, and the world, moreover, is ready and anxious to be convinced; but convincing evidence is not yet forthcoming.

All that I have seen of the Cubans, and all that I know of their character leads me to the belief that they will not prove themselves worthy of the freedom that we have virtually pledged ourselves to give them, and that if we withdraw wholly from the island the first Cuban Republic will go down in a revolution, as so many Spanish-American republics have gone down before.

If this should happen, it would probably lead to a second

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intervention on the part of the U.S., and Cuba would thenceforth be subjected to American control. That we shall eventually take such control for the protection of our interests, or that the Cubans will offer it to us for the protection of theirs,⁵⁶ I have very little doubt; but I sincerely hope, that there will be no talk of annexation until we have had time enough to give the rising generation of Cuban boys a thorough training in truthfulness, honesty and the fundamental principles of republican self government. The present generation can't be reformed — it's too late — but with American control and an American system of training we may be able to make good citizens out of the Cuban boys for whom we are now establishing schools.

But whatever we may

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think of the Cubans, and whatever view we may take of the future of Cuba, there is no question whatever that in driving the Spaniards out of the island we were doing a work of justice, mercy and righteousness. When, as individuals, we see a cruel and brutal man beating a women or starving a child, we don't stop to ask whether the victims of the brutality are up to our level of culture or not. We interfere promptly and without question. The duty that is binding upon an individual, is binding also upon a nation.

When Spain undertook to conquer the Cuban insurgents by starving to death two or three hundred thousand of their women and children, it was our duty to intervene, we did intervene, and by our

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intervention we saved the Cuban people. As soon as the Government of the U.S. got control of the island, it began to undo the worse that the Spaniards had done, and to rescue the people who were still alive. How many hundred tons of medical and hospital supplies and how many hundred millions of rations the government and the Red Cross have distributed among the sick and starving people of Cuba, I will not undertake to say; but the Dept of the Cienfuegos and Santa Clara RR told me in Feb(ruary) that up to that time his road had transported into the

⁵⁶Emphasis in the original.

province of Santa Clara alone relief supplies enough to feed 20,000 people for 10 months.

On the 1st of May 1899

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there was not a town, village or hamlet in all the island of Cuba where food was not being furnished to destitute reconcentrados by the army of the U.S. Invading armies as a rule go to kill and to destroy. Our army went to rescue and to save. It is not an overstatement I think to say that by our intervention and with our food we directly saved the lives of half a million of the Cuban people. In view of this fact and in the light of this record the Spanish-American War will forever stand justified before the judgement bar of history and before the judgement bar of God.

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