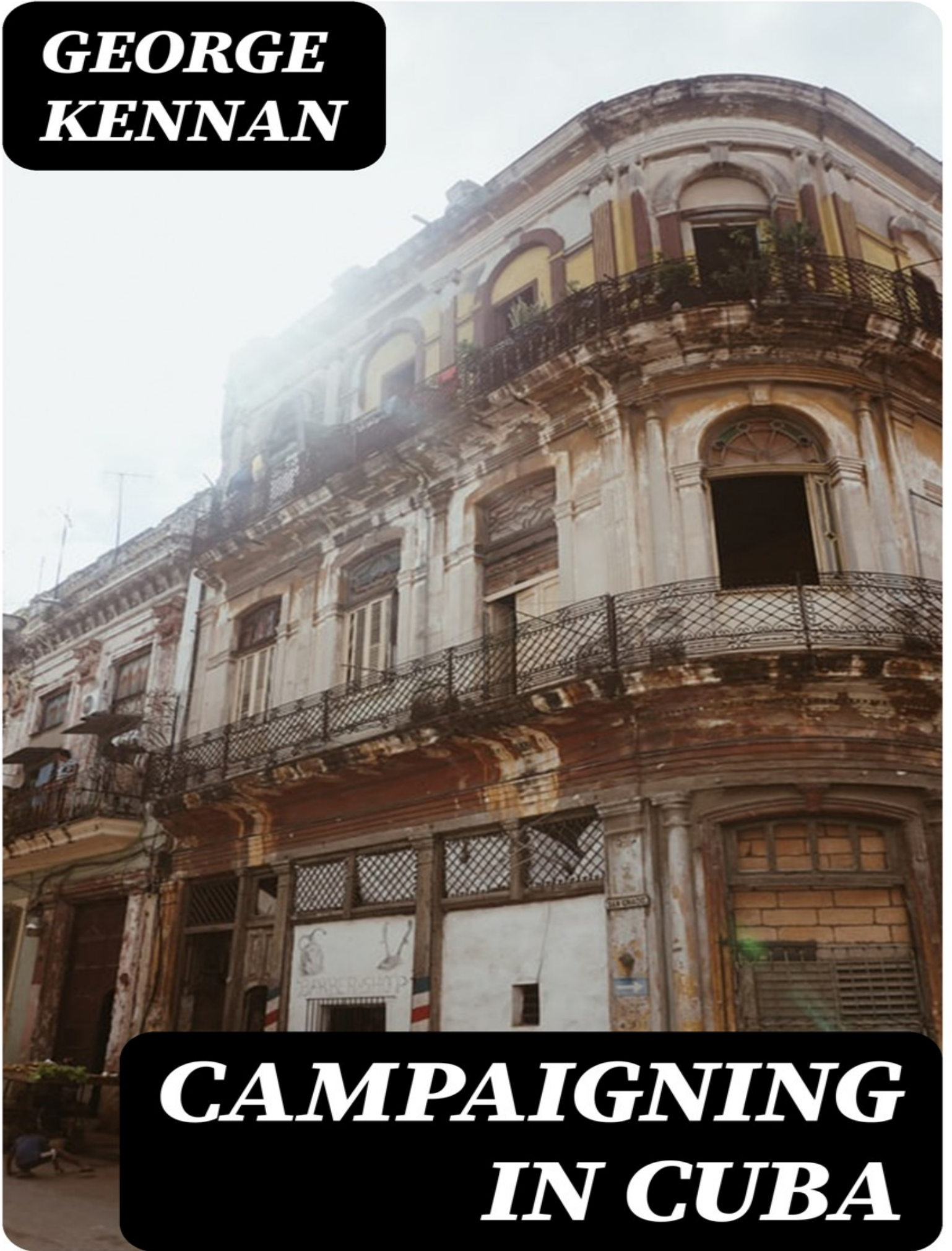


***GEORGE
KENNAN***

***CAMPAIGNING
IN CUBA***



George Kennan

Campaigning in Cuba

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CHAPTER I

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STARTING FOR THE FIELD

WAR broke out between the United States and Spain on April 21, 1898. A week or ten days later I was asked by the editors of the "Outlook" of New York to go to Cuba with Miss Clara Barton, on the Red Cross steamer *State of Texas*, and report the war and the work of the Red Cross for that periodical. After a hasty conference with the editorial and business staffs of the paper I was to represent, I accepted the proposition, and on May 5 left Washington for Key West, where the *State of Texas* was awaiting orders from the Navy Department. The army of invasion, under command of General Shafter, was then assembling at Tampa, and it was expected that a hostile movement to some point on the Cuban coast would be made before the end of the month.

I reached Tampa on the evening of Friday, May 6. The Pullman cars of the Florida express, at that time, ran through the city of Tampa and across the river into the spacious grounds of the beautiful Tampa Bay Hotel, which, after closing for the regular winter season, had been compelled to reopen its doors—partly to accommodate the large number of officers and war correspondents who had assembled there with their wives and friends, and partly to serve as headquarters for the army of Cuban invasion.

It was a warm, clear Southern night when we arrived, and the scene presented by the hotel and its environment, as we stepped out of the train, was one of unexpected brilliancy and beauty. A nearly full moon was just rising over the trees

on the eastern side of the hotel park, touching with silver the drifts of white blossoms on dark masses of oleander-trees in the foreground, and flooding with soft yellow light the domes, Moorish arches, and long façade of the whole immense building. Two regimental bands were playing waltzes and patriotic airs under a long row of incandescent lights on the broad veranda; fine-looking, sunbrowned men, in all the varied uniforms of army and navy, were gathered in groups here and there, smoking, talking, or listening to the music; the rotunda was crowded with officers, war correspondents, and gaily attired ladies, and the impression made upon a newcomer, as he alighted from the train, was that of a brilliant military ball at a fashionable seaside summer resort. Of the serious and tragic side of war there was hardly a suggestion.

On the morning after our arrival I took a carriage and drove around the city and out to the camp, which was situated about a mile and a half from the hotel on the other side of the river. In the city itself I was unpleasantly disappointed. The showy architecture, beautiful grounds, semi-tropical foliage, and brilliant flowers of the Tampa Bay Hotel raise expectations which the town across the river does not fulfil. It is a huddled collection of generally insignificant buildings standing in an arid desert of sand, and to me it suggested the city of Semipalatinsk—a wretched, verdure-less town in southern Siberia, colloquially known to Russian army officers as "the Devil's Sand-box." Thriving and prosperous Tampa may be, but attractive or pleasing it certainly is not.

As soon as I got away, however, from the hotel and into the streets of the town, I saw at almost every step suggestions of the serious and practical side, if not the tragic side, of war. Long trains of four-mule wagons loaded with provisions, camp equipment, and lumber moved slowly through the soft, deep sand of the unpaved streets in the direction of the encampment; the sidewalks were thronged with picturesquely dressed Cuban volunteers from the town, sailors from the troop-ships, soldiers from the camp, and war correspondents from everywhere; mounted orderlies went tearing back and forth with despatches to or from the army headquarters in the Tampa Bay Hotel; Cuban and American flags were displayed in front of every restaurant, hotel, and Cuban cigar-shop, and floated from the roofs or windows of many private houses; and now and then I met, coming out of a drug-store, an army surgeon or hospital steward whose left arm bore the red cross of the Geneva Convention.

The army that was destined to begin the invasion of Cuba consisted, at that time, of ten or twelve thousand men, all regulars, and included an adequate force of cavalry and ten fine batteries of field-artillery. It was encamped in an extensive forest of large but scattered pine-trees, about a mile from the town, and seemed already to have made itself very much at home in its new environment.

The first thing that struck me in going through the camp was its businesslike aspect. It did not suggest a big picnic, nor an encampment of militia for annual summer drill. It was manifestly a camp of veterans; and although its dirty, weather-beaten tents were pitched here and there without

any attempt at regularity of arrangement, and its camp equipage, cooking-utensils, and weapons were piled or stacked between the tents in a somewhat disorderly fashion, as if thrown about at random, I could see that the irregularity and disorder were only apparent, and were really the irregularity and disorder of knowledge and experience gained by long and varied service in the field. I did not need the inscriptions—"Fort Reno" and "Fort Sill"—on the army wagons to assure me that these were veteran troops from the Plains, to whom campaigning was not a new thing.

As we drove up to the camp, smoke was rising lazily into the warm summer air from a dozen fires in different parts of the grounds; company cooks were putting the knives, forks, and dishes that they had just washed into improvised cupboards made by nailing boxes and tomato-crates against the trees; officers in fatigue-uniform were sitting in camp-chairs, here and there, reading the latest New York papers; and thousands of soldiers, both inside and outside the sentry-lines, were standing in groups discussing the naval fight off Manila, lounging and smoking on the ground in the shade of the army wagons, playing hand-ball to pass away the time, or swarming around a big board shanty, just outside the lines, which called itself "NOAH'S ARK" and announced in big letters its readiness to dispense cooling drinks to all comers at a reasonable price.

The troops in all branches of the army at Tampa impressed me very favorably. The soldiers were generally stalwart, sunburnt, resolute-looking men, twenty-five to thirty-five years of age, who seemed to be in perfect physical condition, and who looked as if they had already

seen hard service and were ready and anxious for more. In field-artillery the force was particularly strong, and our officers in Tampa based their confident expectation of victory largely upon the anticipated work of the ten batteries of fine, modern field-guns which General Shafter then intended to take with him. Owing to lack of transportation facilities, however, or for some other reason to me unknown, six of these batteries were left in Tampa when the army sailed for Santiago, and the need of them was severely felt, a few weeks later, at Caney and San Juan.

Upon my return from the camp I called upon General Shafter, presented my letter of introduction from the President, and said I wished to consult him briefly with regard to the future work of the American National Red Cross. He received me cordially, said that our organization would soon have a great and important work to do in Cuba in caring for the destitute and starving reconcentrados, and that he would gladly afford us all possible facilities and protection. The Red Cross corps of the army medical department, he said, would be fully competent to take care of all the sick and wounded soldiers in the field; but there would be ample room for our supplementary work in relieving the distress of the starving Cuban peasants, who would undoubtedly seek refuge within our lines as soon as we should establish ourselves on the island. He deprecated and disapproved of any attempt on the part of the Red Cross to land supplies for the reconcentrados under a flag of truce in advance of the army of invasion and without its protection. "The Spanish authorities," he said, "under stress of starvation, would simply seize your stores and use them

for the maintenance of their own army. The best thing for you to do is to go in with us and under our protection, and relieve the distress of the reconcentrados as fast as we uncover it." I said that I thought this was Miss Barton's intention, and that we had fourteen hundred tons of food-stuffs and medical supplies on the steamer *State of Texas* at Key West, and were ready to move at an hour's notice. With an understanding that Miss Barton should be notified as soon as the army of invasion embarked, I bade the general good-by and returned to the hotel.

In an interview that I had on the following day with Colonel Babcock, General Shafter's adjutant-general, I was informed, confidentially, that the army was destined for "eastern Cuba." Small parties, Colonel Babcock said, would be landed at various points on the coast east and west of Havana, for the purpose of communicating with the insurgents and supplying them with arms and ammunition; but the main attack would be made at the eastern end of the island. He did not specifically mention Santiago by name, because Cervera's fleet, at that time, had not taken refuge there; but inasmuch as Santiago was the most important place in eastern Cuba, and had a deep and sheltered harbor, I inferred that it would be made the objective point of the contemplated attack. The Secretary of War, in his reply to the questions of the Investigating Commission, says that the movement against Santiago, as then planned, was to be a mere "reconnaissance in force, to ascertain the strength of the enemy in different locations in eastern Cuba"; but Colonel Babcock certainly gave me to understand that the attack was to be a serious one, and that

it would be made with the whole strength of General Shafter's command. The matter is of no particular importance now, except in so far as the information given me by Colonel Babcock indicates the views and intentions of the War Department two weeks before Admiral Cervera's fleet took refuge in Santiago harbor.

I left Port Tampa for Key West on the Plant-line steamer *Mascotte* at half-past ten o'clock Saturday evening, May 7. The long, narrow, and rather sinuous channel out of Tampa Bay was marked by a line of buoys and skeleton wooden frames resting on driven spiles; but there were no lights for the guidance of the mariner, except one at the outer entrance, ten or twelve miles from the port; and if the *Mascotte* had not been provided with a powerful search-light of her own she would hardly have been able to find her way to sea, as the night was cloudy and the buoys were invisible. With the long, slender shaft of her search-light, however, she probed the darkness ahead, as with a radiant exploring finger, and picked up the buoys, one after another, with unfailing certainty and precision. Every two or three minutes a floating iron balloon, or a skeleton frame covered with sleeping aquatic birds, would flash into the field of vision ahead, like one of Professor Pepper's patent ghosts, stand out for a moment in brilliant white relief against a background of impenetrable darkness, and then vanish with the swiftness of summer lightning, as the electric beam left it to search for another buoy farther away.

When I awoke the next morning we were out on the blue, tumbling, foam-crested water of the Gulf, forty or fifty miles from the Florida coast. All day Sunday we steamed slowly

southward, seeing no vessels except a Jamaica "fruiter," whose captain shouted to us, as he crossed our bow, that he had been blown off his course in a recent gale, and would like to know his position and distance. We should have reached Key West at half-past two Sunday afternoon; but an accident which disabled one of the *Mascotte's* boilers greatly reduced her normal speed, so that when I went to my state-room at eleven o'clock Sunday evening we were still twenty or thirty miles from our destination.

Three hours later I was awakened by shouted orders, the tramping of feet, and the rattling of heavy chain-cable on the forward deck, and, dressing myself hastily, I went out to ascertain our situation. The moon was hidden behind a dense bank of clouds, the breeze had fallen to a nearly perfect calm, and the steamer was rolling and pitching gently on a sea that appeared to have the color and consistency of greenish-gray oil. Two hundred yards away, on the port bow, floated a white pyramidal frame in the fierce glare of the ship's search-light, and from it, at irregular intervals, came the warning toll of a heavy bell. It was the bell-buoy at the entrance to Key West harbor, and far away on the southeastern horizon appeared a faintly luminous nebula which marked the position of Key West city. Under the war regulations then in force, no vessels other than those belonging to the United States navy were permitted to enter or leave the port of Key West between late evening twilight and early dawn, and we were, therefore, forced to anchor off the bell-buoy until 5 A. M. Just as day was breaking we got our anchor on board and steamed in toward the town. The comparatively shallow

water of the bay, in the first gray light of dawn, had the peculiar opaque, bluish-green color of a stream fed by an Alpine glacier; but as the light increased it assumed a brilliant but delicate translucent green of purer quality, contrasting finely with the scarlet flush in the east which heralded the rising, but still hidden, sun. On our right, as we entered the wide, spacious harbor, were two or three flat-topped, table-like islands, or "keys," which, in general outline and appearance, suggested dark mesas of foliage floating in a tropical ocean of pale chrysolite-green. Directly ahead was the city of Key West—a long, low, curving silhouette of roofs, spires, masts, lighthouses, cocoanut-palms, and Australian pines, delicately outlined in black against the scarlet arch of the dawn, "like a ragged line of Arabic etched on the blade of a Turkish simitar." At the extreme western end of this long, ragged silhouette rose the massive walls of Fort Taylor, with its double tier of antiquated embrasures; and on the left of it, as the distance lessened and the light increased, I could distinguish the cream-colored front of the Marine Hospital, the slender white shaft of the lighthouse, the red pyramidal roof of the Government Building, and the pale-yellow walls and cupola of the Key West Hotel—all interspersed with graceful leaning palms, or thrown into effective relief against dark masses of feathery Australian pine.

Along the water-front, for a distance of half a mile, extended an almost unbroken line of steamers, barks, schooners, and brigantines, discharging or receiving cargo, while out on the pale-green, translucent surface of the harbor were scattered a dozen or more war-ships of the

North Atlantic Squadron, ranging in size from the huge, double-turreted monitor *Puritan* to the diminutive but dangerous-looking torpedo-boat *Dupont*. All were in their war-paint of dirty leaden gray, which, although it might add to their effectiveness, certainly did not seem to me to improve their appearance as component parts of an otherwise beautiful marine picture. Beyond the war-ships and nearer to the eastern end of the island lay the captured Spanish prizes, including the big black liners *Pedro* and *Miguel Jover*, the snow-white *Argonauta*, the brigantine *Frascito*, and a dozen or more fishing-schooners intercepted by the blockading fleet while on their way back to Havana from the Yucatan banks.

But none of these war-ships or prizes had, for me, the interest that attached to a large black two-masted steamer of eighteen hundred tons, which was lying at anchor off the government wharf, flying from her mainmast-head a white flag emblazoned with the red Greek cross of the Geneva Convention. It was the steamship *State of Texas*, of the Mallory line, chartered by the American National Red Cross to carry to Cuba supplies for the starving reconcentrados, and to serve as headquarters for its president, Miss Clara Barton, and her staff of trained surgeons, nurses, and field-officers.

CHAPTER II

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UNDER THE RED CROSS

WHEN Miss Barton joined the *State of Texas* at Key West on April 29 there seemed to be no immediate prospect of an invasion of Cuba by the United States army, and, consequently, no prospect of an opportunity to relieve the distress of the starving Cuban people. Knowing that such distress must necessarily have been greatly intensified by the blockade, and anxious to do something to mitigate it,—or, at least, to show the readiness of the Red Cross to undertake its mitigation,—Miss Barton wrote and sent to Admiral Sampson, commander of the naval forces on the North Atlantic Station, the following letter:

S. S. "STATE OF TEXAS," May 2, 1898.

Admiral W. T. Sampson, U. S. N., Commanding Fleet before
Havana.

ADMIRAL: But for the introduction kindly proffered by our mutual acquaintance Captain Harrington, I should scarcely presume to address you. He will have made known to you the subject which I desire to bring to your gracious consideration.

Papers forwarded by direction of our government will have shown the charge intrusted to me, viz., to get food to the starving people of Cuba. I have with me a cargo of fourteen hundred tons, under the flag of the Red Cross, the one international emblem of neutrality and humanity known to civilization. Spain knows and regards it.

Fourteen months ago the entire Spanish government at Madrid cabled me permission to take and distribute food to the suffering people in Cuba. This official permission was broadly published. If read by our people, no response was made and no action taken until two months ago, when, under the humane and gracious call of our honored President, I did go and distribute food, unmolested anywhere on the island, until arrangements were made by our government for all American citizens to leave Cuba. Persons must now be dying there by hundreds, if not thousands, daily, for want of the food we are shutting out. Will not the world hold us accountable? Will history write us blameless? Will it not be said of us that we completed the scheme of extermination commenced by Weyler?

Fortunately, I know the Spanish authorities in Cuba, Captain-General Blanco and his assistants. We parted with perfect friendliness. They do not regard me as an American merely, but as the national representative of an international treaty to which they themselves are signatory and under which they act. I believe they would receive and confer with me if such a thing were made possible.

I should like to ask Spanish permission and protection to land and distribute food now on the *State of Texas*. Could I be permitted to ask to see them under flag of truce? If we make the effort and are refused, the blame rests with them; if we fail to make it, it rests with us. I hold it good statesmanship at least to divide the responsibility. I am told that some days must elapse before our troops can be in position to reach and feed these starving people. Our food and our forces are here, ready to commence at once.

With assurances of highest regard,
I am, Admiral, very respectfully yours,
[Signed] CLARA BARTON.

At the time when the above letter was written, the American National Red Cross was acting under the advice and direction of the State and Navy departments, the War Department having no force in the field.

Admiral Sampson replied as follows:

U. S. FLAGSHIP "NEW YORK," FIRST-RATE,
KEY WEST, FLORIDA, May 2, 1898.

Miss Clara Barton, President American National Red Cross:

1. I have received through the senior naval officer present a copy of a letter from the State Department to the Secretary of the Navy; a copy of a letter from the Secretary of the Navy to the commander-in-chief of the naval force on this station; and also a copy of a letter from the Secretary of the Navy to the commandant of the naval station at Key West.

2. From these communications it appears that the destination of the steamship *State of Texas*, loaded with supplies for the starving reconcentrados in Cuba, is left, in a measure, to my judgment.

3. At present I am acting under instructions from the Navy Department to blockade the coast of Cuba for the purpose of preventing, among other things, any food-supply from reaching the Spanish forces in Cuba. Under these circumstances it seems to me unwise to let a ship-load of such supplies be sent to the reconcentrados, for, in my opinion, they would be distributed to the Spanish army. Until

some point be occupied in Cuba by our forces, from which such distribution can be made to those for whom the supplies are intended, I am unwilling that they should be landed on Cuban soil.

Yours very respectfully,

[Signed] W. T. SAMPSON,
Rear-Admiral U. S. N.,
Commander-in-Chief U. S. Naval Force, North Atlantic
Station.

After this exchange of letters Miss Barton had a conference with Admiral Sampson, in the course of which the latter explained more fully his reasons for declining to allow the *State of Texas* to enter any Cuban port until such port had been occupied by American troops.

On May 3 Miss Barton sent the following telegram to Stephen E. Barton, chairman of the Central Cuban Relief Committee in New York:

KEY WEST, May 3, 1898.

Stephen E. Barton, Chairman, etc.:

Herewith I transmit copies of letters passed between Admiral Sampson and myself. I think it important that you should present immediately this correspondence personally to the government, as it will place before them the exact situation here. The utmost cordiality exists between Admiral Sampson and myself. The admiral feels it his duty, as chief of the blockading squadron, to keep food out of Cuba, but recognizes that, from my standpoint, my duty is to try to get food into Cuba. If I insist, Admiral Sampson will try to open communication under a flag of truce; but his letter expresses his opinion regarding the best method. Advices

from the government would enable us to reach a decision. Unless there is objection at Washington, you are at liberty to publish this correspondence if you wish.

[Signed] CLARA BARTON.

On May 6 the chairman of the Central Cuban Relief Committee replied as follows:

WASHINGTON, D. C., May 6, 1898.

Clara Barton, Key West, Florida:

Submitted your message to President and cabinet, and it was read with moistened eyes. Considered serious and pathetic. Admiral Sampson's views regarded as wisest at present. Hope to land you soon. President, Long, and Moore send highest regards.

[Signed] BARTON.

Under these circumstances, of course, there was nothing for the Red Cross steamer to do but wait patiently in Key West until the army of invasion should leave Tampa for the Cuban coast.

Meanwhile, however, Miss Barton had discovered a field of beneficent activity for the Red Cross nearer home. In Tampa, on her way south, she learned that in that city, and at various other points on the coast of southern Florida, there were large numbers of destitute Cuban refugees and escaped reconcentrados, who were in urgent need of help. A local committee in Tampa, composed of representatives from the various churches, had been doing everything in its power to relieve the distress of these unfortunate people, but the burden was getting to be beyond its strength, and it asked the Red Cross for assistance. The desired aid was promptly given, and the committee was supplied with

provisions enough to support the Cuban refugees in Tampa until the middle of June.

Upon her arrival at Key West Miss Barton found a similar, but even worse, state of affairs, inasmuch as the number of destitute refugees and reconcentrados there exceeded fifteen hundred. A local Cuban relief society had established a soup-kitchen in which they were feeding about three hundred, and Mr. G. W. Hyatt, chairman of the Key West Red Cross Committee, was trying to take care of the rest; but both organizations were nearly at the end of their resources, and the local committee had nothing left in the shape of food-stuffs except corn-meal. Miss Barton at once telegraphed the Central Red Cross Committee in New York to forward thirty tons of assorted stores by first steamer, and pending the arrival of these stores she fed the Key West refugees from the *State of Texas* and from such local sources of food-supply as were available.

But Cuban refugees and reconcentrados were not the only hungry and destitute victims of the war to be found in Key West. On May 9 Miss Barton received the following letter from the United States marshal for the southern district of Florida:

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, OFFICE OF U. S. MARSHAL,
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA,
KEY WEST, FLORIDA, May 9, 1898.

Miss Clara Barton, President American National Red Cross.

DEAR MISS BARTON: On board the captured vessels we find quite a number of aliens among the crews, mostly Cubans, and some American citizens, and their detention here and

inability to get away for want of funds has exhausted their supply of food, and some of them will soon be entirely out. As there is no appropriation available from which food could be purchased, would you kindly provide for them until I can get definite instructions from the department at Washington?

Very respectfully yours,
[Signed] JOHN F. HERR,
U. S. Marshal.

Appended to the above letter was a list of fifteen Spanish vessels whose crews were believed by the marshal to be in need of food.

In less than three hours after the receipt of this communication two large ships' boats, loaded with provisions for the sailors on the Spanish prizes, left the *State of Texas* in tow of the steam-launch of the troop-ship *Panther*. Before dark that night, Mr. Cobb and Dr. Egan, of Miss Barton's staff, who were in charge of the relief-boats, had visited every captured Spanish vessel in the harbor. Two or three of them, including the great liners *Miguel Jover* and *Argonauta*, had provisions enough, and were not in need of relief, but most of the others—particularly the fishing-smacks—were in even worse straits than the marshal supposed. The large transatlantic steamer *Pedro*, of Bilbao, had no flour, bread, coffee, tea, sugar, beans, rice, vegetables, or lard for cooking, and her crew had lived for fifteen days exclusively upon fish. The schooner *Severito* had wholly exhausted her supplies, and had on board nothing to eat of any kind. Of the others, some had no matches or oil for lights, some were nearly out of water, and

all were reduced to an unrelieved fish diet, of which the men were beginning to sicken. The Red Cross relief-boats made a complete and accurate list of the Spanish prizes in the harbor,—twenty-two in all,—with the numerical strength of every crew, the amount of provisions, if any, on every vessel, and the quantity and kind of food that each would require.

Finding that one of the prizes had a cargo of plantains and bananas, and that most of the fishing-smacks were provided with salt-water tanks in which they had thousands of pounds of living fish, Miss Barton and her staff determined to purchase from them such quantities of these perishable commodities as they were willing to sell at a low nominal price, and use such food to increase and diversify the rations furnished to the fifteen hundred Cuban refugees and reconcentrados on shore. This would give the latter a change of diet, and at the same time lessen the amount of more expensive food-stuffs to be taken from the cargo of the Red Cross steamer or brought from New York. With the approval of the United States marshal, this plan was immediately carried into effect, and it worked admirably. The captains of the Spanish prizes were glad to give to the Red Cross perishable commodities for which they had no accessible market, and ten thousand pounds of fish and large quantities of plantains and bananas were soon obtained for distribution among the Cuban refugees and reconcentrados in Key West. I refer to this incident of the relief-work, not because it has, intrinsically, any particular importance, but because it shows that the means adopted

by the Red Cross to relieve distress in Key West were intelligent and businesslike.

On the day after our arrival Mr. Cobb, of Miss Barton's staff, called at the hotel to tell us that the Red Cross relief-boats were about to make another visit to the Spanish prizes in the harbor, and to ask us if we would like to go with them and see the work.

In half an hour Miss Barton and her staff, Mrs. Kennan and I, started in the steam-launch of the monitor *Puritan* to make the round of the captured Spanish ships, towing behind us two large boats loaded with assorted stores for the destitute crews. The first vessel we visited was a small black brigantine from Barcelona, named *Frascito*, which had been captured eight miles off Havana by the United States cruiser *Montgomery*. The swarthy, scantily clad Spanish sailors crowded to the bulwarks with beaming faces as we approached, and the hurried, almost frenzied eagerness with which they threw us a line, hung a ladder over the side, and helped us on board, showed that although we were incidentally Americans, and therefore enemies, we were primarily Red Cross people, and consequently friends to be greeted and welcomed with every possible manifestation of respect, gratitude, and affection.

The interior of the little brigantine presented an appearance of slovenly but picturesque dirt, confusion, and disorder, as if the crew, overwhelmed by the misfortune that had come upon them, had abandoned the routine of daily duty and given themselves up to apathy and despair. The main-deck, between the low after-cabin and the high fore-castle, had not been washed down, apparently, in a

week; piles of dirty dishes and cooking-utensils of strange, unfamiliar shapes lay here and there around the little galley forward; coils of running rigging were kicking about underfoot instead of hanging on the belaying-pins; a pig-pen, which had apparently gone adrift in a gale, blocked up the gangway to the forecastle on the port side between the high bulwark and a big boat which had been lashed in V-shaped supports amidships; and a large part of the space between the cabin and the forecastle on the starboard side was a chaos of chain-cable, lumber, spare spars, pots, pans, earthen water-jars, and chicken-coops.

The captain of the little vessel was a round-faced, boyish-looking man, of an English rather than a Spanish type, with clear gray honest eyes and a winning expression of friendliness and rustic bonhomie, like that of an amiable, intelligent young peasant. He greeted us cordially, but with a slight trace of shy awkwardness, and invited us into the small, dark cabin, where we drank one another's health in a bottle of sweet, strong liqueur, and he told us the rather pathetic story of his misfortune. The brigantine *Frascito* ("Little Flask"), he said, belonged in part to him and in part to a company in Barcelona. The cargo, consisting chiefly of South American jerked beef, was owned by his father and himself, and ship and cargo represented all that he and his family had in the world. He left Montevideo for Havana about the middle of March, and had no intimation whatever that Spain and the United States were at war, until a round shot was fired across his bow by the cruiser *Montgomery*, about eight miles off Morro Castle. The officers of the cruiser treated him very kindly—"I couldn't; and below] have done

it better," he said, with simple sincerity, "if I had done it myself; but it was very hard to lose everything just because I didn't know. Of course I shouldn't have tried to get into Havana if I had known there was war; but I left Montevideo in March, and had no thought of such a thing." We tried to cheer him up by telling him that the prize-court would hardly condemn and confiscate his vessel under such circumstances, but he was still sad and troubled. He thanked us with simple, unaffected earnestness for the provisions we had put on board his ship, and said that the unexpected kindness of the Red Cross to him and his crew had cheered and encouraged them all. He seemed anxious to do something to show us his gratitude and appreciation, and when a member of our party manifested interest in a large cage of red-crested tropical birds which hung beside the cabin door, he promptly took it down and presented it "to the señorita for the Red Cross steamer, with the compliments and thanks of the *Frascito*."

After putting on board the little brigantine such supplies, in the shape of bread, beans, rice, canned meats, etc., as the crew required, we bade the captain and mate good-by, and left them apparently somewhat cheered up by our visit.

From the *Frascito* we went successively to the *Oriente*, the *España*, the *Santiago Apostol*, the *Poder de Dios*, and fifteen or sixteen other vessels of the prize-fleet, ascertaining their wants, furnishing them with such food-supplies as they needed, and listening to the stories of their captains.

Among the sailors on the fishing-smacks were many unfamiliar and wild-looking Cuban and Spanish types—men

with hard, dark faces, lighted up by fierce, brilliant black eyes, who looked as if they would have been in their proper sphere fighting under a black flag, on the Spanish Main, in the good old days of the bucaniers. But hard and fierce as many of them looked, they were not wholly insensible to kindness. On the schooner *Power of God*, where there seemed to be more wild, cruel, piratical types than on any other vessel except, perhaps, *St. James the Apostle*, I noticed a sailor with a stern, hard, almost black face and fierce, dark eyes, who—had such a thing been possible—might have stepped, just as he stood, out of the pages of "Amyas Leigh." He was regarding me with an expression in which, if there was no actual malevolence, there was at least not the slightest indication of friendliness or good will. Taking from my haversack a box of the cigarettes with which I had provided myself in anticipation of a tobacco famine among the Spanish sailors, I sprang over the bulwark, and, with as cordial a smile of comradeship as I could give him, I placed it in his hand. For an instant he stared at it as if stupefied with amazement. Then his hard, set face relaxed a little, and, throwing his head forward and raising his fierce black eyes to mine, he gave me a long look of surprise and intense, passionate gratitude, which seemed to say, "I don't know your language, and I can't *tell* you how grateful I am, but I can *look* it"—and he did. He had evidently been out of tobacco many days, and in a moment he went below where he could light a match out of the wind, and presently reappeared, breathing smoke and exhaling it through his nostrils with infinite satisfaction and pleasure.

Nearly all the sailors on the fishing-smacks were barefooted, many were bareheaded, and all had been tanned a dark mahogany color by weeks of exposure to the rays of a tropical sun. Their dress consisted, generally, of a shirt and a pair of loose trousers of coarse gray cotton, like the dress worn in summer by Siberian convicts. Dr. Egan prescribed and furnished medicines for the sick wherever they were found, and on one vessel performed a rather difficult and delicate surgical operation for the relief of a man who was suffering from a badly swollen neck, with necrosis of the lower jawbone.

At half-past six o'clock we returned to the *State of Texas*, having attended to all the sick that were found, relieved all the distress that was brought to our attention, and furnished food enough for a week's consumption to the crews of nineteen vessels.

Two days later, at the suggestion of Miss Barton, Mr. Cobb purchased a quantity of smoking-and chewing-tobacco for the Spanish sailors, and we made another double round of the prize-ships, in the steam-launch of the New York "Sun," which was courteously placed at the disposal of the Red Cross for the whole afternoon. On our outward trip we left on every vessel tobacco and matches enough to last the crew for a week, and Mr. Cobb notified all the captains that if they or their crews wished to write open letters to their relatives and friends in Cuba or Spain, the Red Cross would collect them, submit them to the United States prize-court for approval, and undertake to forward them.

The tobacco and the offer to forward letters seemed to excite more enthusiastic gratitude in the hearts of the

Spanish prisoners than even the distribution of food. On one schooner my attention was attracted to a ragged sailor who was saying something very earnestly in Spanish, and pointing, in a rather dramatic manner, to the sky. "What is he saying?" I inquired of Mr. Cobb. "He says," replied the latter, with a smile, "that if they were prisoners up in heaven, they couldn't be better treated than they have been here."

I was touched and gratified to see the interest and sympathy excited by the work of the Red Cross in all who came in contact with it, from the commodore of the fleet to the poorest fisherman. The captains of the monitor *Puritan* and the auxiliary cruiser *Panther* offered us the use of their swift steam-launches in the work of distributing food; the representative of the New York "Sun" followed their example; the marines on the *Panther* doffed their caps to our boats as we passed, and even a poor Key West fisherman pulled over to us in his skiff, as we lay alongside a Spanish vessel, and gave us two large, lobster-like crawfish, merely to show us, in the only way he could, his affectionate sympathy and good will. Mr. Cobb offered him some of the tobacco that we were distributing among the Spanish sailors, but he refused to take it, saying: "I didn't bring the fish to you to beg tobacco, or for money, but just because I wanted to help a little. I hoped to get more, but these were all I could catch."

One touch of kindness makes all the world kin. Even the engineer of the New York "Sun's" naphtha-launch gave his cherished pipe to a sailor on a Spanish vessel who had none, and when one of his mates remonstrated with him,

saying, "You're not going to give him your own brier-wood pipe!" he replied, with a shamefaced smile: "Yes, poor devil! he can't get one away out here. I can buy another ashore."

Late in the afternoon we made a second round of all the Spanish ships to collect their letters, and then returned to the *State of Texas*. Mr. Cobb that same evening submitted the open letters to the United States prize-court for approval, and I made an arrangement with Mr. E. F. Knight, war correspondent of the London "Times," who was just starting for Havana, to take the Cuban letters with him and mail them there. The letters for Spain were sent to the National Red Cross of Portugal.

CHAPTER III

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ON THE EDGE OF WAR

UNTIL the illuminating search-light of war was turned upon the island of Key West, it was, to the people of the North generally, little more than a name attached to a small, arid coral reef lying on the verge of the Gulf Stream off the southern extremity of Florida. Few people knew anything definitely about it, and to nine readers out of ten its name suggested nothing more interesting or attractive than Cuban filibusters, sponges, and cigars. In less than a month, however, after the outbreak of hostilities, it had become the headquarters, as well as the chief coaling-station, of two powerful fleets; the news-distributing center for the whole Cuban coast; the supply-depot to which perhaps a hundred vessels resorted for water, food, and ammunition; the home station of all the newspaper despatch-boats cruising in West Indian waters; the temporary headquarters of more than a hundred newspaper correspondents and reporters, and the most advanced outpost of the United States on the edge of war. In view of the importance which the place had at that time, as well as the importance which it must continue to have, as our naval base in Cuban waters, a description of it may not be wholly without interest.

The island on which the city of Key West stands forms one of the links in a long, curving chain of shoals, reefs, and keys extending in a southwesterly direction about a hundred miles from the extreme end of the peninsula of Florida. It is approximately six miles long, has an average width of one

mile, and resembles a little in shape a huge comma, with the city of Key West for its head and a diminishing curve of low, swampy chaparral and mangrove-bushes for a tail. The shallow bay of pale-green water between the head and the tail on the concave side of the comma is known as "the bight." It is the anchorage of the sponging-fleet, and is the eastern limit of settlement on that side of the island. Beyond it are sandy flats and shallow, salt-water lagoons, shut in by a dense growth of leather-leaved bushes and low, scrubby China-berry, sea-grape, and Jamaica-apple trees. The highest part of the Key is occupied by the city, and the highest part of the city is the low bluff on its western side, where the slender shaft of the lighthouse stands at a height of fifteen or eighteen feet above the level of tide-water. Owing to its geographical position in a semi-tropical sea, just north of the Gulf Stream and within the zone of the northeast trade-winds, Key West has a climate of remarkable mildness and equability. Twenty years' observations show that its lowest monthly mean of temperature is 70° F. in January, and its highest 84° in August—an annual range of only 14°. Between the years 1886 and 1896 the highest temperature recorded was 92°, and the lowest 40°—a range of only 52° between maximum and minimum in a period of ten years. New York and Chicago often have a greater variation of temperature than this in the course of ten days.

Equability, however, is not the only noteworthy characteristic of the Key West climate. It is also remarkable for its sunniness in winter and its breeziness at all seasons of the year. The average number of cloudy days there is