1898 A Backward Look at a Warlike year 1898

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ALTHOUGH the will take its place among the notable years of this century for reason of the important occurrences the world over, the interest of American readers is centered in the great drama of the Spanish war, which opened itself over the whole span of 12 calendar months.

JANUARY.

The closing events of 1897 in the Spanish-American situation all indicated the pacification of Cuba and the removal of the crisis between the United States and Spain. The elevation of Sagasta to the office of prime minister was followed by the recall of Weyler and the appointment of Blanco as captain and governor general of Cuba. The feeling of the Spanish ministry in Cuba was very bitter against the Americans on account of the loss of President McKinley's message, which reflected severely upon Weyler's administration and took a favorable view of Blanco's place of return.

In view of the demonstrations in Havana, the Atlantic squadron was placed in readiness and early in January rendezvoused off Key West. Captain Sigsbee of the Maine was in constant communication with Consul General Fitz-Hugh Lee at Havana. On the night of Jan. 24, in consequence of a communication received from General Lee, Captain Sigsbee was ordered to proceed at once to Havana on a friendly visit. He reached the harbor of Havana on the 25th and was received with the ceremony accompanying a vessel visiting a foreign port.

On the last Sunday in January Captain Sigsbee, General Lee and other United States officers accompanied some of the Spanish officials to a bullfight outside the city, and on their return the famous circular ending with the frantic appeals, "Death to the Americans!" "Death to autonomy!" "Long live Spain!" "Long live Weyler!" was thrust into Captain Sigsbee's hand. He read it, but attached no importance to it whatever.

FEBRUARY.

Early in February Captain Sigsbee made a special effort to entertain the Spanish people on board the Maine, but without success. The captain and his officers visited the city frequently, and to all appearances Havana was as orderly as any city in the most peaceful times. The political air, however, was not clear. On the 7th of February the famous or rather infamous De Lome letter was made public. In this letter Señor de Lome, the Spanish minister to the United States, referred contemptuously to President McKinley. Señor de Lome confessed that he had written it and resigned. On the 16th of the month Señor Polo y Bernabe took the portfolio as Spanish minister in place of De Lome.

On the next night the battleship Maine was blown up at her moorings in the harbor of Havana, and 266 of the officers and crew lost their lives in consequence. The conclusion was reached at once by Americans that the destruction of the Maine was due to Spanish treachery.

Meanwhile the humanitarian aspect of the situation in Cuba, which all along had kept alive the sympathies of the American people with the struggling insurgents, had not been lost sight of. On the 11th of February the house and senate both voted, without a dissenting voice, resolutions calling upon the secretary of state for full information regarding the condition of the reconcentrados in Cuba and the progress of autonomy. It was well known that the department of state was in possession of information supplied by the United States consuls in Cuba of the most harrowing description respecting the widespread distress throughout the island. Two days later the house passed the fortifications appropriation bill, and in the last week of the month passed a bill providing for an increase of the regular army by two additional regiments of artillery.

MARCH.

The De Lome incident having been wholly ignored by the Spanish government and the destruction of the Maine being held, diplomatically at least, as an accident, these two events did not serve to lighten the tension between the government at Madrid and that at Washington. Other occurrences, however, did add materially to the strain.

Early in March the Spanish objected to the transport of supplies for the starving reconcentrados in government warships and at the same time asked that General Lee be replaced as consul general to Cuba.

Spain's great warship, the Vizcaya, which left New York the latter part of February, lay at Havana, and it was known that other warships were on their way from Spain. It was also that while the Spanish fleet of imperiled ships was being reinforced to be transferred to Cuban waters. The United Government (highly friendly to Spain) refused to allow Consul Lee would not be permitted to send out supplies for sale to other vessels than are at war with Spain's navy in buying warships in European shipyards, and it was reported that a news conference in the early part of the month. On the 16th the house unanimously voted to place $50,000 at the disposal of the President of President McKinley, as an emergency fund for national defense. The very next day the senate unanimously passed the Spanish government by President McKinley and three days later made public.

APRIL.

Almost every day in April had its developments in the matter of the war with Spain. On the 2d of the month President McKinley held a council with the secretary of the treasury and ways and means committee on war revenue measures. On the 4th the navy department ordered the purchase of ten auxiliary cruisers, and next day Consul General Lee was ordered to return from Havana, which he did four days later in company with all the American consuls in Cuba. On the 7th of April Spanish Minister Polo, Spanish foreign minister, said the rumors that Spain had reversed the "rule of international policy in the direction of conceding the grounds and allowing the belligerents of the United States." The same day the government issued its warrant for the seizure of Spanish vessels in Western waters of Great Britain, Germany, Greece, Russia, and Italy presented a joint note to the minister expressing the hope that peace with Spain might be preserved, and in reply the note the president emphatically stated that the war in Cuba was over.

On the 12th of April Consul General Lee delivered before the senate committee on foreign relations that Spanish officials in Havana knew of the plot to blow up the Maine. This statement of General Lee's added to the public excitement. Orders were issued on the 15th to concentrate all the regular army of the United States at the gulf ports and in Chickamauga park. The same day the government chartered the American line steamers St. Louis, St. Paul and New York for auxiliary cruisers.

Resolutions and discussions in congress culminated on the 19th in a set of resolutions directing the president to intervene in Cuba. These resolutions were signed by the president on the 19th, and an ultimatum was sent to Spain demanding that her land and naval forces withdraw from Cuba and requiring an answer before noon on April 23. As soon as the Spanish minister learned that the president had signed the resolutions he requested and received his passport. The same day the canal regiment, a warlike speech from the throne, on the 23d Spain virtually declared war by notifying United States Minister Woodford that diplomatic relations with the United States were at an end. This was before General Woodford could deliver the president's ultimatum, which had been carried to him in Madrid and recommended to the Spanish government in advance. Premier Sagasta's proposal received a blank at Havana and several European ports to sail from New York to Cuban waters. Subsequently, however, it was stated that the war had been begun on the 21st by the short act of Spain, and that this was assented to by England on her proclamation of neutrality. On the 25th of April the president issued his call for 125,000 volunteer troops. The day set for the war was the capture of the Spanish gunboat Buena Ventura off Havana by the United States gunboat Nashville. Several days later Admiral Sampson assumed blockade of the Spanish ports in Matanzas. Meanwhile Spain had been active, having called out 80,000 reserves on April 21, and on the 25th Cervera's squadron sailed from Cape Verde presumably for American waters.

MAY.

On May 1 the interest in the war was transferred from our coast to the other side of the globe, where Commodore Dewey, with the Asiatic squadron, destroyed the Spanish naval force guarding the Philippines by a brilliant action in the bay of Manila. On the American side six men were slightly wounded and none killed. The Spanish loss reported was two commodores and 300 to 400 now killed or wounded. The Spanish fought with bravery, but lacked of coolness and skill. Immediately after the battle Commodore Dewey cabled and it was many days before official reports of the engagement were received at Washington.

Shortly the news of May had passed before any definite news were taken to Cervera, Dewey. First Lieut. Hen. H. S. Hunt, U. S. N., and finally about such men as the expedition under the command of General Wesley Merritt. On the 25th several thousand of these troops embarked for Manila. Spain also made an attempt to recover ground in the Philippines, and there were strong intimations that European powers might take an active hand in the affair. It was at this time that the much talked about Anglo-American alliance sprang into being. It being it actually lived. It is now generally accepted that Richard Harvey, her influence in the scale in favor of America and the government interference by European powers did not take place.

Other naval events of May were the bombardment of San Juan, Porto Rico, by Sampson's warships, the affair at Cienfuegos, Cuba, where the first United States officer in the war fell—Ensign Bagley of the torpedo boat Winslow—and the arrival of Cervera's squadron at Martinique. This last was considered by naval strategists a brilliant move in itself, but one likely to end in disaster because of the lack of coal and other naval supplies for Spanish vessels on this side of the water, the Spanish ports in the Caribbean sea being blockaded by American ships. Cervera's fleet was discovered in Santiago harbor on the 19th of May, and on the 29th the first action between the land forces and the Spaniards took place at Las Guasimas. The American troops engaged consisted of General Young's brigade of dismounted cavalry, including about 500 Rough Riders under command of Colonel Wood. This much talked of affair was simply a skirmish, but it had important results in bringing the vanguards of the corps into position at Sevilla. The troops were concentrated there and on the 29th started forward for the attack on Santiago.

Two days after the skirmish at Guasimas (by the first reinforcements expedition to Cuba sailed from Tampa for Santiago. The force consisted of about 16,000 troops, comprising the Fifth army corps, under Major General William R. Shafter. Sampson had informed the administration that a land force of about 10,000 men could easily capture Santiago and force Cervera to come out and fight or destroy his ships. Shafter's instructions were to land within a specified distance of Santiago and in cooperation with the navy get into a position on the heights around Santiago, capture the place and assist in destroying Cervera's fleet. The first landing of the expedition was made at Daiquiri on the 22d of June. By the 25th the troops of the corps were all on shore. On the 30th the first action between the land forces and the Spaniards took place at Las Guasimas. The American troops engaged consisted of General Young's brigade of dismounted cavalry, including about 500 Rough Riders under command of Colonel Wood. This much talked of affair was simply a skirmish, but it had important results in bringing the vanguards of the corps into position at Sevilla. The troops were concentrated there and on the 29th started forward for the attack on Santiago.

JULY.

Desperate fighting began early on the morning of the 1st of July, Shafter directing his corps in two columns for a combined attack upon the Spanish positions at El Caney and San Juan ridge. The attack at El Caney was delivered first but was not in its immediate object. The divisions of Generals Kent and Wheeler, in front of San Juan ridge, after crossing the San Juan river under a heavy and disastrous fire, carried the ridge, getting a position overlooking the city of Santiago. Subsequently El Caney was captured by Lawton's division, and the entire corps on July 2 concentrated on and behind San Juan ridge, from which a counter assault by the Spaniards failed to drive it.

Early on the morning of the 3d General Shafter demanded the surrender of Santiago. Before the negotiations had culminated Cervera's fleet had left the harbor and had been destroyed by Sampson's war vessels under the immediate command of Commodore Schley.

General Linares, the commander of the Spanish forces at Santiago, having been wounded during the attack of July 1, had been succeeded by General Toral, who agreed to consider the proposition to surrender, and a truce was declared from day to day until the 10th. On that date, the Spaniards being assured beyond doubt of relief, Toral refused to consider a surrender. The expedition to Porto Rico sailed from Ponce on the 25th, and on the 27th the surrender was made, and the American flag hoisted over the city. General Miles landed with the expedition in Porto Rico and the next day General Merritt, commander of the expedition to the Philippines, reached Manila. On the 31st of July the forces were reunited in an effort to force the American lines at Malate, and the Spaniards were driven back in confusion, the victories secured by the Americans thus far would result in peace.

AUGUST.

In August the protocol of peace was virtually settled by agreement between the belligerents, brought about through the friendly offices of France, France presented to the United States on Aug. 26 by Spain through the French ambassador, M. Cambon. On the 30th the president gave Minister Cambon a statement of his views on the question of peace, stating terms substantially that contained in the protocol of August.

On the 24 of August the terms communicated to Minister Cambon were publicly announced, and on the 12th they were accepted at Madrid. On the 16 Spain's reply was received by House Commerce and the protocol drafted and signed by that official on the part of Spain and Secretary Day for the United States. This protocol required Spain's relinquishment of sovereignty over Cuba, Porto Rico and other Spanish islands in the West Indies as well as one of the Ladrones to the United States, that Cuba, Porto Rico and other Spanish islands in the West Indies be immediately evacuated by Spain and that the United States hold and occupy the city and harbor of Manila pending the conclusion of the treaty of peace. On 12th of the month Manila surrendered to the United States forces after a bombardment, followed by an army attack upon the trenches.

SEPTEMBER.

During September the military commissions to arrange for the immediate evacuation of the Spanish in the West Indies were appointed by all governments, as were also the commissioners to meet in Paris to treat for peace. The protocol called for five commissioners from each country to meet in Paris not later than Oct. 1. The American commission was completed on the 9th of September, and it consisted of Senator Gray of Delaware, Frye of Maine and Davis of Minnesota, ex-Secretary of State W. R. Day and Whitelaw Reid. They sailed for Paris on the 17th of the month.

OCTOBER.

Several separate sessions of the American and Spanish peace commissions were held at Paris during the month, days of September and on the 1st of October the first joint conference was held.

On the 18th of the month the military occupation of Porto Rico by the American forces was completed by the raising over the public buildings of the San Juan of the American flag. On the 26th of the month the evacuation by the Spanish was completed, the last Spanish troops sailing that day for home.

NOVEMBER.

The month opened with the loss of the Spanish cruiser Infanta Maria Teresa, which was abandoned at sea when in route to the United States Nov. 1 and which was later abandoned on Cat Island, where she had gone ashore.

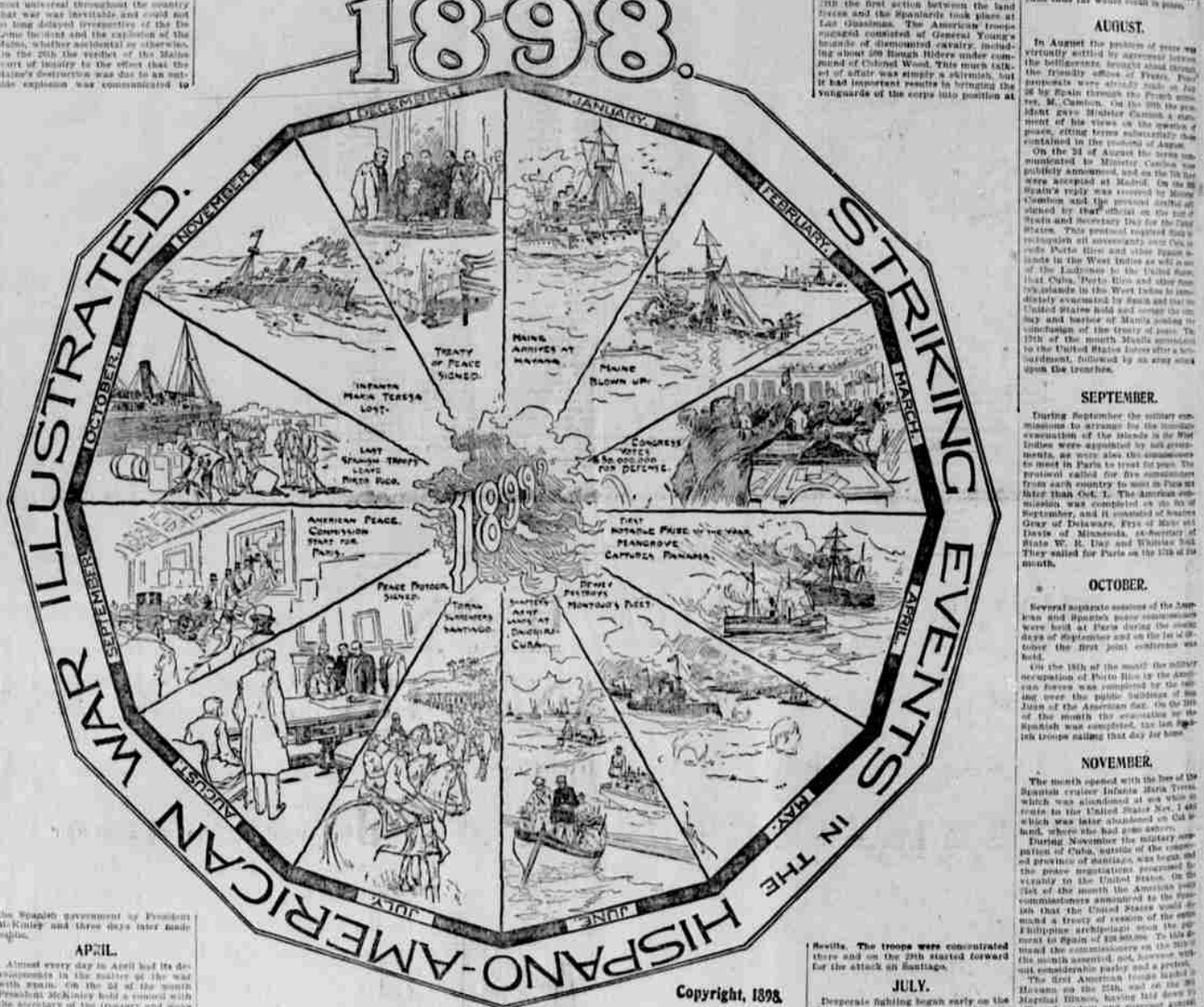
During November the military occupation of Cuba, outside of the congested province of Santiago, was begun and the peace negotiations progressed satisfactorily to the United States. On the 28th of the month the American peace commissioners announced to the Spanish that the United States would demand a treaty of cession of the entire Philippine archipelago upon the payment to Spain of $20,000,000. To this demand the commissioners on the 30th of the month assented, and the agreement was signed by the parties and a protocol.

The first American troops landed in Havana on the 25th, and on the 30th Major General Lee, having laid down the office of captain and governor general, sailed for Spain.

DECEMBER.

December is memorable as the month in which the Spanish-American war was actually concluded. On the 10th of the month the treaty was signed at Paris, giving to the United States, with slight variations, all that had been demanded in the protocol signed in August. A dramatic interest was given to the concluding incidents of the war by the last parade on the 15th of the month of the United States troops in the streets of Havana. The day dawned with bands playing and crowds thronging on the streets. General Gomez, one of the foremost soldiers of the Cuban insurgent army and a statesman as well, died in the city of Washington, where he was an honored guest and also the official representative of the Cuban assembly to negotiate with the American capital the affairs of his people. Dec. 13 Major General Brooke was made governor of Cuba, and on the 16th General Lee relinquished his duties as governor of Havana and was succeeded by Maj. Gen. Ludlow.

CAPT. G. KENNETH GILMER.



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SHORT ITEMS FROM EVERYWHERE.

A new Hercules overtake contains the statement of a union of Wagner the man. "I know him," said the chancellor, "but it was impossible for me to dare for him. At breakfast, dinner and supper, every moment, Wagner dominated conversation. I found myself too busy to give it."

A Yale student met ex-President Dwight on the street in New Haven shortly after Yale's defeat by Harvard. "Your resignation has changed our luck, sir," said he. "On the contrary," said Mr. Dwight, "it's a case of manifest destiny."

Upon his recent installation as abbot of the Trappist monastery at Gethsemane, Ky., Father Obrecht was presented with a crozier made of over 1,000 pieces of wood, the ten years' work of one of the monks.

The best hotel in San Juan, Porto Rico, charges $2 a day, but the chopped house will spare nine rooms, have no outside windows and are in the last extremity for. Under Spanish law, no lodgers where homes join, no outside windows are allowed. This is to avoid the danger of fire from the interior flooding on to adjacent roofs and contaminating the water, as all the water is collected from the rainfall on the roofs and stored in cisterns.

Mount St. Elias after all is not the highest peak in North America. The Alaskan giant is outstripped by another Alaskan peak on the right bank of the Stikine river in the Cook's Inlet country. The United States topographical survey under Mr. G. H. Eldridge found it 20,000 feet high and baptized it "Unfeilun," after the Indian name of their Indian guide or so-called it "Unfeilun," after the Indian name of their Indian guide or so-called it "Unfeilun." The Alaskan giant is outstripped by another Alaskan peak on the right bank of the Stikine river in the Cook's Inlet country. The United States topographical survey under Mr. G. H. Eldridge found it 20,000 feet high and baptized it "Unfeilun," after the Indian name of their Indian guide or so-called it "Unfeilun." The Alaskan giant is outstripped by another Alaskan peak on the right bank of the Stikine river in the Cook's Inlet country. The United States topographical survey under Mr. G. H. Eldridge found it 20,000 feet high and baptized it "Unfeilun," after the Indian name of their Indian guide or so-called it "Unfeilun."

Fort Stanton Indians are at work on the construction of a branch of the Southwestern in western Kansas. It is believed that this is the first time that the red man has been so employed.