

THE IMPROVED CONDITION OF CUBA UNDER AMERICAN ADMINIS- TRATION.

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The statements made in the newspapers of the United States, and confirmed by the reports of Senators Proctor and Thurston, as to the miserable condition of the Cuban people under Spanish rule, up to the date of American intervention, were in no wise exaggerated. The "Reconcentrado" system of General Weyler, whereby he had collected in the cities and in camps under control of the Spanish soldiery, the country people and peasantry suspected of disloyalty, had deprived the island largely of its working, rural population, necessary to the cultivation of the farm lands. Aged people, women and children, without their natural protectors, as well as men, were held concentrated in large bodies living in unhealthy dwellings or in camps; many sleeping without shelter on the plazas of the cities, illy clad and without proper food or proper regard for health or personal welfare. This fact was in evidence in Havana when the first military governor, Major General John R. Brooke, United States army, arrived, with his staff, in December, 1898, to assume control of the military government of the island, to which he had been assigned by the order of the president of the United States.

Cuba Prior to American Occupation.

The city was filled with neglected and starving people. Little children besieged the open windows of the hotel, begging, at meal times, for pieces of bread and seizing, like hungry animals, that which was thrown to them by pitying visitors; the haggard faces of emaciated women and children, met upon the streets in numbers, once seen could never be forgotten. There were special cases which seemed more terrible than others of women and young girls with faces drawn and mere skin and bone, appearing so feeble that it seemed hardly possible for life to exist within their emaciated frames; and it was said to be no unusual event for bodies of several who had died during the previous night to be gathered up in the morning for a hasty burial.

It is almost impossible to describe, in such manner that it may be well understood, the disturbed and demoralized condition of affairs in Cuba when the task of its military government was imposed upon General Brooke, and undertaken by him under the orders of the president. In the Eastern part of the island, in Santiago, order had been restored and reforms begun under Gener-

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als Lawton and Wood, but in other parts the Spanish troops were still in possession of the cities, whilst the Cuban insurgent forces were still in the field. The Spanish forces remained until transported to Spain by the United States, in accordance with their agreement so to do. The number of these soldiers was much larger than had been generally supposed, there being about 30,000 in and around the city of Havana alone. These were being gradually withdrawn when General Brooke, with his staff, arrived, December 26, 1898.

Arrival of Seventh Army Corps.

As the Spanish troops fell back toward the harbor the Cubans followed them as closely as permitted. The feeling was bitter; exchanges of shots were frequent, and several were killed at different times. American troops, consisting of part of the Seventh Army Corps, had arrived, and, under command of General Fitzhugh Lee, were encamped outside the city, whilst General Ludlow, in immediate command of the city as its military governor, was preserving the peace and preventing conflicts when possible. But a few days before, the lives of several Cubans had been spared only through the personal intervention of General F. V. Greene, U. S. V., then in command, and members of his staff, at the Inglaterra hotel, where he had his headquarters. In a conflict between Cubans and Spanish soldiers, the Cubans were pursued up the stairways of the hotel, some being shot and killed before reaching the floors above, whilst others were badly wounded, and pursuit stopped and other lives were saved through their taking refuge in the rooms of American officers and by the personal appearance of General Greene in uniform at the head of the stairs, who stopped the pursuers there.

The dividing line had reached the Prado on which this hotel is situated on the day of the arrival of General Brooke, and the hotel was one mass of mingled Spanish officials, officers in uniform, Spanish and Cuban, as well as American; the Cuban officers wearing their side arms, and the excited talk and mixture of English with Spanish language constituted a perfect babel of sounds; altogether, it afforded anything but an encouraging outlook. General Ludlow, however, who had just previously arrived and relieved General Greene, had matters well in hand, and on January 1, 1899, when the last of the Spanish soldiers were withdrawn, after a review by General Brooke of all troops in and around the city, which left a strong impression of military power in Cuban minds, two regiments or more of infantry and the Second regiment of artillery, which had arrived that day, were camped upon the plazas and stationed in the vacated barracks. These acted as a police force in restoring and

maintaining order, continually patrolling the city until a regular police force was organized and placed on duty.

Problems Difficult of Solution.

The Spanish captain-general formally turned over, on that day, January 1, 1899, all control of the island to the American commissioners, the formal delivery being made to General J. F. Wade, the president of the commission, who at once transferred it to General Brooke, as military governor under the orders of the president, and the American flag replaced the Spanish banner over Morro Castle and the palace of the governor-general.

The problem to be met was a difficult one; the entire governing power of the Spaniards had disappeared with the Spanish governor-general; not a single head of any department of government remained at his post; all the departments were in a state of chaos, demanding immediate attention and reorganization.

The staff officers of General Brooke, who were assigned to receive the different departments of government, found them without their chiefs; not one was present to turn over his department or give a single word of information to the officer ordered to relieve him and take charge. At the Departments of State and Government, of Grace and Justice, and at the Council of Secretaries of the Autonomist Government, all which were received by the judge advocate, the heads of those departments were reported "gone to Spain," or "not feeling well," and unable to be present.

Rural Conditions.

The available population, outside those in the cities, had been drawn into the war on one side or the other, and with the consequent cessation of cultivation of sugar and tobacco, the main products of the island, upon which its wealth and prosperity principally depend, the whole country was in an impoverished condition. Many wealthy people had lost their incomes, farms were mortgaged, debts remained unpaid and the financial condition was such that, without possibility of securing crops, matters were rapidly going from bad to worse; lands uncultivated ran to waste, a large number of sugar plantations, with their expensive mills and machinery, had been burned, and in the disturbed conditions consequent upon the insurrection, it was seemingly impossible to recuperate. No one could safely invest money in property or estates, subject to destruction by the Cuban insurgents on one hand or the Spanish soldiers on the other. But few of the larger sugar plantations had been spared, and these only through protection by Spanish troops stationed on or near them, probably supplemented by secret contributions to the insurgents. Recuperation was impossible also, even after war ceased, partly be-