

cause of the unsettled conditions of future government, and inability to borrow money on farm lands to put in crops, to say nothing of making payments on mortgages already existing.

This condition of affairs had been recognized by the Spanish governor-general who, by decree, had postponed the time for foreclosing mortgages on rural estates in order to give owners thereof the opportunity to save their property. This period was extended by General Brooke, and later again by his successor, Major General Leonard Wood, United States Volunteers, until June 1, 1901.

These extensions had given nearly four years, more than two of them under American administration, in which to arrange for the protection and redemption of their lands, and it was finally decided, in May last, that, in justice to the creditors, payments should begin to be made: a certain percentage of the indebtedness to be paid each year, beginning with the present, for four years, instead of permitting creditors to demand the whole amount due, at once. This will permit those whose land is worth it, to save their property and in cases where the land is involved to the full extent of its value, the creditor will have opportunity to take it and sell or develop it, as failure to make the first payment will enable him to foreclose.

This is the present condition of mortgaged rural states. The past two years have seen great recuperation and good crops where owners have been able to cultivate their lands; but some farms have, for various reasons, such as absence of owners or lack of funds, remained uncultivated. Another year will bring these under cultivation, either by present owners or their successors to ownership, the past year having been a remarkably prosperous one.

#### Difficulties of Reorganization of Government.

The task of reorganization of government by General Brooke was an extraordinarily difficult one. He was in a country occupied by a people whose language was foreign; its system of laws and of government entirely dissimilar to those of his own country; the habits, customs and character of the inhabitants vastly different; with existing conditions of antipathy after a long period of internal dissension and rebellion, and it required a strong and energetic ruler, acting with justice and equity toward all parties, after careful study of the conditions, to do that, which in the future, should be recognized as best for the country and its people.

Most careful and deliberate consideration and action, based upon actual conditions, was necessary in the selection of a cabinet from unknown material, to establish and reorganize the departments of government; and it was in the face of many discouragements that General

Brooke began his effort to carry out the duties imposed upon him.

In his proclamation of January 1, 1899, addressed "To the People of Cuba," existing laws were continued in force until amended, and the assistance and advice of the inhabitants in solving the questions of future government in their own interests, was invited; but so chaotic were the conditions and such distrust of each other, or of themselves, existed that but few responded to this opportunity to assist; but little help was received from them, and that, in great measure, through the efforts of staff officers to inform themselves of the status of affairs for their information and use. The staff, with General Chaffee as its chief, worked hard to accumulate a knowledge of former methods of government and existing conditions, and of the character of leading Cubans of all parties, and they acquired an unusually large amount of information and a working knowledge of affairs within a remarkably short period of time, considering the circumstances and obstacles met. But all the work of decision and responsibility lay with General Brooke, and it can be safely said that for him, as for his staff, there were many hours of work, but little time for sleep, and none whatever for rest and recreation during the first months of military occupation.

#### First Steps in Government.

After most careful inquiry and consideration, General Brooke selected his secretaries for the different departments of government from representatives of the different phases of feeling in the island. The revolutionists, the autonomists, and even the Spanish element, were represented in his cabinet; all able men, educated for professional life, and all, except the Secretary of Agriculture and Public Works, who was an engineer of reputation, were members of the legal profession, the Secretary of Finance speaking excellent English, being an American lawyer, admitted to practice in the courts of the state of New York. Although there was some criticism of the official acts of one or two members of this cabinet, time has developed the fact that his selections were, in the main, most fortunate under the circumstances, and no stronger cabinet has since existed.

Reforms were begun at once, but some came slowly, and only as these men became acquainted with the benefits to be derived from proposed changes. The laws were found to be, as a rule, good enough in themselves, and to provide for necessary protection of property and rights; but the methods of administration of the law, the organization of courts and their methods of procedure, especially in criminal cases, were very bad and open to opportunities for corruption. There had been delays in ad-

ministration of justice, and it was apparent that there were corrupt practices throughout the entire judicial system. The prisons were filled with prisoners; many awaiting trial, some for political offenses, and a large number had been imprisoned under sentence of military courts.

The different department commanders released numbers of persons in prison at once; but as all records thereof were kept in the Department of Justice, and this summary release left the fact of their pardon unrecorded, they were still subject to rearrest and it became necessary, in behalf of the prisoners, as well as following the due course of law, that such releases should be made only by the military governor through the Department of Justice. This caused some complaint and criticism on the part of those who did not understand the facts and desired more rapid procedure, regardless of the law, but it was necessary to the record and to secure freedom from liability of rearrest of prisoners, and was in accordance with existing laws, which had been put in force by the military governor upon assuming control of the government. Under General Brooke, and under his successor, General Wood, prisons were repeatedly and thoroughly inspected, cases investigated, and hundreds of prisoners, all told, were released. General Wood has taken especial interest in this matter, and the work has continued even up to the present year, so that now the prisons contain only justly convicted criminals or those properly indicted, whilst in Havana at least, they will compare most favorably in cleanliness and order with the best prisons of the United States.

#### Reforms.

The much complained of "Incomunicado" system of the Spanish regime, whereby persons arrested were shut up in close confinement without opportunity to communicate with family, friends or attorney, was one of the first things abolished by General Brooke. Other remedial steps were taken to secure personal rights, numerous modifications of the laws were made, a Supreme Court for the island was created, and other important measures adopted, but it was only in December last that the benefits of the important Writ of Habeas Corpus was secured to the Cuban people. It had long been advocated, but was not favorably received, and was held back by the unfavorable action, or lack of action, of the Cuban secretaries of Justice, partly because it was claimed that this, and other remedial measures proposed in behalf of the rights of the people, were provided for in other ways under existing laws by a process of appeal. It was insisted, however, that such process was a long and tedious procedure to secure the release of persons held under illegal restraint, and that the