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THE SANTIAGO TRAGEDY.

There is only one thing that can match the splendid heroism of our soldiers at Santiago, and that is the criminal incompetence of the Subsistence and Medical Departments, to which the feeding and nursing of these brave fellows was intrusted. There are times when silence is a sin, and we feel that to remain quiet in the presence of a shameful and fatal maladministration that has added to the natural horrors of war others that might easily have been avoided, is to do a positive wrong to the heroes of Guantanamo, El Caney, and San Juan.

The wretched bungling which has marked every phase of the Santiago campaign in the Medical and Subsistence Departments is bad enough, Heaven knows, in itself, but when the Secretary of War deliberately proceeds, for reasons best known to himself, to white-wash the department, he not only betrays a callous indifference to the army whose sufferings have been aggravated by the inexcusable incompetence of his subordinates, but he deliberately insults the American people as a whole. A more ill-timed statement than this "apology" or one in worse bad taste (considering the time, circumstances, and Mr. Alger's responsible position) we do not remember to have heard or read in the half century of the existence of this journal.

The people of this country have acquired a reputation for remarkable patience and long suffering; and we think that never did they show it in such a supreme degree as the present. It was hard for our citizens to surrender the very flower of our young men from their homes to be dispatched on a fatal campaign in one of the most pestilential climates of the world. But the surrender was made with the loyal response which marks a truly patriotic people. All that they asked, the least that they expected, was that the men who had volunteered so freely should receive at the hands of the country every possible safeguard and support that is known to modern science. The American people never doubted for a moment that its army would get the best of food, the best of transportation, and the best of nursing and medical care in the field. In this expectation they were fully justified. They had voted lavishly funds to carry on the war, they had given the administration a free hand, in fact, in the matter of expenditure, and they had every reason to expect that all that the government of a wealthy, powerful, and resourceful nation could do to soften the rigors of war would be done.

As a matter of fact, they have seen our army of invasion subjected to inconvenience, hardship, and positive sufferings for which there is not the slightest excuse, and which were entirely due to the amazing incompetency of the medical and subsistence departments. Everything, indeed, was favorable, highly favorable, to the successful landing of troops and supplies and the keeping open of communication. We had the complete command of the sea and abundance of ships for transportation; the campaign was being carried on at our very doors, and the field of battle lay but a few miles from the point of debarkation. Yet, as a matter of fact, our troops had to go through the fierce fighting at Santiago in a half starved condition, and what food they secured was often of the vilest description. The wounded at the front, thanks to the lack of ambulances, had to drag themselves painfully many miles to the rear, only to find a hospital that was without tents, medicine, bandages, ice, and many of even the simplest necessities for "first aid." No "whitewash" can obscure these facts which first came in the press dispatches, and are now daily being corroborated by private letters from our unfortunate soldiers themselves.

Our army triumphed; but in the hour of victory the dreaded fever made its appearance, spreading so rapidly that the victims were soon numbered by the thousand. The first duty of the Secretary of War, one would have thought, was to place the army, or the greater part of it, on transports, and remove it to its native northern home. But no. The political demands of the hour had other calls upon the transports, to satisfy which, they were hurried home in order to carry an army of 15,000 men to a so-called invasion of Porto Rico. This pleasure trip was organized, it seems, in compliance with certain political demands, the

righteousness of which appears to have commended them to the secretary's good military judgment. Meanwhile the sick, wounded, and dying troops were to be dispatched to the interior of Cuba until the conclusion of the Porto Rico junketing trip would set free the transports to bring home what was left of the Santiago army.

Our beloved country is just now passing through a crisis which, in its profound importance, can only be likened to the throes of the revolution which gave the country birth or the terrific struggle of the civil war. The demand of the American people at such a time is that its high officials shall be distinguished by the purest and most unquestioned patriotism. It has nothing but scathing rebuke for such questionable politics as are evidenced in the recent publication of the partial contents of a private letter, in the hope of working political injury to a soldier citizen whose splendid qualities have endeared him to the nation.

SPAIN'S LOST OPPORTUNITIES.

The completeness and rapid succession of our naval victories in the present war is only equaled by the amazing incapacity exhibited by the naval forces of Spain. In every stage of the struggle, from the dilatory setting out from the Cape Verde Islands to the suicidal formation in which Cervera led his fleet to the slaughter at Santiago, the Spaniards have betrayed the most complete ignorance or indifference to the first principles of naval warfare. In every case they seem to have literally done the things that they ought not to have done, and left undone the things that they ought to have done.

In saying this we wish to bear tribute to the excellent qualities of the Spanish sailors as distinct from the officers who command them, or perhaps we ought to say the Minister of Marine, who seems largely to have directed the movements of the fleets. It has always been acknowledged that the Spanish sailor is brave, thoroughly amenable to discipline, and a good seaman. In the present war, notably at Manila, he has stood pluckily to his guns under terrific fire, and there is no question that if he had received the proper and necessary target practice, the casualties on our side would not have been so invariably and ridiculously small. The incapacity, unpreparedness, and mismanagement of the navy are due chiefly to the Spanish Minister of Marine, and in a less degree to the commandants of the various fleets.

The unpreparedness and mismanagement we can understand. They are the outward and visible signs of the grave national sins of procrastination and corruption, the existence of which not even the Spaniards themselves attempt to deny. Witness the reply of the captain of the "Christobal Colon," when asked where the missing 10-inch guns of that vessel might be: "In the pockets of the Minister of Marine." This state of things is essentially Spanish, and, therefore, not unexpected. What was unexpected was the display of either carelessness or incapacity by the commandants of the Spanish fleets, whether in American or Asiatic waters.

The first inkling of what to expect was given by the easy escape of the "Paris" from the English Channel some days after the declaration of war. Spain at that time had available at least half a dozen torpedo boats, or torpedo boat destroyers, with speeds of from 25 to 30 knots an hour—two of these being actually at the entrance to the Irish Channel and just down from the Clyde. The destroyers being seagoing boats of 380 and 400 tons, were easily capable of overhauling the 20-knot "Paris," even if she secured a start of several hours, and by using the torpedo boats and one or two smaller cruisers as scouts, it would have been possible to report and run down the liner with almost absolute certainty. The "Paris" was altogether unarmed, and on being overhauled would have faced the alternative of being torpedoed or captured. Had the conditions been reversed, had we possessed the 30-knot destroyers and Spain the Atlantic liner, it is safe to say she would not have escaped. As a matter of fact, Spain did nothing, and this valuable ship ran unmolested out of the Channel and home to New York.

At Manila the same carelessness or indifference (we know not which to call it) was evident. A position which might have been rendered exceedingly strong and perilous to the attacking force was rendered easily assailable through the dilatoriness of the home government and the inexcusable carelessness of the fleet and garrison. Had the harbor been properly mined, Admiral Dewey's victory would scarcely have been possible without the loss or disablement of some of his fleet. Admiral Montojo claims that requisition had been sent to Madrid for torpedoes, but that these were never forwarded. Granted this was the case, it does not excuse the neglect of the most ordinary precautions which is evident both in the fleet and the fortifications on the morning of May 1. No watch appears to have been kept at the forts on Corregidor Island, at the entrance to the harbor, and it was not until the last ship of the column had safely steamed by that a futile shot was fired at the American squadron. This unpreparedness was bad enough, but it was surpassed by the condition of Montojo's fleet, which, when Admiral Dewey opened fire, was found lying at anchor and without

steam in the boilers. Surely, one would have thought, in view of the near approach of the enemy, the Spaniards would have kept their ships in such condition that they could move at a moment's notice into some sort of fighting formation.

The climax to Spanish naval incapacity was reached in the handling of the Cervera squadron. We doubt if anything to surpass it has ever happened in the annals of naval warfare. Had the vessels been in good condition and been placed in competent hands, the fleet might have made a creditable if not a brilliant record. As it is, the whole story of its maneuvers is one of aimless wanderings, ending in a fiasco—the voluntary entrance into Santiago—as ridiculous, surely, as any that is chronicled in the records of naval and military operations.

In its innate potentiality, its peculiar fitness for the exigencies of the Spanish situation, the Cape Verde ships, as we pointed out some months ago, constituted a truly formidable little squadron. The four cruisers possessed an excellent combination of armor, armament, speed, and steaming radius, and they were reinforced by an admirable scouting fleet of three of the fastest and most modern destroyers in the world. We in the United States naturally supposed that when the squadron set out across the Atlantic, it was "well found" in every particular. We did not then know, as we do now, that it was but half supplied with coal, and that its finest ship, the "Christobal Colon," had never received its main battery of 10-inch guns. These defects are to be charged to a rotten administration, and, in all fairness, cannot be laid at the door of the unfortunate Admiral Cervera.

Now the moral and actual value of this squadron lay above all in this combination of speed and fighting power, but particularly in its mobility. So long as it was on the high seas, and not reported, it constituted a menace to our whole plan of campaign, and no invasion of Cuba was or would have been attempted as long as it was at large. Our own fleets had to be disposed so as best to meet the possible movements of Cervera. Schley, with his flying squadron, was detained at Hampton Roads, so as to be within reach of the northern Atlantic coast, and many of our fast regular and auxiliary cruisers, which should by rights have been scouting far to the eastward, keeping touch with the Spanish fleet, were detained off the New England coast in answer to the urgent appeal of the panic-stricken citizens of Boston, Portland, and other northern cities. So much of a diversion in favor of the beleaguered island of Cuba was Cervera able to effect without striking a blow; and had he remained upon the high seas, meeting his colliers at rendezvous well to the north or south of the sphere of action of our vessels, he might have postponed for many months the final crisis of the war. But for some reasons, best known to himself or the Minister of Marine, he deliberately elected to run into Santiago Harbor, where, for all practical purposes, his ships were as useless to Spain as they now are lying upon the rocks of the Cuban coast.

It is said that he was "starved," that is, his ships were short of coal. If this was the case, the responsibility is only shifted back one remove and placed upon the shoulders of the Spanish government, who should never have sent the squadron across the seas unless it had made full provisions for feeding it with coal.

Once in Santiago Harbor, the only hope of Cervera was that he might fight his way out, not with the hope of escape so much as with the determination to sell his ships dearly and work all possible harm to the enemy. He elected to give battle on that memorable Sunday morning, and his plan of action was the very worst he could have adopted either for the protection of his own ships or the destruction of the enemy. By coming out in column ahead and stringing his vessels out in a single line along what, in respect of the inevitable storm of American shells, might be termed a lee coast, he placed it in the weakest possible formation, and presented it for destruction in detail, broadside on, by the powerful guns of our battleships. Far better would it have been to have formed in line abreast, with the destroyers in the center and to the rear, and to have run the ships boldly, ship for ship, against the circle of blockading vessels. This would have given the Spaniards many opportunities and advantages which they lost by attempting a running fight. First it would have equalized matters somewhat in regard of gunnery, the Spanish gunners being scarcely able to miss as the two lines passed through each other. It would have given the fast cruisers the chance to use the ram, an advantage which would have been greatly increased by the fact that on all our ships steam and speed were low and they would have found it difficult to avoid the charge of the faster cruisers. Moreover, the destroyers could have been brought up to our line in the lee of the cruisers, and, once among our ships, they would have had some chance to get home a torpedo. All of the Spanish ships, moreover, carried a large supply of torpedoes, the "Colon" having four and the other three ships six discharge tubes. It is evident that in a fight at close quarters the chances of hurting our ships were immeasurably greater than in the long drawn out formation which Cervera preferred to adopt.