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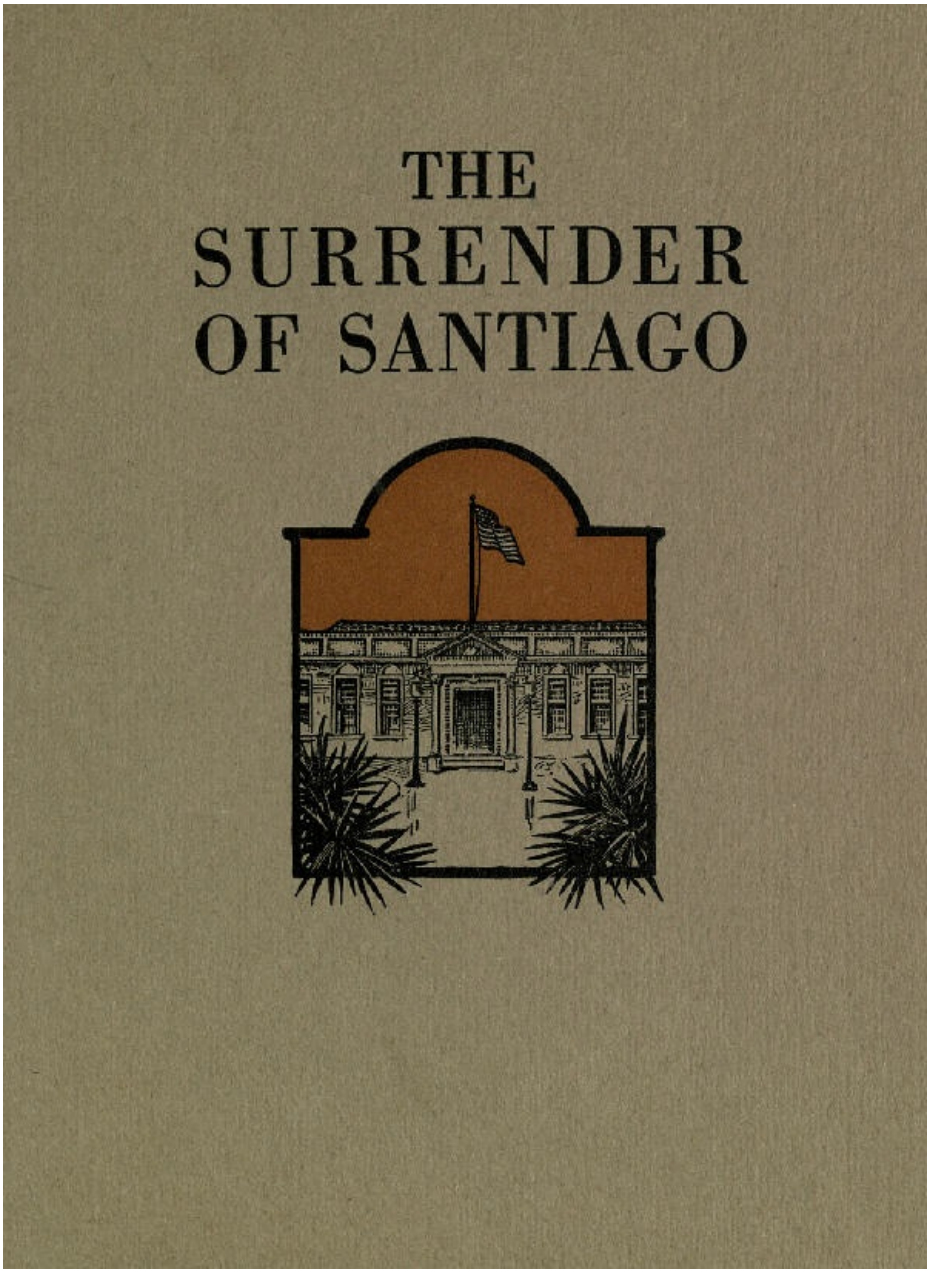
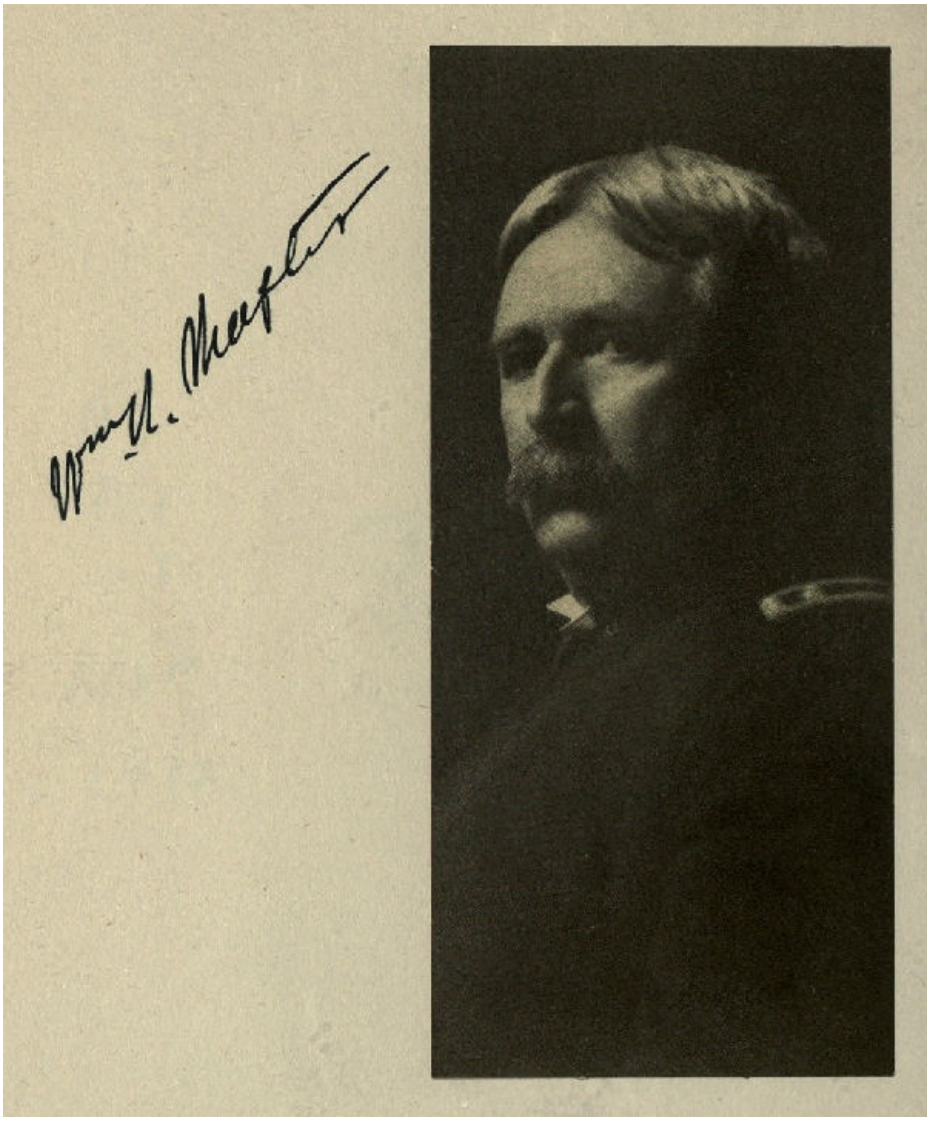
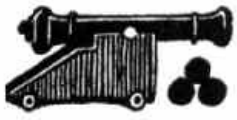




THE SURRENDER OF SANTIAGO

AN ACCOUNT OF THE
HISTORIC SURRENDER OF SANTIAGO
TO GENERAL SHAFTER
JULY 17, 1898

BY FRANK NORRIS



SAN FRANCISCO
PAUL ELDER AND COMPANY
NINETEEN SEVENTEEN

THE SURRENDER OF SANTIAGO

[Pg 3]

FOR two days we had been at the headquarters of the Second Brigade (General McKibben's), so blissfully contented because at last we had a real wooden and tiled roof over our heads that even the tarantulas—Archibald shook two of them from his blanket in one night—had no terrors for us.

The headquarters were in an abandoned country seat, a little six-roomed villa, all on one floor, called the Hacienda San Pablo. To the left of us along the crest of hills, in a mighty crescent that reached almost to the sea, lay the army, panting from the effort of the first, second and third days of the month, resting on its arms, its eyes to its sights, Maxim, Hotchkiss and Krag-Jorgenson held ready, alert, watchful, straining in the leash, waiting the expiration of the last truce that had now been on for twenty-four hours.

[Pg 4]

That night we sat up very late on the porch of the hacienda, singing "The Spanish Cavalier"—if you will recollect the words, singularly appropriate—"The Star-Spangled Banner," and

'Tis a way we had at Caney, sir,
'Tis a way we had at Caney, sir,
'Tis a way we had at Caney, sir,
To drive the Dons away,

an adaptation by one of the General's aides, which had a great success.

Inside, the General himself lay on his spread blankets, his hands clasped under his head, a pipe in his teeth, feebly applauding us at intervals and trying to pretend that we sang out of tune. The night was fine and very still. The wonderful Cuban fireflies, that are like little electric lights gone somehow adrift, glowed and faded in the mango and bamboo trees, and after a while a whip-poor-will began his lamentable little plaint somewhere in the branches of the gorgeous vermilion Flamboyana that overhung the hacienda.

[Pg 5]

The air was heavy with smells, smells that inevitable afternoon downpours had distilled from the vast jungle of bush and vine and thicket all up and down the valley. In Cuba everything, the very mud and water, has a smell. After every rain, as soon as the red-hot sun is out again, vegetation reeks and smokes and sweats, and these smells steam off into the air all night, thick and stupefying, like the interior of a cathedral after high mass.

The orderly who brought the despatch should have dashed up at a gallop, clicked his spurs, saluted and begun with "The commanding General's compliments, sir," et cetera. Instead, he dragged a very tired horse up the trail, knee-deep in mud, brought to, standing with a gasp of relief, and said, as he pushed his hat back from his forehead:

"Say, is here where General McKibben is?"

We stopped singing and took our feet down from the railing of the veranda. In the room back of us we heard the General raise on an elbow and tell his orderly to light a candle. The orderly went inside, drawing a paper from his pocket, and the aides followed. Through the open window we could plainly hear what followed, and see, too, for that matter, by twisting a bit on our chairs.

[Pg 6]

The General had mislaid his eyeglasses and so passed the despatch to one of his aides, saying: "I'll get you to read this for me, Nolan." On one knee, and holding the despatch to the candle-light, Nolan read it aloud.

It began tamely enough with the usual military formulas, and the first thirty words might have been part of any one of the many despatches the General had been receiving during the last three days. And then "to accompany the commanding General to a point midway between the Spanish and American lines and there to receive the surrender of General Toral. At noon, precisely, the American flag will be raised over the Governor's Palace in the city of Santiago. A salute of twenty-one guns will be fired from Captain Capron's battery. The regimental bands will play 'The Star-Spangled Banner' and the troops will cheer. SHAFTER."

There was a silence. The aide returned the paper to the General and straightened up, rubbing the dust from his knee. The General shifted his pipe to the other corner of his mouth. The little green parrot who lived in the premises trundled gravely across the brick floor, and for an instant

we all watched her with the intensest attention.

"Hum," muttered the General reflectively between his teeth. "Hum. They've caved in. Well, you won't have to make that little reconnaissance of yours down the railroad, after all, Mr. Nolan." And so it was that we first heard of the surrender of Santiago de Cuba. [Pg 7]

We were up betimes the next morning. By six o'clock the General had us all astir and searching in our blanket rolls and haversacks for "any kind of a black tie." It was an article none of us possessed, and the General was more troubled over this lack of a black tie than the fact that he had neither vest nor blouse to do honor to the city's capitulation.

But we had our own troubles. The flag was to be raised over the city at noon. Sometime during the morning the Spanish General would surrender to the American. The General—our General—and his aides, as well as all the division and brigade commanders, would ride out to be present at the ceremony—but how about the correspondents?

Almost to a certainty they would be refused. Privileges extended to journalists and magazine writers had been few and very far between throughout the campaign. We would watch the affair through glasses from some hilltop, two miles, or three maybe, to the rear. But for all that, we saddled our horses and when the General and his staff started to ride down to corps headquarters, fell in with the aides, and resolved to keep up with the procession as far as our ingenuity and perseverance would make possible. [Pg 8]

It was early when we started and the heat had not yet begun to be oppressive. All along and through the lines there were signs of the greatest activity. Over night the men had been withdrawn from the trenches and were pitching their shelter tents on the higher and drier ground, and where our road crossed the road from Caney to Santiago we came upon hundreds of refugees returning to the city whence they had been driven a few days previous.

Headquarters had been moved a mile or two nearer the trenches during the truce, and we found it occupying the site of General Wheeler's tent on the battlefield of San Juan. The ground is high and open hereabouts, and, as we came up we could see the general officers—each of them accompanied by his staff—closing in from every side upon the same spot.

It was a great gathering. We had seen but few of these generals; most of them had been but mere names, names that found place in a breathless fragment of news shouted by an orderly galloping to or from the front. But now they were all here: Wheeler, small, white-bearded and wiry; Ludlow, who always contrived to appear better dressed than everyone else, in his trim field uniform and white leggings; Randolph, with his bull neck and fine, salient chin, perhaps the most soldierly-looking of all, and others and others and others; Kent, Lawton, Wood, Chaffee, Young, Roosevelt, and our own General, who, barring Wheeler, had perhaps done more actual fighting in the course of his life than any three of the others put together, yet who was like the man in Mr. Nye's song, "without coat or vest," even without "any kind of a black tie." [Pg 9]

Shafter himself sat under the fly of his tent, his inevitable pith helmet on his head, a headgear he had worn ever since leaving the ship, holding court as it were on this, his own particular day. In the field below, the cavalry escort was forming, and aides, orderlies and adjutants came and went at the top speed of their horses, just as the military dramas had taught us to expect they should.

But, except ourselves, not a correspondent was in sight, and we were very like to be ordered back at any moment. But the god descended from the machine in the person of Captain McKittrick of the commanding General's staff, and we were given an unqualified permission to fall in so soon as the start should be made, provided only that we fell in at the rear of any one of the generals' staffs. [Pg 10]

But here a difficulty developed itself. The procession started almost immediately, and when we fell in at the rear of one of the staffs we found ourselves naturally at the head of the one immediately behind. It was a time when, if ever, precedence and rank were of paramount importance, and a brigadier-general does not take it kindly when two rather forlorn-appearing men, wearing neither stripe nor shoulder strap, and mounted upon an unkempt mule and a lamentable little white pony, rank him out of his place when he is marching to receive an enemy's surrender. As much was said to us, at first with military terseness, and latterly, this proving of no effect, with cursings and blasphemies. Our *deus ex machina* was far ahead with General Shafter by this time, and it was only our mule that saved us from ultimate discomfiture. He belonged to a pack-train and his life had been spent in following close upon the footsteps of the animal in front of him. He was a mule with one idea; his universe collapsed, his cosmos came tumbling about his ears the instant that it became impossible for him to follow in a train. It was all one that Archibald tore and tugged at the bit, or roweled him red. He could as easily have reined a locomotive from its track as to have swerved the creature from its direct line of travel by so much as an inch. [Pg 11]

So what with this and with that, we worried along until just beyond the line of our trenches, where the road broadened very considerably and we could compromise by riding on the flanks of the column.

And an imposing column it was, nearly three hundred strong, and it actually appeared as if one-half was made up of brigadier-generals, major-generals, generals commanding divisions, staff officers and the like. A mere colonel was hardly better than a private on that day. We moved

forward at a quick trot, General Shafter's pith helmet bobbing briskly along on ahead. As we passed through our lines there was a smart cheer or two from the men, and at one point a band was banging away at a nimble Sousa quickstep as we trotted by.

[Pg 12] We were now on what had been the debatable ground, as much the enemy's as ours, and had not gone far before we were suddenly aware of a group of Spanish horsemen over the hedge of cactus to the left of the road, brightly dressed young fellows wearing the blue linen and red facings of the *guarda civile*, who at the sight of us turned and dashed back through the fields as though to give news of our approach. Then there was a freshly macheted opening in the hedge; the column turned in, advanced parallel with the road some hundred yards through a field of standing grass and at last halted.

At once the place was alive with Spanish soldiery. They came forward to meet us in very brave and gay attire. First a corps of trumpeters sounded a pretty trumpet march. They blew defiantly, did these Spanish trumpeters, and as loudly as ever they could, just to show us that they were not afraid—that they did not care, not they, pooh! After these came a small detachment of *guarda*, with arms, who watched the Yankee soldiers with bovine intentness while they came to a halt and ordered arms in front of our position.

[Pg 13] Toral, the defeated General, came next. Suddenly it had become very quiet. The trumpeters had ceased blowing, and the rattling accoutrements of the moving troops had fallen still with the halt. The beaten General came out into the open space ahead of his staff, and General Shafter rode out to meet him, and they both removed their hats.

I cast a quick glance around the scene, at the Spaniards in their blue linen uniforms, the red and lacquer of the *guarda civile*, the ordered Mausers, the trumpeters resting their trumpets on their hips, at our own array, McKibben in his black shirt, Ludlow in his white leggings, and the rank and file of the escort, the bronzed, blue-trousered troopers, erect and motionless upon their mounts. It was war, and it was magnificent, seen there under the flash of a tropic sun with all that welter of green to set it off, and there was a bigness about it so that to be there seeing it at all, and, in a way, part of it, made you feel that for that moment you were living larger and stronger than ever before. It was Appomattox again, and Mexico and Yorktown. Tomorrow nearly a hundred million people the world round would read of this scene, and as many more, yet unborn, would read of it, but today you could sit in your saddle on the back of your little white [Pg 14] bronco and view it as easily as a play.

Toral rode forward toward Shafter and, as I say, both uncovered. Toral was well-looking, his face rather red from the sun and half hidden by a fine gray mustache. He was a little bald and his forehead was high and round. As the two Generals shook hands it was so still that the noise of a man chopping wood in our lines nearly half a mile away was plainly audible. Immediately at their backs the staffs of the two watched. The escort watched. Back along the Spanish and the American trenches thousands of men stood in line and watched; Santiago watched, and Washington, Spain and the United States, the two hemispheres, the Old World and the New, paused on that moment, watching. A sentence or two was spoken in low tones and the Generals replaced their hats and shook hands smilingly.

Instantly a great creaking of saddles took place as the men eased their positions, and conversation began again. The Spanish soldiers filed off through a break in the barbed wire fence, the defiant trumpeters playing their pretty march-call more defiantly than ever.

[Pg 15] Introductions were the order of the next few moments, Shafter introducing all his major and brigadier-generals to Toral. Meanwhile Spanish soldiers were defiling past us along the road going toward our lines, and without arms. There was no rancor or bitterness in the expression of these men. They evinced mostly an abnormal curiosity in observing the cavalrymen who formed our escort, and the cavalry repaid it in kind. The soldiers on both sides wanted to know just what manner of men they had been fighting these last few weeks.

I, myself, became lost in the fascination of these silent-shod soldiers (for they wear a kind of tennis shoe) filing off at their rapid marching gait. We noted that most of them were young, jolly, rather innocent-looking fellows, and we looked especially for officers, studying them and watching to see how "they took it." One fellow led a very fat cow, with his knapsack and impedimenta bound to her horns.

They had nearly gone by and the end of their pack-train of little donkeys was already in sight when a general movement of our escort made me gather up the reins. The head of our column was just descending into the road, going on at a trot. The ride into the city was beginning.

[Pg 16] Shall I ever forget that ride? We rode three abreast, always at a rapid trot and sometimes even at a canter, the General himself always setting the pace. Just after leaving the field where the surrender had taken place the road broadened still more until it became a veritable highway, the broadest and best we had ever seen in Cuba, but disfigured here and there with the dead horses of officers, the saddle and headstall still on the carcass. The city was in plain sight now, but its aspect, with which we had become so familiar, was changing with every hundred yards.

At the junction of the Caney road a block house was passed with its usual trench and trocha, strong enough against infantry, as we all knew by now. This one was of unusual strength and we would have given it more serious attention had not our eyes been smitten with the sight of a veritable marvel. It might have been the white swan of Lohengrin there on the stony margin of the road, or the green dragon of Whantley, or the Holland submarine torpedo boat; but it was

none of these. It was a carriage—a carriage.

I say it was a carriage, a hack, with girls in white muslin frocks in it, the driver lounging on the box and two miserable horses dozing in the harness. I suppose it would be quite impossible to make a reader understand how incongruous this apparition seemed to us. It was in use, no doubt, carrying refugees from Caney back into the city and its presence was easily accounted for. But Mr. Kipling's phantom rickshaw could hardly have produced a greater sensation. [Pg 17]

"A carriage!"

"Say, will you look at that!"

"Well, for God's sake!"

"Damned if it isn't a carriage!"

"Say, Jim, look at the carriage!"

"It is a carriage for a fact—well, of all the things!"

"Well, that get's me—a carriage!"

It was among the troopers of the escort that the carriage had the greatest success. They chuckled over it as if it had some hidden, mirthful significance. They addressed strange allusions to the lounging driver, and when they had ridden by they turned in their saddles and watched it out of sight at the risk of breaking their necks. They rode the sprucer for it; they were in better spirits for it. They laughed, they talked, they went at a faster pace, they cocked their hats, they were gay, they were debonair. They had seen a carriage! [Pg 18]

And now we were close up. Here was the hospital on the very outskirts, with its plethora of Red Cross flags. It was a hospital, after all, and not a barracks, as we had said, studying it through our field glasses during the last week, for blanketed and beflanneled objects, hollow-eyed, with bandaged heads, crowded silently at the grated windows staring at us galloping past. Here was an abandoned trench, and here—steady all, pull down to a walk—here is the barbed wire entanglement we have heard so much about. Formidable enough, surely; three lines of posts right across the road with barbed wire interwoven. A rabbit could not have passed here; and back of it trenches and rifle pits; nothing but artillery could have forced these lines. What fools to have abandoned them—well.

We passed through the gap single file and gingerly, then forward again at a hard gallop, clattering rough-shod over paved streets, for now at last we were in the city of Santiago.

Soldiers without arms, refugees, the men in brown derby hats—Cubans, negroes, dark women with black lace upon their heads, and children absolutely naked, watched us very silently from the sidewalks and from balconies. The houses were of adobe, painted pale blue and pink, and roofed with rugged lichen-blackened tiles. The windows reached from sidewalk to roof and were grated heavily, the doors oak and clenched with great nail heads. Santiago, Santiago at last, after so many days of sailing, of marching, of countermarching, and of fighting. [Pg 19]

Here we were in the city at last, riding in, hoofs clattering, sabres rattling, saddles creaking, and suddenly a great wave of exultation came over us all. I know the General felt it. I know the last trooper of the escort felt it. There was no thought of humanitarian principles then. The war was not a "crusade," we were not fighting for Cubans just then, it was not for disinterested motives that we were there sabred and revolvered and carbined. Santiago was ours—was ours, ours, by the sword we had acquired, we, Americans, with no one to help—and the Anglo-Saxon blood of us, the blood of the race that has fought its way out of a swamp in Friesland, conquering and conquering and conquering, on to the westward, the race whose blood instinct is the acquiring of land, went galloping through our veins to the beat of our horses' hoofs. [Pg 20]

Every trooper that day looked down from his saddle upon Cuban and Spanish soldier as from a throne. Even though not a soldier, it was impossible not to know their feeling, glorying, arrogant, the fine, brutal arrogance of the Anglo-Saxon, and we rode on there at a gallop through the crowded streets of the fallen city, heads high, sabres clattering, a thousand iron hoofs beating out a long roll—triumphant, arrogant conquerors.

At the Plaza we halted and dismounted. The Cathedral was here, the Cuban and Spanish clubs and the Governor's Palace, a rather unimposing affair all on one floor, with the architectural magnificence of a railway station of the French provinces. The General and the generals went in and crowded the hall of audience, very clinquant with its black and white floor, glass chandeliers, long mirrors and single gilded center table. Here for an hour deputations were received. The Chief of Police, Leonardo Ras y Rodriguez, the ex-Governor, and last of all and most imposing, Monsignor Francisco Saenz de Urturi, the Archbishop, in his robes, purple cap and gold chain, followed by his suite. Him, General Shafter, came forward to meet, and the two shook hands under the tawdry chandelier. It was a strange enough sight. By many and devious and bloody ways had the priest and the soldier come to meet each other on that day. [Pg 21]

But it was drawing toward noon. I went out into the Plaza again. The troops were already forming a line of cavalry that stretched along the street immediately before the Governor's Palace, and two companies of the Ninth Infantry and the band occupied the center where the little park is. I went across the Plaza and stood on the terrace in front of the main doors of the

Cathedral. Directly opposite was the Governor's Palace, the naked flagstaff on the roof over the door standing out lean and stark against the background of green hills.

The sidewalks and streets outside the lines of soldiers were crowded with an even mixture of civilians and disarmed Spanish soldiers. The Spanish Club on the left was suddenly closed, but the balconies of the San Carlos—the Cuban Club—were filled with black-bearded, voluble gentlemen in white ducks and straw hats. Every window in the "hotel" was occupied, each one of the little balconies of the Cafe Venus had its gathering, while the terrace of the Cathedral was packed close. There were perhaps five thousand in the Plaza de Armas of Santiago on that seventeenth day of July. [Pg 22]

At five minutes of the noon hour everything fell quiet. Captain McKittrick and Lieutenant Miley had appeared on the roof of the Palace by the flagstaff. Unfortunately there was not a breath of wind. The minutes passed, two, three, four. The silence was profound, nobody spoke. In all those five thousand people there was scarcely a movement.

Then back of us from the direction of the Cathedral's clock tower there came a slow wheezing as of the expansion of decrepit lungs, a creaking and jarring of springs and cog-wheels that grew rapidly louder till it culminated abruptly in a single sonorous stroke. At once Captain McKittrick laid his hand to the halyards of the flagstaff, a bundle of bunting rose in the air, shapeless and without definite color. But suddenly, wonderful enough, there came a breeze, a brisk spurt out of the north. The bunting caught it, twisted upon itself, tumbled, writhed, then suddenly shook itself free, and in a single long billow rolled out into the Stars and Stripes of Old Glory. [Pg 23]

"Pre-sent h' ar-r-r!"

That was from the square, and in answer to the order came the Krag-Jorgensons leaping to the fists and the cavalry sabres swishing and flashing out into the sunlight.

Then the band: "Oh, say, can you see—" while far off on the hills from our intrenchments Capron's battery began to thunder the salute.

The moment was perhaps the most intense of the whole campaign. There was no cheering and that was the best of it. It is hard to understand this, but the occasion was too big for mere shouting, and infinitely too solemn. I have heard the "Miserere" in the Sistine Chapel, and in comparison with the raising of the flag over the city of Santiago it was opera comique.

For perhaps a full minute we stood with bared heads reverently watching the great flag as it strained in the breeze that, curiously enough, was now steady and strong, watching it as it strained and stiffened and grew out broader and broader over the conquered city till you believed the glory of it and the splendor and radiance of it must go flashing off there over those leagues of tumbling water till it blazed like a comet over Madrid itself. [Pg 24]

And the great names came to the mind again—Lexington, Trenton, Yorktown, 1812, Chapultepec, Mexico, Shiloh, Gettysburg, the Wilderness, Appomattox, and now—Guasima, San Juan, El Caney, Santiago.

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