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Very truly yours,  
William H. Hinkley

# THE AMERICAN-SPANISH WAR

A History by  
THE WAR LEADERS

*ILLUSTRATED*  
*With numerous original engravings, maps and diagrams*



NORWICH, CONN  
CHAS. C. HASKELL & SON

22 BEDFORD STREET, STRAND, LONDON, ENGLAND  
GAY & BIRD  
1899

286451  
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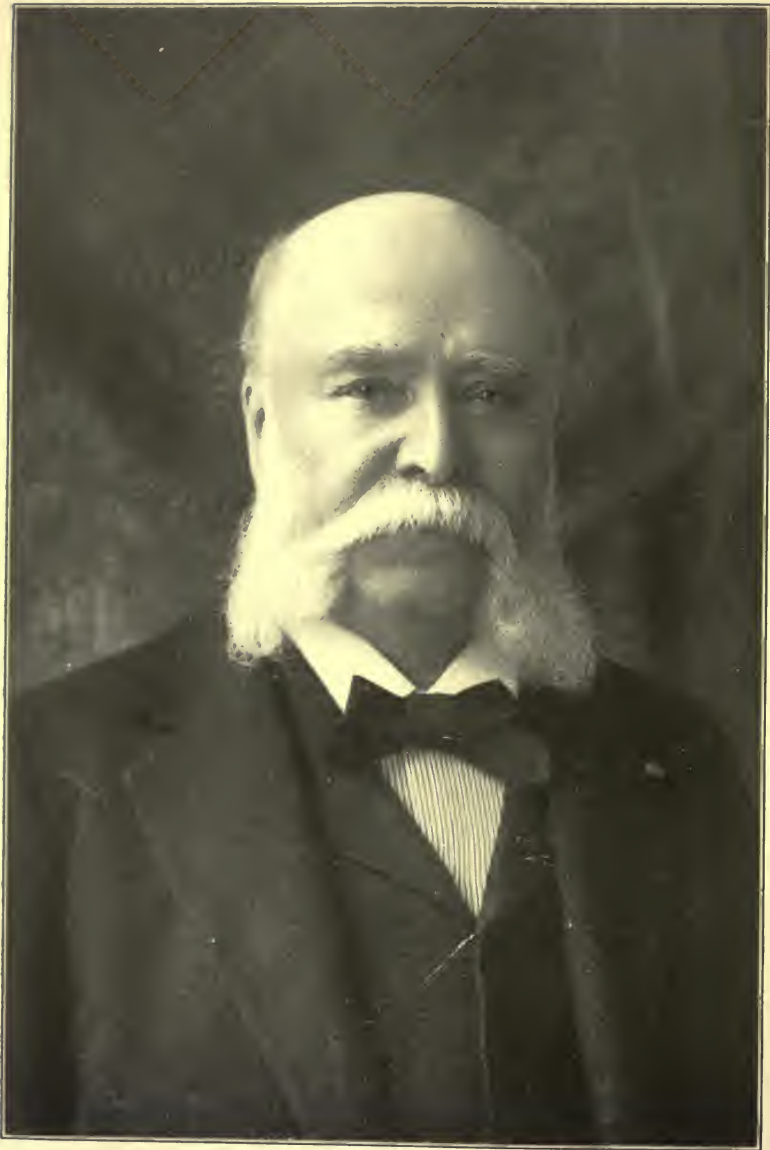
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Alfred L. Woodford

## INTRODUCTION.

BY

GEN. STEWART L. WOODFORD, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of Spain.

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**I**T is an honor which I deeply appreciate to be asked to write these introductory words to such a noteworthy collection of papers as this volume contains.

The island of Cuba suffered during many years from unrest, disorder and civil war. For about half the time between 1868 and 1898 it was the theatre of struggles which wasted its resources and destroyed nearly one quarter of its population. So continuous had been these struggles and so dreadful their results that in our last Presidential canvass both our great political parties practically pledged themselves to such action by our Government as should restore order and compel peace in Cuba. Spain was three thousand miles distant and Cuba was less than one hundred miles from our coast. The burden and the duty of humanity were upon us, and our people of all sections and all parties recognized this duty and accepted this burden.

In March, 1897, President McKinley was inaugurated. As soon as the more pressing needs of internal administration and revenue legislation had been met, he addressed himself to the settlement of the Cuban question. He recognized that it was, in the largest and broadest sense, a national question and was not to be considered and solved upon partisan considerations or through party agencies alone. He retained at Havana as Consul-General a distinguished Democrat, appointed to

that pivotal post by President Cleveland. This was Fitzhugh Lee, who had been a gallant soldier of the Confederacy during our own Civil War and after that war a Governor of Virginia. He sent as Minister to Madrid a citizen of New York, who had served in the Union Army and who was in his personal politics a Republican. The new American Minister started for his post on the 28th of July, 1897. Shortly after his arrival at London, he learned of the assassination of the Spanish Prime Minister, Señor Canovas. There were short delays at London and Paris, and on the 1st of September the American representative reached San Sebastian, where the Queen Regent of Spain was holding her summer Court. His formal presentation to Her Majesty soon followed, and his negotiations with the Spanish Government in relation to Cuba were promptly begun. Those negotiations, whether oral or written, were, from the beginning to the end, straightforward, open and direct and were conducted on the lines of what has come to be known as the "New American Diplomacy." At the outset the American Minister authorized the Spanish Government to publish freely and fully whatever communication he should make to them.

The instructions of the President were firm, yet friendly, and were sincerely in behalf of justice and peace. Those instructions the American Minister sought to carry out to the best of his ability. When war at last came, it was because war was inevitable. The President had done all that a strong and wise man could do for peace, with justice to Cuba and with due regard to the great American interests in that island. At the beginning the President sought the establishment of those conditions in Cuba which should make permanent peace possible and tendered to Spain the good offices of the United States for securing this result. That offer was unfortunately never accepted.

The first formal note from the American Minister was delivered on the 23rd of September. Within a few days thereafter the members of the Spanish Conservative Cabinet resigned. They were succeeded early in October by a Liberal Ministry under the presidency of Señor Sagasta. This seemed a distinct gain for the cause of peace.

General Weyler had been in absolute command of Cuba since the spring of 1896. It was generally understood that he had received assurance from the Spanish Government that he should be given at least two years, or until the spring of 1898, within which to work out his own policy of suppressing the Cuban insurrection. His administration as Captain-General in Cuba was not acceptable to the conscience of the American people and was disapproved by American public opinion. His well-known *bandos* or military decrees, in regard to the *reconcentrados* and the export of tobacco, were believed by our people to be directly responsible for much of the horrible suffering then known to exist in Cuba. I did not then believe and I do not now believe that it would have been possible to keep peace between Spain and the United States until Christmas, 1897, had General Weyler remained in command of Cuba until that Christmas. The change of Ministry therefore seemed to me at the time a distinct gain in the interest of peace.

Señor Sagasta during the preceding month of June, before the assassination of Señor Canovas and while Sagasta was only the leader of a party out of power, had issued a proclamation or manifesto in the name of the Liberal Party. In this document he had discussed very freely and fully the condition of affairs in Cuba and had promised, if the Liberal Party were again entrusted with the Government of Spain, that General Weyler should be recalled and that an enlarged and efficient system of autonomy should be established in

Cuba. The Sagasta Ministry came in. General Weyler was recalled. Decrees granting enlarged autonomy were prepared and promulgated.

The President dwelt upon these things in his message to our Congress when that body met in December, 1897, and expressed his earnest hope that humane methods of warfare and sincere and effective autonomy might bring rest, order and enduring peace in Cuba.

The American Government and people waited with patient benevolence. Meanwhile the war continued. Order was not restored in the rural districts. The disease was too deeply rooted. It was the result of methods four centuries old, and mutual distrust and hatred could not be eradicated or even assuaged in weeks or months. Possibly they may not be in years. The camps of the *reconcentrados* were not broken up. Disease and starvation kept on in their deadly work of decimating the people. Peace did not come, and the necessity for action by the United States grew each day more evident and more imperative.

Then occurred an incident which had immediate, serious and far-reaching effect. Some time during the winter, a private letter from the then Spanish Minister at Washington to a prominent Spaniard, who was visiting Cuba, was discovered at Havana. It was published by the American press and its authenticity was admitted by its writer. It contained expressions of opinion with regard to autonomy and concerning our President which caused natural, immediate and widespread doubt among many of our most conservative people, whether Spain was acting with sincerity and in good faith in this vital matter of autonomy. These suspicions may have been unjust, but they were natural and even inevitable. So far as the Sagasta Ministry and her Majesty the Queen Regent were concerned I am sure that they were unjust. I

believe that both the Ministry and the Queen Regent tried loyally and in good faith to grant and enforce such autonomy as they thought would secure peace and order. This statement is due to them and to history. In practice the autonomy which they offered proved insufficient. Revolutions never go backward, and events in Cuba were not to be an exception to this historic rule. But if the trusted representative of Spain at Washington thought what he wrote about autonomy, it was natural and inevitable for all Americans to fear that the Spanish authorities in Cuba might think the same and that thus in practice autonomy might prove a delusion and a snare. The mischief had been done, and a grave element of doubt and distrust had been added to a situation already very tense and difficult. One private letter from a public man seems a little matter but there is large truth and enduring application in the old adage that "it is the last straw which breaks the camel's back."

The Spanish Minister at Washington at once telegraphed his resignation to his Government at Madrid. He did this before any communication had been received by our Minister at Madrid from our Government at Washington. Immediately on receiving a communication from our Government, the American Minister sought an interview with the Spanish Foreign Office, but before such interview was accorded, the Spanish Government had accepted the resignation of the Spanish Minister at Washington. Serious interviews and correspondence followed, and finally the Spanish Government made representations and explanations of such a character that they were accepted as being full and ample reparation, and this unfortunate and untimely incident was diplomatically declared to be satisfactorily closed. But the mischief had been done and its evil effect remained to the end.

Meanwhile there had been a second and far more serious

matter, and one whose seriousness was aggravated by what had just occurred. The United States Steamer *Maine* had gone on a friendly visit to the Harbor of Havana. The Spanish cruiser *Vizcaya* had been ordered on a return visit of courtesy to the Port of New York. On the night of February 15, while anchored in the Harbor of Havana, at a buoy, indicated by the Spanish authorities, and while under the protection which the ships of a friendly Government are entitled to enjoy from the Government in whose waters they lie, the steamer *Maine* was blown up and destroyed with the loss of 266 of our sailors. In the excited and tense condition of public opinion there came at once the horrible suspicion of foul play and of an external cause for the awful catastrophe. With a wisdom that cannot be too highly commended, Captain Sigsbee at once telegraphed the Navy Department reporting the loss of his vessel and asking suspension of judgment as to its cause. The American people are just and waited to know the facts before they should form a final opinion and fix the responsibility. A Naval Court of Inquiry was ordered, and the report of that body was that the explosion of the ill-fated *Maine* was due to external causes. If any doubt still remained, that doubt was finally and forever removed when the phenomena of the internal explosions of iron-clad war-vessels were so clearly shown in the Spanish ships which were run ashore in the sea fight off Santiago Harbor and which, having been set on fire, were destroyed by the explosion of their own magazines. The ribs of these vessels were bent outward, while the ribs of the *Maine* were bent inward.

Negotiations continued, but the end was drawing nigh. Patriotic people and thoughtful people sought peace. The Queen at Madrid and the President at Washington were alike earnest in their desire and in their efforts for peace. The



Spanish Government had recalled General Weyler, and had offered as large autonomy to Cuba as military and political opinion in Spain would permit. It was the misfortune of Spain that Spanish statesmen did not believe that they could do or ought to do the only things that would have assured peace. Those things were the declaration and enforcement of an immediate armistice and the prompt taking of steps looking to the removal of the Spanish flag from Cuba. According to the best judgment I could then form, the leaders of Spanish opinion believed that the granting of independence to Cuba meant immediate and possibly successful revolution in Spain. They chose between war with us and the overthrow of the Alphonso Dynasty. It might be possible to have war with us and thereby lose Cuba and yet save the Dynasty. While, should Spain grant freedom to Cuba, she must lose the Island and possibly her King. It is not for me, a stranger to Spain and an American, to decide as to the wisdom or unwisdom of this judgment. Whatever any may have thought then, it is now evident that no compromise as to Cuba was possible. The forces bred and born of four centuries of Spanish rule and of nearly three centuries of American neighborhood and example were at work. Cuba could not remain Spanish. She must become independent or American, and war was the last and only possible solution.

As I look back I can see that the incident of the *Maine*, coming close on the heels of the discovered letter, created conditions which made peaceful solution practically impossible. I did not then so believe. I did then believe that immediate and effective armistice would be followed by such negotiations as would secure local independence and the final and peaceful removal of the Spanish flag from Cuba. Whether this belief was right or wrong I did not succeed in obtaining such armistice in time to be of any effect. The

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