

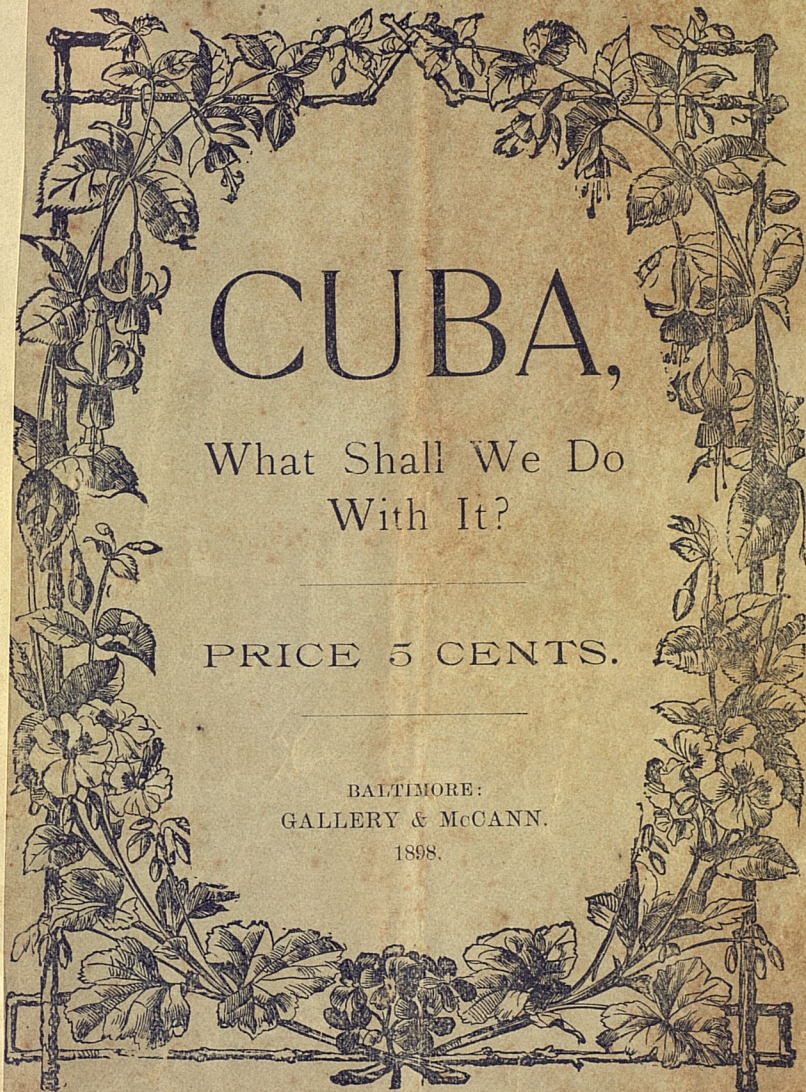
CUBA, WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH IT?

Baltimore, 1898.



PATRIMONIO
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OFICINA DEL HISTORIADOR
DE LA HABANA



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PRICE 5 CENTS.

BALTIMORE:
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BY

CHARLES WARREN CURRIER,

AUTHOR OF "DIMITRIOS AND IRENE," "THE ROSE
OF ALHAMA," ETC., ETC.

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CUBA.

What Shall We Do With It?

IT IS NOT LONG since this wonderful young country, the admiration of the nations, drew the sword against the venerable Spanish monarchy, clad, as it was, in the gorgeous panoply of recollections, descended from a glorious past. The eyes of the world were upon us then, they are upon us still. The war upon which we enthusiastically entered was proclaimed to be one of the most unselfish of all history, a war of sympathy, of humanity. For years the heart of the American people had been moved, its blood had been stirred, by the tales of oppression, of cruelty, of barbaric despotism, that the south-wind wafted toward us from the island home of a downtrodden people. The hour had at last arrived, the hour of justice, of retribution, of freedom. The American nation arose in its might, girt itself with the sword of justice, and, like the crusaders of old, advanced, in the name of humanity, to meet the oppressor whose tyrannical heel had for so long a period rested upon one of the fairest portions of

the New World. For reasons of policy, the legislative body of this mighty nation, declined to recognize the independence of the struggling Cuban patriots, but the President, as well as Congress, gave to the world to understand, that the war, upon which we were about to enter, was to be not a war of conquest, of self aggrandizement, but one, undertaken in the cause of suffering humanity, and to give Cuba a *Stable Government*. Since the beginning of hostilities, our horizon has been widened, vistas of new lands have arisen before us, we have been victorious, and the question naturally arises, what shall we do with our conquests? I will not ask whether we intend to walk in the footsteps of the Roman Republic, to subjugate the world, impose ourselves upon the universe, and become an empire, to rise as Rome rose, and fall as Rome fell. With the general spirit of annexation I have here nothing to do; I will limit myself to Cuba. What shall we do with Cuba? Shall it be as it was with the dogs that were fighting? Two dogs were struggling for a bone: some distance off, a hound of gigantic proportions, and magnificent build, was watching the struggle with interest: the smaller of the two dogs was getting the worst, when the spectator joined in the fight, set upon the larger animal, and drove him off. The smaller dog, bleeding from his wounds, yet full of energy, turned his grateful eyes upon his benefactor, but, what was his consternation, when he beheld the conqueror marching off triumphantly with the bone that he had fought to preserve!

Shall we imitate the hound? For the sake of America's fair reputation I hope not; for, if we do, the nations of Christendom will point at us with the finger, exclaiming, lo! the United States have taken their

place among the robber nations of the world; their war for humanity was indeed a war for self. But, would it not have been less dishonorable, they will say, for the hypocrites to have proclaimed their intentions from the beginning, instead of wearing the mask of benevolence, to conceal the base passions mirrored on their countenance?—Shall we ever deserve this galling reproach?—May that day never dawn! Shall the America of our fathers, the America of Washington, of the heroes that watered the soil of many a hard won field with their blood, descend to the level of greedy robbers, to the base ignominy of avaricious usurpers? Never; no, never; rather let the name of our Republic be blotted from the list of nations; for it is better to die in honor, than live in disgrace.

But far be from us such sad thoughts, and gloomy presentiments. No, the United States, if they have been guilty of faults in the past, will know how to rise above the petty avarice of small minds, they will give a glorious example to posterity, as they have excited the admiration of the world by their chivalrous and magnanimous treatment of their fallen foes. They have been victorious, fully deserving the title of ever invincible, and they can afford to be generous. May the red, white and blue of our national standard never bear the stain of avarice and injustice!

For three years the patriots of Cuba have, with indomitable courage, been struggling for their independence; they love liberty, as much as we love it. We have taken them under our aegis, shall we deprive them of the fruits of their labors?

And who are these Cuban patriots? Are they not a lot of negroes and mulattoes? Suppose that they were;

have not negroes and mulattoes the same rights as white men? But is this allegation true? Undoubtedly their enemies, the Spaniards, have endeavored to persuade the world that the Cuban rebellion was a negro movement. In reply, I will say, that it should be remembered, that not more than one third of the population of Cuba is of the colored race. As long as the slave trade lasted the negro population increased, but since that period it has diminished, while that of the whites has gone on steadily increasing. At the census of 1887, there were 1,102,689 whites and 485,187 colored persons on the island.

Of course, there are negroes in the Cuban army, but Mr. Palma tells us that they form less than one third of the fighting forces. I know of only three colored generals, Antonio and Jose Maceo, and Augustin Cebreco, who have served with the Cubans, except Jose Rabi, who is said to be of Indian descent, be also regarded as a colored man. None of the members of the constituent assembly or of the government are of the colored race.

But are the Cubans able to govern themselves? Give them a chance; let them try. To decide off-hand that they are incapable of self-government, is to be guided by the worst prejudice. What proof have the Cubans ever given, that they have been lacking in the qualities required for this important function? Have they not held the Spanish army at bay for over three years? Were their forces lacking in discipline? They have stood in dire need of food and clothing, they have borne numberless privations, but they have never faltered in loyalty to their leaders and to their cause, without any reward, save their hope of the future. And is that

future to be forever taken from them, at the moment they seem to possess it?

It must also be remembered, that Cubans, exiles from their sunny island, have distinguished themselves in numerous other lands, in the world of letters and the fine arts, in science, as well as in other walks of life. Besides the United States, we find Cubans reaching prominence in France, Italy, Germany, the United States of Columbia, Peru, Chili, and the Argentine Republic, as well as in their own country.

Besides these facts, I may add, that thousands of Cubans have received their education in the United States, where they have become imbued with the spirit of American institutions. To be sure, then, Cuba must possess men of intelligence, of education, and of character who will be fully competent to hold the reins of government. The sweeping assertion that the Cubans are incapable of self-government is, consequently, most gratuitous, and most unjust to our neighbors of the Pearl of the Antilles.

But must we not compensate ourselves for the blood and treasure expended in this war? Did we go to war as mercenaries, did we hire ourselves to the people of Cuba, or did we proclaim to the world, that we were fighting for humanity's sake? *But shall we remain without compensation?* Is not Porto Rico, which we seem determined to take, a most valuable acquisition? If it is virtually in our power today, we owe it to the Cuban patriots, who dared raise the standard of rebellion against their mother-country.

We may further justly expect, that Free Cuba, our next door neighbor in the family of nations, will be a veritable treasure for the United States. She will al-

ways regard with gratitude her benefactor, whom she will undoubtedly place among the most privileged nations. In the first place with the burdensome fiscal administration removed, Cuba will afford a most favorable field for the investment of American capital. Agriculture, the most important of Cuba's resources, will improve under freedom's banner, and with onerous restrictions eliminated, Cuban products, sugar, tobacco, coffee, cocoa, and tropical fruits generally, will find ready purchasers in the markets of the United States. Cattle raising, which in the 16th century was the great, and, in fact, the sole industry of the island, will assume greater proportions, and supply the markets of the world with meat, as well as hides, while the mining industry will again invite foreign capital. Copper and iron ore will be extensively mined, and foundries, established principally by American capital, will no doubt utilize the raw material on the spot.

On the other hand, Cuba will be a consumer of American products. Machinery for the sugar mills, flour, preserved meats, cloth, hardware, shoes, and a number of other articles will be in constant demand in the Cuban markets. With favorable commercial treaties, there is no reason why trade with the Cuban Republic should not be carried on, on the same basis as our interstate commerce, and Cuba free will be of the same benefit to us as Cuba annexed.

But will not the annexation of the island be more beneficial to us than the establishment of a free government? This question, in spite of the selfish motives that prompt it, deserves an answer. My reply is, that the matter is extremely doubtful. The first difficulty lies in race difference. It is true that the American

people is made up of almost all nationalities under the sun, and it may be asked why cannot we unite to ourselves the Cubans, as we have the Germans, Italians and others? There is here no parallel. Emigration flowing to our shores has thus far been under control, and we have been able, to some extent at least, to stamp upon the immigrants our American institutions, with our Anglo-Saxon language. In regard to those that have come to us by annexation in Louisiana, Florida, Texas, and the territories conquered from Mexico, their number was too small, when compared with the increasing American population, to cause any great difficulty. In the case of Cuba it is different, for a population Spanish in race and language, over a million strong, will come to us in a body, while the negro problem will be aggravated by the accession of about half a million to the colored population. If the way for annexation is gradually prepared, if it does not take place by violence, this difficulty will be eliminated, for the Cuban people, beholding the benefits of American civilization, and imbued by degrees with the spirit of American institutions, will be slowly, but surely, educated up to the standard of our republican ideas.

If, on the other hand, Cuba is annexed against the will of its people, the island will stand to us in the relation of a conquered province. Its inhabitants will come to regard the usurpers with as much antipathy, as that with which they looked upon their former tyrants, especially as the language and manners of their new masters will be utterly at variance with their own. Their traditions, feelings, education, and speech are entirely Spanish, though their long oppression has made them hate the country of their ancestors. But when

they find themselves under a foreign yoke, when the dominant race will gradually drive before it all that centuries have rendered dear to them, Spanish oppression will be forgotten, and it will be no wonder if their heart will turn longingly to their mother-country. No! We can never link Cuba to us by an iron chain, while we may bind her with silken chords.

Forcible occupation of Cuba will require a standing army to garrison the forts, and a fleet to patrol the shores. This will be a tremendous increase of expense upon the people of the United States, except we imitate the Spaniards, and make Cuba pay for the maintenance of an army and navy to keep it in subjection. In this case, there will be fresh discontent, and another motive on the part of the Cubans to hate the oppressor.

The great enemy of the tropics should, also, not be overlooked; for, except we raise a body of native troops, American soldiers will be constantly exposed to this scourge of the West Indies, yellow fever, and American homes will be rendered more and more desolate. But to raise native troops, it will be necessary to resort to conscription, for it cannot be expected that Cubans, forcibly subjected, will voluntarily bear arms in the service of the United States. Conscription will be justly regarded by the Cubans as another act of tyranny, for with all the oppression of Spain their sons have never been subjected to that. Thus with a conquered province on our hands, we will be kept constantly in hot water, except we resort to Weylerian methods, and draw upon ourselves the contempt of the civilized world, and excite horror in all that is good in humanity.

The question of humanity here presents itself. Will not the Cubans massacre the Spaniards? What reason

have we for thinking thus? There may have been instances of brutality in the present rebellion, as well as in the Ten Years War, but, on the whole, we have reason to believe that the Cubans have conducted themselves humanely. Whatever they are, the Cubans are not fools, and they know full well, as one of their leaders told me shortly before the present war began, that by such conduct they would be cutting their own throat. No, the Cuban Republic could not afford to treat their former enemies with cruelty. Besides, the American government would be justified in demanding a guarantee, that the lives and property of the Spaniards be respected. With the United States ready to punish any exhibition of barbarity, the Cubans would not dare, even were they so disposed, to transgress the laws of humanity in this regard.

What then shall we do with Cuba? Leave it free to choose its own government. If, having had a fair chance, without foreign interference or intrigue, it becomes evident that a stable government in the island is impossible, then there will be time enough for the United States to step forward, and draw order out of chaos. But by all means let us not impose upon the people of Cuba a yoke of our own fabrication, under the plea of giving a *stable government* to the island. If, immediately after the war, or, in course of time, the Cubans, free and independent, without the employment of external intimidation, request admission into the Union, we will welcome them with open arms; but, until that day come, let us do to our neighbors as we should wish them to do to us, under similar circumstances.

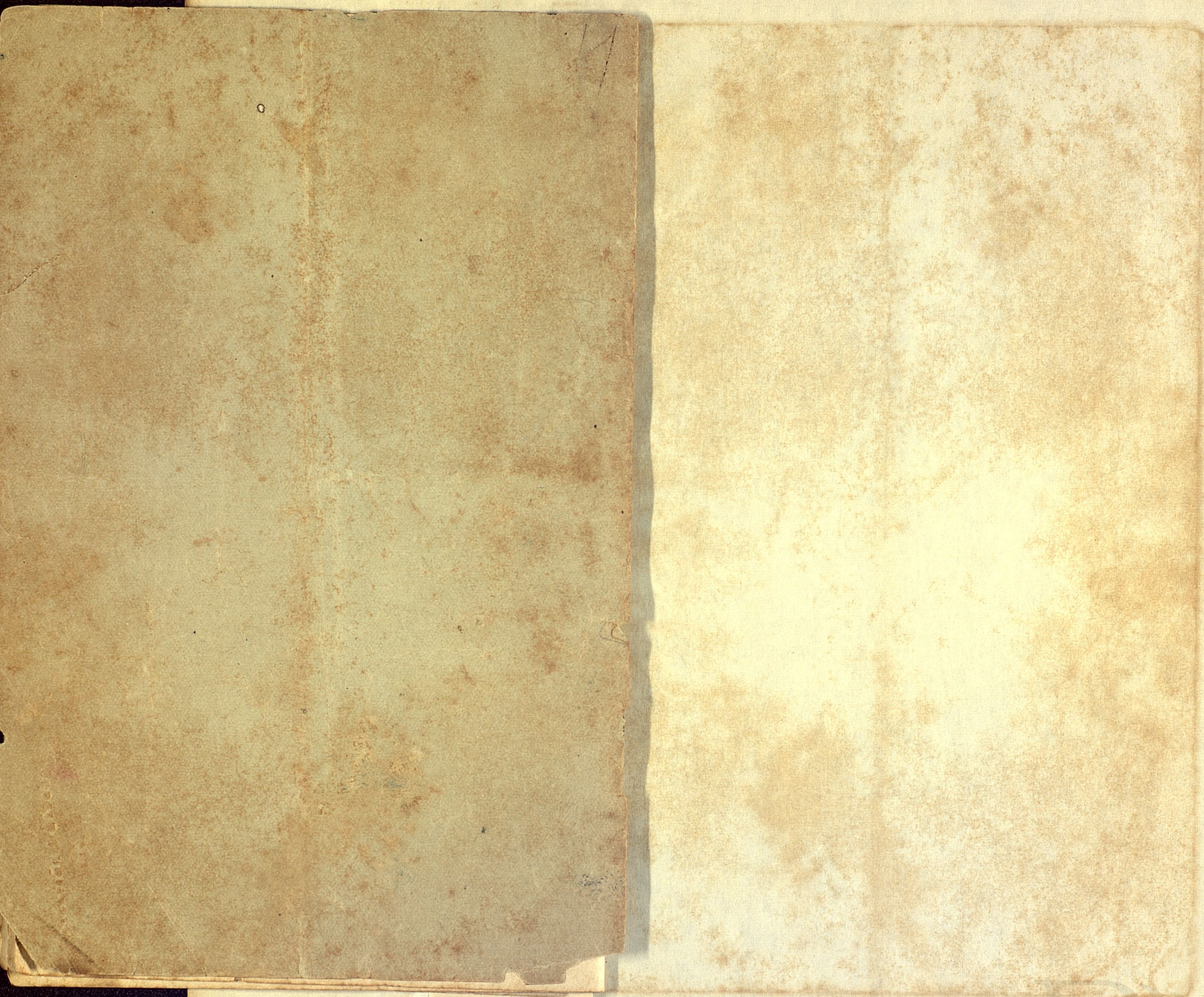
Let us bear well in mind, that nations have their

responsibilities, as well as individuals. The responsibilities of nations are shared by individuals, in proportion to their co-operation. We are all responsible to that Supreme Power, from whose might there is no escape, and who will render to each one according to his works, either in this world or the next. Nations, as such, cannot be punished in the next world, but, as sure as the shadow follows the body, retribution here below follows the iniquitous actions of nations. If we sow the wind, we will reap the whirlwind.



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