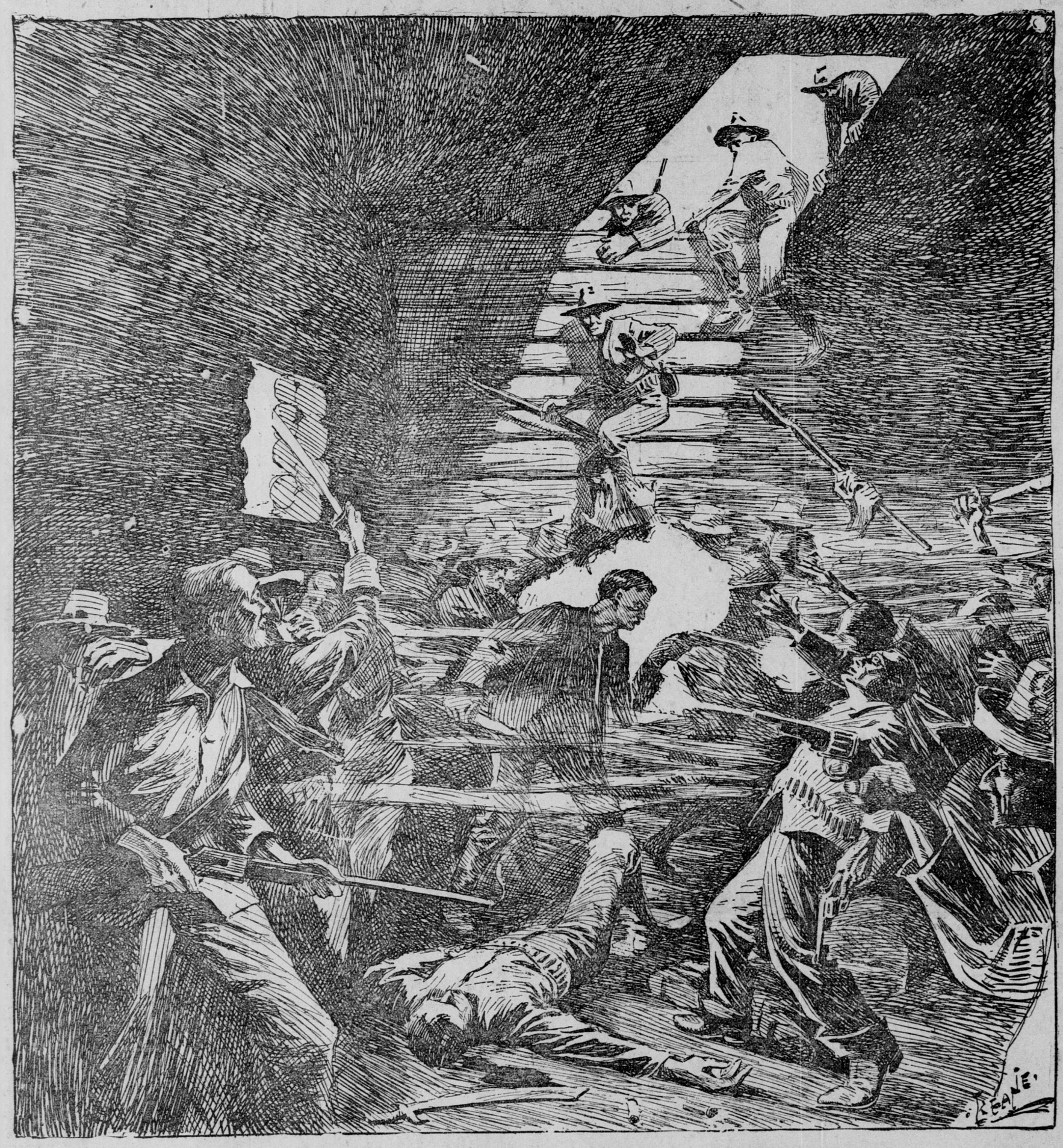
FIERCEST AND BLOODIEST HAND-TO-HAND FIGHT IN THE WAR.



LAST STAND OF THE SPANIARDS: THE DEADLY HAND-TO-HAND FIGHT IN THE BLOCKHOUSE ON SAN JUAN HILL.

Of all the fierce and bloody hand-to-hand conflicts in the war that of the regulars against the last of the fighting Spaniards in the blockhouse at El Caney was the most glorious. Nineteen men of the Ninth Infantry dropped through a hole in the roof and tackled thirty-five Spaniards who were shooting up at them. For twenty minutes it was give and take and no mercy asked. Stabbing, bayoneting and shooting raged and when it was all over there were fourteen hale Americans left and thirty-two dead Spaniards. The other three were taken prisoners.

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And this fierce battle was really the end of two days and a night of fighting.

On the morning of July 1 the entire American camp was awake before daylight. Men moved about in the mists of dawn busy with preparations for battle, for it was known that on this day the advance on Santiago was to be made.

All that day they fought in the tropic heat and when night came knew no rest for the Spaniards kept up a fitful fire through the darkness.

The next day they were at it again and by noon the Americans had silenced all batteries and captured all Spaniards except those in one position in and around the blockhouse.

The troops had moved to the foot of San Juan Hill.

Suddenly a little band of men are seen to rush forward.

The blockhouse on the hill shimmers in the tropical sunshine. The air is heavy and filled with gases of burned powder. The men are dead tired, worn and scarred with battle. But they are not daunted.

Up the hill they go with a wild rush. From the windows and loopholes of the blockhouse a deadly fire is poured into them. Men fall on all sides, but the little band is not broken. Now the top of the hill is reached. The deadly fire from within the blockhouse is kept up. The color sergeant waves his flag and rushes on. All the others follow. Faster and faster, straight for the doors of the blockhouse.

Our boys crowd all about, while the deadly balls from the Mausers play havoc in their ranks. Dead and wounded are on all sides. The air is thick and stifling.

A rush is made for the door, but it is unyielding. One man rushed up to the window and pushes his revolver inside. Screams and groans tell of the execution he does. Round and round the house the men rush, trying to force an entrance, while the Spaniards on the inside are slowly but surely thinning their ranks.

Something must be done or the little band will have to retreat. Desperation is upon them.

Suddenly a man is seen to place a log against the wall and in an instant is on the roof of the blockhouse. Others follow and begin to send the tiles flying in all directions. In a few moments a hole is made through the woodwork and volley after volley is fired upon the penned-in Spaniards.

At this time there are nineteen Americans on the roof; within are thirty-five Spaniards, but all hiding behind walls and barricades so they cannot be killed from the outside.

One man of the nineteen drops in, but in an instant is riddled with bullets and falls limp and dead. But this certain end does not daunt the others. The hole in the roof is made larger and then all the eighteen men drop in as fast as they can.

Then begins the hand-to-hand conflict without quarter. Not a man asks it; not a soldier expects it.

The heat is intense and the fumes of powder almost suffocating. Smoke and flying debris and dust make it almost a conflict in the dark.

But there was not time to think. It was blood from the first. Our boys were crowded into a corner beneath the hole in the roof. From their hiding places the Spaniards poked out their guns and shot wildly at them. Then came twenty minutes of hell. It was cut, slash and shoot. The floor was soaked with blood.

The end came at last—when there were no Spaniards left. Of the thirty-five thirty-two men killed and three taken prisoners. Our boys lost four killed and nearly all the others more or less wounded. But the fourteen survivors were still full of fight. But there was no more need of fighting for the battle of El Caney was over.

The regulars of the army have come in for unstinted and enthusiastic praise for their great work from all the correspondents of foreign papers and home papers are beginning to award them the mead due them. Rupert Hughes, who made a careful study of the soldiers of the United States and Spain ranks the Yankee as the supreme warrior. His observations on the Santiago campaign are particularly interesting in summing up:

"The indomitable magnificance of the Yankee soldier has lost none of its luster to-day. There at Santiago our forces made a landing without the loss of a life, invested the city and drove the Spanish through the jungle back to their labyrinth of trenches, and were busily clearing them out of these with a fatal persistence that did not lack the gentleness to plead with the enemy to avoid useless sacrifice to further battle.

"And another American regiment has gone up higher than the Balaklava or the Plevna heroes. For Captain Ducat of the Twenty-fourth Regulars led a glorious charge up a long hill at San Juan; he started with seventy-five men, and only twenty-two of them reached the blockhouse at the top. But though they lost fifty-seven killed, the important fact, the American fact, is that they captured what they went for. The percentage of loss in men killed was seventy-six, and if the number of wounded were known the percentage of casualties would be doubtless still greater.

"The most noteworthy quality, however, of the American soldier is what Rochefort called a particularly American trait, 'contempt of death.' It is true beyond cavil that the world has never known soldiers that hold or gain ground in the face of such high percentages of loss.

"The word 'decimation' is used for horrible slaughter, and the loss of one man in ten is certainly heavy. In many armies it is believed to justify retreat. But with us whole armies have suffered far greater losses. At Shiloh, Murfreesboro and Chickamauga the losses in killed and wounded ranged from 16 to 34 per cent. At Santiago General Shafter's whole force has lost over 10 per cent in killed and wounded.

"As for single bodies of men, the Light Brigade made a foolish charge bravely and won immortality, thanks to a great lyric; it suffered a loss of 37 per cent killed and wounded.

"In the civil war 262 men in the First Minnesota Volunteers charged a whole division at Gettysburg, and, leaving 215 dead and wounded behind, brought away the rebel colors. While the Light Brigade lost 37 per cent and accomplished nothing except to immortalize a blunder, the First Minnesota lost 82 per cent and gained a vitally important point. And as for useless bravery, what is the Balaklavan 37 per cent to the 75 per cent of the Maine Heavies in a seven-minute charge at Petersburg?

"Two German regiments lost respectively 46 and 49 per cent at Metz and Mars-la-Tour, and the Twenty-sixth Russian lost 75 per cent at Plevna.

"But there were fifteen Union and five Confederate regiments that lost over 50 per cent. The First Texas lost more than 82 per cent at Antietam, and in one company of the Twenty-sixth North Carolina only three men escaped out of eighty-seven, a loss of more than 96 per cent.

"This hideous carnage was the result, not of our fighting aliens, but our fighting each other. And the history of the world has no parallel to it. Why, the total casualties of all our wars, French and Indian, Revolutionary, 1812, Mexican and Indian, do not exceed the loss of Grant's army in the week ending May 12, 1865.

"Grant's killed and wounded in the Wilderness and Spottsylvania were five times Napoleon's loss at Marengo, more than his losses in all his Italian campaign, three times the loss inflicted on Wellington at Waterloo.

"The reason for this unheard-of slaughter? There is just one reason; the most intelligent, the bravest, the fiercest soldiery in the world's history was divided against itself. All that straight shooting, that battle-fury, that determination which does not falter when death is busy on all sides—all those qualities that make up the word 'Americanism' were turned inward at the nation's own heart."

TRIED TO SHOOT BISMARCK

In 1866 Bismarck was returning to his home from the palace, where he had been to see the King. While passing through the large street of Berlin called Unter den Linden, and quite near the place where Hoedel and Nobeling afterward attempted the life of Emperor William, he suddenly heard a shot fired close behind him. He turned sharply around and saw a young man, who, with a smoking revolver, was aiming at him. He strode up to the man at once and seized the arm that held the revolver, while with the other hand he grasped the throat of the would-be murderer. The latter, however, had had time to pass his weapon into his left hand, and now fired three shots in quick succession. Bismarck felt himself hurt in the shoulder and in one of his ribs, but he held his assailant fast until some soldiers came up and took hold of him.

Then Bismarck walked home at a brisk pace, and reached his own house long before anybody there could know what had happened. The Countess had some friends with her when her husband entered the drawing room. He greeted all in a friendly manner and begged to be excused for a few minutes, as he had some urgent business to attend to. He then walked into the next room where his desk stood and wrote to inform the King of the occurrence. Having attended to this duty he returned to the drawing room and made one of his little standing jokes, "Well, are we to have no dinner today? You always keep me waiting." He sat down and partook heartily of the dishes set before him, and it was only when the dinner was over that he walked up to the Countess, kissed her on the forehead, wished her in the old German way "Gesegnete Mahlzeit" (may your meal be blessed), and then added, "You see I am quite well." She looked up at him. "Well," he continued, "you must not be anxious, my child; somebody has fired at me, but it is nothing, as you see."

In 1850, when the tide of political passion still ran high, after the storm of the preceding years, he went one day into a Rathskeller in Berlin to take a glass of Grunthaler beer; a man near him, feeling himself supported by the presence of his friends, began to abuse a member of the royal family. Bismarck looked at him and said quietly, "If you have not left this room before I have finished my beer I'll break this glass over your head," which he proceeded to do, according to his promise, calmly paying for the broken glass afterward and walking leisurely away.

GENERAL FITZHUGH LEE ON CUBA'S POLITICAL FUTURE.

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., Aug. 24.—In the Florida camps and cities the war is no longer discussed. The question of supreme importance now concerns the plans for the reconstruction of Cuba. "What will be the political future of the island?" "How extensive is the military occupation to be?" and inquiries of similar import are the first to be put by every man who has returned from Cuba since the signing of the protocol.

There is probably no other man in the country who can speak with so much authority or so interestingly on the subject as Major General Fitzhugh Lee. Since the probability of his appointment as Military Governor of Cuba during the period of American occupation became a well defined certainty, General Lee has maintained a dignified silence, refusing to talk for publication. Before he was summoned to Washington, however, while still in command of the Seventh Army Corps in Jacksonville, he talked freely with the Sunday Call's correspondent in regard to the subject of Cuba's political future, as he was then able to do in an unofficial capacity. From the tone of these utterances there is no doubt that General Lee understands and is in complete accord with the views of the administration with regard to the treatment of the Cuban situation. Following is what General Lee said at the time:

THE rules and regulations prescribing the course to be followed on the island of Cuba, now that the war is over, will be decided upon by the Government of the United States, but only so far as to embrace a provisional control upon the part of the United States, pending the formation of a government which will have the approval and consent of a majority of the voters of the island, as decreed and set forth by their representatives assembled in legislative conference.

Without, of course, being able to foreshadow the policy of the Government of the United States, it may be said that during the transition state from Spanish to "home" rule, this Government will insist upon peace and order everywhere, upon full security to human life, and upon a strict maintenance of property rights of all classes and nationalities. In order to effect that purpose it will be necessary to have an armed occupation by the United States troops as a sort of constabulary, or, in other words, as a guarantee to the people who are now on the island and to those who may hereafter come that law and order and peace will be insisted upon in all portions of Cuba.

In taking this action the United States can scarcely be accused of an intention to interfere in any way, shape or form with the government of the island, which it is perfectly willing to leave to the people themselves, provided the guarantees as before stated are satisfactory.

Whether Cuba will ultimately become a republic, or later be merged into an American colony, and later still possibly into an American State, is a question for the future and for the people of the island to determine. By proving to the Spanish soldiers and residents who elect to remain there and to Spanish merchants and property holders and others that a safe and suitable government will be assured them, and that their rights will be respected in every particular as strictly as the rights of all other classes of citizens, it is to be hoped that their assistance may be obtained, with that of the conservative Cubans and Americans, in forming a government which will be sufficient for all purposes and which will remain as formed until those interested under forms of law shall proceed to change it.

The solution of the problem of establishing a fair and stable government in Cuba does not present any insurmountable difficulties. It is almost certain that the interests of the people from the United States and other countries who are in Cuba now or who settle there in the future will become too great to be exposed to revolutionary riots, even should there be found an element disposed to them. The Spaniards and the foreign-born inhabitants of the island will undoubtedly realize that it is to their advantage to work in harmony with the conservative and law abiding portion of the natives for the strict observance of the rights of all.

It is difficult to say how many American troops will be required for the occupation of Cuba during the period pending the organization of a stable and efficient local government. The number should be sufficient to inspire confidence in the complete preservation of order, so that capital and enterprise will not be afraid to invade the island and do their part in the work of its restoration to peaceful prosperity. The change will no doubt be gradual, the United States troops taking the place of the Spanish soldiery as fast as the latter are withdrawn from the various garrisons. As the mission of the Americans is to preserve order and not to wage war, it will scarcely be necessary to move them into Cuba in numbers equal to those of the retiring Spaniards. It may seem wise, however, to the Government of the United States to take advantage of this opportunity to give some of the volunteer soldiers who did not have the opportunity to participate in the active hostilities a chance to secure a somewhat more thorough military training than they have thus far obtained. This consideration may lead to the employment of a larger body of men than would otherwise be used, and to the taking of some of the newer volunteer regiments for this service.

It is not conceivable that the native inhabitants of Cuba will receive the troops of the United States in any unfriendly or hostile spirit. They must realize that it is to the arms of the United States that they owe their speedy deliverance from Spanish rule, that the mission of the United States in the island is not one of conquest, but of friendly concern for the establishment of order, and that it is to their advantage as well as to that of the other residents of the island to make the task as light as possible.

An encouraging factor in the problem of Cuba's political future is presented by the attitude of the provisional government, as explained by their representatives in this country, and by the emissary who has just come from their headquarters in Cuba. From this it appears that those who now control the administration of civil affairs in the island are willing and anxious to assist to the fullest extent of their power in bringing about the establishment of a suitable and satisfactory government. It seems to be no part of their plan to seize the reins of government or even to hold the authority that has already been intrusted to them, as was attempted in the case of some of the South American countries on the achievement of their independence. On the contrary, the terms under which the present civil administration exists and which it has declared its intention of respecting provide for the calling of an assembly representing as nearly as possible all classes in Cuba, and to turn over to this assembly their present authority and leave to it the task of constructing a new government.

This procedure, if carried out, will be the first step taken by the Cubans under the protection of the United States toward their own government as a free people. Its conduct will be, in a measure, a test of the ability of the Cuban people to control and direct their own affairs. To the American who has watched the successful operation of our own constitution it will doubtless be an encouraging indication that the political leaders of the Cuban people seem disposed to accept its principles and general outline for their own government.

The greatest need of Cuba at the present time is peace; peace in which to bind up and heal the wounds inflicted by a severe and devastating war; peace in which to develop her rich resources and to gain a start on the high road to prosperity; peace guaranteed by every safeguard which her own people and the people who have finally achieved her independence can provide.

FIRED A SALUTE FOR JOE PIPER

SPINNING yarns invites competition around the soldiers' campfire. Here is a good story told by a lieutenant who had seen service among the marines in his early life.

"When I joined the navy I was assigned to duty on an old bark-rigged ship attached to the North Atlantic squadron. Her guns were muzzle-loaders and smooth-bores, but she had a fine assortment of old salts in her crew, and my brightest recollections of that service are of the stories told by some of these old fellows, to which we kids used to listen in open-mouthed wonder. We didn't always believe the tales of course but we were too discreet to say so. One man did laugh disdainfully at one old salt's yarn and he was in sick bay for a week afterward.

"Old Harry Sharp, chief bos'n's mate, who had been with Hull on the Constitution, told me one story of a little event that took place at Nagasaki, Japan, when we weren't as friendly with the British as we are now.

"The ship in which Sharp was serving in 1870 was assigned to service in Asiatic waters. She was commanded by Captain Joseph Piper, who had as much love for a Britisher as Satan has for holy water. One afternoon the ship was swinging at anchor with 30 fathoms of chain out when the lookout reported a British man-of-war coming into the harbor flying the admiral's pennant. That meant a salute. Gun crews were piped and the salute was fired, the Britisher replying gun for gun. Twenty-one guns were fired, and then, to the surprise of everybody, Captain Piper turned to his quarter gunner and said, 'Fire six more guns.' Astonishment was depicted on every line of the gunner's face, but an order was gospel to him, and bang! bang! in quick succession went six more guns. When the Englishman had reached her anchorage and while the admiral was on the American with his flag lieutenant the younger officer said to Captain Piper: 'Pardon me, captain, but we have been two weeks coming from the South Sea Islands, and has there been any change in the international code of salutes in that time?'

"'Well,' said Piper, 'I fired 21 guns for the queen of England, five for the United States and one for Joe Piper, by God.'

"The Englishmen left the ship, and later the matter was investigated through the United States Minister at Tokio, and every mother's son of the American crew swore by all that was good and holy that only 21 guns had been fired. But the upshot of it all was that Piper was relieved from the command and sent home."

LIQUID AIR FOR BLASTING

THE most interesting application of liquid air which has hitherto been tried on a commercial scale is to make an explosive by mixing it with carbon. So said Professor Ewing in a paper just read before the London Society of Arts. When liquid air, enriched by the evaporation of a large part of its nitrogen, is mixed with powdered charcoal, it forms an explosive comparable in powder to dynamite, and which, like dynamite, can be made to go off violently by using a detonator.

To make the explosive the liquid, containing about 40 or 50 per cent of oxygen, is poured on fragments of wood charcoal, two to four cubic millimeters in size. These are kept from scattering under the ebullition of the liquid by mixing them into a sort of sponge with about one-third of their weight of cotton wool. The liquid which remains is, of course, richer in oxygen than that which is originally applied, and when the mixture is allowed to stand long, all the liquid evaporates and the explosive power disappears. It must, therefore, be mixed at or near the place where it is to be used. But the cotton wadding, impregnated with coarse charcoal powder, can take up more than enough of the liquid to supply oxygen for its complete combustion, and when put quickly into thick insulating cases of paper, it retains its full explosive power for five or ten minutes. After an interval, which ranges from fifteen to thirty minutes, according to the size of the cartridge, all explosive power is lost.

Experiments were made with this explosive on the parade ground at Munich, and a practical test on a large scale has gone on for some months in a coal mine at Pensburg, not far from Munich, and are claimed to have given very satisfactory results.

The chief advantage of the explosive is its cheapness, the cost being simply that of the power used in liquefying the air. Even the fact that after a short time the mixture ceases to be capable of exploding may be urged as a recommendation in one respect, for if a detonator hangs fire there is no danger of the charge going off accidentally some time after the explosion is due; nor is there any danger of its being purloined or used for criminal purposes.

It is questionable, however, if such an unstable explosive can ever be found either convenient or economical, except, perhaps, in large quarries where a large amount of blasting is to be done at one place.