

1929
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Wash. D.C.

January 30, 1923.

Mr. Angel Rivero,
San Juan, P.R.

My dear friend:-

I just came from an hour-and-a-half's conversation with General Miles, and want to write you this letter while the subject is fresh in my memory.

General McIntyre had given me a letter of introduction to General Miles, and I went to see the old General at his residence, the Gordon, and found him in very good spirits and condition for his age, considering he is over 80. I delivered the letter and then handed him over your book. He read your dedication, which he praised very highly, and then I read the prologue of your book in English for him. General Miles was more than pleased, and he said that it was very kind of you to express such chivalrous sentiments both of himself personally and of the conduct of the Spanish-American war in Porto Rico. He looked over the entire book with a good deal of interest, and expressed his admiration for the way in which the printing has been done and the excellent presentation of the whole book.

I had to listen to a good deal of his reminiscing, and I am very sorry that I have neither the time nor the ability to write to you all that he told me with regard to his campaign both in Cuba and Porto Rico. He did say that when he was about to commence the campaign at Porto Rico, he was questioned from Washington by cable to state where he expected to land, and he replied, following an interview with Admiral Samson, that he would land with three thousand three hundred troops at Fajardo. After he sent his message, it occurred to him that the enemy would be in possession of same very soon, either through the cable office itself or by some interception of the home

government, and as it were, Washington gave out the news to the papers that General Miles had sailed for Fajardo with 3,300 men, but he then fooled everybody and decided, after due consultation with Captain Whitney, to land at Guanica, which he did. He then continued his story of many incidents which have no interest whatever.

Another interesting feature of our conversation was when he told me that before the two navies had clashed in Santiago de Cuba, he had received instructions to proceed with 75,000 men and capture Havana. It happened that that same evening he and his wife were dining with the President and Mrs. McKinley, and after dinner the President and himself got to talking about the order of capture of Havana. General Miles told the President that he had received the order from the Secretary of War, but after due consideration he would answer the next day that in all the United States there was not sufficient ammunition to keep an army of 75,000 men fighting for over half an hour, and, therefore, it was useless to think of commencing a campaign under the circumstances. Furthermore, he thought that under the circumstances, it was foolish to tackle with 75,000 men an army of 125,000, who were in Havana and its vicinity, with 150,000 more scattered on the rest of the Island. That he thought that the best thing that could be done was to have the Navy fight it out with the Spanish Navy of Admiral Servera and then, if the Americans were victorious, to proceed with the troops, who by then would have enough ammunition to cope with the Spaniards. McKinley saw the logic of this reasoning and both he and the Secretary of War acted accordingly, and the result we all know.

He told me also of the surrender of the Army of Santiago de Cuba and how the commanding General, to whom he had made the offer, asked him for 48 hours in order to consult General Blanco and the home office, and how pleased he (Miles) was when, at the expiration of the time granted, the offer was accepted. Then it was that he proceeded to Porto Rico.

We then spoke about the blowing up of the Maine, and I at this point read him the paragraphs in your book referring to this matter, as well as those contained in your letter to me, and I told him about the printing of a new edition in English and how you expected him to write the prologue of the book, touching upon the subject of the blowing up of the Maine. General Miles promised me to write you a letter, which he will send to me, for transmittal, in which he will thank you for your kindness and will then take up the subject of the blowing up of the Maine. He said that he, in common with other military and naval men of those days, was of the opinion that the explosion was caused by a certain kind of inferior quality of powder, which was stored in the Maine, as well as in other places in the United States, such as arsenals and a few ships. That after the Maine was blown up, many similar happenings occurred in different places and it was found to be due to the kind of powder and the same was taken away from storage so as to avoid any more explosions. I hope he will tell you that in his letter, as he promised.

General Miles told me that the one man of those days who was more than others responsible for the war with Spain was Roosevelt, then sub-Secretary of the Navy. He claims that the only member of the Cabinet who was in favor of war was Alger, then Secretary of War. He says that Sherman, who was then Secretary of State, told him that in his opinion there was no need of any war with Spain, that all the differences would be arranged if the government could make the Spanish government see its blunder in sending a man like General Weyler to Cuba and further inducing the Spanish government to grant the Cubans a more liberal form of government, and that he (Sherman) for one would be leaving the Cabinet as soon as war was declared. Miles says that this was the dominant sentiment in the Cabinet and that he knows that President McKinley was opposed to war. He claims that one day he happened to be in the office of the Secretary of War, Alger, much before the blowing up of the Maine, when Mr. Roosevelt came in and addressing himself to Alger, asked him "how are we getting along with Spain, are we going to fight?" Alger replied, that everything was coming our way and Roosevelt then said "Thank Good for that".

Mr. Angel Rivero

-4-

Jan. 30, 1923.

I don't think there is anything more that I can remember about my conversation with General Miles that would be interesting, although, as I said above, we spoke for more than one-hour-and-a-half. At the end of our talk, he told me to tell you how very pleased he was and grateful to you for your courtesy and that he believed that you were doing a wonderful thing and wished you all success and that he believed that your noble task would find easy roads to travel in this country, where, after so many years have elapsed, there is no hatred left against Spain and it will be very easy to achieve what you desire.

Let me tell you that General McIntyre, with whom I left your book for more than a week, is very much interested and enthusiastic about it, for he knows many of the incidents and is acquainted with the people of whom you write. I have promised to send him a copy of your book.

Now, my dear friend, I hope that I have done all that you asked and expected of me, but if I have not complied fully with your desires, please let me know, and I will try again. The only thing you can blame me for is in writing in English, but this is not my fault as my stenographer cannot write Spanish, and I have promised myself not to sit down to a machine if I can help it, and you will not blame me.

With kindest personal regards, believe me to remain your sincere friend,

RHT

P.S. On the boat coming up from Porto Rico I met a gentleman who gave me his card, which I will enclose in this letter, who saw your book and told me that he was very much interested in it, and in case you decided to publish an English edition he would be interested in the printing of it, for that is his business. He told me had just gotten the contract to print the Blue Book of Porto Rico. I then told him what had happened to you with Heath and Company and he told me that that firm are editors, but not printers, and he promised he would write either me or you on this subject when the time came.

RHT. dd

Wash. D.C.

February 15, 1923.

Mr. Angel Rivero,
San Juan, P. R.

Dear friend:-

On this, the 25th anniversary of the blowing up of the Maine in the harbor of Havana, I had the pleasure of receiving a visit from General Miles. This was in response to a telephone call from me a couple of days ago, reminding him of a letter which he had promised to write you. And it was very good for this old General, over eighty years of age, to pay me this visit on this very cold day.

When I spoke to him on the phone, he told me that he had delayed writing you the letter because he had requested from different sources the necessary information to be able to write you regarding the kind of powder that was stored at the time in the magazine of the Maine, as well as in other magazines and places, and that evidently on account of the many years that have elapsed, and so many people having disappeared who could give direct information on the subject, he was unable to verify the exact data which he had in his mind. He said that he remembers distinctly that in 1898, on account of the strained relations between the two governments, it was considered at the time an ill-advised step, -- the sending of the Maine to visit the port of Havana, but that the order was given and that the night before the battleship had sailed, and while they were giving a farewell dance on board, they were at the same time taking in the supply of ammunition and powder; that the ordnance officer, whose name he could not remember, was considered a careless man, and had not given special and personal attention to the storing of the said war materials; that this same officer had been connected, one way or the other, with other unfortunate occurrences in connection with explosions, and that a little after the blowing up of the Maine this man died, it having been