A CAPTAIN UNAFRAID

PART IX.

NARRATED BY CAPTAIN JOHN O'BRIEN TO HORACE SMITH

To my mind the real story of how the Maine happened to be sent to Havana in January, 1898, is contained in the unprinted chapters of the war, for, aside from its greater interest, it illustrates the events which apparently trivial accidents sometimes serve great purposes and clear up famous puzzles of history. Capt. John Randolph Caldwell, Cuban correspondent for "The New York Herald," had been despatched to Havana. Some weeks before he reached the capital, the famous battle which probably never would have been fought, and which, according to the official story, was precipitated by the destruction of the Maine in Spanish waters, was not yet considered, and the intervention of the United States to assure the independence of Cuba would have been nothing more than a dream.

To get his message past the censor, Capt. Caldwell obtained an ingenious crypxonym by which all important happenings were transmitted in the moment of danger to the Department, and which included in super-longitudes and cryptograms of 300, 400, and 500 words the whole story of certain events which were not in the newspapers. He had made one of several hundred arbitrary messages which covered every important development that occurred in Cuba.

Early in January, 1898, there were serious rumblings in Havana, pointing to the forthcoming inauguration of the 10th Congress of the Cuban party, and the American Legation was in the most excitable state. An agent of the government, a Mr. Loring, had been property, and all the insurgents were in a state of alarm. The Spanish residents of Cuba had no sympathy with Blanco’s policy, which they considered to be an evidence of weakness. The government, however, was not able to throw the blame on the insurgents, but the disapproval of Blanco’s policy was expressed in a series of disturbances which began in Havana about the Spanish section of the population, and even among the Americans.

The Americans living in Cuba became thoroughly alarmed, and Capt. Caldwell called upon the Legation to have a warship sent to Havana to protect them. The plan had been made a dozen years before, but it was not of any great interest in this last instance. Everyone knew a warship would be despatched to Havana to make the momentous crisis, but he declined to make the General Legation’s request, as he had assurances from General Blanco who, it was understood, had offered to make an immediate landing. At the solicitation of Spain no United States naval vessel had visited Cuban waters during the war, and General Lee knew that to send a warship to Havana at that time would be like waving a red flag at an angry bull.

WHEN the riots were in progress, Jose Congosto, the new Secretary General of Cuba, had made a trip to Havana to try to bring to order the disturbances. It was no easy task, for he had hisamping those of General Lee on the third floor of the hotel. The two states were separated by old-fashioned divan doors, which were bolted and latched, and by Congosto’s pride in his own ability. It is easy to say that he kept his poises, so the Americans in General Lee was overheard.

The next morning Capt. General Lee, asserted, that the disturbances were the work of Spaniards who were opposed to the policy of the government, and urged that the United States should back this policy, as, according to his belief, it promised peace. He told of some anti-American things that had been heard in the hotel, and said they came from irresponsible persons and no attention should be paid to them. He was afraid, he said, that he would descend to the city a force of regular troops which would quickly suppress the disorders. The only danger was that an American would be murdered, which might be sent down to compound matters. This, he said, in the day’s wire which was sent to the Secretary of State from Washington, with which element that really serious results would follow, and he begged that such a possibility be prevented.

Capt. Lee, I was not sent to control the situation without difficulty, and I pledge you not only to make this order up to him, but to have the head of a single American will be injured. But I implore you not to allow a warship to be sent here.

"I leave everything in General Lee, and you need fear no American interference. No warship will be sent here unless I ask for it, and at present I have no such intention. Congosto departed greatly relieved.

To my mind the General Lee’s promise not only to put down the riots, but to protect Americans and their interests. The truth is that speaking of the Maine and Americans, and no one knew this better than General Lee; for it was in considerable de-

The Maine—on the Way to Her Doom.

gree due to his forcefulness that this was true. Despite their fear, they were actually more secure, with regard to both their lives and property, than any other for-

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