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attle Call for Cuba

Frank Putnam





MAR 30 1898

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A Battle Call for Cuba

Frank Putnam



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To Jean Girton

WRITER'S NOTE.

Cuba bleeds. Four hundred thousand non-combatants starved, outraged, given to a slow death by Spain. Two hundred thousand more perishing by like means. This in progress three years at our very door. Before God and man, this nation assumed authority to protect the peoples of the New World from the tyranny of the Old. The hearts of this people have been true to that traditon. Our leaders have betrayed us. Grover Cleveland and William McKinley knew what deeds were done in Cuba. They knew it officially from our servants, the consuls. That knowledge they withheld from their employers, the people. They sacrificed this nation's dearest treasure, her fair fame, to a scheme of local prosperity.

Upon Grover Cleveland and William McKinley must rest the eternal infamy of this betrayal.

It is not yet too late to free Cuba. It is forever too late to do our duty by the six hundred thousand dead and dying victims of Spain's ferocity and our captains' cowardice.

Chicago, March 20, 1898.

I

CUBA

Serenely calm, serenely cold, our nation sits with folded hands,
And sees the savage wolf of old with children's blood stain Cuba's
sands.

Across yon slender arm of sea murder and rape and ruin reign;
To our deaf ears the victims' plea, mournful and awful, comes in
vain

My country! from whose dear-loved dust the Spirit of Freedom
sought the sky,

Fit us to guard the sacred trust our fathers gave or battling die!

The lash, the goad, the despot's chains—Time's dreadful vengeance
—must befall

The coward land that counts its gains when Freedom's hunted
children call.

Thou Freedom! arm the patriot's hand; confuse, strike down the
dastard knave;

Lead thou thine own appointed band where deathless glory waits
the brave!



II

HOW LONG ?

Still quakes the isle 'neath Murder's tread; still Hate is free to
work its way

Upon the bowed, defenseless head of Cuba; still the tyrant's sway,

Unchecked, unawed, relentless runs; still Hunger robs the
patriot's fold;

Still we, fair Freedom's favored sons, bid Honor bow to lust of gold.

My brothers! Hear you, heed you not the wail winds waft across
the sea?

Or have you all too soon forgot the cause Time trusts to you and me?

Inglorious peace! The coward's shame shall blot and brand us
through the years—

Foul blot and brand upon the fame our fathers bought with blood
and tears!

Eternal God! to whom men fly beneath the lash of hideous wrong,
How long shall Cuba's children cry for Thy relief?—how long?—
how long?



III

THE CUBAN PATRIOT

Since slave first slew his slavish fears and dared his master's will
defy,
The smug have damned his cause with sneers, with inuendo and
with lie.

What time our fathers, face to face, with England's hired butchers
fought,
They too were named "a mongrel race, too little up from nothing brought."

That reptile sneer is sped to-day at him whose breast for Cuba
bleeds;

I call him kinsman and I say he proves his manhood by his deeds!

I care not whether white or black or mingled blood his arteries fills,
Who tireless treads the thorny track that mounts to Freedom's
sacred hills.

When Time the wounds of war has healed and gray Oblivion hides
his grave.

His greatness then shall be revealed where Love laments the
nameless brave.



IV

McKINLEY

In bank and mart, in shop and store, where mills' gigantic pulses
beat,

On hill and plain, by sea and shore, wherever men and brothers
meet,

With speech that burns the lips it leaves their broken idol freemen
name;

His course the nation's hope deceives and gives us to eternal shame.

A mighty people, proud and free, await their captain's battle call;
Their captain bends the coward knee; his nerveless hand the sword
lets fall.

The heroic deeds that reft our chains arouse in him no answering fire;
Trembling, he schemes for sordid gains and sees a race in rags
expire.

Accurst forever th' incarnate Fear that dared not check the tyrant's
hate:

Our children's children's ears shall hear Time's fearful cry: "Too
late! Too late!"



V

MASON

A man is risen among the cold and bloodless crew in senate hall;
His voice is like the voice of old, when freemen burst Oppression's
thrall.

Such speech is his as Henry hurled defiant at the idiot king—
A speech that rang around the world: forever may its echoes ring!

Too long, too long, the island's green ran red beneath the Spaniard's
blade;

Too long the groveling and the mean the Great Republic's council
swayed.

Then William Ernest Mason came, electric, Western, stalwart, free:
His utterance was a living flame that thrilled the land from sea
to sea.

His war cry, like a lightning stroke, leapt vivid through the sleeping sky:

That hour a people's conscience woke; that hour saw Spain's dominion die!



VI

GOMEZ

To that high plane where Love enshrines his name who gave this
nation life,

Unerring Time's decree assigns the hero of a newer strife.

His fight is that undying fight, whose martyr roll is ages long—
The ceaseless battle waged by Right against the sway of crue
Wrong.

His arms are few, his purse is lean, the woods his templed cities are;
His road is long, Death lurks between, but at the end shines Freedom's star.

Of dauntless courage, splendid skill, unwearied purpose, noble mind,
His final years are Freedom's still; youth's roseate dreams are left behind.

One dear desire is his alone—whose fruit pray God he live to see—
The hated arms of Spain o'erthrown, the land of his affection free!



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