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FOR



# AMERICAN PRINCIPLES

—AND—

# AMERICAN HONOR

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AN ADDRESS

—BY—

Hon. CARL SCHURZ

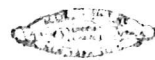
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BY HON. CARL SCHURZ.

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I have long been, and am now, firmly convinced that, if the facts and tendencies of the imperialistic policy carried on by our government were well inquired into and fully understood by the American people, and then submitted to a popular vote on their own merits for approval, that policy would be indignantly spurned by the intelligence as well as the moral sense of an overwhelming majority of our citizenship. Its defenders, well aware of this, therefore, make a special effort to mislead that intelligence and moral sense by the pretence that their opponents, the anti-imperialists, pusillanimously refuse to meet the responsibilities devolved upon us by the late Spanish war, and that those responsibilities can be discharged only by a virtual continuance of the present policy.

This I emphatically deny. Let us see what our true responsibilities are, and how they should be met. To this end we must first remember what has happened. In April, 1898, we went to war with Spain for the sole purpose, as Congress proclaimed to the world by a solemn resolution, of rescuing from oppressive misrule a population struggling for freedom and independence. Congress not only positively disclaimed any intention to annex to this republic the territory inhabited by that population, but declared that the people of Cuba "are, and of right ought to be, free and independent"—in other words, that Spain, by her oppressive misrule, had not only morally but actually forfeited her sovereignty over that country. This was the affirmation of a principle.

Then came Dewey's victory in Manila Bay. The case of the Philippine Islands was in all essential respects

identical with that of Cuba. Their people had also been struggling against Spanish oppression, like the Cubans, and if the Cubans, according to the declaration of Congress, "were, and of right ought to be, free and independent," so surely were the Philippine Islanders; and if Spain had, according to our proclaimed doctrine, morally and actually forfeited her sovereignty over Cuba, so she had forfeited her sovereignty over the Philippines.

But the claims of the Philippine Islanders as to their independence was in fact even much stronger than that of the Cubans. Dewey invited and brought the chief leader of the Philippine insurgents to the scene of action. With Dewey's aid and under his eyes that chief organized a Filipino army of 30,000 men; he proclaimed the Philippine republic, hoisted the flag of that republic on his armed vessels, and set up a civil government which, according to the imperialist Barrett's testimony, compared in some of its important parts favorably with that of Japan. The Filipino army then, while our land forces were gradually arriving, quickly cleared the interior of the country of the Spaniards, taking many thousands of them prisoners, and so hemmed in on the land side the Spanish garrison of Manila that it could neither receive reinforcements nor escape into the interior. In other words, the Filipinos acted most efficiently as our allies, crippling the Spanish power as we could not have crippled it with our force then at hand; and they were practically recognized as our allies even to the extent of having turned over to them Spanish prisoners taken in a common enterprise.

And while so profiting from their action as our allies, we—I do not say officially promised them their independence—but we did what morally amounted to the same thing; we permitted them to believe that in fighting on the same side with us they were fighting for their own independence; we permitted them to believe this until we had troops enough on the field to make us masters of the situation.

What happened then? We took Manila, summoning

the Spanish commander to surrender on the very ground, among others, that he was hemmed in on the land side by the Filipinos. And then we proceeded to conclude a peace treaty with Spain. That treaty was to decide the fate of the Philippine islanders. The Filipinos, our allies, whom we had permitted to believe that they were fighting for their independence, asked to be heard. We slammed the door in their faces. And behind their backs we extorted, or bought, as you like, from Spain, the common enemy, the sovereignty over our allies—the same sovereignty which in the Cuba precedent we had affirmed to have been forfeited by Spain and rightfully to belong to the people of the country. And now we recognized that sovereignty as still possessed by Spain, the common enemy, although we knew that Spain could not deliver any part of it, having not only morally but actually lost it; and we performed this amazing act of treacherous self-stultification, in order to make our late allies our subjects, because we coveted their land.

Thus we deliberately turned our loudly vaunted war of liberation and humanity into a shameless war of conquest, which, to adopt President McKinley's own phrase, was in the extreme sense an act of "criminal aggression"—for there was no element of criminality lacking. We did not stop with the diplomatic betrayal. Weeks before that treaty with Spain acquired any color of legal force by the assent of the Senate, President McKinley issued an order to our army—the notorious "benevolent assimilation order"—assuming that our sovereignty over the Philippines did actually exist, and directing the army to enforce it all over the archipelago—as flagrant a usurpation of power as was ever committed. That order was of so inflammatory a character, so clear a declaration of war against the Filipinos demanding freedom and independence, that Gen. Otis, foreseeing with alarm the consequence it would bring on, tried to suppress it. But, through a subordinate, it became known to the Filipinos, and they understood it as what it was—a declaration of war against them. Then the conflict wantonly provoked



by the President's order came. We destroyed by force the government the Filipinos had set up—a very respectable government, as all competent witnesses testify—a far better government than the insurgent Cubans ever had. We carried death and desolation into the towns and villages of our late allies. We killed many, many thousands of them, and still go on killing them at the rate of 1,000 to 1,500 a month for no other reason than that, as we call it, they refuse to submit to our sovereignty; but as it may in truth be called, for no other reason than that our former allies object to being sold and brought like a herd of cattle, and that they still demand that liberty and independence to which, by the principle we ourselves had affirmed in the case of Cuba, they are rightfully entitled.

Some time ago in a public speech I challenged the defenders of our administration to point out in the whole history of the world a single act of perfidy ever committed by any republican government more infamous than that which has thus been committed by our government against our Filipino allies. That challenge has remained unanswered to this day. I now renew it. I call upon them all—from the highest to the lowest—members of the Cabinet, and Senators and Representatives who tell us that the honor and the best interests of the country demand us to approve and sustain such things; and the bishops to whom the moral aspects of the case should be of some consequence; and the laymen who listen to them—I call upon them all to show me in all the annals of mankind a similar instance of more knavish treachery. Let them answer me if they can. And then let them tell me what the responsibilities are growing from such conduct.

Is there any doubt about the facts? They are history. There has indeed been some quibbling as to whether the Filipinos were really our allies. That our government did not give them the title of allies, is true enough. But did we not use their services as those of allies so long as their services were of any advantage to us? Did we

not practically treat them as allies during that time, even to the extent of recognizing them as entitled to the charge of prisoners taken from the common enemy by the aid of our arms? And did not our using them as our allies, and our profiting by their services as our allies, impose upon us the moral obligation to respect them as our allies? An unscrupulous pettifogger may dispute that, but a man of honor will not. Let the imperialists answer. There has also been some quibbling as to our having promised them independence. That we did not in formal official declaration promise them independence, is true enough. But did we not, while we were using them as allies, and profiting from their service as allies, know that they believed they were fighting for their own independence, and that they would not have fought on the same side with us against the common enemy if they had believed otherwise? And did we ever during that period honestly tell them that they were mistaken? And as we did not tell them this while using them as allies, was not that morally as good and binding a promise as if it had been written down, signed, sealed, and delivered? Again, an unscrupulous pettifogger may quibble about this, but an honest man, a gentleman, will not. Let the imperialists answer.

What, then, is our responsibility growing out of this state of facts? I may be told that this is an extreme and unpractical view of the case; that we must deal with things as they are; that we have got the Philippines now; that the only thing to be considered now is what to do with them; and that all that preceded our getting them is a mere "academic question," useless to discuss. An academic question, indeed! It may be a very inconvenient question to the imperialists, but that does not make it merely academic. It must be discussed to exhibit the moral aspect of the case. Let us look at it. In the first place, we have not got the Philippines yet. We are still fighting and killing people, our late allies, to get control of them. All we have got is, as I have shown, not a moral and rightful, but merely a technical,

title—such a title as an unscrupulous corporation-wrecker may, by legal quirks and technicalities and treachery and force, get to the property of the stockholders. But suppose we had won actual possession of the Philippines. Would that alter the moral nature of the question? If we have them we are, in view of the way we got them, in possession of stolen goods—goods obtained by fraud, treachery, and brutal force. We know the goods are stolen goods, for we have stolen them ourselves. When we remind the imperialists of that fact, the answer is substantially this: "Spare us the useless discussion of that academic question. Suppose the goods are stolen. Then the possession of those goods devolves upon us new responsibilities which in the first place require us to keep the stolen goods."

Is this really the first demand of the new responsibility of the great American republic? I have always believed that the republic of Washington and Lincoln should and would always recognize it as the first and highest responsibility to give to the world an example of good faith and perfect justice in the recognition of the rights of others, be they ever so humble. Unless I am altogether wrong in this belief, our true responsibilities in the case of the Philippines demands not that we regard it as a mere academic question how we got them, or that we should keep the stolen goods under the sanctimonious pretence of benevolent purposes, but that, as an honest and righteous people, we should restore them to their rightful owners, and to secure, so far as it is in our power, those owners in the possession of them.

A most startling attempt to justify the retention of the Philippines and the subjugation of their inhabitants has recently been made by Bishop Potter, when he said in a public speech on this matter: "If my son should come to me and say he proposed to marry a young creole woman with seven children, I would call him a great ass. But if he had come to me and said he had already contracted such a marriage, I should still try to maintain intimate relations with him. What we have done in the

Philippines has established just such a relation as that, and it would be a source of national mortification if we gave up our responsibilities because we find them difficult."

With due respect, be it said, no illustration would be more unhappy. It might fit if the Creole woman with her seven children had run after our son entreating him to marry her, or if she had at least willingly consented to his proposal of marriage. But what is the truth? The poor woman is desperately struggling against our son's treacherous embrace, and our son is busy discharging his "responsibility" to the children by killing them at a rapid rate because they resist the shameful subjugation of their mother.

Not very long ago the Bishop, keenly appreciating the moral and political tendencies of our imperialistic policy, told his flock that the main question was not what we would do with the "fruits of our victories," but rather what they would do with us. One of the first things they have already done with us, it seems, is so to benumb our moral sense and to confuse our moral principles as to make us capable of cheating our own consciences by putting aside the question of right or wrong in what we have done as a mere "academic question" no longer to be discussed, because it is done, and of readily accepting that which exists, however wrongful, degrading, and dangerous, simply because it exists. I would humbly suggest that this is a rather serious thing for teachers of religion and morality to contemplate. They might earnestly consider whether, when we have done wrong, it is not our Christian duty to right the wrong to the utmost of our power; that this is inexorably demanded by our first responsibility as a nation, and that it would, in the Bishop's words, indeed, be a "source of national mortification if we gave up that responsibility because we find it difficult." And this responsibility the imperialists have either not the will or not the courage to meet face to face.

How is that responsibility to be met? No sensible man

can doubt that we should have had no war with the Filipinos, just as we have had no war with the Cubans, if we had, after defeating the Spaniards, simply applied to the Philippine Islands the same principles which we have applied to Cuba—that is, if we had frankly and sincerely at the start recognized the Philippine Islanders as entitled to their freedom and independence, and then gone about in good faith to aid them in setting up an independent government, and let the world know that we would not permit any other power to interfere with them, which would have been quite sufficient for their protection. Nor will any sensible person doubt that if we, even to-day, after all that has happened, proclaimed it to be our sincere and fixed intention with regard to them to treat the Philippine Islanders on the same basis of right as that on which we have promised to treat the Cubans, the abominable slaughter would cease at once, and although much natural distrust would have to be overcome, friendly relations with the islanders could be established, with substantially the same desirable results as we might have had more cheaply by honorable and statesmanlike conduct at the beginning? Who has the audacity to deny this? Is there any sound reason why this most righteous and rational policy should not be adopted?

By some it is said that the establishment of an independent government in the Philippines would at once be followed by bloody anarchy, that those people would forthwith begin to cut one another's throats, and that to prevent this we had to destroy the native government, which at the time was in a considerable portion of the country in peaceful operation, and that incidentally we had therefore to cut their throats ourselves. A more ghastly mockery than this objection can hardly be imagined. In the first place, this prediction of bloody anarchy is a mere guess, without any proof. But even if it were well founded, will any imperialist have the hardihood to pretend that those people would in their internal broils have killed half as many, or one-tenth as many, as we have killed and are killing to subjugate them?



Can we who have been and are slaughtering them by the thousands with no end in prospect—can we presume to refuse to them independence, on the ground that there may be disorders that may cost some of them their lives? Can hypocrisy be more impudent and disgusting?

It is also said that there are great difficulties in the way of their having an independent government, differences of tribes and the like, and that, therefore, they cannot be left to govern themselves. Admiral Dewey, emphatically and repeatedly, from his knowledge of them, pronounced them far more capable of self-government than the Cubans. But if the Cubans are less capable than the Philippine Islanders, must we therefore give up our efforts to secure independent government to that island.

No doubt, there are difficulties in the way; but I venture to say that at present the greatest of those difficulties is in ourselves. There are two ways to approach the solution of such a problem. One is to take the problem in hand with a sincere desire that it be solved. Then many of the difficulties which at first sight appeared most formidable will be found not to be insurmountable at all to an honest, intelligent and persevering effort to overcome them. The other way to approach the problem is with no sincere desire to solve it, or even with the desire that it not be solved. Then difficulties are diligently looked for and magnified until they appear so great that the task of overcoming them seems hopeless.

Here is the trouble with our imperialists. Determined to make the Philippine Islanders our subjects, they find no end of reasons to show that those people cannot be their own masters. Nothing would be easier than to convince any one desiring to be so convinced that the Cubans, or the Mexicans, or the Chilians are incapable of maintaining decent independent governments, and that therefore we must rule them. Why, it might even be shown that the people of New York City, or of Philadelphia, or of Chicago, have proved themselves unable to



govern themselves, and that the conduct of their municipal governments must therefore be entrusted to somebody else better fitted.

But let us once resolve with perfect good faith to aid the Philippine islanders in constructing an independent government suitable to their conditions, and let us have men in power who are honestly determined to accomplish that end, and the difficulties will rapidly diminish. Of course, the Philippines will not have an ideal republican government. We have not, for that matter. But let us honestly try together, and they can get an independent government as good as that of Mexico, and better than those of most of the South American republics. They would probably have such a government now had we not perfidiously drowned it in blood.

The fine pretence that we must subjugate them in order to teach and secure to them *honest* government is perhaps not as proudly insisted upon to-day as it was a month ago. It is not too much to say that the recent disclosures in Cuba have advertised our disgrace in that respect to the whole world more glaringly than it had ever been advertised before. Nor can we flatter ourselves with the belief that the Cuban instance is an isolated one. Some time ago Gen. Otis issued an order against evil practices in our administration of things in the Philippines which clearly indicated that our service there was honeycombed with corruption. Neither is this surprising. My official experience in the conduct of Indian affairs as Secretary of the Interior taught me some pertinent lessons. Why is it so especially difficult to prevent corrupt practices in the Indian agencies? For two reasons: First, because these officers are comparatively far removed from the observation of the government and of the public. And, secondly, because a good many of our people have very little regard for the rights and interests of so-called inferior races, and consider cheating and robbing such races as a privilege of the superior being. To such men the Philippine Islander is only a "nigger," and the Cuban and the

Porto Rican but little better; and finding themselves in the transmarine dependencies much farther away from governmental and public observation than even an Indian agent is, they will always be apt to regard these dependencies as fair fields for plundering operations. The idea that our colonial service will become a seminary of political virtue is, therefore, a highly grotesque one. Most of the rascalities practised there we shall, on account of the distance, never know. But in all probability enough will become known to produce an incalculably mischievous effect upon the natives and to expose this republic to the ridicule and contempt of mankind.

It would require the strictest kind of civil service system, covering all positions, and a most rigorous enforcement of it, to counteract such tendencies and temptations. How much of such a system we may expect from an administration which, in spite of the solemn pledges and protestations of its party and of the President himself, has so much demoralized the system which already exists by opening all sorts of facilities in it to the invasion of spoils politics, I leave you to judge.

On the whole, that pharisaical cant which was used to envelope this wicked and wanton war of "criminal aggression" against the Filipinos in the guise of humanitarian purpose, has very much subsided. It could not stand against the facts in the case. The declaration of the administration leader in the House of Representatives that we want to make all the money we can out of the Philippines, and the equally brutal appeals of greed put forth by the Denbys and Beveridges, are by this time generally taken to reveal the true spirit of the enterprise.

Now, I am myself very much in favor of the largest possible expansion of our commerce by legitimate means. But must we to that end repudiate the high principles, ideals and traditions of the great American republic, and commit the villany of betraying our allies, and slaughter untold thousands of innocent people who only stand up for the principles to which we ourselves owe our national existence?

I have time and again publicly challenged the imperialists to deny the fact that we might have had in the Philippines for the mere asking all the coaling stations and commercial facilities, and all the civilizing agencies, and all the so-called "footholds" for our Asiatic trade we may reasonably desire, if we had treated the Philippine Islanders justly as to their right to independence. No imperialist, to my knowledge, has ever denied this. I ask them now whether there can be any doubt that we can have all these accommodations and facilities and privileges to-day without striking a further blow, if we stop the present iniquitous slaughter by honestly and effectually recognizing their right to independence. Who doubts this? Who, then, will deny that even from the legitimate commercial point of view our treatment of the Philippines is as uncalled for and wanton as it is cruel, treacherous and disgraceful, and that we can still correct the colossal blunder we have made by doing justice as an honest nation if we only resolve to do so?

Indeed, there may be some persons expecting to make more money out of the Philippines if we subjugate them at the cost of ever so much blood and devastation, and then rule them by a substantially despotic sway. But who are they? Not the people at large, especially not the laboring masses, but a favored few. And here I invite the special attention of our conservative fellow citizens who are so much alarmed at the possibility that the political struggles in this democracy—a democracy working through universal suffrage—may develop into a struggle of the poor against the rich. Have they considered how apt this kind of imperialistic policy will be to incite and hasten such a development? What was it that so powerfully aroused the masses of the American people about the law denying the Porto Ricans free trade with the United States? It was the sudden revelation of what imperialism really is—the arbitrary rule of one people over another; it was the breach of promise of freedom and prosperity we had given the Porto Ricans, who from the depth of their misery and despair vainly appealed to

our sense of justice; it was the spectacle of the President and the Secretary of War abandoning for some reason their emphatic declarations of "plain duty." It was, indeed, all this, but it was something more. It was the fact that this Porto Rican business appeared like the lifting of a curtain behind which the people saw the figures of a group of men trying to control, and to a large extent actually controlling, our government to enrich themselves by manipulating our colonial policy. What impression do you think that such a scene must produce upon the popular mind at a time when "plutocracy" is a word in everybody's mouth?

Far more than any other kind of government does a democracy working through universal suffrage need the conservative influence of high principles and ideals of right and justice, and of popular beliefs founded upon such principles and ideals; for when they disappear the evil passions of covetousness and of selfish ambition take their place and become the only motive power of action, there remaining nothing higher to appeal to. And that is the direction in which the imperialistic policy is driving us. Nothing can be more dangerous in a democracy like ours than the prevalence of the notion that might is right—a notion involving the worst kind of anarchy, above and below. And that principle is preached and proclaimed every day by this imperialistic policy. Is it not high time that the American people, sobered from the debauching intoxication of victory, should rise up again to a just appreciation of the *true* responsibility of this great republic? That true responsibility is its responsibility for the maintenance of the great principles upon which it was founded. It is its responsibility for the great lesson it is to administer to mankind that true democracy means not only the assertion of one's own rights, but also a just respect for the rights of others, and that this democracy of ours is able to resist the temptations which might seduce it from its fidelity to that high obligation. It is its responsibility for the fulfilment of the great promise expressed by Abraham Lincoln on the

battlefield of Gettysburg, that "government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Who will deny that this responsibility—our true, our paramount responsibility—imperatively demands the abandonment of a policy to subjugate as subjects to our arbitrary rule another people aspiring to liberty and independence? That there are difficulties in the way of that abandonment is true. But those difficulties, as I have shown, do not consist in their setting up an independent government with our aid and assistance, and in our protecting them against foreign interference. The main difficulty—the only real difficulty—is in ourselves. It is the difficulty of baffling the greed of some persons who want to rule that country for exploitation; it is the difficulty of curbing our own vanity and false pride, which would persevere in an ambitious course however wicked, because we have once entered upon it. These difficulties of meeting our true responsibility is great; but to quote Bishop Potter's words again, it would indeed "be a source of national mortification if we gave up our responsibility because we find it difficult." But if we do overcome those difficulties and fulfil the duty imposed upon us by our true responsibility, the American people will stand before the world in an attitude of moral greatness never surpassed in the annals of mankind; for we shall have shown that we cannot only take cities and conquer hostile armies, but that, which is infinitely more glorious, we can, when we have done wrong, conquer ourselves.

I have been told on very good authority that many of the leading Republicans are heartily sick of the whole Philippine business, and that they sincerely wish we had never taken a foot of ground on the Philipinnes and were now rid of the whole concern. I have good reason for believing it. But why have they not the moral courage frankly and publicly to say so? Why do they not in the open light of day appeal to the President, and to Congress, and to their party to give up that accursed "crimi-



nal aggression," and to do that which is just and right and would be most honorable to the American people? Is their moral sense so enslaved by a wretched party spirit that it must humbly cower under a dictation which they cannot but detest and be ashamed of? Surely they could do no better service to themselves and to their country than by emancipating their consciences like men.

You will have observed that in reciting the acts of our government I said: "*We* have done this, and *we* have done that." I used that form of expression for the sake of brevity. In justice to the American people it should be corrected. No, it was not the American people that instigated or even sanctioned by their assent the betrayal of American principles in the attempt to subjugate a foreign population and in ruthlessly destroying them. Those things have indeed been done in the name of the American people; but it may justly be said that the history of Machiavelian politics shows few instances of a more unscrupulous "confidence game" than that of which the American people have in this case been made the victim by means of an artful censorship of news, of sanctimonious cant disguising evil deeds, and of other equally unscrupulous contrivances. What the American people really think, what understanding and appreciation they really have of their responsibilities, they will soon have the first opportunity for declaring; and as I began by saying, and now repeat, I am firmly convinced, that if the question were submitted to them on a reasonably clear issue, an overwhelming majority of the American people would show themselves eager to demonstrate their moral soundness by washing their hands of this bloody iniquity, and by thus making it manifest to all the world that they are an honest and just people, and that the republic of Washington and Lincoln still lives.

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