

The United States Commission  
for the evacuation of Cuba

Hotel Trocha  
Vedado (Havana)

Nov. 5. 98

Dear Gonzales.

You naturally feel an interest in everything in this Island, and I therefore send you copies of letters for your own perusal, of course, not to be made public.

Every day that passes now ~~more~~ without taking some steps to do something for the Cubans increases the difficulties and complication - The United States troops will not be able to stand this climate - but the Cubans can. They speak the language, know the country, and I have no doubt could be easily managed, but from some

unaccountable<sup>2</sup> reason, a prejudice  
against them appears to have taken  
possession of the minds of some  
of those entrusted with authority  
that I cannot understand -

The Spaniards are the most re-  
markable people I have ever  
had anything to do with, and if  
my views could have prevailed  
they would have been brought  
to terms some weeks ago. As it  
has not been thought advisa-  
ble to send troops to the Island  
war ships could have come, and  
~~with~~ four or five of them in  
Havanna harbor, would have enabled  
us, to come to terms with them  
weeks ago. They are making  
a desperate struggle both  
here and in Paris for money -  
Bankrupt, torn into factions  
at home. Spain presents a pita-  
ble spectacle, and they are  
just stupid enough to add

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to the difficulties of their situation by unreasonable demands. If the Government concludes to hold the entire Philippino group as I hope ~~the~~ will, it might be just as well to pay for all except the Ladrones, as we did with Mexico, under the Gadsden Treaty of Guadalupe-Idalgo. Perhaps that may be the solution after all -

We have sent the Spanish Com. here a note in the form of an ultimatum, that they must complete the evacuation by Jan'y 1<sup>st</sup> but this is not to prejudice the right of the U.S. Government to take possession at an earlier date - I do

not know<sup>4</sup> what the President's intentions are, but we ought to take possession of the Custom Houses. not later than the 1<sup>st</sup> of Decr.

The ordeal thro which we have had to pass here, has been the most terrible I have ever experienced. The charges at El-Caney and San Juan were child's play compared with the suspense and anxiety at the most dangerous season of the year in this climate. and it has required a much stiffer upper lip to keep down a panic, than any I ever had in battle,

Col Williams Depot Quartermaster is reported this morning with a mild case of yellow fever at the Hotel Pasajje in Havana. Fowler has recovered, and I understand is going home - Every case <sup>except Williams</sup> so far has

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been brought on by the impudence  
of the victim. It is reported that  
Col Waring indulged quite freely  
in Champagne dinners and high  
living, so that when he went in  
the presence of the disease his  
system was ripe for it -

I don't know <sup>how</sup> it is in the country  
but it is as certain as fate, that  
no American can drink alcohol  
ic liquors in this city with im-  
punity - It is poison, and when  
our troops come, if they indulge  
as they do at home, they are bound  
to pay the penalty -

So far I have kept fairly well,  
but even with the greatest cau-  
tion, I have been troubled with  
bowel affections occasionally.  
If you can communicate with

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any of the Second Regt. say to them for me, that when they get here. to avoid as they would ratsbane, all alcoholic liquors, fruit, and over much meat, to keep their persons clean by frequent bathing with sponge, towel, or otherwise if they cant reach streams, - to keep their bowels open, heads clear, and a little quinine occasionally - Small doses of Calomel now and then is very beneficial. And above all things if they expect to escape yellow fever even in winter, they must keep out of all houses in the cities, except those known to be free from infection. It lurks in stores, junk shops, public and private houses, where least expected - and it is in such places it is usually contracted.

The water with which the city is supplied, from the vents springs

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some fifteen or twenty miles away  
 is as good water as I have ever  
 seen for drinking and bathing  
 purposes. It is as clear as crystal  
 and seems to be perfectly pure -  
 I see no reason why it may not  
 be freely used with impunity.  
 Havana itself is a veritable cess  
 pool of filth and dirt, and <sup>explains</sup> speaks  
 of its health possibilities, that  
 the inhabitants are not decimated  
 with plague, much less fevers.  
 The Buzzards appear to be about  
 the only scavengers and sanitarians.  
 Only day before yesterday riding  
 on horseback, through some of the  
 less frequented <sup>streets</sup>, I passed two  
 dead horses in the gutters, in an  
 advanced stage of decay, the  
 Buzzards doing what the people

were too large or worthless to do,  
gradually removing them -  
we leave the street cleaning con-  
tractor refuses to act, because  
the authorities owe him now  
\$40,000, and will not pay. Between  
the two the people are in a bad way.  
And if something is not done by  
somebody pretty soon, conditions  
will grow worse. The Spanish  
officials on the eve of their  
departure, are not going to spend  
any money for the benefit of  
Cuba, and nobody else has any  
power or authority to do so.  
Whatever else may be said of  
the Spaniards, their soldiers are  
certainly the best behaved, and  
most orderly I have ever known.  
For the two months we have been  
here, seeing hundreds daily  
passing the streets, and in gar-  
risons. I have <sup>not</sup> seen a drunk  
man among them, or heard them

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speak above an ordinary tone of voice - They seem to be very poorly cared for, as to subsistence, pay and transportation.

Of the 115,000 reported to us, about 20,000 are sick, and they all have a depressed, subdued appearance.

Now they are all to be transported to Spain, in the present bankrupt condition of the Spanish treasury is a very serious problem - but they will be required to complete the evacuation by July 1<sup>st</sup>.

What has become of your brother Ambrose? Before leaving Washington I went with him to the Secy of War for assignment and he got his orders for Santiago.

but I have not heard from  
him since.

I get the State regularly twice  
a week, and keep very well  
posted on home affairs.

As soon as we come to a final  
agreement with the Spanish  
Crown I am going to make  
a tour of the Island.

Very truly yrs  
M.C. Butler

I did not intend to bore you  
with so long a letter, but  
my pen got away with  
me and you are the victim.

M.C. D

MS A. 9. 2. 11  
1885  
Butler