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EDITORIALS

Our prediction of last week that the Philippine Archipelago would probably be an important battle ground of the war between Spain and the United States, has been verified. No report from Commodore Dewey is needed to prove the completeness and importance of his victory there.

Its completeness has for days been conceded in substance by the Spanish, and its importance is obvious. The moral effect of this battle of Manila Bay, in exposing the hollowness of the pretensions which the Spanish have been making to frighten the "Yankee pigs," to keep up their own courage, and to secure European aid

in the war, is not the greatest of its advantages. With the destruction of the Spanish fleet at Manila, which has swept the western ocean of Spanish war vessels, our Pacific coast is secured against bombardment, and, except for the remote possibility of privateers, our merchantmen may sail the waters of the Pacific with the same sense of safety they might have upon Lake Michigan. In the Pacific, the war is at an end.

But the exposure of the kind of enemy with which we have to deal is too important to be passed by in silence.

When the word first went forth that Commodore Dewey's fleet was about to move upon Manila, the Spanish authorities gave out a hifalutin description of the fighting power of their fleet and of the mines and forts by which Manila was protected. They announced that their fleet would go out of the harbor to meet ours, and confidently predicted that ours could under no circumstances get within gun shot of Manila and would most likely go to the bottom.

Then we were told that the Spanish fleet was actually hunting for Dewey to give him battle upon the ocean. That is certainly what it should have done. With a large bay like that of Manila to retire into, accessible only through a narrow channel guarded by forts on both sides and by forts on an island in the middle, and well mined besides, a far inferior fleet to that of the Spanish could have held a superior fleet to Dewey's at bay. It had only to watch from without the approach of the enemy, fighting him while retreating from him, until he came within range of the guns of the forts, and then if need be until he could be lifted out of the water by the mines. But the Spanish fleet retreated first and fought afterwards.

The defense of Manila was so badly managed that the American fleet passed through the fortified channel and into the bay before the Spaniards seemed to know anything about its presence. From that moment there was no hope for the Spaniards, and they would have been wise and humane had they sunk their ships at once and saved the lives of their men without a fight. Such blundering as theirs, or worse than blundering, can hardly be atoned for by charging the Yankees with "sneaking" into the harbor at night—as if that wasn't an excellent way in time of war for an enemy to get into a harbor supposed to be planted with torpedoes—and then bragging about their sacrifice of brave men in a hopeless battle. Brag, bluster, blunder and collapse are the mildest words with which to characterize the conduct of the Spanish at Manila.

We suspect, too, that when the war is over it will be apparent that brag, bluster, blunder and collapse, are the mildest words with which to characterize Spain's whole conduct in the war. Before it began, the United States was warned of the great power of the Spanish navy. But when it began, the United States was asked why it did not take a nation of its own size, why it wanted to turn its powerful navy against poor, weak Spain. Before the war began, the United States was menaced on the Atlantic by a fleet of battleships and torpedo boats that we were assured would leave nothing of the American navy afloat if hostilities once opened. But when it did begin, the Spanish fleet that had been so threatening hugged a Portuguese anchorage as long as Portugal would permit, and then disappeared. Where it is as this is written, no one outside the confidence of Spain knows. Of course it may turn

up yet, most unexpectedly, and give the American navy a terrible pounding; but we venture the prediction that before that happens we shall hear as much of the weakness of this fleet as we are hearing of the weakness of the one which Commodore Dewey's men sunk in Manila Bay. There is good reason now to believe that the Spanish government is bankrupt in more than pocket, that it exists throughout upon false pretenses.

The history of the insurrection in Cuba goes to confirm this. For three years with some 200,000 troops from first to last, absolutely at its command, and with unlimited opportunities for obtaining supplies, Spain has waged a losing war against an insurrectionary army which Spanish officials themselves say has never exceeded 60,000 men all told, and which has not only had little opportunity for obtaining war supplies, but has been prevented by the United States from availing itself of the opportunities that offered. If the Spanish government were not rotten to the core that insurrection, resisted mercilessly and barbarously by the Spanish as it was, would have been crushed long ago. The Spanish government is evidently one which deserves to sink, as it apparently is sinking, out of sight. With the Philippines virtually in the hands of a foreign power, with Havana effectively blockaded, with Puerto Rico in a tumult and ready to drop under other control or into freedom, with her Pacific fleet sunk and her strongest remaining fleet playing "button-'e-button" on the Atlantic, with her rebels in Cuba whom she has fought savagely for a generation about to secure their long coveted independence, and with her people at home angered by the hypocrisy of their rulers, angered to the verge of rebellion—in these circumstances Spain cannot much longer sustain the arrogant pretensions with which she met the advances of the United States in behalf of outraged Cuba.

What we say of Spain refers to her rulers and not to the masses of her

people. In the battle of Manila Bay the common sailors, and for that matter the officers, showed no lack of bravery and devotion. For those who died there, and for those at home who mourn them, we should have no feeling but that of brotherly sympathy—the same sympathy that we extend to the Cubans. But the common people of Spain are ruled and abused by a class which regards itself as born to govern and them as born to obey. The circumstances attending the Spanish defeat in Manila Bay illustrate the whole situation. That defeat, due to no shortcoming on the part of the Spanish people, is chargeable to the incapacity if not the corruption of officials who got their places through no personal merit but through inherited "pulls." So the hypocrisy, the hollowness, the cruelty of Spain is the hypocrisy, the hollowness and the cruelty of a governing class. This war is not in reality a struggle between Americans and Spaniards—even though the nature of war pits them one against another in deadly conflict—but between the principle of autocratic government, for which Spain stands, and that of self-government, which, however inadequately and sometimes hypocritically, is represented by the United States. Let us, then, cherish no animosity toward the misgoverned people of the unhappy nation with which we are at war.

An ominous suggestion, apparently inspired, is now and then dropped at Washington, to the effect that it may be necessary to send a fleet across the Atlantic and attack Spain. There can be no necessity, nor excuse for anything of the kind, unless the Spaniards insist upon fighting wantonly after the purpose of the war shall have been determined.

The purpose of this war is to free Cuba by driving the Spaniards off the island and allowing the inhabitants to establish their own government. It has no other justification. Consequently the point of attack for us is Cuba, and not Spain. It is our busi-

ness to drive the Spaniards out of Cuba, and when we shall have done that, to offer to make peace. Should Spain still insist upon fighting, should she then, refusing to make peace, continue to prey upon our commerce, it would be our part to advise the European powers to make her behave. If they did not respond favorably, then and not till then would it be incumbent upon us to carry the war into European waters. Then and not till then should we be justified in so doing.

But this contingency will never arise. When we shall have driven the Spanish out of Cuba they will be willing to make peace; or if they are not willing, Europe will be ready to compel them to. The talk about carrying the war into other parts of Spanish territory than Cuba—except on the Pacific, where aggressiveness on our part is incidental—has its origin in the American jingo spirit which is as inimical to liberty as are the Spanish in Cuba. This war must not be allowed to take on even an air of invasion and conquest.

It is naturally irritating to Americans to hear the Spaniards wildly asserting that our motive in going to war is to grab more territory, when every intelligent American knows that our real motive is the freedom of Cuba, and believes that we have no purpose and would tolerate no attempt to subject that island to our authority. But we should bear in mind that in making their accusation the Spaniards are not wholly at fault. We have officially given them cause for suspicion in facts that would have been unexplainable upon any other hypothesis if congress had not made a distinct disclaimer. Had we only the president's message to fall back upon, we should have difficulty in convincing the world that annexation is not our purpose. Though in that message it is said that "forcible annexation" cannot be thought of, there is nothing to indicate that some other method of making Cuba subject to our control might not be adopted;