

*New York Journal*  
September 7, 1898

*Stephen Crane's Views of Havana*

HAVANA, Sept. 4, via KEY WEST, Sept. 6.—Two years ago the Spanish merchants of Havana, filled with patriotic ardor, began a collection for the purchase of a warship for the Spanish navy. A short time ago the money contributed had reached the comfortable sum of \$800,000, which was given into the keeping of the Captain-General.

But now ensues one of the most strenuous and painful cases of bargain ruing the world has yet seen. The Spanish patriots want that money back, and they want it badly. They say with a deal of dry humor that they have discovered that a Spanish warship is not a good investment. But does the Captain-General loosen his grip? Oh, no! He declares that the money was donated to the Spanish navy, and it shall go to the Spanish navy. The Havana merchants now see themselves in the position of people who got over-patriotic at the wrong time. Their only solace now is to burst into tears.

An \$800,000 joke is almost too expensive to incite laughter, especially in the man who pays, but the victims manage a feeble grin. They tried to withdraw the money in order to build with it a great Spanish clubhouse and in this way draw closer together the Spaniards who are to stay here and make them thus present a firmer front to the social and commercial attacks of the Cubans and the coming American. Even this fine idea did not catch the Captain-General.

About half a dozen unarmed men landed yesterday from the relief ship in the uniform of the United States regular army. They strolled around the streets, entered the cafes; did as they pleased. Of course, they attracted a great deal of attention. They were very tall men, giants to the people of Havana, and beside that they were American soldiers. I asked them how they had been treated and they answered: "Oh, we've been used all right. We mind our own business and nobody says anything to us." When all has been said and done, the recent war was a most curious war.

The newsboys went screaming through the streets yesterday selling a translation of the Constitution of the United States. They flew here and there with it excitedly, as if it were a war extra. So much so that two or three Americans were misled into buying it, expecting to read of the fall of New York.

The bones of Columbus still agitate a few minds. Today the papers announce joyfully that the Duke of Veragua, lineal descendant of the discoverer, has decided that he and he alone shall have the bones.

The harbor is growing lively with shipping. The time to make 2,000 percent on the sale of provisions in Havana has already past. Merchants who think otherwise are likely to incur serious loss. In three days the whole situation has changed. The wharves are now piled high, and there is even more still in the bay. When Blanco decided to refuse Red Cross relief it was pretty certain that Havana had plenty of food.

If the army is making any preparations for embarking for Spain it is not apparent. Officially there is barely a mention of any such possibility. The great function of the soldier in Havana is to have nothing whatever to do. The Spanish officer has still less to do than the soldier. A brigade of volunteers is, however, aligned for inspection every morning in the Prado. It is a weird scene. However, the hotel fronts the Prado and when the band plays it is worth even the endurance of an inspection of volunteers.

The authorities, by the way, have always spoken highly of these volunteers and valued them, but in action they certainly would make a sorry exhibition. Doubtless the standard of bravery would be creditable but they don't know the business of soldiering at all. On drill they make a most unsoldierly appearance, and it is doubtful if one of them is sure whether he is carrying a gun or a handspike. But the Mauser is a fine weapon.