

El Yara (June 19, 1886): "From Tampa"

I would fail to fulfill my sacred duty as a Cuban and an honest man if I did not share some thoughts with those sensible people who are eagerly following the establishment of this colony. These reflections of mine, if taken into account by those who should assist us in this laborious enterprise, may contribute to the development of noble ideas that will lay the foundation for the well-being and prosperous future and of this newly formed community, which has not yet had time to acquire a distinct character due to the special circumstances we are going through.

When we review the history of America, the first thing that catches our eye, as a starting point to establish a comparison with the peoples of war-torn Europe, is the founding of the United States of the North. Who were the men who planted the beautiful banner of civilization on Plymouth Rock? The severity of their customs; the strength of their souls inspired by the noblest and most generous sentiments; the deep understanding of human passion which those athletes of morality and virtue resisted with great determination; the generous detachment from the hatreds that belittle men, and the sublime selflessness of dedicating oneself to the service of humanity with no other aspiration than the fulfillment of duty in spreading the eternal principles of truth and justice.

I do not intend to compare the founders of Ibor City with those extraordinary men who change the course of the history of nations. However, I could not help but point out this historical fact so that the parallel I propose to draw between Spain and America contains the powerful appeal of being true.

Who were the founders of the Spanish colonies on the American continent? Instead of bringing us the Bible, they brought a sword that soon was stained with innocent blood. They were driven by a thirst for gold, envy among their ranks, and the most repugnant vengeance in all their many acts of vandalism against the poor indigenous tribes they encountered. Under the shield of Christianity symbolized by the cross of redemption that masked their lowly actions, they, through the power of their words, mercilessly decimated all the peoples they sought to conquer, committing the most punishable acts that tyranny and despotism can entail.

If, unfortunately, we know so many of these truths, and yet aim to build an untainted society here that honors the Cuban people, we must begin by not introducing vice and immorality, the shaky pedestals of misery and degradation. Why don't we strive instead to establish a school for our children? Why don't we build a church where morality and truth are preached to us? Why don't we reject any germ of corruption that begins to develop? Only with this behavior can we reach our ideals. Since we cannot, for now, dedicate ourselves to such a noble enterprise in our homeland, let us begin our work in the shadow of this great nation so that we may one day bring something worthy back to our beloved Cuba, and the world will see that, although we were educated under the odious tutelage of Spain, we have been able to bind ourselves to the eternal doctrines of morality and achieve a feat worthy of posterity.