

A DEFENCE OF GENERAL FUNSTON.

BY MARK TWAIN.

I.

February 22. To-day is the great Birth-Day; and it was observed so widely in the earth that differences in longitudinal time made curious work with some of the cabled testimonies of respect paid to the sublime name which the date calls up in our minds; for, although they were all being offered at about the same hour, several of them were yesterday to us and several were to-morrow.

There was a reference in the papers to General Funston.

Neither Washington nor Funston was made in a day. It took a long time to accumulate the materials. In each case, the basis or moral skeleton of the man was inborn disposition—a thing which is as permanent as rock, and never undergoes any actual and genuine change between cradle and grave. In each case, the moral flesh-bulk (that is to say, *character*) was built and shaped around the skeleton by training, association and circumstances. Given a crooked-disposition skeleton, no power nor influence in the earth can mould a permanently shapely form around it. Training, association and circumstances can truss it, and brace it, and prop it, and strain it, and crowd it into an artificial shapeliness that can endure till the end, deceiving not only the spectator but the man himself. But there is nothing there but artificiality, and if at any time the props and trusses chance to be removed, the form will collapse into its proper and native crookedness.

Washington did not create the basic skeleton (disposition) that was in him; it was born there, and the merit of its perfection was not his. It—and only It—moved him to seek and prefer associations which were contenting to Its spirit; to welcome influences which pleased It and satisfied It; and to repel or be indif-

ferent to influences which were not to Its taste. Moment by moment, day by day, year by year, It stood in the ceaseless sweep of minute influences, automatically arresting and retaining, like a magnet of mercury, all dust-particles of gold that came; and, with automatic scorn, repelling certain dust-particles of trash; and, with as automatic indifference, allowing the rest of that base kinship to go by unnoticed. It had a native affinity for all influences fine and great, and gave them hospitable welcome and permanent shelter; It had a native aversion for all influences mean and gross, and passed them on. It chose Its subject's associations for him; It chose his influences for him; It chose his ideals for him; and, out of Its patiently gathered materials, It built and shaped his golden character.

And we give *him* the credit!

We give God credit and praise for being all-wise and all-powerful; but that is quite another matter. No exterior contributor, no birth-commission, conferred these possessions upon Him; He did it *Himself*. But Washington's disposition was *born* in him, he did not create It; It was the architect of his character; his character was the architect of his achievements. If my disposition had been born in him and his in me, the map of history would have been changed. It is our privilege to admire the splendor of the sun, and the beauty of the rainbow, and the character of Washington; but there is no occasion to praise them for these qualities, since *they* did not create the source whence the qualities sprang—the sun's fires, the light upon the falling rain-drops, the sane and clean and benignant disposition born to the Father of his Country.

Is there a value, then, in having a Washington, since we may not concede to him *personal merit* for what he was and did? Necessarily, there is a value—a value so immense that it defies all estimate. Acceptable outside influences were the materials out of which Washington's native disposition built Washington's character and fitted him for his achievements. Suppose there hadn't *been* any. Suppose he had been born and reared in a pirate's cave; the acceptable materials would have been lacking, the Washingtonian character would not have been built.

Fortunately for us and for the world and for future ages and peoples, he was born where the sort of influences and associations acceptable to his disposition were findable; where the build-

ing of his character at its best and highest was possible, and where the accident of favorable circumstances was present to furnish it a conspicuous field for the full exercise and exhibition of its commanding capabilities.

Did Washington's great value, then, lie in what he accomplished? No; that was only a minor value. His major value, his vast value, his immeasurable value to us and to the world and to future ages and peoples, lies in his permanent and sky-reaching conspicuousness as an *influence*.

We are *made*, brick by brick, of *influences*, patiently built up around the framework of our born dispositions. It is the sole process of construction; there is no other. Every man and woman and child is an influence; a daily and hourly influence which never ceases from work, and never ceases from affecting for good or evil the characters about it—some contributing gold-dust, some contributing trash-dust, but in either case helping on the building, and never stopping to rest. The shoemaker helps to build his two-dozen associates; the pickpocket helps to build his four dozen associates; the village clergyman helps to build his five hundred associates; the renowned bank-robber's name and fame help to build his hundred associates and three thousand persons whom he has never seen; the renowned philanthropist's labors and the benevolent millionaire's gifts move to kindly works and generous outlays of money a hundred thousand persons whom they have never met and never will meet; and to the building of the character of every individual thus moved these movers have added a brick. The unprincipled newspaper adds a baseness to a million decaying character-fabrics every day; the high-principled newspaper adds a daily betterment to the character-fabric of another million. The swiftly-enriched wrecker and robber of railway systems lowers the commercial morals of a whole nation for three generations. A Washington, standing upon the world's utmost summit, eternally visible, eternally clothed in light, a serene, inspiring, heartening example and admonition, is an influence which raises the level of character in all receptive men and peoples, alien and domestic; and the term of its gracious work is not measurable by fleeting generations, but only by the lingering march of the centuries.

Washington was more and greater than the father of a nation, he was the Father of its Patriotism—patriotism at its loftiest

and best; and so powerful was the influence which he left behind him, that that golden patriotism remained undimmed and unsullied for a hundred years, lacking one; and so fundamentally right-hearted are our people by grace of that long and ennobling teaching, that to-day, already, they are facing back for home, they are laying aside their foreign-born and foreign-bred imported patriotism and resuming that which Washington gave to their fathers, which is American and the only American—which lasted ninety-nine years and is good for a million more. Doubt—doubt that we did right by the Filipinos—is rising steadily higher and higher in the nation's breast; conviction will follow doubt. The nation will speak; its will is law; there is no other sovereign on this soil; and in that day we shall right such unfairnesses as we have done. We shall let go our obsequious hold on the rear-skirts of the sceptred land-thieves of Europe, and be what we were before, a *real* World Power, and the chiefest of them all, by right of the only clean hands in Christendom, the only hands guiltless of the sordid plunder of any helpless people's stolen liberties, hands recleansed in the patriotism of Washington, and once more fit to touch the hem of the revered Shade's garment and stand in its presence unashamed. It was Washington's influence that made Lincoln and all other real patriots the Republic has known; it was Washington's influence that made the soldiers who saved the Union; and that influence will save us always, and bring us back to the fold when we stray.

And so, when a Washington is given us, or a Lincoln, or a Grant, what should we do? Knowing, as we do, that a *conspicuous* influence for good is worth more than a billion obscure ones, without doubt the logic of it is that we should highly value it, and make a vestal flame of it, and keep it briskly burning in every way we can—in the nursery, in the school, in the college, in the pulpit, in the newspaper—even in Congress, if such a thing were possible.

The proper inborn disposition was required to start a Washington; the acceptable influences and circumstances and a large field were required to develop and complete him. The same with Funston.

II.

“The war was over”—end of 1900. A month later the mountain refuge of the defeated and hunted, and now powerless

but not yet hopeless, Filipino chief was discovered. His army was gone, his Republic extinguished, his ablest statesman deported, his generals all in their graves or prisoners of war. The memory of his worthy dream had entered upon a historic life, to be an inspiration to less unfortunate patriots in other centuries; the dream itself was dead beyond resurrection, though he could not believe it.

Now came his capture. An admiring author* shall tell us about it. His account can be trusted, for it is correctly synopsized from General Funston's own voluntary confession made by him at the time. The italics are mine.

"It was not until February, 1901, that his actual hiding-place was discovered. The clew was in the shape of a letter from Aguinaldo commanding his cousin, Baldormero Aguinaldo, to send him four hundred armed men, the bearer to act as a guide to the same. The order was in cipher, but among other effects captured at various times a copy of the Insurgent cipher was found. The Insurgent courier was convinced of the error of his ways (though by exactly what means, history does not reveal), and offered to lead the way to Aguinaldo's place of hiding. Here was an opportunity that suggested an adventure equal to anything in penny-awful fiction. It was just the kind of a dare-devil exploit that appealed to the romantic Funston. It was something out of the ordinary for a brigadier-general to leave his command and turn into a scout, but Funston was irresistible. He formulated a scheme and asked General MacArthur's permission. It was impossible to refuse the daring adventurer, the hero of the Rio Grande, anything; so Funston set to work, imitating the peculiar handwriting of Lacuna, the Insurgent officer to whom Aguinaldo's communication referred. Some little time previous to the capture of the Tagalog courier, several of Lacuna's letters were found, together with Aguinaldo's cipher code. Having perfected Lacuna's signature, Funston wrote two letters on February 24 and 28, acknowledging Aguinaldo's communication, and informing him that he (Lacuna) was sending him a few of the best soldiers in his command. Added to this neat forgery General Funston dictated a letter which was written by an ex-Insurgent attached to his command, telling Aguinaldo that the relief force had surprised and captured a detachment of Americans, taking five prisoners whom they were bringing to him because of their importance. This ruse was employed to explain the presence of the five Americans: General Funston, Captain Hazzard, Captain Newton, Lieutenant Hazzard, and General Funston's aide, Lieutenant Kitchell, who were to accompany the expedition.

"Seventy-eight Macabebes, hereditary enemies of the Tagalogs, were chosen by Funston to form the body of the command. These fearless

* "*Aguinaldo.*" By Edwin Wildman. Lothrop Publishing Co., Boston.

and hardy natives fell into the scheme with a vengeance. Three Tagalogs and one Spaniard were also invited. The Macabebes were fitted out in cast-off Insurgent uniforms, and the Americans donned field-worn uniforms of privates. Three days' rations were provided, and each man was given a rifle. The 'Vicksburg' was chosen to take the daring impostors to some spot on the east coast near Palanan, where Aguinaldo was in hiding. Arriving off the coast at Casignan, some distance from the Insurgent-hidden capital, the party was landed. Three Macabebes, who spoke Tagalog fluently, were sent into the town to notify the natives that they were bringing additional forces and important American prisoners to Aguinaldo, and request of the local authorities guides and assistance. The Insurgent president readily consented, and the little party, after refreshing themselves and exhibiting their prisoners, started over the ninety-mile trail to Palanan, a mountain retreat on the coast of the Isabella province. Over the stony declivities and through the thick jungle, across bridgeless streams and up narrow passes, the foot-sore and bone-racked adventurers tramped, until their food was exhausted, and they were *too weak to move*, though but eight miles from Aguinaldo's rendezvous.

"A messenger was sent forward to inform Aguinaldo of their position and to *beg for food*. The rebel chieftain promptly replied by despatching rice and a letter to the officer in command, instructing him to treat the American prisoners well, but to leave them outside the town. What better condition could the ingenious Funston have himself dictated? On the 23d of March the party reached Palanan. Aguinaldo sent out eleven men to take charge of the American prisoners, but Funston and his associates succeeded in dodging them and scattering themselves in the jungle until they passed on to meet the Americans whom the Insurgents were notified were left behind.

"Immediately joining his command, Funston ordered his little band of dare-devils to march boldly into the town and present themselves to Aguinaldo. At the Insurgent headquarters they were received by Aguinaldo's bodyguard, dressed in blue drill uniforms and white hats, drawn up in military form. The spokesman so completely hoodwinked Aguinaldo that he did not suspect the ruse. In the meantime the Macabebes manœuvred around into advantageous positions, directed by the Spaniard, until all were in readiness. Then he shouted, 'Macabebes, now is your turn!' whereupon they emptied their rifles into Aguinaldo's bodyguard. . . .

"The Americans joined in the skirmish, and two of Aguinaldo's staff were wounded, but escaped, the treasurer of the revolutionary government surrendering. The rest of the Filipino officers got away. Aguinaldo accepted his capture with resignation, though greatly in fear of the vengeance of the Macabebes. But General Funston's assurance of his personal safety set his mind easy on that point, and he calmed down and discussed the situation. He was greatly cast down at his capture, and asserted that *by no other means* would he have been taken alive,—an admis-

sion which added all the more to Funston's achievement, for Aguinaldo's was a difficult and desperate case, and demanded extraordinary methods."

Some of the customs of war are not pleasant to the civilian; but ages upon ages of training have reconciled us to them as being justifiable, and we accept them and make no demur, even when they give us an extra twinge. Every detail of Funston's scheme—but one—has been employed in war in the past and stands acquitted of blame by history. By the custom of war, it is permissible, in the interest of an enterprise like the one under consideration, for a Brigadier-General (if he be of the sort that can so choose) to persuade or bribe a courier to betray his trust; to remove the badges of his honorable rank and disguise himself; to lie, to practise treachery, to forge; to associate with himself persons properly fitted by training and instinct for the work; to accept of courteous welcome, and assassinate the welcomers while their hands are still warm from the friendly handshake.

By the custom of war, all these things are innocent, none of them is blameworthy, all of them are justifiable; none of them is new, all of them have been done before, although not by a Brigadier-General. But there is one detail which is new, absolutely new. It has never been resorted to before in any age of the world, in any country, among any people, savage or civilized. It was the one meant by Aguinaldo when he said that "*by no other means*" would he have been taken alive. When a man is exhausted by hunger to the point where he is "too weak to move," he has a right to make supplication to his enemy to save his failing life; but if he take so much as one taste of that food—which is holy, by the precept of all ages and all nations—he is *barred from lifting his hand against that enemy for that time.*

It was left to a Brigadier-General of Volunteers in the American army to put shame upon a custom which even the degraded Spanish friars had respected. *We promoted him for it.*

Our unsuspecting President was in the act of taking his murderer by the hand when the man shot him down. The amazed world dwelt upon that damning fact, brooded over it, discussed it, blushed for it, said it put a blot and a shame upon our race. Yet, bad as he was, he had not—dying of starvation—begged food of the President to strengthen his failing forces for his treacherous work; he did not proceed against the life of a benefactor who had just saved his own.

April 14. I have been absent several weeks in the West Indies; I will now resume this Defence.

It seems to me that General Funston's appreciation of the Capture needs editing. It seems to me that, in his after-dinner speeches, he spreads out the heroisms of it—I say it with deference, and subject to correction—with an almost too generous hand. He is a brave man; his dearest enemy will cordially grant him that credit. For his sake it is a pity that somewhat of that quality was not needed in the episode under consideration; that he would have furnished it, no one doubts. But, by his own showing, he ran but one danger—that of starving. He and his party were well disguised, in dishonored uniforms, American and Insurgent; they greatly outnumbered Aguinaldo's guard;* by his forgeries and falsehoods he had lulled suspicion to sleep; his coming was expected, his way was prepared; his course was through a solitude, unfriendly interruption was unlikely; his party were well armed; they would catch their prey with welcoming smiles in their faces, and with hospitable hands extended for the friendly shake—nothing would be necessary but to shoot these people down. That is what they did. It was hospitality repaid in a brand-new, up-to-date, Modern Civilization fashion, and would be admired by many.

“The spokesman so completely hoodwinked Aguinaldo that he did not suspect the ruse. In the meantime, the Macabebes manœuvred around into advantageous positions, directed by the Spaniard, until all were in readiness; then he shouted, ‘Macabebes, now is your turn!’ whereupon they emptied their rifles into Aguinaldo's bodyguard.”—*From Wildman's book, already quoted.*

The utter completeness of the surprise, the total absence of suspicion which had been secured by the forgeries and falsehoods, is best brought out in Funston's humorous account of the episode in one of his rollicking speeches—the one he thought the President said he wanted to see republished; though it turned out that this was only a dream. Dream of a reporter, the General says:

“The Macabebes fired on those men and two fell dead; the others retreated, firing as they ran, and I might say here that they retreated with such great alacrity and enthusiasm that they dropped eighteen rifles and a thousand rounds of ammunition.

“Sigismondo rushed back into the house, pulled his revolver, and told

* Eighty-nine to forty-eight.—*Funston's Lotos Club Confession.*

the insurgent officers to surrender. They all threw up their hands except Villia, Aguinaldo's chief of staff; he had on one of those new-fangled Mauser revolvers and he wanted to try it. But before he had the Mauser out of its scabbard he was shot twice; Sigismondo was a pretty fair marksman himself.

"Alambra was shot in the face. He jumped out of the window; the house, by-the-way, stood on the bank of the river. He went out of the window and went clear down into the river, the water being twenty-five feet below the bank. He escaped, swam across the river and got away, and surrendered five months afterwards.

"Villia, shot in the shoulder, followed him out of the window and into the river, but the Macabebes saw him and ran down to the river bank, and they waded in and fished him out, and kicked him all the way up the bank, and asked him how he liked it." (Laughter.)

While it is true that the Dare Devils were not in danger upon this occasion, they *were* in awful peril at one time; in peril of a death so awful that swift extinction by bullet, by the axe, by the sword, by the rope, by drowning, by fire, is a kindly mercy contrasted with it; a death so awful that it holds its place unchallenged as the supremest of human agonies—death by starvation. Aguinaldo saved them from that.

These being the facts, we come now to the question, Is Funston to blame? I think not. And for that reason I think too much is being made of this matter. He did not make his own disposition, It was born with him. It chose his ideals for him, he did not choose them. It chose the kind of society It liked, the kind of comrades It preferred, and imposed them upon him, rejecting the other kinds; he could not help this; It admired everything that Washington did not admire, and hospitably received and coddled everything that Washington would have turned out of doors—but It, and It only, was to blame, not Funston; his It took as naturally to moral slag as Washington's took to moral gold, but only It was to blame, not Funston. Its moral sense, if It had any, was color-blind, but this was no fault of Funston's, and he is not chargeable with the results; It had a native predilection for unsavory conduct, but it would be in the last degree unfair to hold Funston to blame for the outcome of his infirmity; as clearly unfair as it would be to blame him because his conscience leaked out through one of his pores when he was little—a thing which he could not help, and he couldn't have raised it, anyway; It was able to say to an enemy, "Have pity on me, I am starving; I am too weak to move, give me food; I am your friend,

I am your fellow-patriot, your fellow-Filipino, and am fighting for our dear country's liberties, like you—have pity, give me food, save my life, there is no other help!" and It was able to refresh and restore Its marionette with the food, and then shoot down the giver of it while his hand was stretched out in welcome—like the President's. Yet if blame there was, and guilt, and treachery, and baseness, they are not Funston's, but only Its; It has the noble gift of humor, and can make a banquet almost die with laughter when it has a funny incident to tell about; this one will bear reading again—and over and over again, in fact:

"The Macabebes fired on those men and two fell dead; the others retreated, firing as they ran, and I might say here that they retreated with such alacrity and enthusiasm that they dropped eighteen rifles and a thousand rounds of ammunition.

"Sigismondo rushed back into the house, pulled his revolver, and told the insurgent officers to surrender. They all threw up their hands except Villia, Aguinaldo's chief of staff; he had on one of those new-fangled Mauser revolvers and he wanted to try it. But before he had the Mauser out of its scabbard he was shot twice; Sigismondo was a pretty fair marksman himself.

"Alambra was shot in the face. He jumped out of the window; the house, by-the-way, stood on the bank of the river. He went out of the window and went clear down into the river, the water being twenty-five feet below the bank. He escaped, swam across the river and got away, and surrendered five months afterwards.

"Villia, shot in the shoulder, followed him out of the window and into the river, but the Macabebes saw him and ran down to the river bank, and they waded in and fished him out, and kicked him all the way up the bank, and asked him how he liked it." (Laughter.)

(This was a wounded man.) But it is only It that is speaking, not Funston. With youthful glee It can see sink down in death the simple creatures who had answered Its fainting prayer for food, and without remorse It can note the reproachful look in their dimming eyes; but in fairness we must remember that this is only It, not Funston; by proxy, in the person of Its born servant, It can do Its strange work, and practise Its ingratitude and amazing treacheries, while wearing the uniform of the American soldier, and marching under the authority of the American flag. And It—not Funston—comes home now, to teach us children what Patriotism is! Surely It ought to know.

It is plain to me, and I think it ought to be plain to all, that Funston is not in any way to blame for the things he has done, does, thinks, and says.

Now, then, we have Funston; he has happened, and is on our hands. The question is, what are we going to do about it, how are we going to meet the emergency? We have seen what happened in Washington's case: he became a colossal example, an example to the whole world, and for all time—because his name and deeds went everywhere, and inspired, as they still inspire, and will always inspire, admiration, and compel emulation. Then the thing for the world to do in the present case is to turn the gilt front of Funston's evil notoriety to the rear, and expose the back aspect of it, the right and black aspect of it, to the youth of the land; otherwise *he* will become an example and a boy-admiration, and will most sorrowfully and grotesquely bring his breed of Patriotism into competition with Washington's. This competition has already begun, in fact. Some may not believe it, but it is nevertheless true, that there are now public-school teachers and superintendents who are holding up Funston as a model hero and Patriot in the schools.

If this Funstonian boom continues, Funstonism will presently affect the army. In fact, this has already happened. There are weak-headed and weak-principled officers in all armies, and these are always ready to imitate successful notoriety-breeding methods, let them be good or bad. The fact that Funston has achieved notoriety by paralyzing the universe with a fresh and hideous idea, is sufficient for this kind—they will call that hand if they can, and go it one better when the chance offers. Funston's example has bred many imitators, and many ghastly additions to our history: the torturing of Filipinos by the awful "water-cure," for instance, to make them confess—what? Truth? Or lies? How can one know which it is they are telling? For under unendurable pain a man confesses anything that is required of him, true or false, and his evidence is worthless. Yet upon such evidence American officers have actually—but you know about those atrocities which the War Office has been hiding a year or two; and about General Smith's now world-celebrated order of *massacre*—thus summarized by the press from Major Waller's testimony:

"Kill and burn—this is no time to take prisoners—the more you kill and burn, the better—Kill all above the age of ten—make Samar a howling wilderness!"

You see what Funston's example has produced, just in this

little while—even before he produced the example. It has advanced our Civilization ever so far—fully as far as Europe advanced it in China. Also, no doubt, it was Funston's example that made us (and England) copy Weyler's *reconcentrado* horror after the pair of us, with our Sunday-school smirk on, and our goody-goody noses upturned toward heaven, had been calling him a "fiend." And the fearful earthquake out there in Krakatoa, that destroyed the island and killed two million people— No, that could not have been Funston's example; I remember now, he was not born then.

However, for all these things I blame only his It, not him. In conclusion, I have defended him as well as I could, and indeed I have found it quite easy, and have removed prejudice from him and rehabilitated him in the public esteem and regard, I think. I was not able to do anything for his It, It being out of my jurisdiction, and out of Funston's and everybody's. As I have shown, Funston is not to blame for his fearful deed; and, if I tried, I might also show that he is not to blame for our still holding in bondage the man he captured by unlawful means, and who is not any more rightfully our prisoner and spoil than he would be if he were stolen money. He is entitled to his freedom. If he were a king of a Great Power, or an ex-president of our republic, instead of an ex-president of a destroyed and abolished little republic, Civilization (with a large C) would criticise and complain until he got it.

MARK TWAIN.

P. S. April 16. The President is speaking up, this morning, just as this goes to the printer, and there is no uncertain sound about the note. It is the speech and spirit of a President of a people, not of a party, and we all like it, Traitors and all. I think I may speak for the other Traitors, for I am sure they feel as I do about it. I will explain that we get our title from the Funstonian Patriots—free of charge. They are always doing us little compliments like that; they are just born flatterers, those boys.

M. T.