

AFTERWORD

In my three score years and ten, I have been fortunate that the pathways of my life have never led me to a battlefield. I have never known conflict; never witnessed the death, destruction and desecration of war; never faced the ultimate challenge that has blighted and defined the lives of millions. The pathways walked by George Clarke Musgrave, though, carried him to five separate theatres where, as a writer rather than a soldier, he was intimately involved with the worst and the best of war, and where he matured as both an author and a man.

*From the pen of an inexperienced but dedicated twenty-two year old, his raw emotions and the fervent passion that he held for “Empire” permeate through the chapters of his first book, *To Kumassi with Scott*, whereas his later works became progressively more detailed, more measured and more objective analyses of war, written from a developing perspective of shrewdness and experience, hard-won over twenty years.*



Each of the wars that our author knew was different in purpose, intensity and outcome, and each of the books that he wrote of these wars is correspondingly unique. There are, however, four consistent themes interwoven through all of his writing. First, he was a harsh critic of those who failed to venture into war zones, but penned their reports and pompous conclusions from the plush comfort of their desks. Second, his vivid and accurate accounts of everyday incidents, actions, victories and tragedies in the field were created against the backdrop of the political, military and strategic imperatives that determine the unfolding nature of war. Third, with honesty and integrity as his touchstones, he had no hesitation in exposing the failings and, in equal measure, attributing the successes of those in authority. Fourth and, above all, his writing chronicled the often untold stories of those left behind to suffer the iniquities and atrocities of wars that others fought. To encapsulate our author's work only within these categories, though, fails to do justice to either his breadth of vision or his eminence as a wordsmith so, here, it is perhaps appropriate that we note his own words:

In writing of war, well known episodes must take their place to complete the story; so must the personal observations of those who were there in the field, the bivouacs, the hospitals, and the prisoner convoys, and so must the pictures painted with an eye to the

diplomatic reasons behind the plans of war, the great sweep of armies as they manoeuvre for advantage, and the effect of the life and death decisions of Generals on the fighting man and on the civilian population. No one who has seen the horrors of war can pen words to glorify it. Neither can they minimise its great spiritual values. No man can face death or see his comrades go to the Great Unknown, and remain unchanged. Splendid lessons of self-sacrifice are learned daily. Everything material in life has an altered value, and new spiritual influences create an idealism over the stern veneer that hardship and lack of comfort create.

Although he was regularly commissioned by the most important newspapers and journals of the day and his books sold well on both sides of the Atlantic, it is unlikely that our author would ever have considered himself wealthy. Nevertheless, his writing did bring him a substantial income and he travelled extensively, living comfortably with his family in various homes in America and England. He also funded his son Edwin's undergraduate studies as a Civil Engineer at the University of London. But financial returns were not his only rewards. Throughout his career he earned the respect and admiration of presidents and politicians, generals and foot-soldiers, his peers, his editors, his publishers and his readers; less tangible remuneration, perhaps, but ultimately more valuable.

His writing as a war correspondent came to a close at the time that the Great War in Europe was drawing towards its conclusion. When American forces joined the Allies on the Western Front in late 1917, our author left France and returned to England, from where he made several transatlantic trips, sometimes travelling alone and sometimes accompanied by his wife and son Edwin. On his travel manifests he commonly listed his occupation as a journalist but he was, in fact, writing as an author at this time. *Under Four Flags for France* was published in 1918 and in May of 1919 he journeyed from Liverpool to New York, and on to Havana, where he spent some weeks researching and preparing the manuscript for his final book, *Cuba - the Land of Opportunity*. But this was not a book of war; it was, instead, a comprehensive socio-economic analysis of post-war Cuba's natural resources, mineral assets technological development and cultural richness, together with a stinging critique of Britain's politicians and business leaders for failing to realise, or even recognise, the potential of the "Pearl of the Antilles."

Given everything that our author had experienced in Cuba, not least the indestructible bonds forged in battle and the comradeship born in the Spanish-American war that continued for many years subsequently, it is

no great surprise that he dedicated his final book to the memory of his great friend, Theodore Roosevelt.

George Clarke Musgrave left Cuba for the final time on 30th July 1921, a date that marked a turning point in his life. Again, it seems appropriate that he tells us of this himself:

August 4th, 1921 is an important day; the final day. The USS Henry R Mallory glides into the mouth of the Hudson River and I gaze with a strange fondness as we slide by the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, aware that this will be the last time I see this iconic New York vista. Back from Cuba, my final book drafted, I have no idea what lies ahead, but I do know that it is not to be here. There is nothing left for me now in the country that has given me so much. Roosevelt is gone, taken in his sleep two years ago; the team that he created has been broken up by Taft; most of my friends and press colleagues are now retired and scattered; Lamson Brothers was dissolved a year ago and I have no need of employment elsewhere. In two weeks' time, I am taking Mary and Edwin back to England and then we will travel no more. My days of chasing stories in the field are over; my books are published; my words are written; my pen has run dry ...

... the library is now closed

