

FOREWORD

I never met my great-uncle, George Clarke Musgrave. Born in 1874, he answered the Reaper's call in 1932 and now lies at rest with his parents at Swanage in the beautiful countryside of Dorset. I did not know him but, for more than a decade now, I have lived with him, walked with him and dreamed with him. But now he is gone and his going has left us with the sad reality that he can no longer recount his life and times to you in person. That task has slipped several branches down the family tree to me and it is with some trepidation, and a keen desire to keep true to his memory, that I have dedicated myself to channelling for you the stories of this fascinating, multi-faceted, complex character.



George Clarke Musgrave's time in this world carried him through the great challenges and changes of the reigns of Victoria, Edward VII and George V. For his own character, though, he always felt himself more closely aligned with the reformers, the heroes, the visionaries and the Empire builders of the 19th century, than with the dour and stifling traditionalists of the 20th. Following service in the British Army, brought to a premature end by injury and subsequent medical discharge, George Clarke became a war correspondent and journalist, seeing action with both British and American forces in a number of conflicts across the world. His articles from these conflicts were published in many national and international journals including: the Illustrated London News, the London Chronicle, the Daily Mail, Strand Magazine, Black and White Review and the New York Times. He also wrote a number of books which were readily published and well received by audiences on both sides of the Atlantic.

His books are now out of print and first editions are rare and expensive. But his words should be read and, in seeking to bring his library back to life, my intent in these pages is twofold: Firstly, to present for you authentic adaptations of our author's original works, written with a particular focus on preserving the action, the excitement, the drama and the emotion of his original narrative and, secondly, to knit together the diverse and tangled threads of his career which spanned some twenty five years in which he grew from a raw but determined twenty-one-year-old neophyte of the media circus to a seasoned, brilliantly analytical and highly respected observer of war.

So, share with us the raw brutality, the traumas and the evils of war tempered with an undying admiration for the men and women who have

lived and loved, suffered and triumphed in its fighting. Discover in these writings my attempts to chronicle the joys, the tears, the pleasures, the pain and the blessings of a life that George Clarke Musgrave always tried to live well.

First let us journey to the mysterious Ashanti territories for an accurate and entertaining account of Sir Francis Scott's Expedition to Kumassi in 1895-96, vividly portraying the killing fields, the treachery and the debauchery that characterised this gold-rich outpost of the Empire and building to the final scenes when King Prempeh had to undergo the ultimate humiliation watched by his horrified chiefs and subjects. Even after Kumassi had been occupied by the British troops, the Ashanti continued to proclaim the invincible greatness of their King. But there could be no further self-deception when the King and the Queen-mother had to kneel before the Governor and embrace his feet. The final denouement followed when Prempeh refused to pay the indemnity that had been owed to the British for more than twenty years, at which point the Royal family was seized, deported to the Coast as prisoners and exiled to the British colony of Sierra Leone. The lands of Ashanti had stood as the great barrier to the development of our African territories and the expedition had been a brilliant success in fully accomplishing its object. Following a final parade and salute for His Excellency Governor Maxwell, the Expeditionary Force quietly left for Old England, having brought to a close the most peaceful, but also the most successful and best managed campaign that has ever graced the annals of British History.

Now to Garcia's Santiago where our author witnessed the patriotic struggles of the Cubans, and the iniquities practised upon them by the impulsive Spanish occupying force. Arriving with a dual commission from an English newspaper and an American journal, he landed in Cuba "a warm sympathiser with Spain." For two years, though, he lived and served with the revolutionaries, learned of their cause and experienced their suffering. Commissioned as a Captain on General Garcia's staff, he repeatedly crossed the lines carrying despatches from the insurgent Cuban Government to the Americans. Danger and hardship became his companions and he was twice imprisoned, three times wounded, barely rescued from a spy's death and finally arrested and deported to Spain under threat of execution. Following intervention by the British government he was eventually released from prison in Cadiz, from where he journeyed back to England and on to America to join the United States forces at Tampa Bay for the invasion of Cuba at the start of the Spanish-American war. Assigned a position with Theodore Roosevelt and members of the First United States Volunteer Cavalry, better known as the

Rough Riders, he reached Cuba on June 22nd. Despite a travesty of planning and logistics on the part of General Shafter and his staff, the US forces soon took control of San Juan Hill, which gave them a base directly overlooking Santiago. Two weeks of siege followed until the Spanish surrendered the city on July 17th when our author was “surprised and honoured” to be one of only a handful of war correspondents allowed to witness the Spanish capitulation.

Next to the lands of the Transvaal, arriving as the hostilities of the Second Boer War opened at Kraaipan in October 1899. In the military operations that followed, the early Boer sieges and subsequent British actions led to the battles for the relief of Kimberley, Mafeking and Ladysmith which our author experienced in the intimate detail that is the reality of individuals fighting, suffering and dying for their country. In every war there comes a critical period when the tide turns. This is triggered sometimes by the outcome of a particular battle; sometimes by the unknowing and often uncaring intervention of ignorant politicians; sometimes by the life and death decisions of generals. In our conflict with the Boer, this period came early, just two months from the outset, and was primarily characterised by the arrival of General Sir Redvers Buller as supreme commander. His early successes in the field were soon followed by three disastrous failures, with many hundreds of men lost, killed and captured. Whether it was these crushing defeats that changed the course of the war will, perhaps, never be known. But within just two further weeks of brilliantly planned and heroically fought actions, he once again strode the Natal as a giant. The siege of Kimberley was broken; Cronje surrendered at Paadeberg; the Tugela Hills were won and Ladysmith was relieved. Buller’s failures, in what has become known as “Black Week,” will doubtless feature in the newspapers of the day more highly than the catalogue of courageous leadership and individual heroism that made his subsequent victories possible. But undeniably it was his leadership, battle-skills and bravery and the way in which he was able to lift the minds of his men that put us back on the path to victory.

We now journey to the other side of the world as our author is called back from his honeymoon in Scotland by an urgent telegram from the New York Times. He settled his new wife at her family home in New Jersey and then left for San Francisco on 5th July 1900, from where he sailed for China. His brief was to travel with the American force that was part of an eight-nation alliance with Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Austro-Hungary, Japan and Russia, mounting what was termed the “China Relief Expedition.” There is no written material relevant here. Instead, we have only a collection of notes, diary entries, photographs, military briefings and

despatches covering the four weeks spent in China. For such an experienced, committed and prolific writer, this is something of a surprise, but the clues lie in the tenor of the words that he uses to describe the horror, the brutality and the sheer trauma of his experiences. The march from Tientsin to Peking and the relief of the Legations is documented in some detail but worse - much worse - was to follow. His closing notes describe the aftermath of the expedition, when military order was replaced by chaos. In the days following the entry of the alliance forces into Peking, there began an orgy of looting, execution, rape, torture and murder, described as “an unfolding kaleidoscope of human behaviour more nightmarish and more brutal than any of us could have believed possible.” And here lies the reason why our author penned no words for publication. In a note describing his final hours in the city, together with a group of three fellow correspondents, he wrote; “not one of us had ever known such an assault on the senses; not one of us had ever been exposed to such obscene visions of reality. In our hearts we all knew, we had a silent understanding and a shared pledge that there are things we must not write which would show that this Western civilisation of ours is merely a veneer over savagery”.

Back to the glorious vastness of America now, and to a lost and silent decade living in Summit, New Jersey but travelling widely in Europe, the Balkans, Russia, Scandinavia and South America. We can say nothing of the origin or real purpose of these trips but, on behalf of Roosevelt, now leader of the newly formed Progressive Party, our author was quietly and surreptitiously monitoring the growing tensions in Europe and the increasingly belligerent behaviour of Germany. But world events were rushing on to a different and dangerously complex level. At the 1913 Congress in Paris, delegates agreed that the Balkan crisis was set to explode and, with some urgency, our author left for Germany, Austria, Hungary, Serbia and then Sarajevo to follow events and report back to Roosevelt's chief advisor, Albert Beveridge. When Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated by Yugoslavian nationalist, Gavrilo Princip, ethnic hatred swept across the Balkans and the countries of Europe, tied by their interlocking treaty obligations, were drawn one-by-one into the conflict. As the calls for war intensified, no Head of State appeared able to quell the collective madness of their politicians and generals until, on the evening of Sunday, August 2nd, Germany sent a twelve-hour ultimatum demanding that Belgium allow free passage for her armies to invade France.

Our author readily identified that Germany's strategy was based on a plan to extend her frontier straight across France to the mouth of the

Seine. Hinged on Metz, her armies were to carry her frontier posts outward across Belgium and then swing the line south to embrace all of northern France. The French Army was to be overwhelmed in the process, and the capture of Paris would have been the logical result. Following an active and dangerous path through the conflict, he explored the ways in which this master-blueprint of Germany was defeated with simple strategy and brilliant tactics which foiled the invasion and ultimately wrecked the chances of a German victory. Against this backdrop he walked the same fields, fought the same battles, suffered the same torments and cried the same tears as a million other men of France, Britain and Belgium, drawing his pictures with an eye to the effects of war on the fighting man and on the civilian population. And only when the US forces had arrived in Europe and the Allies were poised on the brink of victory did he leave again for America.

These were his Wars ... and here are his Words

