

CUBA'S PRESIDENT.

A CHAT WITH THOMAS ESTRADA PALMA ON THE CUBA OF TODAY AND THE FUTURE.

President Palma Versus Roosevelt—He Says the Island Can Govern Itself and Does Not Want Annexation—Its New Public Works—Ten Million Dollars in the Treasury The Cuba Railroad And Van Horn—Americans in Cuba—Chances for Small Investments—The Health Conditions—Immigrants from Spain—Schools, Etc., Etc.

HAVANA—I met President Estrada Palma, the Theodore Roosevelt of the Cuban republic, today in the Palace del Presidente. This is the executive mansion corresponding to our White House at Washington. It is situated in the heart of business Havana with offices and stores at the back and side, with a park in front, and the Cuban senate across the way.

The building is of brick or stone, covered with stucco of the color of rich Jersey cream. The second story is upheld at the front by heavy columns and just back of them is a wide driveway upon which the front doors open. A soldier in blue uniform guards the main entrance, standing beside two little cannons, which are used more for ornament than defense.

I passed through the front door and went by a patio filled with tropical trees and plants, up a wide marble staircase to the office of the president. The reception rooms are different from those of the White House and their furniture is arranged in Spanish fashion. A long row of mahogany and wicker chairs stands at one side of the room with rows of chairs extending out from each end of it. The guests of honor at the most having the seat on the sofa.

At the time of my arrival there several men were waiting to see President Palma. My appointment had been made by the American minister, but I was a little in advance of the hour and it was somewhat in vain before the president could receive me. At this time an official led me into the private

then projects are brought before congress which might not be for the good of the country, and such projects are sometimes adopted. It is so with every country and every congress. The executive, however, is safeguarded here against such impetuous legislation of that nature."

NEW PUBLIC WORKS.

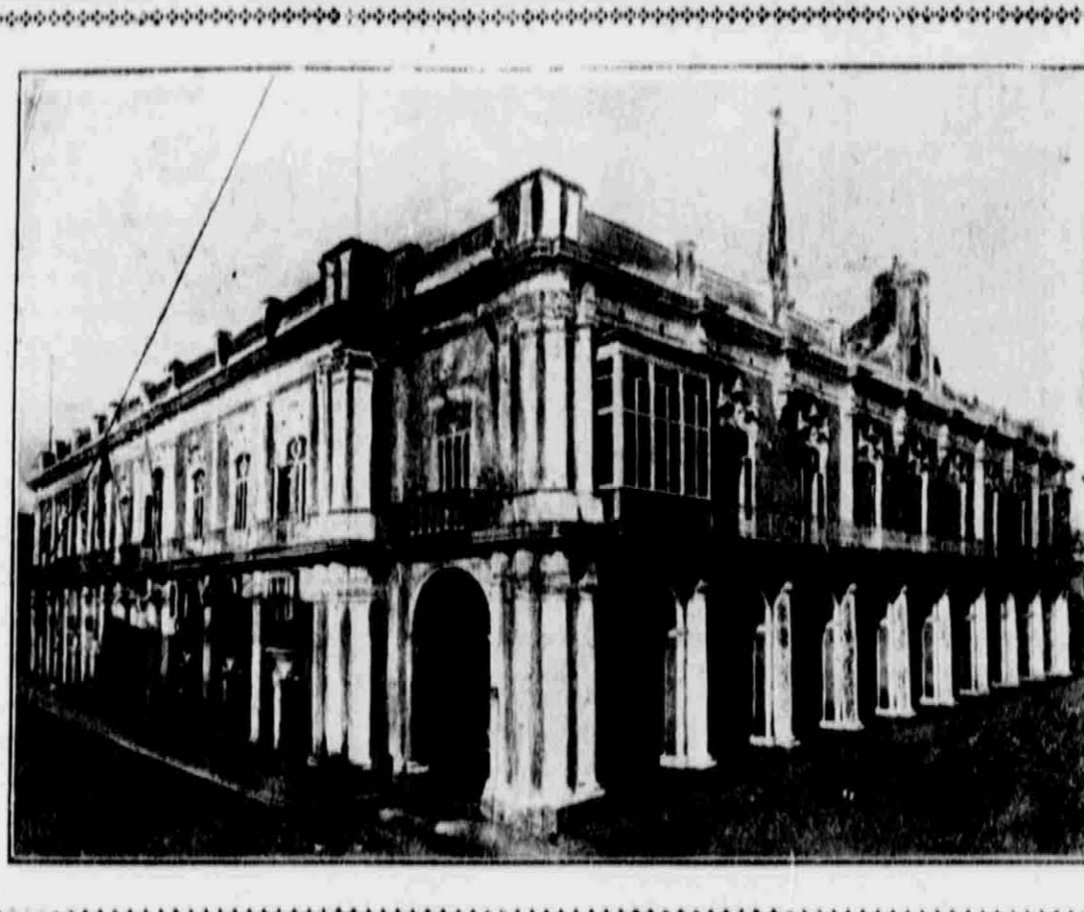
"What will Cuba do with her \$10,000,000 surplus?" I asked.

"That is a matter for congress to determine," replied the president. "A great deal of it will go into public works and the extension of these works which we have already begun. We have many plans for the betterment of this island, and we expect that our revenues from now on will be large enough to enable us to greatly improve Cuba. We expect to extend the public roads and to build a good road system from one end of the country to the other, giving all the rural districts access to the cities and ports. This is a matter of the greatest importance and we are improving our harbors, and we also wish to add the railroads to opening up the undeveloped portions of the country. We want lines that will make all parts of Cuba accessible and these lines will be chiefly branch lines to the roads now in existence. It may be that we shall build roads of that kind by guaranteeing an interest on the investment."

CUBA'S NEW RAILROAD.

"What has been the effect of the Cuba railroad on the island?"

"That road has done us an incalculable good," replied President Palma. "Indeed, now that it is here, I do not see how we could have possibly done without it. The road has opened up



PRESIDENT PALMA'S OFFICIAL PALACE. Photographed for the Deseret News by Frank G. Carpenter.

Will these good times continue?"

"I see no reason why not. This island is phenomenally rich. It raises some of the products which the world wants and must have. It raises many things better than any other country. There is no tobacco like Cuban tobacco, and there is no spot on God's green earth which will raise any product as well as we. We can produce sugar at a lower cost than any other people, and we are now making it more economically than ever. Our planters believe that sugar will never be so low as it has been in the past and that from now on there will always be a profit in raising it. The Cuban fruit industry is at its beginning, and the same can be said of our vegetables. Our wealth depends upon our soil, and this is of incalculable fertility. Indeed, our prospects are bright."

CLEAN AND HEALTHY.

"What is the sanitary condition of the island?"

"It is excellent. We have been cleaning up our cities and they are today the cleanest of the world. We are improving sanitary conditions everywhere and have greatly bettered the national health. Take this city of Havana. In 1899 we had a death rate here of almost 40 per 1,000. Yellow fever then caused 425 deaths and snuffbox 146. During the American intervention the death rate was cut down to 27 per 1,000, and of these only 18 were due to yellow fever, with no snuffbox. That was in 1901. In 1903 the mortality fell to a little more than 20 per 1,000, with no yellow fever. Last year our death rate in Cuba was less than 15 per 1,000; on the other hand, our birth rate was more than 34 per 1,000. This means we are having twice as many births as deaths, so that our natural increase alone will add enormously to our population."

IMMIGRATION.

"How about your immigration?"

"That is also increasing. The good times are bringing many Spaniards from the northern part of the peninsula, and we expect them to come in a steady stream from now on. These immigrants are very desirable. They are thrifty workmen, and will add much in building up the country. Just now there is a big demand for laborers on the plantations. We need more people, and it may be that Congress will allow immigration in some way or other."

CUBA'S NEW SCHOOLS.

"What is the government doing along the line of education?"

"We have established schools in all

the towns and we expect to furnish educational facilities to every part of the island. Our babies are anxious to go to school, and we have had little trouble in getting the children to school. You must remember, however, that during the last year of the Spanish rule, the majority of the children under the age of 10 were sent to school and the schools were run and taught by professional teachers. As a result of the years taken by the American government in 1898 we had about 200,000 children of school age, and of these only 10,000 were sent to school, and only 1 per cent of the public schools. At present we have more than 15,000 children in the public schools. We have about 2,000 teachers, and about 2,000 school buildings. In the past the private schools were far superior to the public schools. The public schools are now better equipped with all the modern apparatus of all kinds, and their teachers are more efficient."

"We have now a number of high schools with a faculty in each, and we are improving our secondary and agricultural schools. We have also here in Havana an excellent university which has facilities of letters and sciences, and of medicine, pharmacy and law. There are engineering schools connected with the university, and schools of architecture and agriculture. Last year this college had 175 graduates. Havana has also a school of medicine, and a school of agriculture, and a school of commerce. The schools are better than in the past, and we are doing our best to improve them by investing in the national facilities of the island."

FRANK G. CARPENTER.



PRESIDENT ESTRADA PALMA IN 1905. Photograph Given to Frank G. Carpenter for the Deseret News.

offices and presented me to the president. Mr. Palma arose as I entered and gave me a seat beside him. He then began to talk about the condition of the island and what it would be in the future. He spoke excellent English, although with a foreign accent, and answering my questions without reservation.

ESTRADA PALMA IN 1905.

As we talked I had a good chance to study the man. President Palma is fast approaching his seventieth year, but he does not look more than 40, and his energy is that of one in his fifties. I have referred to him as the Theodore Roosevelt of Cuba. He is not like Roosevelt in appearance, nor action, but he is like him in that he does things, and does them quickly. He works hard, works all the time and thrives upon it. Although three score years and ten, his hair is still black, his eyes are bright and his cheeks rosy. Like Roosevelt, his life has been a strenuous one, and like him, he is the son of well-to-do parents. His father was rich and young Palma was educated in the best schools of Cuba and Spain. Like Roosevelt, he studied law, and like him, found the law too prosy, and at an early age went into politics and devoted his life to statesmanship and patriotism.

the whole of eastern Cuba and has given us a through line from one end of the island to the other. It has further extensions in view, and it is already one of the chief arteries of our trade. I think that Cuba owes much to Sir William Van Horn for building that road.

"Will it be a good investment?"

"Yes, although it may not pay dividends for some time to come. A railroad through a new country is a long-time proposition, and the Cuba road may be some years in building up its traffic. As to the ultimate value of the property, however, there is no question. It is bound to come."

"Are there many Americans in Cuba?"

"Thousands of them. The number increases steadily, and is greater now than at any time in our history. Those who are coming now are investing in all sorts of enterprises, and are doing much to enrich and develop the country. Some of them are buying lands in large and small tracts."

"Does Cuba welcome Americans?"

"Yes. We want and expect that your people will come here and help us develop Cuba. This island will support a large population. It is of enormous richness, and a small tract of land suffices for a good farm. All we need here is industry and business sense, allied to a good class of immigrants, to make this one of the richest islands upon earth. The Americans are noted as workers and business men, and we feel that they have just the characteristics which are needed for Cuba's development."

CHANCES FOR AMERICANS.

"But you refer to men of large capital, Mr. President. What does Cuba offer to him of small means?"

"There are many chances here for men who have but little money," said President Palma. "Take, for instance, raising fruits and vegetables for the markets of the United States. That business is profitable, and it is at its beginning. Indeed, almost any kind of farming can be carried on in Cuba more comfortably and more profitably than in your country. As to our chief industries, such as tobacco and sugar, they pay far in excess of the money crops of other countries. Sugar just now is making the planters rich. They are getting high prices and their crop this year will amount to more than 1,000,000 tons. The tobacco crop has also been good, and in fact every one here is making money."

DON'T WANT CUBA ANNEXED.

"Do you think Cuba will ever be annexed to the United States, Mr. President?" I asked.

"I should not like to see any such union," replied Estrada Palma. "I believe we should be associated commercially and industrially just as closely as possible, but not politically. I think each country should keep its political entity and work out its salvation along its own lines. Cuba, if it is left alone,

can do that. As to commercial matters, however, Cuba and the United States are interdependent, and they must always be so."

"Has our trade benefited by the reciprocity treaty?"

"Yes, both imports and exports have greatly increased. The United States took \$2 per cent of all that Cuba sold last year, and she furnished 42 1/2 per cent of what she bought."

"But that, Mr. President, shows that the odds are altogether for Cuba. According to those figures we are buying twice as much of you as you are buying of us."

"That is true, now," replied the President. "But the proportion is changing, and your sales will greatly increase under the new treaty. This country is in excellent condition. We all have money in our pockets and we shall buy more this year than ever before. Indeed, I expect a great increase in our imports, and a large part of that increase from the United States. Your people are just beginning to appreciate this market. From now on you will study it, and push your goods more earnestly. Indeed, I am anxious to see the trade between our country and yours grow, and I have no doubt it will grow."

THE FUTURE OF CUBA.

You speak of Cuba's good times.

A little later he came to the United States, with his wife and baby, and established a school for Spanish-American students in Orange county, N. Y. He lived there for 18 years, all the while working more or less for Cuba, and acquiring the knowledge of our government and its institutions which he is using so well in his present position at the head of our little sister republic. President Palma understands both Cuba and the United States, and he believes they are destined to work together, although he thinks Cuba should, and will always be politically independent.

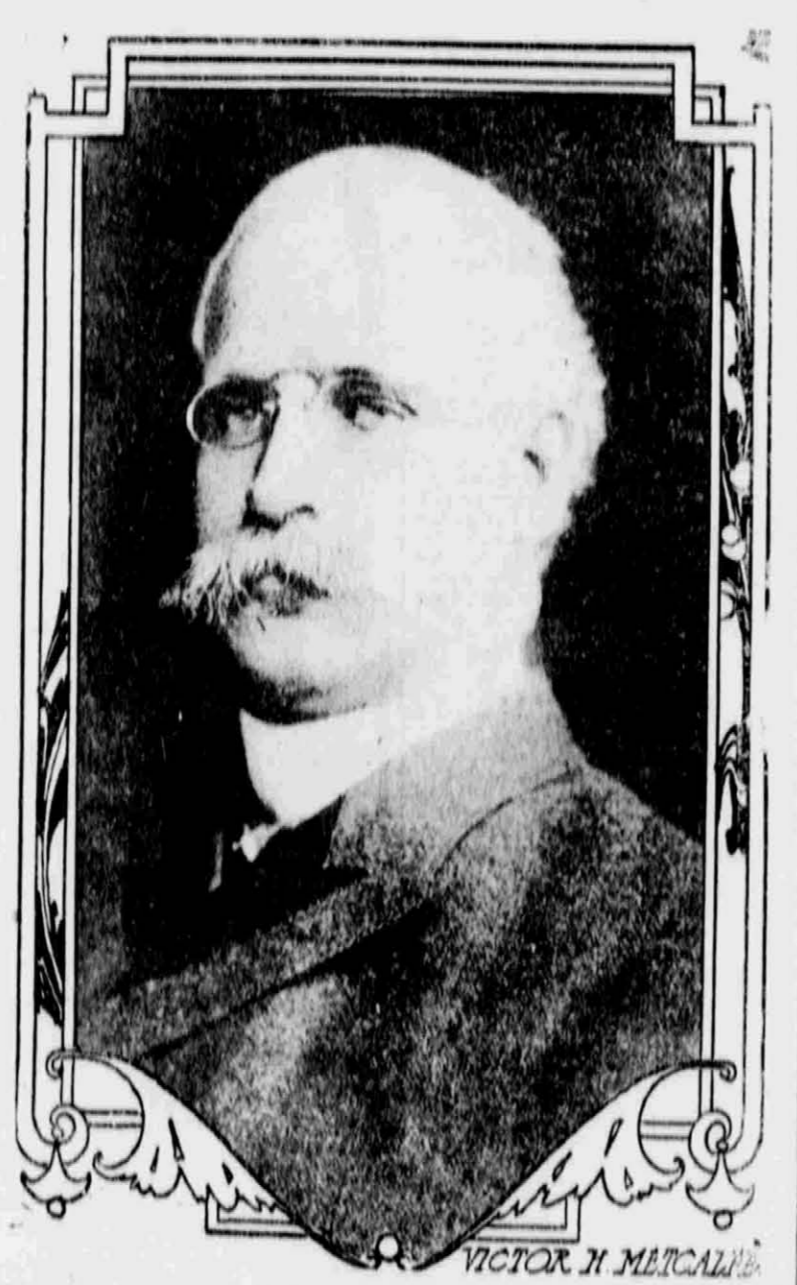
CUBA ABLE TO GOVERN ITSELF.

During our conversation along such lines the president said:

"We have already shown that we are fit for self-government. The republic is thoroughly established, and I hope that it will last for generations to come. It is a new thing for us, but our people are patriotic, and they wish to do the best they can for the country. It seems to me that we are doing well. We have already a surplus of more than \$10,000,000 in our treasury, a fact which shows that the government is honestly administered."

"Then you do not have much graft or looting in Cuba?"

"I am glad to say no," replied the president. "Indeed, our government of today is remarkably honest. If there were corruption I should grieve it, but so far there has been none in any branch of the government. Our officials are anxious for the reputation of their country, and they are really working for Cuba's good. Of course, now and



METCALF MAY QUIT CABINET. Secy. Victor H. Metcalf of the department of commerce and labor, will, it is asserted, throw up his job as a cabinet officer. Secy. Metcalf is angry with the president over the way he handled the Chinese question of immigration. Mr. Metcalf comes from California. He feels the same as every Californian on the Chinese exclusion problem. He is probably the best equipped man in the cabinet to talk on the subject.

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