CUBA IN 1905.

Frank G. Carpenter Describes Our Commercial Invasion of the Island.

Cuba's Wonderful Prosperity—Its Big Sugar Crop, Which Adds Forty Millions to its National Wealth—The New Loan—What Consul General Says as to Money Making—Fifteen Thousand Dollar Men Needed to Work American Trade—Our Goods in Cuba—A Big Mail-Order Business.

(Special Correspondence of the Deseret News by Frank G. Carpenter.)

HAVANA.—Cuba has put on the seven-league boots of modern progress and is marching, double-quick, toward prosperity and wealth. Its surplus this year is greater per capita than that of any country on earth. Sugar has gone skyward, and the crop will bring $40,000,000 more than the usual price. In addition Cuba has more than $20,000,000 from the bonds which have been recently allowed to the soldiers. From these two sources alone it has now $60,000,000 more than a year ago, and all this in a population of 1,500,000 souls. This means an average increase of $40 for every man, woman and child in the country, or, at five to the family, an increase of $200 per family. To realize that, suppose that every family in the United States could suddenly add $200 to its present pile. Suppose that every mother's son of you and every mother's daughter, too, had $40 more than you had last year, or in any year preceding, and you have the condition of the Cuba of today. Such an increase in the United States would mean the sudden addition of about three and one-half billion dollars to our national wealth; and also that this vast sum would almost all go into immediate circulation for the booming and building up of the country.

That is what they have in Cuba today.

They have more. Every business is prosperous. The tobacco crop has been good. The island is fast becoming the fruit and vegetable garden of the United States, lands are being sold in large tracts to Americans and there is a general rise in real estate and other properties throughout the island. There were three times as many American tourists here last winter as in any winter preceding, and today scattering companies of young Yankees are prospecting the provinces and picking up good things in cheap lands and other investments. I felt that we should soon have a big industrial and commercial invasion of Cuba, and came here as one of the advance scouts of our business army to report to you the possibilities of that peaceful invasion. I find, however, that the movement is far in advance of what I supposed, and that the invasion, although entirely unorganized, is well under way.

A TALK WITH OUR CONSUL GENERAL.

Perhaps no American in Cuba is better posted on the situation than Mr. Frank Steinhart, the consul general from the United States. He was here during the war and was closely associated with Gen. Wood and our other officials in the reformation of the country. He has done much for American trade since then and he sees Cuba through the eyes of a practical business man. I met Mr. Steinhart in the offices of the consulate this morning. Said he:

"You cannot appreciate the change in Cuba since the war, without having been on the ground. At that time the people were the poorest of the poor. Thousands had not enough to eat and hardly enough clothes to cover their nakedness. This was so when the war closed and long thereafter. At the Inglaterra hotel, where you are stopping, the cafe, as you know, is right on the street. Early dinner there, in those dark times, one would have a crowd looking in at the windows, reaching out its hands and begging for food. You could see famine in the ribs of every other person you met; many of the children were skin and bones. The cattle had been eaten up during the war, and there was practically no meat for sale at prices which the people could pay. There was no money. The merchants [illegible] business. Everything was poverty. Today the people here are fat and well dressed. All have money and [illegible] spend. Business is good everywhere and every one has work. Lands are rising and real estate sales are made every day."

I here referred to the increase in circulation from the sugar surplus and the loan, whereupon the consul general said:

"Yes, but that is not all. The sales of lands will bring in many millions of new money this year, and Cuba's foreign trade with the balance in her favor has enormously increased. Indeed, I don't know of a country which has so much good new money as this."

MR. CARPENTER PHOTOGRAPHS LITTLE CUBANS FOR THE "NEWS."

When the War Closed They Were Skin and Bones Only. Their Condition Today Presents Quite Another Picture.

GENERAL CONSUL STRINGHART.

THE SUGAR SURPLUS.

"But much of Cuba's surplus is from sugar, the price of which is liable to fall?"

"Sugar may fall," replied the consul general. "Indeed, I believe that a lower price would be for the good of this island. It would prevent inflation and put us on a sounder business basis. Sugar is bound to bring a fair price in the future, and this is the chief sugar country of the world. Cuba can produce more on the same area at a lower cost than any other country. They talk [illegible] out the Philippine Islands as a possible competitor of Cuba in the sugar industry. That is ridiculous! We can raise sugar here for less than the freight on the manufactured product from the Philippines to the United States. We can lay our sugar down in New Orleans at a lower cost than sugar can be produced on the Louisiana plantations. The conditions for this industry are almost perfect in Cuba. There is no land like it."

NEW SUGAR MILLS.

"Is most of the sugar land under cultivation?"

"No," replied our consul general. "Our sugar industry is only about a half century old and the product altogether amounts to a million tons per annum. It might be quadrupled if all the available lands were under cultivation. There are vast sugar areas which are yet to be opened up, and some parts of the island are practically untouched as far as this industry is concerned. Take Santiago. There are tens of thousands of acres which will produce sugar for sale there at from $2 per acre and upward, and there are similar lands in Puesto Principle and Santa Clara. Many new mills are now building and that especially along the line of the Cuba railroad, which has been constructed since the war, opening up the eastern end of the island."

AMERICANS IN CUBA.

"Are many Americans coming into Cuba?"

"Yes, from all parts of the United States, and many of them are investing in lands and other properties. The majority of those, now here are men of money, who make large purchases. They are entirely different from the Americans who overran Cuba at the close of the war. Those were mostly the straggling offscouring of our army and adventurers without money, whose chief idea was to get something for nothing and to sell it for a big price. Those now arriving bring money with them or have such backing at home that they can pay for what they buy. Indeed, cash is a necessity in making purchases here. The Cubans who sell want a goodly proportion of their money down, and the balance on very short time. The lands are held in large tracts. It is easy to find good investments embracing from one to 100,000 acres each, but it is almost impossible to buy small farms of Cubans. Such farms are for sale at much higher prices from the Americans who buy the large tracts."

MONEY IN CATTLE.

"But does it not take a large tract for any kind of an agricultural undertaking here?"

"It does, as far as sugar is concerned. Such plantations often run into the thousands of acres, and it requires several thousand acres to support one good-sized sugar mill. It is different with tobacco, vegetables, fruit and coffee. These crops can be raised on small farms. That is also the case with cattle, although stock farming is more profitably conducted on large ranches.

"This country is one of the best cattle countries of the world," continued the consul general. "We have land here which raises grass from 12 to 15 feet high, upon which the cattle will keep fat the year round. They need no grain whatever, and there is no expense for barns or stables. Our cattle were all killed off during the war, but prior to that time there were as many as 3,000,000 head on the island. Since the war closed we have been getting our meat on the hoof from Texas, Venezuela, Porto Rico and elsewhere. We have, I venture, something like 2,000,000 cattle in Cuba now, and more than 1,500,000 on the register books. Our farmers are surprised at how well cattle do here. You can bring an old American cow with hollows over her eyes as big as your fist to Santiago and put her on grass. Within a few months she will fill out, fatten up and be as spry as a cat. Indeed, I look for the time when Cuba will be exporting beef. Just now meats are high and the stockmen are doing well."

AMERICAN TRADE.

"What should Americans do to increase their business here, Mr. Steinhart?"

"They should send their best men to study the island and its possibilities. One of our leading agricultural implement manufacturers asked me the other day about selling goods in Cuba. In reply I asked him if he had a man in his works who was worth $15,000 a year to him. He replied that some of the higher officials of the company received that much. 'I don't mean one of your fancy officials,' said I. 'I mean one of your mechanical engineers, a man who knows all about machinery and can invent modifications of machinery for certain ends. If you have such a man worth $15,000 a year, and can send him here, he will earn you more money in one trip than an $15,000 you have ever spent. Your man should not do a stroke of work, but go over the island and live on the plantations and see how the work is done and what machinery is needed. Such a man will plan machines which will revolutionize the sugar business, and which will make your sugar mills and your farming implements just what Cuba wants.'

"I said the same thing to the Fairbank people a few months ago," continued Gen. Steinhart, "and they sent a man down at a salary of $10,000 a year. That man has been on the plantations studying the situation. He was in my office the other day, and during his stay told me that he had already made plans which would drive the English and German machinery out of Cuba."

THE FUTURE OF CUBAN TRADE.

"Do you look for much increase in our trade with Cuba, Mr. Steinhart?" I asked.

"Yes, if our merchants will send the proper men here and will take advantage of the opportunities now offered to increase the trade. They should realize that they are working not only for the Cuba of today but the Cuba of the future. This island is just at its beginning. It will rapidly grow in population and wealth. The Cubans are money spenders, and their market will be worth far more to us than that of any South American country. Our manufacturers should appreciate this future. They should send men here to study the field. Every exporting house should have its branch here in which to educate drummers for the Cuban trade and work it. The Cuban has his own business methods, and we should adapt ourselves to him rather than force him to do business our way."

THE MATTER OF CREDITS.

The European nations give time here on every bill sold. On some things they give three, six and nine months, and in certain branches of business 18 months. There is no reason why Americans should not trade with Cuban merchants on the same basis that they trade with home merchants. The commercial houses here are old and well established. Their financial standing can be easily ascertain, and many of them are perfectly good. If the United States would have the bulk of the business here it must give as good terms as other nations.

AMERICAN GOODS IN CUBA.

I find American goods for sale almost everywhere in Havana. They are handled by Cubans, Spaniards and Americans and are imported both direct from the United States and through commission houses. There are altogether about 25 American mercantile firms and also agencies of many large American houses. The Armours, Swifts and Cudahys have meat establishments selling lard, hams and canned stuffs. There are several American drug stores, an American news stand, a whisky dealer or so, and a large number of real estate firms.

One of the biggest American establishments is that of the Harris Brothers on O'Reilly street not far from the Prado. This firm sells all sorts of American office furniture and supplies, stationery and notions. It has a big acetylene gas business, having put in hundreds of acetylene light plants at sugar mills, small towns and houses throughout the island, which it supplies with carbide. The Harris boys come here from Florida just about the time the war closed with less than $5,000 and opened a store for typewriters, bicycles and office supplies. They did about $100,000 worth of business the first year, and since then have steadily increased, until now they have not only this retail establishment in Havana, but also a considerable wholesale trade throughout the island. They tell me there are plenty of chances here for sober and industrious Americans with honesty and a fair amount of brains. They have trouble in finding good men for their own work, and say that this is the case with others.

AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES.

I find that all the leading American newspapers and magazines are sold in Cuba. You may buy them in Havana in the various passageways upon which the stores open, and there is a large news stand just above the national theater which belongs to a German-American who has a general news business in other cities as well. This man tells me that he sells 12,000 American magazines and 60,000 American newspapers every month. He charges good prices. All American papers cost from 7 to 10 cents apiece. The 10-cent magazines cost about 15 cents and other things in proportion. The only books sold are paper novels, although one may occasionally buy English bound books in the Spanish book stores.

I find that many of our American houses are sending goods here by mail. This is so with the big Chicago mail order houses and also the leading merchants of other cities. Lord & Taylor, John Wanamaker, Arnold & Constable and other New Yorkers are doing such a retail business with Cuba, and a number of such houses have open accounts with people throughout Cuba. Many Cubans come to the United States and there arrange to have goods sent to them. Some big firms send men here to drum up such accounts, and altogether a great deal of business is done which does not show in our trade reports.

A commercial traveler representing one of the largest department stores of the United States, for instance, tells me that he is selling many fine editions of the English and American novelists and sets of costly dictionaries. He has sold within the past three months $60,000 worth of a 10-volume dictionary, the finest bindings are in chief demand, and the sets average $125 apiece. This man says he takes many orders for dresses from Cuban women, our shirt-waist suits being especially popular. He is selling American shoes, hardware and furniture, and, indeed, almost everything that is handled in an American department store. He finds the Cubans friendly to Americans. They buy largely and are easy to sell.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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$21.35 to Asbury Park, N. J. $21.35.

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Millennial Stars, early editions.
Plea for Polygamy (Pub. by Carrington, Paris, France, 1898).
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