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DESERET EVENING NEWS.

Tuesday. - May 6, 1890.


## PECULIARITIES OF CUBA.

THE METHOD OF MAKING SUGAR.—NINE-TENTHS OF THE TRADE IN THIS COMMODITY CONDUCTED BY AMERICANS.—HOW SPAIN RETAINS ITS GRIP ON THE ISLAND.—DEPRECIATION of THE CURRENCY.

The following interesting article descriptive of Cuba is taken from the Detroit News:

City Counselor J. W. McGrath has returned home after an absence of several weeks in Cuba, whither he went in company with M. H. Chamberlain and Marvin Preston. The latter had decided to extend his visit to Vera Cruz, Mexico, while Mr. Chamberlain lingered in Florida in the expectation of going on a successful fishing expedition.

Soon after the return of Mr. McGrath an *Evening News* reporter asked him for the general impressions of the trip and he obligingly talked of it as follows:

"It was a very enjoyable and beneficial trip. We left New York March 13, landed at Santiago March 20, intending to remain only a few hours, but as we so interested in this, the oldest city on the western hemisphere, in its quaint architecture, its beautiful colorings, its people, that we remained there for ten days.

"From this point we made several excursions into the interior to see the immense sugar plantations, and along the coast to Guantanimo, and thence to the Isabel and Sabelano sugar estates operated by Brooks & Co., of New York. The largest estates, however, are at Cienfuegos. We witnessed the harvesting and the crushing of the sugar cane, and saw the sugar in its original state before the 'refiner' at our sectional mixes it with glucose. We do not eat pure sugar. Our policy practically prohibits the importation of clarified sugar.

"Sugar can be produced in Cuba at a profit at two cents per pound. Each sugar mill produces from 5,000,000 to 6,000,000 pounds of sugar annually. It costs anywhere from $500,000 to $1,000,000 to erect a sugar plant. Each mill owner cultivates from 500 to 800 acres of cane and takes the cane produced by smaller sugar farmers.

"The products of Cuba are sugar and tobacco, although the mountains are filled with iron, copper and manganese. But one mine is being operated by a Philadelphia company who are shipping from 50,000 to 60,000 tons of iron each month to Philadelphia. It is said that the ore can be shipped from Santiago de Cuba to Philadelphia cheaper than it can be carried from Lake Superior to Cleveland.

"The best Cuban cigars are exported to Europe, not to the United States. We buy their products largely, but sell them scarcely anything.

"They get their shoes, clothing, dry goods, furniture, hardware, etc., principally from Great Britain and France, although Havana is but 29 hours from Tampa, Fla. They need the products of our manufactures, our furniture, our agricultural implements, our shoes, our clothing, etc.

"The sugar estates are largely operated by free labor, mostly colored. Large numbers of Chinese are employed in and about the sugar mills. The women earn from 80 to 90 cents per day, the men from $1 to $1.25 per day. In the fields they work 12 hours, but in the mills about 10 hours.

"We went from Santiago along the southern coast, stopping at Santa Cruz, Trinidad and Cienfuegos Batalanos, and thence by rail to Havana, where we remained several days. From Havana we visited Matanzas, the far-famed Yumuri Valley, the cave of Bellamar, the Quinta de Delicios, etc.

"The Cuban Valleys are most beautiful and fertile. Sugar has been raised upon one piece of land for sixty consecutive years without replanting, cultivation, or fertilization. The machinery in the sugar mills is, in many instances, of the latest and most approved patterns, but the wagons, plows, etc., are those in use in the middle ages.

"Cuba needs, most of all, a moderate government. The people are restless and dissatisfied. The revolutionary spirit exists everywhere. They are taxed to death. The Spanish government exacts about $28,000,000 annually and gives back a military organization, a Spanish local police, Spanish governors, peasons and taxgatherers, and a state church system, the rites of which but few observe, notwithstanding they are of that faith.

"I was told that the taxation amounts to $28 for each cultivated acre of land. A cow can be bought for $10, but if you wish to slaughter the animal you must pay $18 to the Spanish government for the privilege of doing it.

"Cuba has a population of 1,500,000, of whom 500,000 are negroes, 250,000 are Spaniards and 750,000 natives of Cubans. Ninety-seven per cent of the people would vote for annexation to the United States if they had the opportunity. The Spanish soldier and the Spanish policeman are omnipresent, and one or more Spanish gunboats can be seen in every harbor. The harbors of Havana, at Guantanimo, at Matanzas, at Santiago, and generally along the coast are the finest in the world.

"The general condition of the negro is bad, and not different from that in the United States. One of the greatest difficulties experienced by the sugar makers is to get the negro to work at all. Hence the estates are not operated as well as they might be were the negro more willing to labor. They were liberated in the seventies. There are not a great many Chinese on the island. There are about 4,000 in Havana. The Chinese do not work in the fields, but in the sugar mills. They handle the cane into the crushers, direct into the rollers, and handle it back when not perfectly crushed.

"Although the Cubans are restless and dissatisfied with the Spanish government, there are no indications of an uprising. They have no arms and no vessel can carry a load of arms or advance into a Cuban port without a special permit from the governor. They do not allow an American vessel to land at a dock in Cuba. Our vessel anchored outside while the Spanish vessels were moored at the docks. They are very vigorous in their surveillance. They will allow no foreign vessel to enter any harbor after nightfall. Possibly they admit a vessel under stress of weather, but not otherwise, save in daylight. There are many Americans on the island of Cuba, and, indeed, all of the enterprise exhibited there is by Americans or Englishmen. Only one sugar estate on the island is operated by Spaniards. The jealousy of the Spanish government, as well as the slow deliberation of the Spanish race, is exemplified by the fact that Brooks & Co., sugar farmers and manufacturers, waited eleven years for a permit applied for from the Spanish government, to build a railroad from the coast port to their plantation. Even then the firm was compelled to build a custom house at the port at a cost of $30,000, which the government does not keep in repair, but allows it to fall gradually into ruins. The Spaniards, by their institution to their public buildings, appear to indicate that they have no assurance of maintaining their grip on the queen of the Antilles. Forts, churches and custom houses are decayed and left to crumble. Havana is paved with stone. A soft coral rock is quarried, which by exposure to the air becomes hard. But this is a limestone, and the air is continually filled with its limy dust. Havana has underground drains, but Santiago de Cuba, a city of 45,000 inhabitants, has overground drains, and when it rains the streets are a sight to see.

"What makes a very marked impression on the American is the absence of factories seen in our own or in English and other European cities. Stand on top of Fort Moro and look down on the city of Havana and you can see every house in it. It looks like a great dead city on account of the absence of that activity. There is no smoke from the factory smokestack. There are no factories. But there is no smoke at all. You will not see a stove in all Cuba. They cook on charcoal grates set in the top of a table against the wall. On the sides of the table are apertures for a draft. A tin funnel, like a locomotive smoke-conductor in a northern round house, carries off the fumes of the charcoal. But for that matter, the fumes might as well be left to go through the windows, since there is no glass in them, nothing but iron or wooden crossbars. There are no two rooms partitioned off as we have them. Nothing but curtains form the partition, and what is going on in one room can be heard in the other. There are very few doors except front doors. Almost 90 per cent of the people do business and reside in the same house. The entrance to the store of the ordinary merchant is the entrance to his residence. But the tobacco merchants divide the two. They are merchants of the better class. Nearly every house has a court, which is a yard surrounded by the structures composing the house. From his dining room the merchant can see his horse feeding across the court in the rear portion of the house, store and stable combined. These courts are often gay with flowers and filled with foliage and plants. There are no alleys in Cuba. They take more ground space than we do, and nearly all live on the ground floor."

"One thing that struck me favorably in Cuba was the coloring of the house. You look down the vista of a long street, a narrow one, as the streets will scarcely average 15 feet in width, and you see the roofs are covered with terra cotta. But the houses. One is kalsomined, not painted, a pure white, the next blue, the next light copper color. None of the colors are loud, but all are soft and pleasing to the eye. The general effect is very agreeable. Obispo Street in Havana is the widest. It is 16 feet in width. Sidewalks are no more than 10 inches or 2½ feet in width at the widest. Two persons cannot pass on any of their sidewalks. Curbstones are not to exceed 10 inches in many cases from the house line. Most of the people walk in the street and not on the sidewalk. But there are plenty of vehicles. They are very cheap. Three of us rode a mile for 50 cents, paper money, which is equal to about 20 cents of our money. At Santiago Spanish gold is at a premium, and Mexican half dollars at a discount of 20 per cent. At Havana paper is used which cannot be passed outside the city. One dollar in Spanish gold will buy $240 in Havana paper. American silver ten and five cent pieces circulate freely in Cuba, and to retain it there in circulation holes are punched in each of the pieces. The currency resembles our old worn fractional currency. American paper money and gold are at 10 per cent premium over Spanish gold. One dollar of our money will buy $260 of Havana money."


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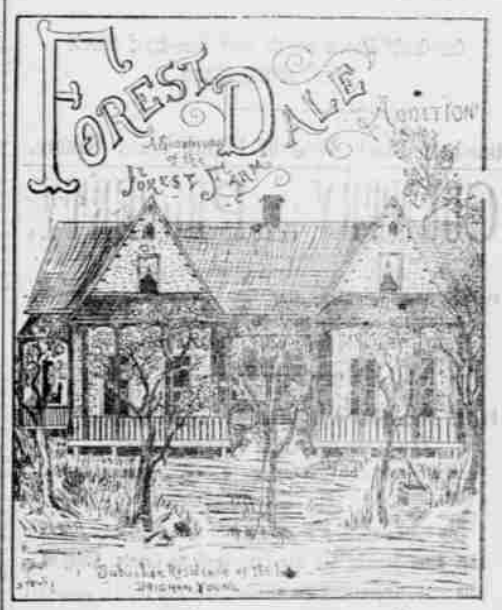


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