

without a branch between. The man, with a bit of rope around his waist, ending with a palm leaf stirrup for one bare foot, took his machete in his teeth and shinned up like a lizard, to the very top where he whacked off one of the huge leaves. As in most things in this wicked world, the descent was more rapid and dangerous than the ascent; but he came down grinning, elated by the twenty-cent piece, for which he would gladly climb palm trees for the rest of his natural life.

Later we went to see the cutting of a field of cane. Several hundred men and women were ranged in long lines, each line under a leader, who starts the tune and takes the initiative in every movement. Altogether they swing the machete, grasping the cane stalk with one hand and bending in unison, as though moved by machinery, the whizzing sounding of the blades cutting the air and the click of falling cane making a rude accompaniment to the song they are singing. Ox carts carry the cane to a queer machine patented by a Cuban, which hoists it up, weighs it, and dumps it evenly into waiting cars, to be conveyed to the mill. There women throw it in to the grinders, chanting a wild chorus as they work, in which one company responds to another in a sort of musical dialogue.

This letter is already too long to go into the modus operandi of sugar-making, even if its writer understood the subject. Cane is cultivated like Indian corn, which it closely resembles in appearance—only some yellow in color. It is first planted in rows—not in hills like corn—and must be hoed and weeded until it gets high enough to shade its own roots; after which it needs no further attention till the cutting. This refers to the first laying out of a plantation, which will afterwards continue fruitful for years, by simple processes of renewal. When thoroughly ripe, the long, yellow leaves are streaked with red, the top a dark green, from the center of which shoots up a silvery stem, two or three feet high, on whose stem grows a lilac plume, shading to white. The effect of a cane field in its maturity, basking under the torrid sun and gently undulating in the breeze, is a picture to live in the memory. Sugar-cane yields but one crop a year. There are several varieties, but in Cuba the Otaheltan seems to be the favorite. Between the time when enough of the cane is ripe to warrant the getting of steam in the grinding mill, and the time when rain and heat spoils its quality, all the sugar for the season must be made; hence the necessity for great industry during a portion of the year. In Louisiana the grinding season lasts only eight weeks; in Cuba it continues four months. This year, with war on hand, there is greater haste than ever, for the mills may be burnt down any day. The juice is pressed out by machinery, and after the second squeezing is dry, the crude sugar is put into bags of jute, each bag containing 240 pounds. By the way, a fair sample of Spain's methods may be seen in these sugar bags. The coat of an English jute bag is 9 cents; but the duty thereon, unless it be made in Spain, is 10 cents, and its price to Cubans is 20 cents. So the thrifty mother country gets the job of making the bags, and supplies them to her colonies at twice their value and five per cent over! That is no worse, however, than in the matter of flour. Cubans might get it direct from the United States at \$6 a barrel; but it sells at Havana from \$12 to \$15 the barrel because every ounce of it must first go to Spain and come back with a brand upon it.

A few years ago the value of Cuba's plantations, all told, including sugar, coffee and tobacco, was officially estimated at \$380,555,527, yielding a net

yearly income of \$35,000,000. Remembering that only about one-third of the island's superficial area of 117,000 square kilometres, is under cultivation, these figures speak well for its fertility. Heaven knows it ought to be fertile, with frequent baptisms of blood during four centuries. Within the last two years it has been enriched by upwards of 400,000 human carcasses. According to a statement made in the cortes by the learned Deputado, Don Jose de Pi-rojo, Cuba had contributed to the Spanish crown, up to the year 1890, a trifle over \$137,500,000.

In the year '96 she was happy in having to pay only \$26,000,000, not counting the exorbitant municipal taxes—more than was ever demanded of any equal number of taxpayers in the world. No wonder Spain considers her rebellious colony a prize to fight over.

FANNIE BRIGHAM WARD.

### A DYING NATION.

Spain alone, of all the nations which have filled a large place in the world's history, is weaker today than it was when the century began. England and Russia are more powerful than they were then. Austria has lost its shadowy connection with that political fiction called the Roman Empire, which Voltaire said was neither an empire nor Roman, nor holy, and she has been driven out of the German league. France has lost territory here and there, and has gained some, but both Austria and France are in all essential particulars stronger than they were a century ago, leaving out of view the transient dominance which Bonaparte gave to the latter country. The empire of Germany and the kingdom of Italy did not come into being until the last third of the present century.

Totally different has been the record of Spain. In 1800 Spain comprised not far from half of North America and nearly all of Central and South America. She had the whole of the region west of the Mississippi, from the Canadian line south to the Gulf of Mexico, and practically the whole of the continent from this point southward to Cape Horn, and the islands adjacent belonged to her. In addition she had Florida and a strip of territory north of the Gulf of Mexico, extending from the present state of Florida west to the Mississippi, so that she had the territory on both sides of that river at its southern end. The boast that the sun never set on the dominions of Philip II could still have been truthfully made in the days of Charles IV a century ago. But all of that immense domain has broken away from her since then, except a few fragments. Of that world empire, comprising the greater part of the western hemisphere which Spain had 100 years ago, Cuba, Porto Rico and a few other islands, too insignificant to find a place on ordinary maps, are all that is left to her today. Nothing in the history of any other nation except the collapse of Alexander's empire after the great Macedonian's death or the fall of Rome, when Odoacer overturned the shadow throne of "Little Augustus," equals the swift and utter ruin which has come to Spain since the eighteenth century's closing years.

How and why did Spain lose its American empire? The answer to this query necessitates the taking of a glance backward farther than the time at which the break up in Spanish-America began. Philip II, so a Spanish chronicler of his time tells us, schooled his son Philip to be an imbecile, in order to prevent him from asserting himself before the fathers' death, and the work was done so thoroughly that the later Philip remained an imbecile to the day of his death. Philip III surrendered the government to a

persecutions of Philip II, which were so barbarous that Motley says "it was beyond the power of man's ingenuity to add any fresh horrors" to them. He drove tens of thousands of Jews and about 1,000,000 Moors out of the kingdom. He continued in his American provinces the hideous reign of murder and treachery which, under his predecessors had been carried by such instruments as Pizarro and Cortes.

Here are the causes of the fall of Spain from the position of primacy among the nations in the seventeenth century to that of a third class power in the nineteenth. These causes brought this consequence because the causes have endured. The case of Philip III is cited here for two reasons; Philip II's reign marks the beginning of Spain's decline and fall. That monarch's defects, follies and vices are repeated in an overwhelming majority of Spain's crown wearers.

They recur with fatal regularity and constancy among that country's monarchs down almost to today. "God who has been gracious in giving me many states has not given me an heir capable of governing them." The latter part of this observation which is ascribed to Philip II, would be true of very nearly all or that king's successors. The incapable and cowardly Philip III, who reigned from 1598 to 1621, is reproduced 200 years later in the cowardly, vicious and incompetent Charles IV, who reigned from 1788 to 1808, and in the person of Charles' still more despicable son Ferdinand VII, whose sway nominally extended from 1808 to 1833. For Philip's favorite the Duke of Lerma, we have the weak corrupt and unscrupulous courtier Godoy, religious persecutions and barbarities which Philip II and Philip III perpetrated in Spain's European dominions were practiced in Spain's American dominions along to the days Charles IV and Ferdinand VII. These follies and enormities had driven most of Spain's European provinces outside of the peninsula proper into revolt, which fourth Charles went to the throne. They erected all of Spain's American dependencies into nations separate from Spain during Charles' and Ferdinand's reigns.

With the regime of Charles IV the downfall of Spanish power on the American continent began, and the current of Spanish affairs began to touch the stream of United States history. The Louisiana province, which was ceded to Spain by France in 1763, after France's defeat by England, Spain retroceded to France in 1800, on a promise from Bonaparte, which that potentate promptly disregarded, to render certain services to Spain. As compared with the France of Bonaparte, the Spain of that day was as feeble in diplomacy as it was contemptible in arms. Charles was a glutton and an imbecile, and the queen, Marie Louise of Parma, was a shameless profligate, who elevated one of her lovers, the weak and vain Manuel Godoy, from a mental post in the king's body guard to the station of prime minister and virtually head of the government, to which arrangement the imbecile king, who knew the relations between the queen and Godoy, assented. Godoy and Charles were wax in Bonaparte's hands. When the last named personage coerced the Spanish government into surrendering Louisiana to France, he, on Godoy's demand, promised not to give up that territory to any other power except to Spain, and to be especially careful not to let the United States get a foothold in it. Bonaparte, when temptation appeared, repudiated his pledge as cheerfully as he did the promise to perform certain favors for Spain as an equivalent of the retrocession. The temptation came in 1803, when the war between England and France was resumed.