

AFTER THE WAR IN CUBA

Havana; Its Development and Progress.

Cuba a year and a half after the war is peaceful, patient and prosperous, remarkably so within so short a period; but underneath the tranquil surface the American incumbents are cognizant of almost indecent haste on the part of the unschooled and unprepared Cubans to seize the reins of state. After talking the situation over calmly with various Americans in Cuba, we are of the opinion that the political Cuban is incapable of appreciation. This does not apply to the rank and file of Cubans, who have nobly returned to peace and prosperity, skinny though the latter must be for some time to come; but then it is never the rank and file that perpetrate war and its horrors. Cuba has its quota of rapacious, plotting and inconsiderate disturbers. It would seem that the Cubans might not so soon forget that, but for the intervening Americans, their fifteen years' war would still be on with Spain, intent on their absolute extermination. Five years would have been none too much schooling for the freed Cubans, who never have known a government of their own, and as well might Uncle Sam entrust a precocious youth with the reins of a mettlesome team. The general population seems grateful, patient, and disposed to let affairs of state take their natural course, but not so the political hot-heads, who imagine themselves statesmen, and are avidious to share in the distribution of Cuban spoils after the Spanish methods so long in vogue. From all that can be seen in Cuba it is hard to imagine that war is possible under the humane and unselfish American protectorate, the blatant and sensational newspaper correspondent to the contrary notwithstanding.

We arrived in Havana this year auspiciously, from a historical point of view, witnessing the formal abdication of General Brooke and the entree of Governor-General Wood. General Brooke, in accordance with military tactics, left the palace in civic apparel—a soft hat, a Prince Albert, cassimere trousers and glossy pumps—walked through the royal gates at the foot of O'Reilly street to the harbor steamerette that was to convey his party to the anchored Olivette. The only pretense of pomp was his escort of American generals, from General Lee down, and a mounted bugle band from the Quemados.

The destitution and terrible suffering of the people of Cuba before and immediately after the war, and the generous response of the American people to the call for help, are matters of history. The State of Texas, loaded with food and supplies contributed from the nation, and having on board Miss Clara Barton and her staff of physicians and nurses, was the first ship to enter the harbor of Santiago after the surrender of that city. The necessity for the work then begun, of caring for the sick and destitute, has never ceased. Personally, with her field agents, Miss Barton visited the most needy localities, and, aided by the local authorities and charitable volunteers, organized hospitals and asylums, providing them with all needful requisites. Immediately after her arrival in Havana she founded a "creche," or day-nursery for the care of the infant children of poor mothers compelled to seek employment away from their homes—a charity heretofore unknown in that island. Soon afterward she started a society called "El Socorro," to aid the widows and girls, who were compelled to seek employment, especially those of the educated and refined class, who, behind the doors of their once happy homes, are now fighting vainly against hunger and death. To those she bravely and quickly opened avenues of refuge, relief, and resources for the arts of refined labor.

A barbarous Spanish custom still barnacles Havana, and that is the vaccinating outrage that departing visitors and tourists are subjected to as mercilessly as the insurgent wretches were dispatched at the Fort Cabanas deadline. There is no getting out of Havana without a "health" certificate, and every leave-taking person is steered to his fate at 22 Mercaderes street. Here he is confronted by an M. D. executioner and peeled to his shoulder or thigh in search of a vaccinating scar, which, if not decipherable, precipitates a murderous attack, the chosen limb being stabbed, shot and consigned to periodical torture.

Havanaites seem to think no more seriously of yellow fever than Americans do of smallpox, business and society pursuing the even tenor of their ways the same as if the islandic plague did not exist. To the Havana visitor there is, in fact, no appearance or evidence of the saffron pest. Everybody seems as healthy and active as in New York or Chicago, and assuredly there is no suggestion of fever or fear in the bustling thoroughfares. The plague was remarkably mild in character the past year and the fatalities hardly one in ten as compared with Havana's record under the slothful Spanish regime.

After a year it is apparent that Uncle Sam wildly misjudged the Cubans when he took temporary possession of the island and transported 40,000 or 50,000 troops with which to preserve order and prevent possible brigandage. They were never in the least required and have long since been recalled, there being now less than 10,000 regulars in all Cuba and no volunteers whatever. Of course Uncle Sam did not know this and could take no chances, but retrospectively it seems to have been a sinful waste of money and surprising military hindsight. The Cubans generally at first perused the American invasion with curiosity and indifference, and perhaps wondered if Uncle Sam knew what he was about, but the islanders as a whole seem to have lost little time in returning to their balliwicks and occupations. The remnant of American regulars remaining

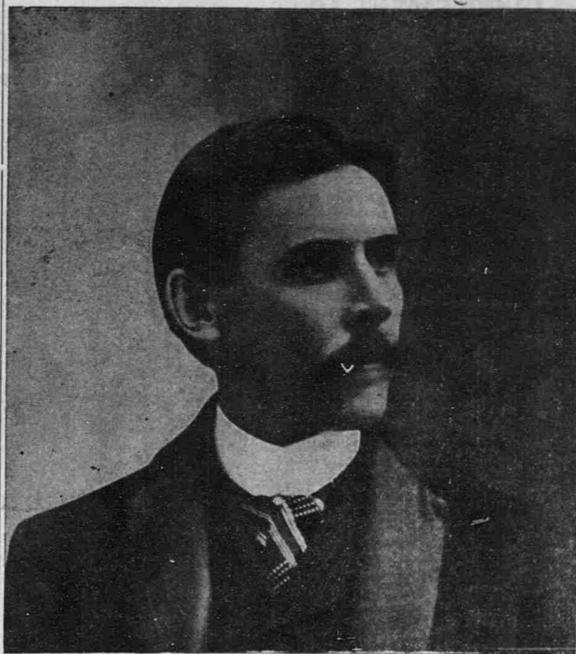
are parceled out on the Havana vedado, at Quemados camp, and about the island, Santiago, Mantanzas and similar points. Only a few of the regulars in Havana proper now wear the navy blue cap and blouse and light-blue trousers peculiar to the ranks at home. Many of the officers through the summer affected white duck. As a whole the American soldiers have fared healthfully indeed in Cuba, and many intend locating in the Antilles on leaving the army.

Havana now swarms with proud and pompous Cuban policemen. The new Cubanettes, in dark-blue blouses and bloomers, with soft hats, visible hip revolvers and billies, and white gloves, are slightly if not physically awesome. The heaviest weight is about 140 pounds, and from that down to boys that even the milk burros rubber at. For the most part the Havana police-

men hail from the first Cuban families and are as imperial as peacocks. They may never grow large, but there is hope that they may ripen a little as the world wags along.

Nothing in Havana interested us more than the remarkable transformation of the postal service within a year after the Cuban war. A steam launch, owned and operated by the government, calls upon every incoming and outgoing vessel, promptly receiving and dispatching the mail of the island. Under the Spanish regime the Havana postoffice was crude, countrified and unreliable indeed, with no systematic departments, no letter boxes or free car service. The incoming and outgoing mails were assorted and bunched on big tables! If the outgoing mail was not ready when a vessel was scheduled to leave, the boat had to wait or the mail laid over until the next steamer was due to leave. The only carrier service was that at the individual or tip expense of the recipient of a letter. A half a million of undelivered and unclaimed letters were found in barrels, boxes and corners by the incoming Americans, and the confusion and squalor of the premises were simply staggering.

The Havana postoffice is now organized into metropolitan divisions and sections, and a competent superintendent placed in charge of each. The mails are made up and dispatched from schemes, and regular case examinations of clerks are held. Registered matter is handled in immense volumes—so large, in fact, that it would astonish a registry clerk in the largest office



DR. W. I. SEYMOUR.



STREET SCENES IN HAVANA

- 1. A street in Regla.
- 2. A street in Jesus del Monte
- 3. Ox team and cart, Havana
- 4. Down Correles Street
- 5. Street crossing; Cuban cop.
- 6. Antique street car service.
- 7. Feeding reconcentraoes.
- 8. U. S. paying Cuban soldiers.