

CUBA LIBRE.

Formerly shunned alike by tourists and commercial travelers, Havana is getting to be more attractive than Barcelona and promises to become the Nice of a new Western Riviera. Poor concentrados, impoverished by the cruel practices of Gen. Wyler, have either been set to work making roads or were intrusted with implements and cattle to till for their own benefit small farms. As a consequence, fields devastated by war begin to teem with sugar cane and tobacco. The tillable soil of the island, under actual cultivation, is inconsiderable as yet, but the area is almost as great as it ever has been.

The expenses have chiefly been met by carefully collected imposts, the onerous export duties being at last abolished. The fourteen million dollars annually derived from this source have been distributed in about the following proportion: For sanitation, 25 per cent; for municipalities, 15 per cent; for instruction and administration of justice, 10 per cent; for charities and public works, 10 per cent; for guarding rural districts and suppressing brigandage, 10 per cent.

During twelve months in 1895 Cuba imported merchandise for the value of \$61,443,334.65, and exported, inclusive of an extraordinary large crop of sugar for \$110,285,020.31. The foreign trade of the island for six months, ending June 30, 1900, consisted of imports for \$37,321,366, exports for \$30,972,031; ending on June 30, 1901, it consisted of imports for \$34,129,959, exports for \$42,707,144.

Of sugar the island has produced:

Year.	Tons.	Worth per ton.
1891.....	819,760	\$64.92
1892.....	976,789	65.74
1893.....	815,894	72.90
1894.....	1,054,214	54.55
1895.....	1,004,264	41.89
1896.....	225,221	53.83
1897.....	212,051	45.00
1898.....	305,543	45.42
1899.....	335,668	51.37
1900.....	300,073	58.59
1901.....	600,268	50.00

The provinces of Havana, Matanzas and Santa Clara are almost entirely devoted to the cultivation of sugar cane. The boast that ultimately they will be able to supply the world with all the sugar it needs is probably an exaggeration. But more acres are constantly planted; without being replanted they can produce new crops for ten consecutive years, and it is fair to presume that Cuba will soon raise more sugar than it ever did in the past. As the largest consumers we are in the position greatly to stimulate production by reducing or abolishing the duty. Since 1876, when we concluded a reciprocity treaty with Hawaii, the export of sugar from those islands

to the United States has grown from 26,000,000 lbs. worth \$1,227,000, to 545,000,000 lbs. worth \$21,898,000 in 1899. The value of land suitable for sugar plantation has always been greater in the densely populated island of Porto Rico, where it sold as high as \$80 an acre, than in Cuba, where equally fertile ground went begging for \$8 an acre. Sugar from Porto Rico is now admitted free; unless the United States reduce the onerous duties on Cuban sugar, the difference in the values of land on the two islands will become greater, and Porto Rico will continue to thrive at the expense of Cuba. Porto Rico contains about 3,600 square miles, a population of 953,243, or 265 persons on a square mile. Cuba has a population of 1,572,797 and 41,655 square miles, or thirty-eight inhabitants to one square mile.

If any excuse could be made for indulging in the use of tobacco, it is the divine fragrance of a cigar made of Havana leaf. The finest, called "Vuelta Abajo," is produced exclusively in the province of Pinar del Rio. A never-ceasing demand keeps up prices and renders the production lucrative, so that a careful grower is rewarded for his pains by a profit of 25 per cent. The entire production of tobacco on the island was in 1896-7, 375,000 bales, against 460,000 bales in 1899-1900.

Values of exports of tobacco and manufactures thereof amounted in 1895-6 to \$24,047,841; 1899-1900, \$21,712,435; eleven months of 1900-01, \$27,348,445. While the exports of leaf tobacco have increased, chiefly to Key West and New York, exports of manufactures thereof have diminished. Against 250,000,000 cigars exported in 1889 less than 125,000,000 were exported in 1899.

A large portion of the tobacco and cigar business is controlled by two combinations: The Henry Clay Bock Company, an English syndicate, with a capital of \$7,000,000; the American Havana Commercial Co., with \$8,000,000 capital. Other important firms are the German of H. Upman & Co. and the English Partagas Co.

The iron ore, containing nearly two-thirds of metallic iron, is chiefly exported to Philadelphia. Last year the principal mines produced: The Juragua Iron Company, 151,000 tons; Spanish-American, for the American Steel Company, 293,000 tons. Declared values of the exports were: For 1899, 386,900 tons, worth \$506,997; for 1900, 409,815 tons, worth \$514,750. Values of some exports have considerably fallen off: Fruit, in 1895-6 \$2,133,770, 1899-1900 to \$510,122. Cacao in 1895-6, \$551,628, 1899-1900 to \$281,211. In the first part of the last century 1,600 plantations produced in Cuba better and more coffee than Java.

Nearly a million arrobas were exported in 1815. She does not produce now enough to satisfy home consumption, since it can be raised cheaper elsewhere.

Exports could be increased of timber, asphaltum and mineral ores other than iron, if their production were stimulated. Rates for the use of money, rule on the island, in cities at 6 per cent to 7 per cent for bankers' loans, at 8 per cent to 9 per cent on bond and mortgage secured by improved real estate, the value of which has advanced, and from 12 to 20 per cent per annum on plantations in the rural districts. Titles to this kind of property are of questionable value; laws which prohibit foreclosures of farm mortgage have often been enacted and again were enforced in 1897. They begin now to be partially collectible, but to borrow money on the security of plantations is as difficult as ever.

Cubans, Spaniards and Germans control the banking and wholesale business. The retail business is in the hands of Spaniards, who charge a profit of 50 per cent, and give long credit. Cubans are accustomed to pay liberally for it. Some attempts have been made to introduce the system of American "department stores" on a cash basis, but they did not succeed. Since the Treaty of Paris cancelled the bonded debt of \$500,000,000, held in Spain, the island is free of debt. Municipal debts (Havana, about \$10,000,000) are comparatively small.

There are three political parties on the island, who profess the following opinions: Republicans are in favor of absolute Cuban independence. Union democrats, comprising the conservative elements, wish for a United States protectorate. Nationalists vacillate between these two extremes. The Platt amendment to the new Cuban constitution, by which Cuban independence is practically abandoned for a United States protectorate, was at first violently opposed by politicians solicitous for a semblance of freedom and the continued prosperity of the country, the majority, comprising even some of the radical leaders, finally voted for this amendment. It must be admitted, however, that our military rule is not popular. Our soldiers may be respected, but they are feared by the ignorant, and generally hated. We have reason to be proud of the achievements of the officers we sent to govern the Cubans. They may be grateful themselves for improvements that have been made, nevertheless they chafe under our military regulations and consider them harsh. Few of our representatives there have learned the art of diplomacy; the Spanish language is not familiar to them. Juan Gualberto Gomez, a radical, who, though of African descent, is a most influential leader, has been quoted as saying that he preferred Spanish slavery to American rule.

When the excellent constitution is put into practice, independence permanently established and stability assured, we may, by careful consideration of Cuban rights become popular; especially if we offer them a reciprocity treaty, to which, as our political wards, they are entitled. Their prosperity never has made practical progress. If we accelerate and place it on a firm footing the islanders will wish to become Americans—free in reality, as well as in name.—Journal of Commerce and Commercial Bulletin.