

Americanizing Porto Rico

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 3.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—With this letter I close my series on Porto Rico. I have found Uncle Sam's new island one of the most interesting parts of his possessions, and I believe in the end it will, in proportion to its size, be one of the most profitable. During my travels I have interviewed the leading Americans who have visited Porto Rico as to whether the island will pay or not as a part of our territory. So far I have not found one answer in the negative. General Fred Grant, with whom I talked just before he left San Juan for the Philippines, was enthusiastic over Porto Rico, and he knew as much about the country and its inhabitants as any man who has ever visited it. During his stay he rode over every part of the island on horseback, going from town to town and village to village. He visited every plantation of any size and made the personal acquaintance of almost every prominent Porto Rican. Some of his rides were extraordinary. At one time he made eighty-two miles in one night on horseback, his only companion being his son, a boy of 17. He had traveled 115 miles by rail and horse the day before, but pushed right on in order to get through quickly. General Grant told me he thought the island would be the garden patch of the United States, and that it would eventually be divided up into small plantations, owned by individuals and syndicates and by rich people who desire a delightful winter residence. He was enthusiastic over the climate and the fertility of the soil. He liked the people, and told me he thought they would make good American citizens. He believes, I think, in a civil rather than military government, but does not think the Porto Ricans are as yet fit to govern themselves.

General Robert P. Kennedy, the head of the insular commission, has the same opinion, although I do not know that he expresses it in his report. He, together with many others, think the island should have a government somewhat like that of the District of Columbia, the chief officials to be Americans, appointed by the president. Assistant Postmaster General Heath, who has visited all parts of the island, expressed a similar opinion in a conversation with me, as have also many other prominent men.

Americans Should Handle the Money.

There is one thing very evident, and that is that Americans should handle all public funds and hold the chief offices of trust for some years to come. The Porto Ricans have been educated according to Spanish ideas of honor and financial responsibility. They have been taught that every public official can be bribed and can be moved by bribes. With them in the past justice has always been bought and sold. Judges and justices are still considered open to purchase, and the courts cannot be respected as long as natives are at the head of them. It is so with the other native officials. Nearly every one of them expects to charge for doing his duty when the doing it benefits any one out of whom he can squeeze money. The notaries public, for instance, so managed their offices in times past that many of them made as much as \$10,000 a year. General Kennedy tells of one who made more than \$50,000 per annum, and says he heard of some who made more. According to law, the notaries have to draw up all real estate papers. They charge not only for their services, but also a percentage on the amount of the sales. Having made a deed, they will not deliver the original to the purchaser, but make him pay for a certified copy. They then hand the original deed over to the recorder, who charges for entering it, but who will not let any one look at the entry, but will charge for telling whether it is there and just what it is. Fees of this kind are common in all such transactions. A recent transfer of real estate cost the purchaser over \$2,000 for notarial and recorder fees. Another transfer, the amount of which was only \$2,000, cost in fees alone over \$500. The recorders charge proportionate fees for all kinds of work, one recently demanding more than \$3,000 for recording a will. In fact, until Uncle Sam took possession of the government it is doubtful whether there was an official in Porto Rico who was not making more or less money outside of his regular salary.

The stealings extended to all branches and the people were worked in every possible way. In some of the towns I found the policemen going about the markets and laying assessments of their own or the mayor's, I suppose, on the amount of vegetables and fruit which the peons had brought in for sale. The jailers in many of the towns have been found to have charged 20 cents apiece for the rations they have given the prisoners, whereas it is known that the rations thus itemized have cost each 15 cents or less. School teachers have been allowed to charge certain classes of pupils, and they have, as a usual thing, sublet their living rooms to the government for school rooms, making, in some cases, as much out of their rent as their salaries. The normal school at San Juan, which has chiefly small children, and which is not a normal school in our sense of the word, has seventeen professors, who have been drawing \$45,000 a year from the government, and the host of government officials at the capital have, until lately, been doing little more than fleece the people and draw their salaries. The department of public works has been costing Porto Rico in salaries alone \$58,000 in Porto Rican currency, the courts and department of justice have been receiving \$160,000, and other things in proportion.

The priests up to the beginning of the American occupation were paid out of the government treasury, annually receiving \$92,000 from that source, and this notwithstanding they charged such high fees for marriages that many people were unable to afford the ceremony.

Must Be Americanized.

I am surprised at the hazy ideas which many hold as to our possession of Porto Rico. Some do not realize that it is now and for all time a part of the United States. It is as much a part of the union as Massachusetts or California, and the time may come when it will be one of the most important parts of the country. We should consider the island as an outlying defense or fortification. It will be one of our chief military and naval stations and will be one of the bases of operations in the defense of the Gulf of Mexico and of any canal across the Isthmus of Panama. We have already a naval station upon it, and have set aside a large territory on the bay of San Juan for a navy yard. As a station of this kind it is important that the island should be essentially American in all of its interests. Its people should be made Americans as far as heart, head and pocket are concerned. The heart and pocket will go somewhat together, but the head will have to be a matter of education. Before we can make the Porto Ricans Americans in our sense of the word we have got to give them our language and ideas. They must be taught English. The only way to do this will be through the next generation, and that by American education. At present 90 per cent of the Porto Ricans cannot read and write. They are densely ignorant, and having been so oppressed by the Spaniards, they have an antipathy to everything Spanish, and from now on will naturally lean toward everything American. These 90 per cent form the working classes. The other 10 per cent are the property owners and the government class. They are Spanish in feeling and education, and it is they who wish to keep the Spanish language in the schools. I think this is a mistake. The Spanish language or literature are the key to the Spanish thought and idea, the very things we want to get rid of. Nothing but English should be taught, and English should be made the language of the people just as soon as possible. If Spanish were kept out of the schools this would be accomplished in a very few years. The young Porto Ricans would become Americans in spirit and ideas; they would feed upon our literature and would probably be the most intensely patriotic of our people.

New Schools Very Important.

One of the brightest men I met in San Juan was the American consul, Mr. Hanna. He told me that the only hope of Porto Rico was in the children and in English education. General Kennedy has the same opinion. He believes in the organization of night schools as well as day schools, and says the island should be divided up into small school districts, and that the English language should be taught. He found the same condition of education existing as that I have described in a former letter. He visited school houses everywhere, but nowhere found desks nor any kind of school conveniences. I do not think a proper representation has been given as to the backward condition of education in Porto Rico. The reports of the bureau of education have been full of large words conveying the idea that much more than the reality has been accomplished. The Porto Ricans themselves, of course, are anxious to make as good a showing as possible. They put their best foot forward at all times, and when Secretary Alger was here some time ago they had the school children of San Juan come out to meet him. I don't know that the secretary knew it, but the assembly included in fact all the school children who could be scraped together from all the schools, both public and private. In San Juan and also the sur-



THROUGH AVENUES OF COCOANUT PALMS.

rounding towns. A photograph made of the review was quite impressive.

Carpetbaggers Not Wanted.

I doubt whether Uncle Sam can do much with the educated Porto Rican, especially those who have been of the official class. The tax collectors and other political leeches who have been fattening off of the people for years cannot be taught to govern honestly. The keeping them in office, as has been done in some cases, is only changing the name of the government and not its character. In time the people will be educated up to our idea of a government, but until then we should consider that we have about \$50,000 ignorant and oppressed people to care for, and that their interests are above the 50,000 or 75,000 property owners who have been molded along lines contrary to ours. The children of these people may be educated so that they will become Americans; it is doubtful whether the old will ever be so. At the same time the men sent down to take charge of the offices should not be of the carpet-bag class. The more important officials should be honest American business men—not broken-down, out-of-job politicians, and to them should be given the charge of all money-producing offices. I know such a policy would not be popular in Porto Rico, but it will undoubtedly tend to bring order out of the financial chaos which has prevailed there for years.

Among the most important things is the reorganization of the courts and of the laws. The laws should be adapted to those of the United States and the system of justice should be the same. English should be the official language of the courts, and a jury system should be established.

English as the Porto Ricans Teach It.

I believe the Porto Ricans are anxious to become good American citizens. I think many of the better classes are already so in spirit, and if the tariff can be so ar-

ranged as to give the island mercantile advantages they will be more patriotic still. I saw American flags everywhere over the island. They are hung up in many of the parlors and sitting rooms, and also in many of the stores. The Porto Ricans are trying to learn the English language, and every young man who has a smattering of it is teaching his friends. Some of the methods of teaching are peculiar, books having been published showing how the language may be learned without a teacher in thirty lessons. From one of these comes the following, from which you may see what the pronunciation of these future Yankees of the tropics may be if the public school teachers do not correct it. I quote:

English.	Pronunciation.	Spanish.
What is your name?	Uat iz tua neim?	Como se llama Ud?
How old are you?	Iou old na iz?	Que edad tiene Ud?
What is the price of this?	Uat iz ze prais ov zis?	Cual es el precio de esto?
It is very dear.	It iz veri dia.	Es muy caro.
I will give you a dollar?	It will giv lu ei a dola?	Yo le dare un peso.
That is not enough.	Zat iz nat enuf.	No es bastante.
Speak slowly.	Spik slouli.	Habla despacio.
You speak too fast.	Iu spik tu fast.	Ud habla muy ligero.
This is a fine house.	Zis iz oi fair haus.	Esta es una casa bonita.

Points for Porto Rican Visitors.

Americans should visit Porto Rico. They will find few discomforts and will see more curious things in a four-weeks' trip than they can see in Europe in six months. The steamers now take you from New York to San Juan in about five days. The distance is about 1,400 miles, and the sea, after you pass Cape Hatteras, is remarkably smooth. At San Juan you find a fairly good hotel, and there are places where you can stop comfortably over night at almost any town on the island. If you are a good horseman you can get a native pony and go from place to place in the saddle. Your steed

will carry you along as gently as though you were on a rocking horse. It will take you through avenues of coconut palms; it will carry you through miles of coffee plantations and into regions where you will see a luxuriance of vegetation not visible outside the tropics.

If you are an amateur photographer you will find snap shots of all kinds at every turn and on every road, but you will have to be careful of your lights. The air in Porto Rico is full of moisture. It has what is technically called light interference, and there is a peculiar haze which makes photography difficult. During my travels I met one of the photographers of the War department and got the benefit of his experience. He told me that he had made thousands of exposures, and that it was some time before he discovered the exact steps and times to get the best result. He says that the light is so strong that the glare spoils the photograph if it is not carefully made. It is best to use a small diaphragm and expose slowly. The best steps are thirty-two and sixty-four, and the best time from one-twenty-fifth to one-fourth of a second. One must be very careful of his plates. They should be wrapped in tinfoil and not left long in the plate holder. Users of films should buy tropical films and keep them wrapped in oiled silk. I have used films and have had good results. Porto Rico is a good place for moonlight photography. The moon is very bright, and beautiful effects are to be had by night, the photos showing the outlines of the hills and roadways.

A Word as to Outfits.

The traveler need not worry much about his outfit. He can wear almost the same clothes that he wears in the summer at home, although it is well to bring an overcoat, for the nights in the mountains are often cold. The man who intends to ride much on horseback had best bring his own saddle and bridle. The average Porto Rican of the country sits upon his pony as upon a chair, with saddle baskets on each side and with his legs around the neck of the pony. He uses no stirrups, but, notwithstanding this, his method of sitting is quite as comfortable as ours. One needs a good waterproof, rubber leggings and an umbrella. He should have a blanket for interior trips and insect powder will often help his slumbers. As to food, he can get anything in San Juan that he can get in the United States, and this is so also as to wines and liquors. He will never be out of reach of Porto Rican rum, which will serve in case of an attack of cold, and which will cost him about one-tenth what he would pay for it at home. Good bread is to be had everywhere. It is made by the town bakers and sold at so much a loaf. The meats of the interior are tough, the chickens are small, but the eggs are generally good.

As to the language, if you do not understand Spanish it is well to take along a phrase book of Spanish and English, although this is not essential. You will meet American soldiers everywhere and you cannot find a town where you will not be welcomed by the postal officials. In most places the Americans will put themselves at your disposal and guide you about the country, showing you the sights.

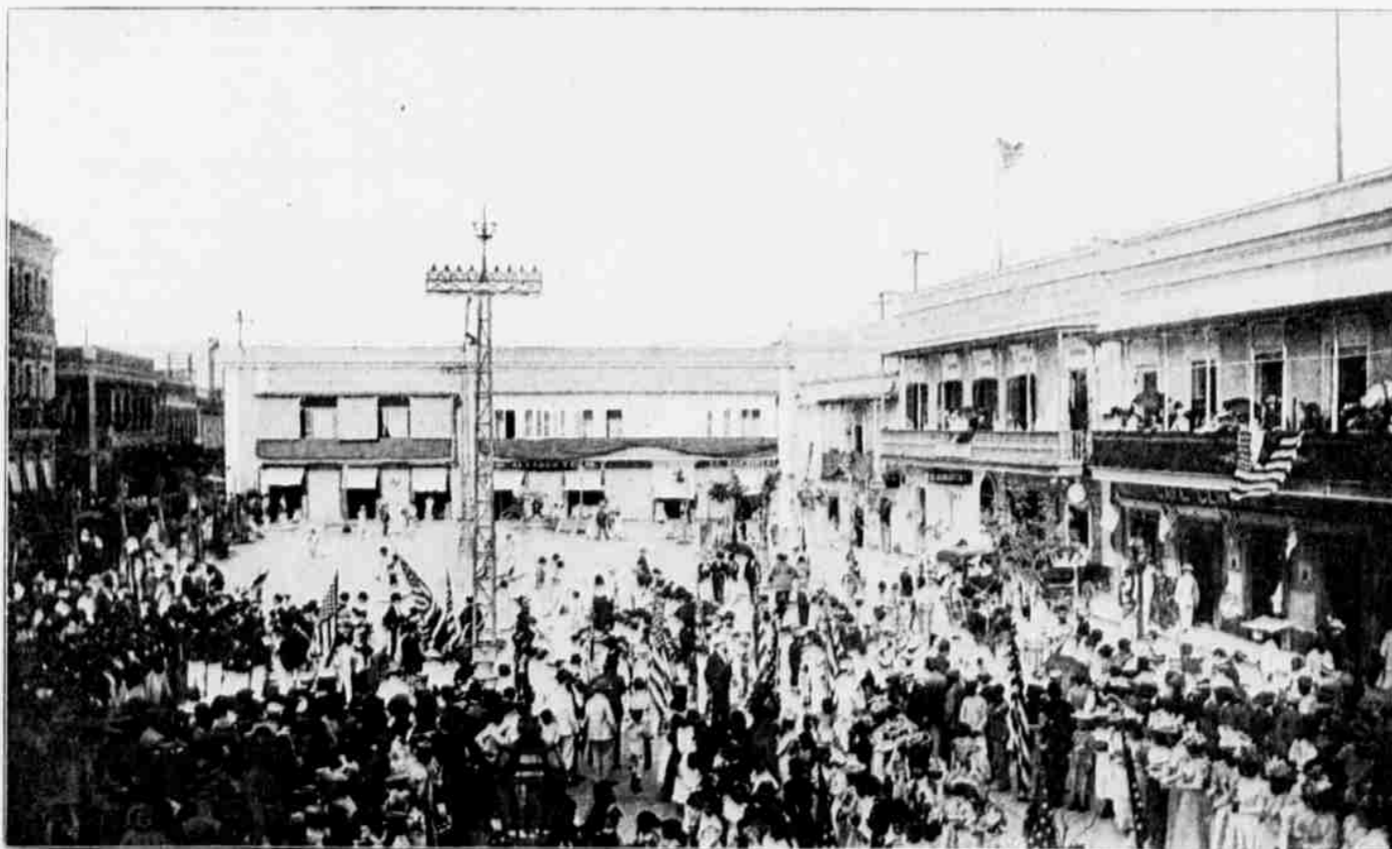
The best way to do it is to take everything you think you may want on the ship with you to San Juan. There is no extra baggage to be paid on the steamer, and a couple of porters will carry your trunks and bags on their heads from the ship to the hotel, where you can leave them while you make trips through the interior. Bicycles can be used in many parts of the country, especially on the military road and its branches. The weather, however, is somewhat hot for wheeling, and the bicyclists I have seen have generally seemed pretty well tuckered out.

Travel is everywhere safe for American men, and I think women could travel alone without danger on any of the public roads of the island. As to health, the country is quite as salubrious as any part of North America, the only warnings necessary being to avoid the night air and overexertion under the tropical sun. Those who wish may make the trip cheaply. In addition to the steamship fare it need not cost them more than \$5 per day, while parties by traveling together could make the average rate still less. Altogether, I doubt whether there is a place where the American can get more pleasure, health and profit from a trip than in Porto Rico.

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Green Corn in Europe

Julian Ralph tells of his delight in finding green corn in Europe. In the course of many years of extensive travel on the continent he had never seen an ear. He recently stopped at a hotel in Paris and met a porter in the hall carrying a basket of genuine American green corn. "Green corn!" he shouted. "Is it possible that this is what I see?" "Yes, monsieur," said Mme. Brunel, the wife of the proprietor. "It is veritably the green corn of America. We grow it upon our farm. So many of our guests are Americans and so fond are they of this peculiar food that we have seen it to be to our advantage to make for them this singular product in our fields in the country." "I took Mme. Brunel's hand," says Mr. Ralph, "and pressed it. I raised my hand as one does who bestows a benediction. 'God bless you, madam,' said I, with such evident plety that she could not take offense. 'You are the most magnificent and the most wonderful woman in France.'"



GENERAL ALGER REVIEWING THE SCHOOL CHILDREN OF SAN JUAN.