



PHOTOGRAPH LENT BY HUGH KELLY.

A CUBAN PEASANT HOUSE OF THE BETTER SORT.

CUBA AS SEEN FROM THE INSIDE.¹

BY OSGOOD WELSH, AN AMERICAN SUGAR-GROWER.

CUBA, the land of tragedy, slavery, comedy, and romance, the old home of the buccaneer, has been the scene of many a conflict. The legends of the island are full of romance, and in many cases are pure inventions. It has been in the possession of Spain for about four hundred years, and peopled by native-born Spaniards and Africans and their descendants, known as Creoles. While a province of Spain, and, as Spaniards regard it, an integral part of the kingdom, the island has always been the spoil of the Spanish office-holder. Corruption in administration has been rife and the demoralization of the inhabitants most thorough. The buccaneers disappeared years ago, but brigandage exists up to the present day. Every part of the island has its own brigand chief, who collects tribute from the people of his district. So fruitful is the soil of Cuba, and so easy the life in times of peace, that the peasantry have always been a happy-go-lucky lot. Nor does one have to go far to discover what may be called the national pastime; for on Sundays and holidays, at every railroad-station and in all the small settlements, men may be seen with fighting-cocks under their arms.

¹ For inside information from another point of view, the reader is referred to "Ten Months with the Cuban Insurgents," an article in the June CENTURY, by a young American who was an officer with the insurgents.—EDITOR.

Of late a great deal has been said and written about Cuba, but in nearly all cases the accounts are colored and poorly digested. It must be remembered that slavery existed all through the island, and was totally abolished only in the year 1886. The demoralizing influence of slavery upon the slaveholding classes is well known; its effects are discernible throughout the island, and cannot be eradicated until at least one generation after the abolition of the system has passed away. For many years, Cuba, in common with other West India islands, enjoyed the monopoly of supplying a large part of the world with sugar, and the profits accruing were enormous. By the sugar industry families of great wealth and influence were built up.

For a time the civilization of Cuba was in many respects far in advance of the United States. The dwellings both in the cities and on the sugar estates were in many instances palatial, the furnishings and fittings gorgeous in the extreme, and the use of silver for all domestic utensils was quite common. Thus there existed in the island what might be termed a barbaric civilization, as compared with what is known as a more domestic civilization in this country. The line between the rich and the poor was sharply drawn. The disaffected and restless citizens of the island to-day are, to a great extent, the descendants of those rich families

who, by reason of their profligacy, indolence, and neglect, have become almost extinct as a power in the land. There are, however, a few notable exceptions. The palatial residences and large estates remain; but the families, if in possession at all, exist only in name. Their fortunes were dissipated in Havana, New York, Saratoga, Paris, and Madrid. The present generation of those families are profligate, idle, and more or less vicious, and, in consequence, a disturbing element in the island.

The insurrection that began about three years ago was made possible by the industrial depression in the island. Following the downfall of the great Cuban families, the control of the sugar estates fell into the hands of native-born Spaniards and a few Americans. Slavery became extinct, and Chinese labor was substituted and abandoned. Owing to the competition of the bounty-fed beet-sugars of Europe, the price of sugar in the markets of the world became very low; and had it not been for the wonderful natural advantages possessed by the island, and the ingenuity of those who of late have controlled the work of production, the industry might have become almost extinct, as in the case of some of the English islands. Many small factories were abandoned, private railroads were built, and the work was concentrated into what are known as central factories, thus minimizing the labor required and decreasing the expense of manufacture. It must be understood that

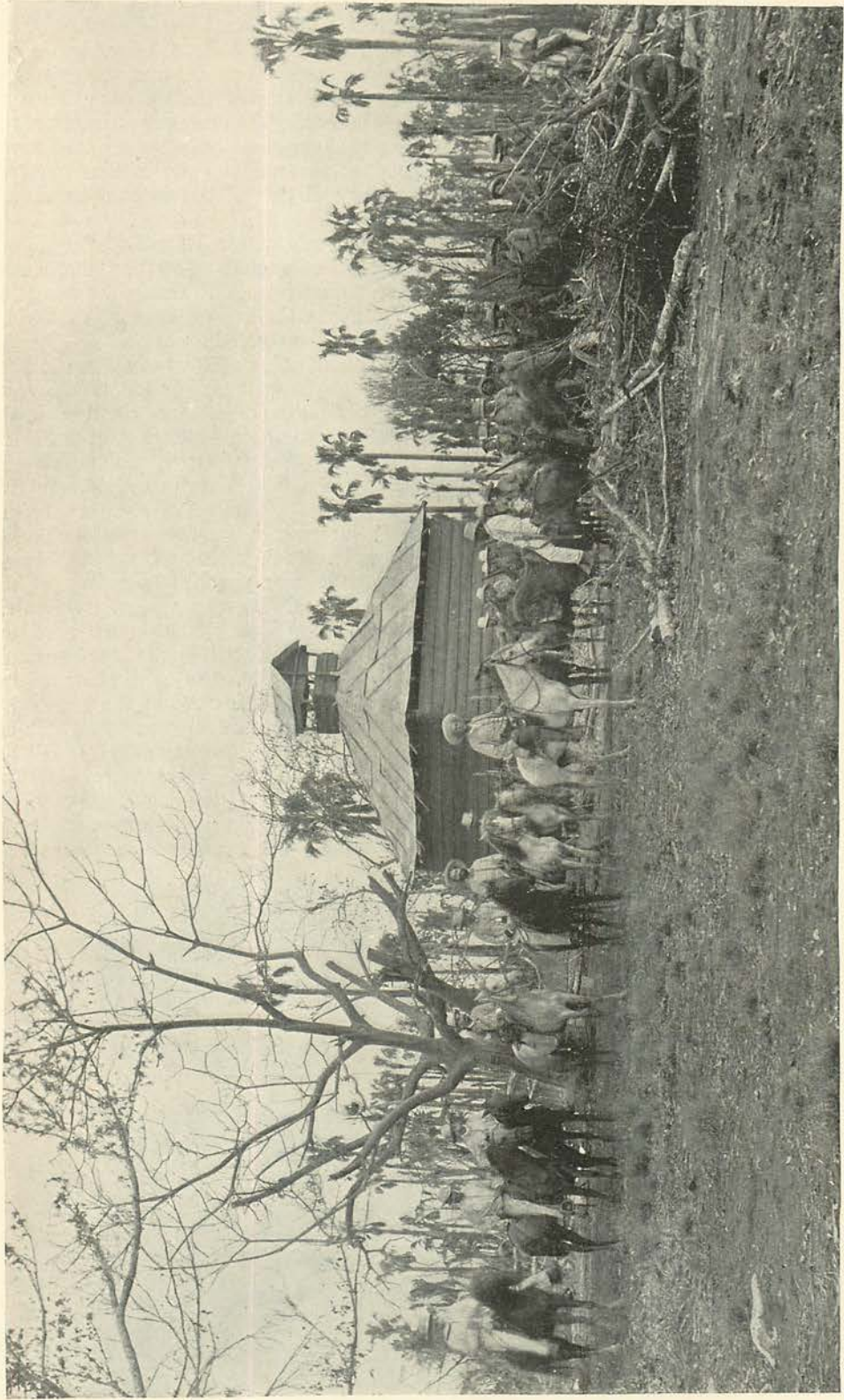
sugar is the one great staple product of the island. Tobacco, while of considerable importance, cuts but a small figure as compared with sugar. During the few years immediately preceding the present insurrection, the crop of sugar steadily increased from seven hundred thousand to one million tons per annum, and this in the face of extremely low prices.

The people of the United States do not appear to appreciate what the Cuban insurrection really is. The United States is in fact the battle-ground, because of the industrious propaganda carried on by the Junta, whereas the island of Cuba has been the scene of disaster and destruction. The insurgents had no importance whatever in the eyes of serious-thinking people until the autumn of 1895, when, it will be remembered, some important newspapers in this country, and a number of senators, took a lively interest in the insurrection; and it was not until then that the spirit of insurrection became generally rampant in the island. The Cubans are a peculiarly impressionable people, always eager to be on the safe side; and when they saw the attention paid in the United States to their affairs, they immediately jumped at the conclusion that their independence was in sight; and, wishing to be on the winning side, all became more or less active insurgents. The peasantry are by nature docile and industrious for a tropical people, but at the same time ignorant and superstitious, and there-



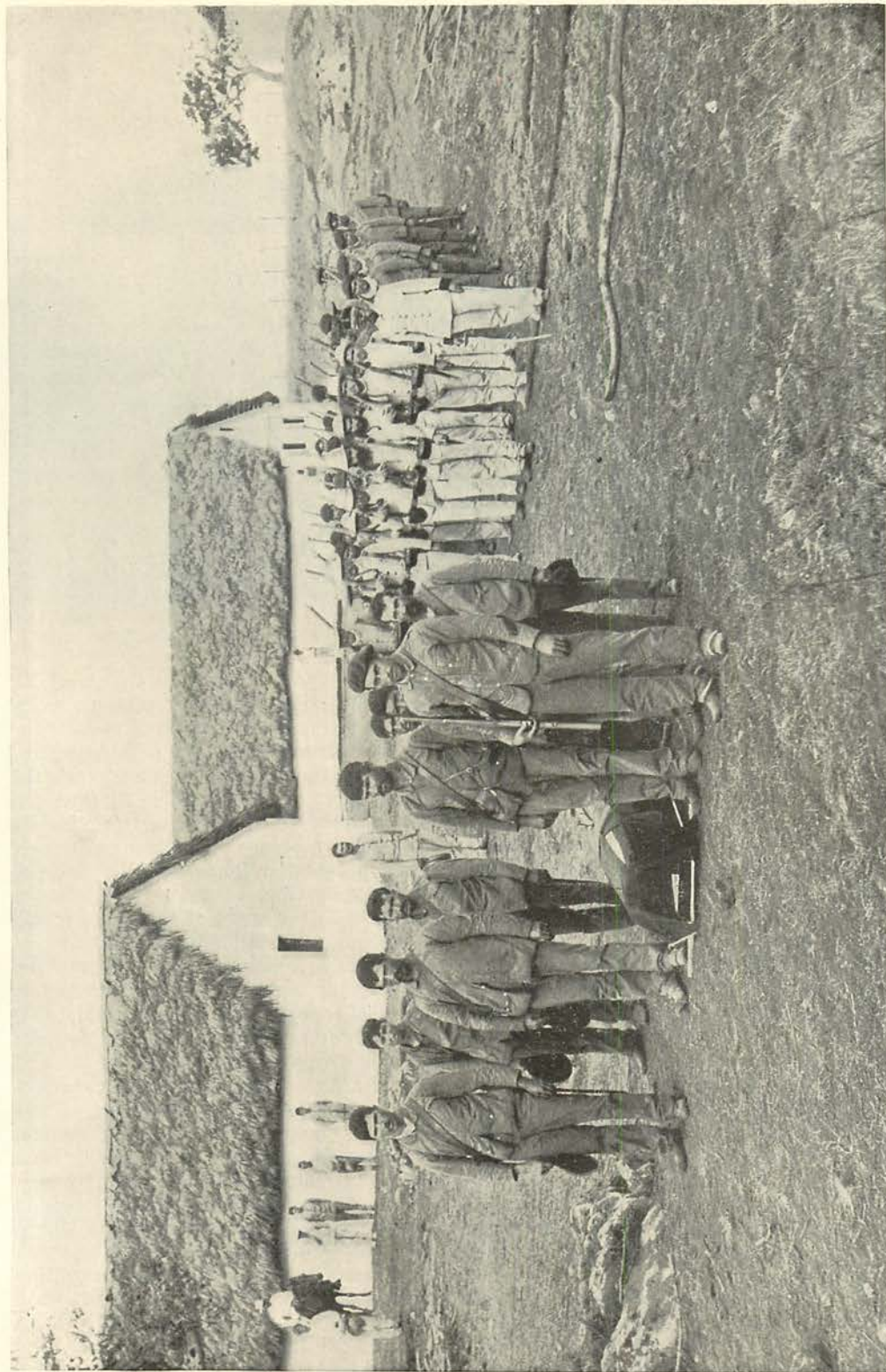
PHOTOGRAPH LENT BY HUGH KELLY.

PEASANT HOLDING A WOODEN PLOW.



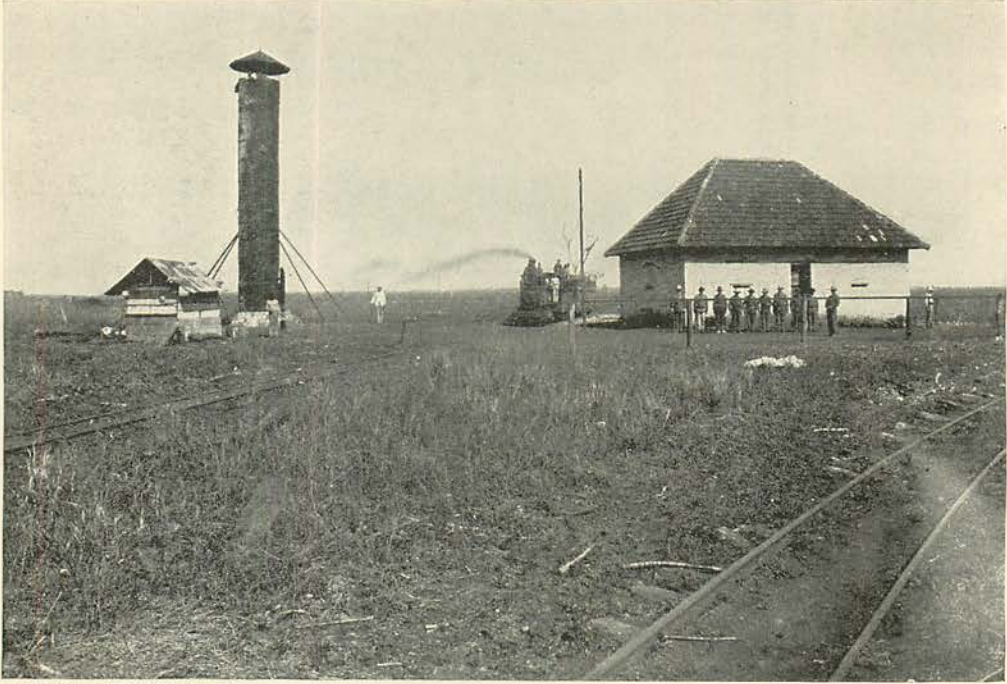
PHOTOGRAPH LENT BY OSGOOD WELSH.

A SUGAR-PLANTER WITH STAFF AND SPANISH BODY-GUARD.



PHOTOGRAPH LENT BY OSGOOD WELSH.

FUNERAL OF A PLANTATION GUARD, KILLED IN REPELLING AN ATTACK OF INSURGENTS.



PHOTOGRAPH LENT BY OSGOOD WELSH.

BLOCKHOUSE ON A PLANTATION RAILWAY, AND LOOKOUT TOWER MADE OF AN OLD SUGAR-HOUSE BOILER.

fore easily led by schemers like the leaders of the insurrection.

The two prominent figures in the movement were Maximo Gomez and Antonio Maceo. Gomez is a San Domingan, a white man, a soldier of fortune, and a "boss." Maceo was a mulatto, an ardent enthusiast in the interests of his race, a conscientious, honest, upright man, who in the European schools had trained himself in the art of war. He enjoyed the respect of his enemies, and was a born soldier.

The "insurrection," as it is known, had its inception in the eastern provinces, and virtually did not exist west of Puerto Principe. It will be well to remind the reader that the most eastern province of the island is Santiago; then come Puerto Principe, Santa Clara, Matanzas, and Havana, the westernmost province being Pinar del Rio. The island at the time of the outbreak was literally full of horses and cattle. Gomez, Maceo, and their followers, armed and mounted, made a raid from the east toward the west, penetrating the province of Pinar del Rio.

Their line of march was wide, and was literally a pillar of fire by night and a cloud of smoke by day. During their march their numbers were steadily augmented, the ignorant peasantry little knowing that they

were adding fuel to the flame that would be their destruction, and end in making so many of them the famous "reconcentrados." The path of destruction of this raid is clearly discernible in the devastated country, and the ruin of every structure within its lines, except possibly the larger sugar properties that were protected by Spanish troops. Maceo penetrated Pinar del Rio, and was left there by Gomez, who returned to the fastnesses in the wilds of the east. It will be remembered that Maceo fought many engagements in Pinar del Rio. Succor from Gomez being denied him, he was ultimately compelled to leave that province, and, in his effort to cut his way through the Spanish lines, fell a victim to the chances of war, and in his death the possibility of race complications growing out of the insurrection was largely eliminated; for it must be remembered that Maceo was a negro and enjoyed the absolute confidence of his race. By common repute, the negroes of the insurrection are the best fighting men; and had Maceo lived, they would have had in him a powerful advocate in demanding full recognition for their part in the conflict. Since the death of Maceo, the so-called war in the provinces of Pinar del Rio, Havana, Matanzas, and Santa Clara has been confined to occasional encounters with the Spanish troops and the

destruction by the insurgents of all unprotected property.

The question is often asked, Why has not Spain, with her large forces, been able to quell the rebellion? To those who are most intimate with the conditions prevailing in the island, the only answer seems to be that the Spanish generals and other officers are incompetent, and, being stimulated by double pay while on colonial service, appear to be in no hurry to get back to Spain. The mystery of Spain's utter failure in Cuba seems to have its solution in the fact that sixteenth-century methods are employed in the face of nineteenth-century conditions, a practice under which success is impossible. The indomitable pride and courage of Spain, and the inability of the Cubans to effect an organization leading to efficient self-government, are the factors that have prolonged the situation through all these years. The corruption of the Spanish administration in Cuba is proverbial, and need not be dwelt upon; but it should be borne in mind that the seed sown by them has found a fruitful soil in which to grow. The Cubans themselves, more particularly those of the towns, have been imitators of their masters, and in the matter of barbarity and cruelty the roaming bands of insurgents have been equal in every respect to the worst of the Spanish forces. Those of the people of the United States who, during the Civil War, lived in what were known as the border-lands or disputed territory can form some idea of the conditions existing in many parts of unhappy Cuba, where the country is harried first by the Cuban patriots and next by the Spanish irregular forces, known as guerrillas.

Much has been said of the terrible *machete*, a deadly weapon indeed in the hands of a desperate man, and when used against a defenseless person. The *machete* was never intended for a weapon of warfare; it is an instrument of husbandry carried by the Cuban peasant in times of peace, and is his one familiar daily companion. It cuts his fire-wood, aids him in building his hut, hews his path through the *manigua*, and performs many other offices. The *machete* is a straight, heavy blade about two feet long, with a wooden or bone handle, having no guard; consequently it is utterly unsuited as a weapon to be used in a conflict with an armed man. The Cuban, of course, by reason of his long familiarity with the instrument, is an adept in its use, and its effect upon a group of unarmed workmen is truly terrible. It is in the foray against the de-

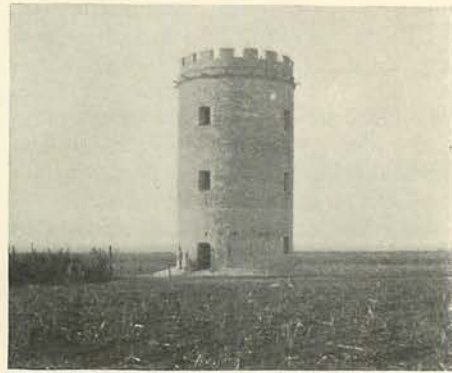
fenseless and unarmed that the most serious work of the *machete* has been done in the island of Cuba.

The principal central sugar-factories of Cuba have tributary to them large areas of land on which is grown the cane for the mills. The cane is transported to the mills by private lines of railways, these being in some cases fifty miles long. To illustrate the method of warfare practised by the insurgents, consider one of these large properties as it was before the Gomez-Maceo raid and afterward. Imagine a tract of country twelve miles square, through which is laid about fifty miles of railway, with many stations and buildings for the accommodation of workmen and their families, and with the necessary stores. At about the time of the Gomez-Maceo raid this place was visited by the insurgents, and every outlying building, being unprotected, was destroyed. What is known as the "batey," or the piece of land on which the factory, shops, dwelling-houses, etc., are situated, was guarded and consequently was unmolested. Literally thousands of people were thus rendered homeless and destitute. The proprietors, recognizing the seriousness of the situation, immediately set to work to care for the unfortunate peasantry; and to guard them and the property from further devastation, a system of small forts or blockhouses was devised and speedily erected. Meanwhile the process of "reconcentracion" went on, with the happy result of providing safe homes for the unfortunate. In all, sixty-four of these forts were erected on that particular property, and at one time they were garrisoned by about nine hundred men, in the pay of the owners of the property, the arms and ammunition being furnished by the Spanish government. In addition, the proprietors established a force of about two hundred mounted guerrillas for the protection of the workmen in the fields and for the general maintenance of order. The expense, as can be readily understood, was enormous; but the property, barring the first raid, has been preserved intact. The proprietors received many threatening letters from the insurgent leaders, but in the face of all difficulties and dangers maintained the integrity of the property and supplied a veritable sanctuary for thousands of people who were victims of the insurgent raids throughout the surrounding country. Each family, as it arrived, was allotted a piece of land and given facilities for the erection of a dwelling-place.

When the insurrection broke out, the

population of Cuba was, in round numbers, one million five hundred thousand, one third black and two thirds white, the line between black and white being sharply drawn, as in this country; that is to say, all tinged with black blood are classed as black. Some few Chinese remained in the island after the system of Chinese contract labor was abandoned; so the working-classes of the island

order, and not merely for the purpose of setting up an insurgent government, there would be found a general disposition to lay down arms and go to work. It is also safe to say that all people, both Spaniards and Cubans, having possessions in the island look to the United States as the only power that can guarantee peace and prosperity. Setting aside the class to whom the patronage and



PHOTOGRAPH LENT BY OSGOOD WELSH.

DEFENSES ILLUSTRATIVE OF SIXTY-FOUR STONE FORTS AND BLOCKHOUSES ON
A SUGAR PLANTATION NEAR CIENFUEGOS.

were composed of Spaniards, native whites, negroes, and Chinese. All hotels and shops were kept by Spaniards, and most of the employees in those establishments were from old Spain. Draymen, stevedores, and the like were Spaniards and negroes. The cigar-makers were invariably Cubans, both white and black. The field-laborers throughout the island were native Cubans, white and black, and a few Chinese. In sugar-factories are found Spaniards, Cubans, and Chinese. Excepting a comparatively small number of men who are active in the insurrection, it is safe to say that the people of the island, both Spaniards and Cubans, are anxious for peace. And if they could be made to understand that the advent of the American forces was for the purpose of establishing peace and

power of government are attractive, serious-minded Spaniards and Cubans alike believe that successful Spanish rule is no longer a possibility; but insurgent rule, as an alternative, is dreaded. I say this without hesitation, because of my large circle of acquaintance among the residents of the island, both Spanish and Cuban, many of whom I find it a privilege to count among my friends.

By taking an active part in the affairs of the island, the United States has assumed a grave responsibility. By overthrowing a government which has existed for centuries, it binds itself, in its own interest and in honor, to give the island as good a government as it gives to its own people. It is bound also to safeguard its interests as a protecting power. A ship-canal

is sure to be cut somewhere through Central America, and Cuba, with its magnificent harbors and unlimited resources, will always be the key to the Caribbean Sea; consequently Cuba must be under the control of the dominant power of the Western Hemisphere. The imagination cannot depict the limits of the possibilities for Cuba as a secure and wisely governed territory.

Save the railway systems of the few most densely populated provinces, there are no internal improvements in the island. After leaving the immediate vicinity of the larger towns there is not a single made road. The conditions of existence are so easy that the strongest incentive for improvement is lacking. In no place on the face of the earth is it probable that the contrast between the rich and the poor is so marked. The home of the peasant is a hut, generally of but one room, with a lean-to for a kitchen; its frame is of light poles, and the shell and the leaves of the palm-tree furnish the materials for the roof and walls. Nothing more primitive could be imagined.

With but little more than an apology for cultivation, the earth yields abundantly for the needs of man. Cattle and horses thrive, and it is a poor peasant indeed who has not one or more of the strong and easily kept ponies of the island. Under a strong arm the almost universal desolation of to-day would, as if by magic, be turned into peace, abundance, and prosperity. To illustrate the fertility of the soil, it may be mentioned that there are many cane-fields from which more than one hundred annual crops have been taken without the return of anything to the land. Not more than about one fifth of the island has been under cultivation.

By pretty much all the world Cuba is

known as "The Pearl of the Antilles," and this by reason of no poetic fiction, but because of its wonderful prolificness, due to soil, climate, and rainfall. Cuba, under unfavorable conditions, has produced one million tons of sugar in a year, or, say, one half of the annual consumption of the United States. With a stable government and a guaranty of exemption from revolution, the people of the United States could be supplied by the island with all the sugar they need, and at less cost than they can get it elsewhere. Even under the unfavorable conditions of the last few years, sugar is made in Cuba at a cost of less than two cents per pound, and it is known that that figure could be materially reduced. The level lands and lower foot-hills are adapted to sugar cultivation, and in the hill countries the finest coffee known in the world is grown.

Of course Cuba is tropical, and has all the inconveniences of a damp, hot, summer climate; but the mountains are a delightful place of residence and wonderfully healthy all the year through. As a winter resort it is far more desirable than any place available to the majority of the people of the United States, and would unquestionably become the Mecca of those seeking exemption from our cold winters. All winter long fresh vegetables and fruits abound. The sulphur springs in the hills about one hundred miles from Havana are particularly attractive. The deposits of iron and copper ore and asphaltum are only partly developed. Coal is not known to exist in the island, but the virgin forests of valuable wood are immense. Nature has given every conceivable advantage to Cuba, and it requires only the intelligence of man to develop the wonderful resources and establish a producer of wealth hitherto unknown.

SONG.

BY CHARLOTTE FISKE BATES.

ROSE that wast born with the morning,
 And hast lived and died for me,
 Here in the dusk of the evening
 I rue the death of thee.

Would that the beauty and sweetness
 That thou on my heart hast shed,
 I had caught into a cadence,
 To live when I am dead!