

ALONE IN PORTO RICO.

A WAR CORRESPONDENT'S ADVENTURE.

BY EDWIN EMERSON, JR.

BEFORE we went to war with Spain I did not know where Porto Rico was. I had a vague idea that it was a Spanish harbor somewhere; for from my school-boy days I remembered certain postage-stamps bearing the youthful profile of King Alfonso of Spain, with the words "Puerto Rico" on top.

Shortly after the *Maine* was blown up I was told off to go to the front as a war correspondent. The worst of it was, there was no front. My instructions were delivered in this wise: "Here is a camera, and a pass to Washington. It is good for the Congressional Limited. Find out from somebody who knows where you can see the first fight, and get some army and navy credentials in Washington, if you have time. If not, we will apply for them. Then get down there as fast as you can, and let us know where to find you. Here are orders for passes over those lines that give us 'ads,' and a draft on the house. If you run out of money, draw on us for more."

After this unusually long speech, the senior partner of our concern unbent enough to shake hands with me, and the younger took me out to a farewell dinner.

In Washington, I stated my case to Assistant-Secretary Roosevelt, and asked him what he would do in my place.

"If I were you," he said briefly, "I should go down to Key West and join the fleet. If you can get on board one of the press despatch-boats there, it would be a good move, for I'd rather not put you on any of our vessels. I should n't wonder if the first fight would be off Porto Rico. Good luck to you, wherever you go."

The next train to Florida was due to leave Washington within one hour, and I caught it in the nick of time. On the boat from Tampa to Key West, I was told that the despatch-boat *Buccaneer* was to be sent to Porto Rico.

Arriving in Key West, I learned that the yacht had sailed away that morning to get a "beat" on the whereabouts of the Spanish Cape Verde fleet. Rather than

spend a dreary fortnight in a hotel, I took a flying trip over to Cuba, and got there just in time to see the last American refugees following Consul-General Lee out of the country.

When I returned war had been declared. The fleet was preparing to move. I managed to find a berth on another despatch-boat, and so steamed out with the first blockading squadron that invested Cuban waters.

After the more or less desultory bombardments of Matanzas, Cardenas, and Port Cabañas, we returned to Key West, with its harbor full of captured prize vessels. Going in, we noticed that several of our war-ships were taking on extra supplies of coal, so we hastened to do likewise. Before our bunkers were half filled, the coaling cruisers got under way, and joined the deep-draft battle-ships anchored near Sand Key, some six miles out in the strait.

We followed in haste. As we drew out, a strange-looking craft came into the harbor. It proved to be the *Buccaneer*, her former war-paint ill disguised under a transparent coat of white lead, and with the British flag flying at her stern.

Of course it was too late to swap ships in the stream, the more so since she had come back for repairs from the effects of a heavy gale without having reached Porto Rico. Most of her American crew had deserted when she hoisted the British ensign in Jamaica.

We joined the squadron at nightfall, just in time to see the colored lights from the flag-ship's foretop flashing the admiral's orders to the expectant fleet. Every ship had her anchor under foot and was getting up steam. From a score of funnels black smoke drifted thickly landward.

At midnight, at last, the fleet got under way. We all thought we were going to Havana to knock down the old Morro and smash the town. With that comforting belief, I went to sleep on the after-deck, and did not wake up until the sun shone in my face. We were off Havana, with its

yellow houses sparkling in the sunlight, and near enough for us to see the red and orange of the Spanish flags fluttering over the Morro.

We waited for the bombardment, but it never came.

After a day of idle expectation, one of the monitors that had been left in Key West joined the squadron at nightfall, and then the whole fleet steamed eastward. The next morning we passed Cardenas. It was some time before we began to speculate where we were going. To us it was a very serious thing, because we were running out of coal. There was some doubt whether we had enough to get back. Every now and then the fleet would stop, and exchange a prodigious number of signals, but none of us knew why. Once we ran up to the flag-ship, and asked them where the fleet was bound to. No answer was given. We asked where we might coal. To this the answer was: "Use international code!" This was just what we had been doing. Our captain became frantic, and, rigging up the same signal-flags, he repeated both questions. In answer, the flag-ship ran up the signal, "We understand you." We waited for more, but nothing came. We repeated our questions all over again, but got no further response. After this unsatisfactory interview with the admiral, our commodore, as we called him, called a council of war. He said he felt sure now that the fleet was going to Porto Rico.

"Bully!" said I.

"Bully nothing," said he. "We have n't got enough coal to take us to Porto Rico; and if we keep up with the fleet for one night more, we sha'n't have enough to take us home."

I asked what he was going to do about it.

He wanted our consent to turn the boat back. I said that I wanted to go to Porto Rico, and he should never turn back with my consent. With that I scowled at our artist to make him back me up; but he said nothing, nor did any of the others.

Said the commodore: "I am afraid you will have to get out and walk."

A little later our second officer told me that there was always coal at Cape Haytien; and finally I prevailed on our commodore to follow the fleet for one more night.

We had fallen back to the tail end of the fleet, but one battle-ship was still behind us, towing a lagging monitor. A blast from her whistle brought our captain running up on the bridge. She hoisted some pennants, and our second officer read from the signal-book: "Come within hail."

We came alongside. The megaphone roared: "Are you going to stop at any eastern port?"

"Yes, sir; at Cape Haytien, for coal," bellowed our commodore.

"Will you let us put a man on board your boat? He is an officer of the United States army."

"Yes, sir."

"Here 's your chance," said the commodore to me; and then he roared back: "Will you take one of our men in exchange?"

After some hesitation, the megaphone reported that it was against the admiral's orders, so we yielded. The gig brought us a trim young man in a bicycle-suit with riding-gaiters, and carrying a dress-suit case. He introduced himself, giving his rank and branch of service. We soon learned that he had misunderstood our destination, and expected to be landed at Cape Maisi, in eastern Cuba.

It was a steep proposition. I urged that we try and land him somewhere on the coast. Our captain said he would n't dare to undertake it without a pilot, and it would mean losing the fleet. Willy-nilly, our military friend had to come with us to Cape Haytien, in the hope of getting a boat to Cuba. There he found out that no boats were to be had, so we carried him off with us, having first taken on coal at the rate of twenty-five dollars per ton. Then we rejoined the fleet, and followed it on to Porto Rico.

After the bombardment of San Juan on May 12, all the despatch-boats raced to St. Thomas, the nearest cable-station. We were all nonplussed at the unexpected bombardment, nor could any one tell what damage had been done by the three hours' cannonading. At all events, the Spanish batteries had not been silenced, for they kept on firing their futile shots until our fleet had retired beyond all range. At St. Thomas we learned that Cervera's fleet had been reported off Martinique and Curacao, and having heard of the bombardment, had gone on to Cuba by the southern passage. The other despatch-boats went back at once to the fleet, with the *Montgomery* and *Minneapolis*, which had raced into port for despatches. News reached us that they were returning to Santiago; but we, alas! were left high and dry, with disabled boilers.

The highest and driest of the lot was our military emissary to General Gomez, who had moved into lodgings, perforce, high up the hill in the clean little Danish town Charlotte Amalie. I joined him presently, having become an outcast from the boat on account

of an animated discussion with our commodore, which ended with my walking overboard, only to be rescued by a darky bumboat-woman.

There we were stuck for ten dreary days, though it was really a very pretty and hospitable place. I think it was when our first weekly bill was presented that we decided that something would have to be done.

"We are eating our heads off," said I.

"And I am eating my heart out," said he.

"Well, seeing we can't get to Cuba, and you can't reach Gomez in time to be of any use, why don't we go to Porto Rico?" I proposed. "It is nearer, and there is just as much to be got there as in Cuba, for you as well as for me."

"Just the thing!" said he.

That night we lay awake till early morning, discussing how to get around the cable company, so that we might send despatches from Porto Rico and through St. Thomas; for it was rumored that one of the men in the local office was in the employ of the Spanish consul.

Tossings, groans, and other indications of displeasure from the next room finally put a stop to our talk, which had been carried on from one bed to the other. I remembered that one of the guests at the house was down with intermittent fever, so we quit.

At breakfast I heard that our invalid neighbor was the local superintendent of the cable company. This upset our plans. We gave up all idea of using the cable, and decided to get out at once, before the patient could recover sufficiently to put the Spanish consul on our track.

Late that night I rowed my companion to a coal-steamer in the harbor clearing for Ponce, Porto Rico, and saw him installed as pantry-man, under an English passport. The *Ardanrose* weighed anchor almost immediately afterward.

Next morning I sailed out in a fishing-sloop bound for Santa Cruz, forty miles away. At Fredericksted, on the western end of that island, I took passage on a Danish schooner for Porto Rico. My identity as a pseudo-German correspondent had been fully established, and I had taken the extra precaution to submit my papers to the Spanish consul in St. Thomas before leaving port.

The second day brought us into the harbor of San Juan, sailing slowly past a string of white buoys marking newly laid mines. The pilot pointed out a little white tent under a grove of palm-trees inland, where

soldiers were stationed to touch off the explosives stored in the hold of a ship that had been sunk across the channel immediately after the bombardment of the city by our fleet. At the wharf I was met by the custom-house officials, who turned me over to a military officer. I explained my calling as a German war correspondent, and asked to see the German consul; but he took me before the military governor, Captain-General Macías. This officer received me very courteously, but asked why I came in so small a boat. I answered that I had tried to secure passage on the *Ardanrose*, the only vessel clearing from St. Thomas for Porto Rico, but that the Spanish consul had warned the captain of the vessel against receiving passengers.

"Ah, yes," said the captain-general; "it is just as well that you did not come on that vessel, for Señor Vazquez has informed us that an enemy of Spain may be hidden in her hold. If he dares to come to Ponce, we shall know how to receive him, and he will learn how Spain deals with her enemies."

After this comforting conversation, he expressed his satisfaction at the presence of an impartial foreign correspondent, who might correct the unscrupulous falsehoods that had been published in the American and English newspapers. With this plain hint, he sent me to his colleague, Don Ramón Ortega, and to the civil governor, who in turn had my papers countersigned at the German consulate of San Juan. I was allowed to engage a room at the Hotel Inglaterra, a curious building projecting its corner into the sharp angle of two streets, like the bow of a ship. In its roof was a large, gaping hole, made by one of our shells. I was a guest here for two days, roaming through the city at will, and visiting such sights as the Casa Blanca, on the high bluff overlooking the fortifications, and other places which I thought might prove of interest to my erstwhile traveling companion and roommate.

It did not take me long to discover that the effects of the American bombardment on the fortifications, as well as in the city, were more wide-spread than I had anticipated. In the outer breastworks, facing the sea, each of the older forts and towers had suffered severely, while some of the batteries lying under their shadow were all but dismantled.

The havoc wrought in the city was plain to all. More than a score of houses had gaping holes and clefts in their walls. The

fragments of one shell alone, aimed at the Spanish standard floating above the roof of the *intendencia*, after snapping the flagstaff in twain, shattered the roof of the building, went through the so-called throne-room, struck two officers and some soldiers who were chatting on its marble steps, and finally disfigured the front and rear walls of several adjoining buildings, injuring and wounding two other persons.

Within the harbor, where the visiting foreign men-of-war rode at anchor, believing themselves to be beyond the range of our guns, many shots likewise took effect. Had the Spanish fleet been hiding inside, as it was later at Santiago de Cuba, it would have been driven to seek the open sea. Even the neutral ships found themselves in uncomfortable quarters. One stray shot went clean through the forward smoke-stack of the French corvette *L'Amiral Rigault de Genouilly*. Another tore into the rigging of the British merchant vessel *Aldborough*, splintering one of her topmasts, while several shells exploded on the harbor-front, in the immediate vicinity of the powder-magazine of the Spanish navy-yard, causing the colored stevedores and wharfmen on the water-front to scatter in all directions. One old man was blown to pieces.

In the city itself everything was topsyturvy for many days following the bombardment. The well-to-do people and most of the women fled into the hills, and the larger stores and shops stood empty and open, with none to buy and none to do the selling. The price of provisions rose to the famine point, and in the country the people were said to be starving.

All available carriages, carts, and wagons, as well as horses, donkeys, and even bicycles, had been seized upon to carry the fleeing citizens into the hills; and the little railroad running to Rio Pedres and Congreso was taxed to its utmost to carry the turbulent crowds of passengers fighting for admittance. The nearest places, it was reported, became so overcrowded with refugees that there were not enough roofs to cover their heads, though the authorities threw open the government buildings, churches, schools, and local playhouses. Municipal food supplies were exhausted.

Those that remained behind were panic-stricken. Every time a large vessel was sighted from the tottering top of the Morro, the cry arose, "*Los Americanos*," and then would come another wild rush for the railroad-station, fugitives from all directions

scampering down the steep streets and alleys of the city. At night the uneasy rest of the San Juanese was broken by the cry of "*El jumby*," the slang word for ghost, which had come to be applied to our swift auxiliary cruisers flashing their search-lights through the darkness like bolts of silent lightning.

To make matters worse, the authorities openly betrayed their weakness by shoring up the crumbling walls of the well-nigh shattered fortresses, and by offering to release and arm the convicts in the city prison, while apparently harmless men were arrested from day to day, to be cast into the empty prisons as political suspects.

On the day I landed I witnessed the arrest of a poor Crucian dorky, John Farrill by name, whose sole crime was that he was seen gaping up at the ruins of a large three-story house on Fortaleza street, that had been struck by two American shells during the bombardment.

Suddenly there was a cry of "*Un espia*," and a disorderly mob of colored wharfmen laid hold upon him and the colored woman who stood by him. A few *voluntarios* ran up with bare machetes, and dragged the scared couple off to the nearest guard-house, where they were placed under a military escort and marched to prison.

What their fate was I never learned, for when I had gathered as much information as was possible, I took formal leave of the Spanish officials in San Juan, and set out on my prearranged trip across the island. At the little station of the narrow-gage railroad that runs westward along the coast to Dorado and Arecibo, I bought a through ticket. From the windows I saw the deep blue of the bays running in from the sea on one side, and on the other inland lakes circled by tropical foliage, distant palms, and pineapple plantations. While speeding along I pondered seriously on the unguarded words of the Spanish captain-general concerning the fate awaiting a certain person at Ponce. I concluded that no possible purpose could be served by going there alone. If I did so, indeed, suspicion might be still further excited, involving another as well as myself. At the first stop, Cataño, I got off, and was left behind by the train, as if by accident. The station-master was very sympathetic, and told me that my ticket would be good on the next train, which would be due after a few hours or so, should it happen to be on time. I shrugged my shoulders, and wandered off with what show

of aimlessness I could command, to take a look at the village, with its outskirts of palm-thatched huts, and cocoanut-trees waving over patches of rustling sugar-cane. I found a cheap horse, with a still cheaper saddle thrown into the bargain. Thus mounted, I ambled off over an old country road leading to the town of Bayamón, in the interior of the island.

A cool sea-breeze blew from the coast, and stirred up the fragrance of the tropical foliage covering the hills on either side of the road. Bright humming-birds darted about, and from the woods came the incessant cooing of the mountain dove, the *paloma*, relieved occasionally by the song of warbling vireos. My heart sang with them as I rode, and I felt altogether too well to worry about the fate hanging over my friend at Ponce, nor did I bother to think of my own uncertain destiny. All around me hirtella-bushes were flowering crimson, and the stately sabino-tree, with its immense white flowers and silvery leaves, perfumed the soft air. It seemed to me as if I had found the loveliest spot on earth. Thus I passed through Bayamón, along the highway to Guaynabo, over a superb military road to Aguas Buenas, a cross-road town fitly named after the excellent quality of its water. There I rested all night at the village inn, on a straw pallet that seemed soft after my saddle. Early in the morning I rubbed down my horse, swallowed some vile coffee, and was off again, after a refreshing stirrup-cup of *agua buena*.

My plans had become unsettled when I was driven to give up all hope of meeting the other man in Ponce. I fell back upon the alternate venture of striking straight across the island to the nearest southern seaport, making what observations I could along the road. The obvious thing was to follow the military highway to Caguas and thence to Cayey. It was a mercy I did so, for my pony went lame after we had covered but a few miles of the road, and I was glad to dismount at the city gate of Caguas to deliver my papers over to the white-clad sentinel, who stopped me with a perfunctory, "*Quien vive!*"

The little soldier was considerate enough to let me take my horse to the nearest blacksmith's shop before escorting me to the Ayuntamiento, and thus I had an opportunity to see something of the town. At the intendencia I was ushered into the presence of the alcalde, and once more explained my presence in the country as a German newspaper correspondent. Then I learned that

my papers were all wrong, not having been countersigned by every alcalde in every village and town along the line from San Juan to Caguas.

The fellow was so obstinate that no argument would move him. So I was marched into the guard-house, whence I sent a message to a friend at the German consulate in San Juan, who had agreed to forward such messages to St. Thomas by way of Santa Cruz. I had plenty of time to reflect, and I presently came to the conclusion that the shortest cut to liberty was the best. If I let things take their course, awaiting consular intercession, the chances were that I should languish in jail for weeks or months, with a possible prospect of having the incidental object of my mission become known, after all. That would mean short shrift. As I reflected on the more or less spurious character of my credentials, and on the danger of making bad matters worse for my friend, who by this time must have effected his landing on the other side of the island, my determination to take things into my own hands became fixed.

For several hours, now, I had been left to my own devices, and it was nearly noon. I recalled the generous permission of the Spanish alcalde that I might buy my own meals, and accordingly I summoned the sentinel who had been placed at the door of the guard-house. He proved to be the same man that took me in charge at the city gate, so we smiled at each other like old friends. I pointed to my stomach, and said plaintively: "*Tengo hambre. Quiero almorzar;*" for breakfast was the only proper term to apply to the meal I wanted.

"How I can serve you, señor?" inquired the little soldier, encouragingly; and I replied, mustering all my Spanish of the market-place:

"*Pan, mantequilla, carne, leche, café, huevos, y una botella de vino.*"

This bill of fare seemed to appal him, and he informed me in voluble Castilian that bread cost fifty centavos a pound, that butter was not to be had for love or money, that wine would be cheaper than milk, and that meat of any kind would be very, very dear. It was all on account of those accursed *Americanos*.

"Get what you can," I said hungrily; and drawing forth all my slender stock of Spanish money, I gave him a couple of Porto Rican dollars, newly minted. He disappeared with alacrity, locking the door behind him. Then I waited for my breakfast, pulling im-

patiently on the cold brier pipe that I had kept as a last souvenir of my friend in Ponce.

At last my guard returned with a darky who bore a platter of food. With a lordly gesture, I waived the question of change. The little soldier's eyes glistened greedily, and I fancy mine did likewise as I fell to. While I ate I thought deeply, and when I arose the proper Spanish phrases came readily to my tongue.

"You, too, must be hungry, *mi amigo*," I said; "and it is not right that a soldier of Spain should starve while his German friend eats. When do you breakfast?"

"I have had my morning coffee, señor," he answered; but I interrupted him, saying: "That is not enough. You are losing your meals and your siesta here on my account, and it is but right that you should be served as well as your prisoner. Here is a small coin," I continued. A minute afterward I heard him turn the corner, whistling. I mounted the guard-house bench, and peered out at him through a small window-grating admitting air and light to my cell. He looked up at me, grinning as he passed; then he went on his way.

In his absence I managed to escape. There was no other sentinel. I walked out into the street, and found it deserted, for it was the time of the midday siesta. A brass sign representing the shaving-plate of a barber and surgeon caught my eye, and I recalled my beard, and the prominence given to it in my passport, where it figured as *barba rubia*.

Now or never was the time to rid myself of this ruby article which had called forth so much contempt from my shipmates. I entered the shop, and aroused the barber from his siesta in the back room. Without a word I pointed to my ragged chin, and settled down in his primitive chair. Ten minutes later I was beardless. I sauntered forth into the street, and, turning a corner, recognized the blacksmith's shop where I had left my horse. In the yard stood several ponies, including my own; but of the smith or his apprentices nothing was to be seen. From some children tumbling about on a heap of straw I learned that all the men were asleep. I examined my horse, and found it still unshod, and as lame as ever. Another horse, cream-colored and of prepossessing appearance, stood beside it. Three of his feet were newly shod, and he looked fit and strong. I looked around for my saddle, but could not see it anywhere. A bridle hung within convenient reach. Without further

ado, I slipped it over the halter on the cream-colored pony's head, and vaulted upon his glossy back.

As I rode out into the sunlit street, I wondered what I had better do with myself. I knew it would not do to go to Ponce, nor to go out by the way I came, for there was that city gate. I did not want to ride westward, for among my papers confiscated by the alcalde was a letter of introduction to a certain Señor Heidegger, a German planter on the west coast. So I looked up at the sun to make sure of the direction, and then rode due east, on a horse-trail which took me over a shallow river, where I watered my horse as a precaution. There I met a *jíbaro*, as the native white men of Porto Rico are called. I asked him where the road led to, and he said to San Lorenzo. I told him that was the very place I wanted to go to. In reply to inevitable inquiries of the *campesino*, I told him that I came from San Juan, where I had recently landed, hoping to get a place with a wealthy German planter at the eastern end of the island, and I mentioned the name of a man of whom I had heard several times. My *jíbaro* told me that I could not find a better master. So we parted, he on to Caguas, and I to strike off that road as fast as the nature of the country would allow.

By nightfall, after I had ridden up and down some of the most unprepossessing hills, and had got tangled in no end of chapparal, cactus, and other thorny undergrowth, which changed a new pongee coat I had bought in San Juan into an old rag, I found myself on a high range of sierra. From a *jíbaro* negress I learned that I was half-way between the towns of Quemados and Jaguas, and that I would find a better trail for my horse below. So I rode down a lovely green valley, where plantations of coffee and tobacco lay side by side. As it grew darker, bats flew all about me, and I heard the evening cries of birds which sounded like our whippoorwills and mocking-birds. At last I struck the trail that the woman had mentioned. I rode on a little way, and took the horse into a clearing, where there was a spring well hidden from view, and there I hobbled his fore feet to the halter-rope, flung myself on the ground, and went fast asleep. The last thing I heard was the beautiful song of the solitaire singing in a copse above me.

I was awakened early the next morning by the screeching of green parrots, quarreling with other birds in the top of a cocoanut-palm. I was drenched with dew, but forgot all as I thought of my horse. To my great

relief, I found him standing behind a bit of oleander-bush red with flowers, crunching the juicy stalk of a prickly-pear. I watched him with interest as he took the stalk and with his teeth ripped off the skin with all its thorns. He whinnied as if we were old friends. After bridling and watering him, I found the trail, and rode off southward. On the way I ate everything I could find, from green cherries and guava plums to juicy mangos, which stained the front of my coat, and bell-apples, the meat of which suggested mildew. There were also custard-apples, a large green fruit not unlike cream-puffs inside. The most astonishing and the best of all was a fruit called *pulmo*—in our language, sour-sap. It is about as large as a quart bowl, and so nourishing and full that a single fruit was enough for a good meal, although that did not deter my horse from eating four. Later I found that they are also relished by dogs. Of springs and streams there were so many that I had no fear of dying of thirst. If water was not handy, I could always climb a cocoanut-tree, and throw down the green nuts, which were filled with an abundance of watery milk, more than I could drink at one time. Other nuts there were in plenty; but many were more curious than edible, even to my willing appetite. One had a delicious odor. I tasted a little, and thought it ideal for flavoring candy. But soon it dissolved in my mouth in a fine dust, absorbing all the moisture, so that I had to blow it out like flour. Nothing ever made me so thirsty in my life, and even after rinsing out my mouth I felt for a long time as if I were chewing punk or cotton. The fruit of the tamarind only added to my torments by setting all my teeth on edge. When we reached the next spring, I fell off my horse for fear he would get all the water. Only after I had satisfied my thirst would I let him drink.

About that time I met a hunter, with whom I trudged along for some distance. He too was a *jíbaro*, or Porto Riqueño freedman, and turned out to be a most entertaining fellow. He knew the Spanish name of every shrub and tree along the wayside, and told me just what fruits and nuts were good to eat, and which were poisonous. At times, when his lean dogs would stir up a bird from the underbrush, he talked of birds and insects. Thus I learned that the large green parrakeets that flitted through the purple foliage and orange-colored blossoms of the Ortegán trees were a peculiar native breed, highly prized by bird-fanciers; while the beautiful wild

peacock, whose harsh cry of "peon, peon" reached us from the thick purple growths of coccolaha-trees flowering all over the sierra, was nothing but the tame peacock gone wild. The curious lump in the beak of the honey-creepers that infested the pineapple and sugar plantations, he explained, was formed by the waxy pollen of the cocoanut blossoms into which this greedy bird is wont to thrust its fuzzy-feathered head.

At other times he would point out to me the tracks of deer, or of the wild mountain goat. I told him of certain curious small beasts I had caught a glimpse of while riding across country over the hills near Caguas, and learned that they must have been the aguti and the armadillo, both of them indigenous to Porto Rico. Of snakes there were none, but no end of lizards, sunning themselves on the long stretches of crumbling plantation walls, or darting in and out among the loose rocks of the hillside. For a change of subject, I asked my guide whether he had any children.

"Yes, señor; eighteen."

"What? All living?"

"Yes. There were twenty-two, but now there are but eighteen. I buried one last week."

"Are they all the children of one wife?" I asked rather curiously.

"Oh, no. Three wives. One is dead, but the other two are still living with me."

After a pause I inquired:

"And do they live in peace?"

"Yes, señor. They love each other very much, and live like sisters when I go hunting or fishing."

This casual glimpse into the patriarchal life of the West Indies interested me so much that I was almost tempted to accept my *jíbaro's* invitation to enjoy the hospitality of his house; but his palm-thatched hut lay too near the garrisoned town of Patillo.

Still, the inborn courtesy of the man would not allow me to part from his threshold without eating some of the corn-bread baked by one of his wives, and without a farewell drink of *aguardiente*, flavored with aniseed, called *ojén*. For a parting gift he gave me one of the delicious cigars made of the furry tobacco-leaf that is grown in the famous plantations about Cayey.

Avoiding the towns, I rode over a high hill trail, from which I had my first good view of the sea and of the mountain El Yunque, the anvil-shaped peak of which towered up far behind the range of the sierras. Below me I could see a tempting

road winding in and out of the rich plantations of rice and sugar running down to the coast.

Though my companion had told me the name of the nearest towns and villages, I had no definite idea where I was, and where it might be safe to strike down to the sea.

Presently my horse sniffed water, and not long afterward I heard the welcome sound of a river rushing through woods near by. A turn of the trail brought me to a magnificent waterfall tumbling down from a cleft in the ragged rocks.

A small boy, his white skin gleaming in the sun, was leading a dripping pony from the purling pool below the waterfall. I rode my lathering horse into the churning water, and slipped off to take a swim myself. Then I joined the boy, dressing on the river-bank. When I asked him how far it was to the town of Arroyo, he laughed wonderingly, and said that Arroyo lay far behind me.

"Where do you wish to go?" he asked, in turn.

"To Mauñabo," I ventured at random.

"Oh, Mauñabo!" he exclaimed. "That is where we live."

This alarmed me, and in my bones I felt that my yarn about looking for a place on the German señor's plantation would never go down with that boy. I murmured something about looking for a German friend living on a plantation near Mauñabo.

"What is his name?" asked the boy.

I answered evasively that he lived near the plantation of another German señor. With misgivings I uttered the name mentioned to me by the German consul in St. Thomas.

"My papa," said the boy, with pride.

I wished I were out of it, but grasped at the first straw, when he continued: "Do you wish to see him?"

"No, not now—not until I have done some other business down there;" and with that I waved my hand vaguely toward the east.

As the son of a German father, it occurred to me that the boy might speak German.

"Und sprichst du auch Deutsch?" I asked.

He responded promptly with a few German sentences tinged with a curious Creole accent. At all events, it was better than my Spanish, and helped to place me at a slight advantage in my further talk with him.

Once more he offered to lead the way to his father; but I evaded him again, and presently got him to talking about coins and postage-stamps.

A Haytien silver coin I had saved from our brief stay in the Black Republic proved highly acceptable to the boy.

Then I told him that I had lost my only map of Porto Rico, and that I would gladly offer some rare old stamps for a new one.

He said eagerly that he had a good map of his own, drawn as a school exercise; but the large size he mentioned appalled me, so I offered him a triple-bladed pocket-knife on top of the other bribe, if he would undertake to draw me a little map no larger than my hand.

He jumped at this offer, and so we made off until we came within a few miles of the town. There I halted, on the pretext that I was ashamed of my travel-stained and tattered clothes, but promised to wait for his return.

He galloped off, and I waited in the underbrush, with my heart in my mouth. When he did not return within an hour, I began to fear the issue, and changing over to the other side of the country road, sought a good hiding-place for myself and my horse, from which I had a full view of the road for some distance ahead.

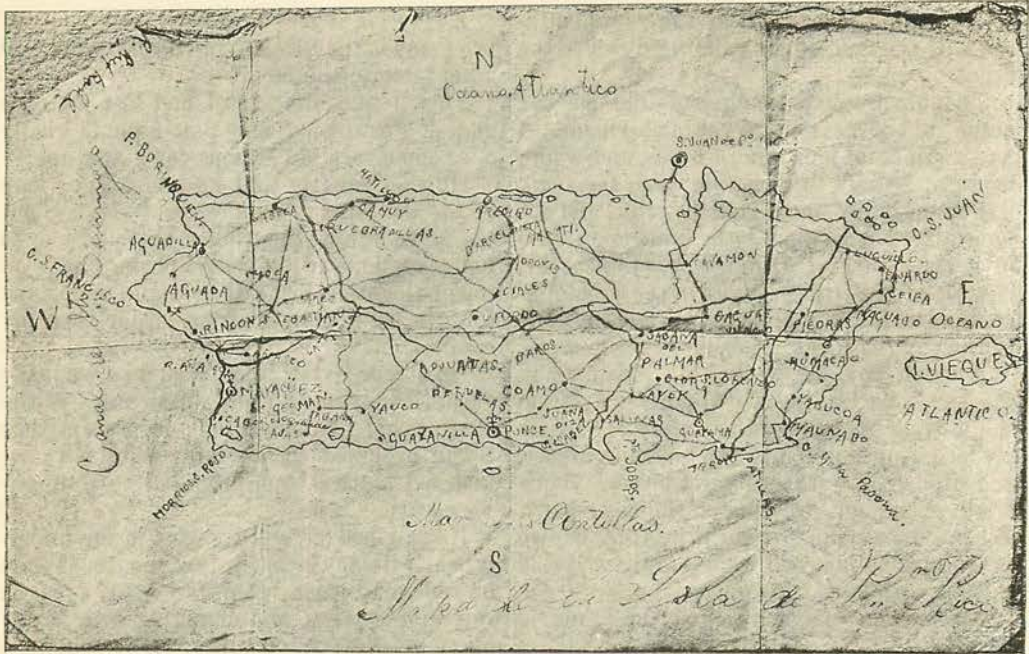
At length he came, mounted on another horse, several sizes too large for him. When I had made sure that he was quite alone, I hailed him from the underbrush, and came out into the open. He showed me the diminutive map he had made, and I was delighted to find it carefully drawn and apparently correct. He had even put in the boundaries of each province in red ink, and had marked all churches and monasteries with crosses. On the other hand, he had omitted to indicate the roads, and I had to get him to draw them with a pencil from guess-work.

Despite its small size, it was certainly a highly serviceable map, and I was glad enough to give my only knife in exchange for it, and to promise no end of postage-stamps for the future, when my ship should come in.

The boy then volunteered the information that the German overseer I was looking for might be found at the end of the next cross-road, only a few miles from where we were.

Without further reflection, I determined to pin my hopes to this man, and so parted from my little rescuer at the cross-roads.

An hour's ride brought me to the plantation, where I found my man superintending the work of some twenty jibaro men. When I accosted him in German, his honest face lighted up in a manner that encouraged me; and, risking all, I told him that I was in



MAP OF PORTO RICO FURNISHED TO THE WRITER BY THE BOY.

some trouble on account of the war, and must needs throw myself upon his mercy.

"Come home with me, and be my guest," said he, and with that he led the way to the white hacienda on the hill.

Once there, I told him that I was a German correspondent who had got into disfavor with the Spanish authorities. He seemed to understand, and assured me that I was among friends.

At supper my host talked freely about the war. The people in the country, he said, looked forward to the coming occupation of the island by the Americans as a blessing. To the well-to-do planters and exporters the annexation of Porto Rico to the United States would mean new prosperity. Already most of their trade was with America. Throughout the West Indies, in fact, as well as in most other parts of the New World, he thought, a feeling had grown up that America should be for the Americans.

When I asked him whether the Porto Riqueños would put up any fight, he said earnestly: "The Spanish soldiers and the *guardia civil* will fight well. San Juan will resist to the last. You know the San Juanese think that their city is impregnable. Our black *jibaros* and campesinos will hang back, ready to go over to the conquerors, whoever they may be. Most of the planters here in the east will welcome the Americans as deliverers, and will further all the plans of our

revolutionary junta, provided their estates may be protected from the ravages of irresponsible marauders calling themselves *insurrectos*. Better anything, even war, than the twofold system of blackmail under which we are now suffering. We scarcely know which is worse—our war taxes to Spain, or the incessant *subsídios* for the Revolutionary Committee, that are extorted from us by threats of arson and negro uprisings."

"Where do the insurgents keep themselves?" I asked.

"Anywhere," he answered lightly. "Tomorrow I shall introduce you to some of them."

If I had not been so tired and sleepy I should have taken fire at this suggestion. As it was, I was willing to agree to anything, most of all to my host's invitation to go to bed. Bed, in this case, meant a comfortable hammock; and *buenas noches* had scarcely been exchanged before I kicked off my heavy leather leggings and tumbled in, glad to be rid of all worry about my horse.

Late next morning we rode out to meet the *insurrectos*. They were waiting for us not half a mile from the house. From their marked deference to my friend the overseer, I judged that they were recruited from the farm-hands on the plantation. They were mounted on well-fed, sturdy-looking ponies, but their arms and equipment were of the simplest. All carried machetes, or pruning-

knives, somewhat larger than those used in Cuba, and two or three had old-fashioned fowling-pieces slung across their saddles. In all I counted seven men.

"If you wish to go with these men," said my host, "they will see that no harm comes to you. They will treat you as their friend and guest so long as you may wish to stay with them, and they stand ready to escort you to their chief, Don Pepito, or to any other place of safety. Personally I should, of course, prefer to have you remain under my roof as my guest."

Of course that was out of the question, though I could not but appreciate the tact and delicacy with which he had got both himself and me out of a highly dangerous situation. All I could do was to thank him warmly for what he had done, and especially for his generous loan of a fresh horse and saddle in exchange for my foundling pony, now awaiting a convenient return to his proper owner in Caguas.

"*Auf wiedersehen!*" he shouted, as our cavalcade swung around the next bend in the road; and I repeated unthinkingly, "*Auf wiedersehen!*"

They gave me the choice between a machete and a musket, and I foolishly chose the gun. It was a muzzle-loader, and proved a dead weight in my hands. After a while I asked where we were going to fetch up. Our leader told me that he hoped to surprise a mounted patrol of the guardia civil, so that I might see how Don Pepito's *insurrectos* could fight. I thanked him for his courtesy, but begged him not to trouble himself on my account. The ancient firearm in my hands took on a new interest. I wished it were a modern magazine-gun, and looked at the fowling-pieces of my comrades with envy. I found myself wondering how many men constituted a Spanish patrol, and whether they were really such poor shots as the American comic papers had made us believe. An odd flash of memory recalled to me the names of two brothers from Porto Rico whom I had met when we were students at Harvard, and I remembered vaguely that somebody had told me that they were serving as loyal officers in the guardia civil.

Suddenly our advance-guard stopped and pointed down the road. We lined up, and saw, some distance down the hill, two white-clad horsemen walking their horses leisurely toward a town.

Before I had time to make up my mind whether they were soldiers, the men about me clapped spurs to their horses, and charged

wildly down the road, yelling like madmen. My horse followed of his own accord, and I found myself taking an unsteady aim at two retreating figures clattering on ahead of us through a cloud of dust. At last, when my chance had come, as I thought, I pulled the trigger; but it did not budge. When I had got my aim once more, I tried again. This time the gun missed fire. Of the several shots of my friends, none, evidently, could have had any effect, for the two frightened soldiers were clearly getting away from us. The next turn of the road brought us in sight of the city. The fleeing guardsmen were still gaining.

Our leader swore some blasphemous oaths involving all the saints of the Spanish calendar, and reined up his horse. We did likewise. "What would you have?" he exclaimed apologetically.

"Take me to the coast, and put me on some boat that will take me away from Porto Rico," said I; "for I have not come to fight. It shall be made known to the world that you are as brave as your brothers in Cuba."

"When shall you return with the American army, and where shall we expect you?" he insisted; but I warded him off with a promise that all these matters would be communicated to Don Pepito in due time.

"Your wishes are commands," said *el capitán*, as he led the way off the highroad to the coast. A few hours afterward I was taken aboard a Spanish sugar-schooner, and installed in her ill-smelling cabin as a supercargo. The Spanish captain, who, curiously enough, bore the same name as his boat, did not like it a bit; yet he took the passage-money I offered him in advance, but refused absolutely to take his load of tobacco and molasses into St. Thomas. He was afraid, he said, that a Yankee cruiser coaling there might capture him. In particular he expressed apprehension of "*el crucero Americano con tres chimeneas*," meaning the *Yale*.

At last we compromised on the neighboring island of Santa Cruz, not quite eight miles away; but even there, he said, he could land me only in some open roadstead, and after dark. Otherwise the Danish authorities would make trouble for both of us. In fact, it was only his friendship for Don Pepito, he assured me, that prevailed upon him to take so unsatisfactory a passenger.

As soon as we got under way I went fast asleep. I was awakened by some commotion on the deck, and came up feeling very seasick. When I had gathered enough

strength to drag myself forward, I saw that a rather curious-looking craft was bearing down upon us. She looked like one of our torpedo-boats, and my heart leaped within me as I thought of meeting some of my friends of the torpedo flotilla.

The captain came forward with blanched face. "Un torpedero Americano," he wailed despairingly; and then he dropped on his knees and called loudly upon San Sebastian to help us. As if in answer to his prayer, the report of a blank cannon-shot came booming over the water. We hove to with all the alacrity of a racing-yacht. As we swung around I got a good view of the other vessel, and realized of a sudden that no American torpedo boat ever looked like that. For one thing, she was too big, and stood too high. If not American, there was but one alternative. All doubt was ended when she came alongside and hailed us in Spanish. Our captain was on his feet in an instant. I wished I had never left home. Somebody suggested that I go below and hide among the molasses barrels. The mere thought gave me deadly nausea. Still, something had to be done, for they were lowering a boat. I looked at the captain, and he looked at me with murder in his eye. Without another word, I went up the nearest shroud, and began to fuss with a rope dangling from the masthead. As I hung with my arms over

the gaff, looking down upon the tossing deck of the torpedo-destroyer, our masts swayed to and fro so crazily that I had a sickly sensation, and feared I might drop from my perch plump down upon the ugly-looking machinery of the Spanish *torpedero*.

In the meanwhile, an officer had boarded us, and was chatting with our captain at the stern. It seemed as if he would never go. If our captain should betray me, and order me down, I reflected, I could at least kick off my shoes, and so get rid of certain incriminating evidences against me. To expedite matters, I pulled off my shoes, and stuck them both into a fold of the bunched foretopsail. When I looked down again, our captain was escorting the Spanish naval officer to the gangway. A minute later the little boat pushed off, and I could hear the measured plash of her oars, and the sharp commands of the officer when he reached his ship. As she swung around and headed back to Porto Rico, I caught a glimpse of the name on her stern. It was *El Terror*.

I slid down the shroud, more dead than alive, and helped the captain put our helm hard aport until our bowsprit pointed once more for Santa Cruz. Behind us, when I looked back a last time, the *Terror* had vanished, and the dim coast-line of Porto Rico was sinking out of sight in the darkness.

PREMONITIONS.

BY ROBERT UNDERWOOD JOHNSON.

THERE 'S a shadow on the grass
That was never there before;
And the ripples, as they pass,
Whisper of an unseen oar;
And the song we knew by rote
Seems to falter in the throat;
And a footfall, scarcely noted, lingers near the open door.

Omens that were once but jest
Now are messengers of fate;
And the blessing held the best
Cometh not or comes too late.
Yet, whatever life may lack,
Not a blown leaf beckons back.

"Forward!" is the summons—"forward! where the new horizons wait."