

A CUBAN OLLAPODRIDA.

LIFE AS IT IS FOUND ON THE PEAK OF THE ANTILLES.

Manners and Customs of the Sunny Isle—How They run Hotels—Household Arrangements and the Style of House—Pictures of Scenery.

LONDON, Feb. 20.—You are always received at the century-old bodeguy posada or inn of Cuba as a person of great distinction. This, however, is wholly in the ethical sense. It in no wise betters the quality of your food; ministers to your bodily needs; or clears the filth, fleas and cobwebs from your dim old alcobas. An out-of-the-way inn in Cuba is a shelter much inferior to a night in the open air. Mine host will dance all around you with ineffable welcomes. He will call upon all the saints to guard you. He will protest endlessly, "My house is thine!" Then he will go to sleep. He awakens just before you depart, and showers blessings and bills upon you. If in the meantime you have got anything but quaint and laughable studies, you are in truth a born diplomat.

The country roads of Cuba crook and turn to avoid obstacles, just as the Cuban will do six days labor to avoid one. "Beware of the pantanos!" is the warning heard from every tongue throughout the day. These "pantanos" are sinks in the clay soil where one's animal plunges from perfectly solid footing fairly out of sight. The "pantanos" are bad enough, but the desechos (literally, refusals; avoidances) are worse. These are ways cut around impassable places, involving serious riding through bogs and jungles, and not infrequent goings astray in the dense forests.

The fences of these remarkable "roads" are curious affairs. Frequently they are of the Spanish bayonet, and the hemicycle with a broad leaf and barbed point six inches long, strong enough to impale your horse. Again strips of stone fence will be seen. Others are of pina de raton, or bastard pine-apple tree. But the larger number are of pinones botija. Green limbs are cut from this, and when thrust in the ground grow instantly and luxuriously. Between the branches the vejeco de angarilla, a hardy vine is planted. This weaves itself through and through the hedge in all manner of fantastic and tightening freaks; and as it bears a lovely purple blossom, this fence is always strikingly beautiful to the eye.

One class you will miss in Cuba—not in shops but everywhere else—is the women workers. The most sensible and often the handsomest of women can be found occupying places of trust in American mercantile establishments and offices. In all Havana but one place is noticed where white women are employed. This is a modiste's on Calle de Obispo; and these are a straggly lot indeed. Women in Cuba are ladies, washerwomen, or demi-monde. Shopping is done by the fair senoras or senoritas in the afternoon, and one will then certainly see beautiful women. They are neither flippant nor trifling in their purchases as in some countries. No salesman would dare gossip with them; suggest for them; or chatteringly enter upon discussion of their affairs. Nor do they inform shopkeepers of their own or their neighbors' intentions. They seem to know just what they want and go straightway and get it. The turnouts are very gay; thousands of women meet, mingle and pass greetings; but there seems to be a general understanding that a shop is not just the place in which ladies should entertain one another. This may arise from the fact that Spanish women are well bred. And well bred women set some store upon their own dignity and the home.

There being neither stoves nor fire-places in Cuba, the question of cooking-fires becomes an odd one. In the cities all cooking is done on charcoal urns, in the larger establishments these often being arranged in the form of massive charcoal ranges. But in remote country places a little pagoda-like corner is built next the house, or a detached structure, not unlike an American farmer's large smoke-house, is seen. Here the fire is built squarely upon the ground, or upon, or within, rude stone bases, and the smoke ascends at will, usually finding vent underneath raised roofs.

In this primitive cocina or kitchen, the guarda candela (literally candle, or fire-guard) is always smouldering. It is practically the fire-place "back-log" of our olden days to the Cuban country-home. If it should happen to go out, which is seldom permitted as unhappy superstitions attach to the fact, on discovery it is instantly relighted from flint and steel sparks struck into bunches of corn-tassels or dry and splintered leaves of the palm.

An agreeable diversion in Cuba is participation in a genuine "cobijar" or house-raising. I was once a guest at one of these in the country region north of Trinidad. A couple had been married. About a cabellera of land had been given them by an old montro father, and planters and yeomen alike, some from as far as twenty leagues away among the mountains, had come to make a sort of festivity out of setting the queer home upon its legs.

Over a hundred men were here, and their little ponies were tethered for a half mile up and down the road. Two fat bullocks had been killed, and roasted, and there was no

end of roasted pigs, and tender lambs from the mountains, with all sorts of unnamable Cuban country dishes. Perhaps a score of men were employed in the cooking alone. There were casks of aguardiente and flagons of cheap Catalan wine, and these splendid swarthy fellows made many picturesque groups among the laurels, palms, tamarinds, and mignonettes which grow to the height of our own flowering locusts.

But to me the construction of the house itself, as it arose in the wilderness garden, under the lazy, "visiting" sort of efforts of the crowd, was fully as interesting. It was built of guabrahaca (ax-breaker) wooden posts, interwoven with the long, straight and thin saplings of Haya, until a complete and most dexterous net-work of side-walls was made. This woven work is perhaps eighteen inches in thickness, and as rapidly as it progressed upward a score or so of guajeros forced into the chinks and interstices a hard plaster made of clay, water and the tough espartillo grass; so that by the time the casa de vivienda was ready for its roof, as two or three days are consumed in a Cuban house-raising, the sides are dry and solid as a brick wall. This particular structure was about 40 feet square in area, making a pretty comfortable home for a newly wedded pair. The roof went to a tremendous height at the ridge, and with its bellying arch of Hayapoles, reaching out over rude, wide porches, was thatched with the broad leaves of the palma de manaca, a small species of the palm, which serves for a perfect shelter for a period of seven years.

The quaint little village of San Francisco de Paula, between Havana and Guines, is one of the most winsome places to be found in Cuba. It is romantic in situation and prized for beautiful women and famous bread, both worth travelling a distance in any country to enjoy. The village nestles within a narrow gorge—the main street being formed by the calzada itself—and then truantly straggles on either side to a cock-pit on the one height and to a queer old church on the other. But down below, along the street and about the ways and paths between the houses, are bowers of roses, splashing fountains, and pretty girls innumerable.

Every home in this village nest was like a bit of old Doric Salem set in a frame of honeysuckle, jasmine, and rose; and every pillowed portico, wide, and big as the house itself, was a scene for an artist and student of simple toil and glowing beauty. Here, too, was a delightful surprise in the pleasing discovery the delicate beauty, the Cuban woman, could do something in the nature of work. These were the sweetest of Cubans and every one was as lazily busy as pretty.

At sundown in Havana harbor cannon boom from all the forts and man-of-war. Instantly every flag in the harbor is lowered. At eight o'clock again the cannon bellow. Instantly again from hundreds of vessels come the clanging sound of "eight bells!" With these mingle the chiming of bells from an hundred churches. Far and near sound the notes of the trumpeters in forts upon the mountains. Then for a little it seems as if deep silence came upon mountain and city and bay; and then—here a song; there the notes of a guitar; over yonder the merry click of the castinet; beyond, sailors singing roisteringly or well; here again an old American accordion full of sentiment and sweetness; out there in some Scotch craft a bagpipe, softer sounding than on shore; beyond that clump of vessels, the crew of a German man-of-war, singing as only Germans can sing some soulful Bundeslied; upon the shore near and far and all about, all manner of half-heard tones of laughter and melody, hidden and intensified in mystery and sweetness by distance and night; while from the look-outs on Moro tower, around to Jesus del Monte, and on again circling to the sea, are heard, as in medieval days of old Spain, the chanted calls of challenging sentinels, travestying our later time with owl-like hootings from monarchy's mold and gloom.—EDGAR L. WAKEMAN.

British Solons Need Not Thirst. The wine cellar of the British House of Commons is capable of holding some £30,000 to £40,000 worth of wine, says Tit-Bits. It is over 200 feet long, with innumerable small cellars branching from the main avenue. In this storehouse there is seldom less than £3,000 worth of wine. The various brands are selected in a curious way. Two or three well-known merchants send in samples of the wines they can supply. A napkin is fastened round each bottle and a number given to it. The judges then meet together, each having by his side a sheet of paper. As the wine is handed round the judges record their impression of it, and the brand that is most generally liked secures for the owner a lucrative order. On the way to the cellar is the cigar-room, a little apartment containing £1,000 worth of the best weeds. In a Parliamentary Session of average length 7,800 luncheons and 10,650 dinners are served to members, and 1,120 luncheons and 1,190 dinners in the strangers' room.

One Kind of a Wedding.

A singular marriage took place recently at Minsk, in Russia. The bride arrived at the altar surrounded by a bevy of beautiful girls. The bridegroom was accompanied by a number of gendarmes. After the ceremony the bridegroom was taken to prison and the bride was observed of all observers at a joyous banquet. The explanation of all this is that the man had been convicted of theft and murder and sentenced to ten years imprisonment with hard labour. A few days after the wedding both man and wife joined a caravan which set out for Siberia.

A LINCOLN COUNTY MIRACLE.

THE TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE OF A WELL-TO-DO FARMER.

Mr. Ezra Merritt Suffers Untold Agony—Told by a Physician That Only Death Could End His Sufferings—How He Secured His Release from Pain—Anxious That Others Should Benefit By His Experience.

Grimly Independent.

How often we hear the expression "Hills are green far afar" as a term of disparagement. So it may be with many of our readers when they hear of anything occurring at a distance from home bordering on the wonderful. They may place little confidence in it, and even if they do believe it, allow the matter to pass from their minds without leaving any permanent impression. Not so with local affairs. When anything startling occurs in our midst, affecting people whom we all know well, every one is interested, and all are anxious and even eager for the most minute details. For some months past there have been published in the columns of the Independent from time to time, accounts of remarkable cures made by that now justly famous medicine—Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People. Possibly some of our readers have looked upon some of these accounts as describing cures highly improbable, if not impossible. And yet this should not be the case, for they are all vouched for by respectable newspapers, who could have no object in stating other than the facts, and who would be discredited by their own readers were they to do so. However, seeing it believing, and Mr. Ezra Merritt, of South Grimsby, stands forth to-day as living testimony to the wonderful curative powers of this not at all over-estimated medicine—Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. Having heard that a most remarkable cure had been effected in the case of Mr. Merritt, the editor of the Independent, with that desire possessed by most newspaper men for verifying things coming under their notice, resolved to investigate the case and satisfy himself as to the truth of the story. Some days ago he drove over to Smithville, and at once called upon D. W. Eastman, druggist, a straightforward business man, whose word is as good as his bond with all who know him. Mr. Eastman stated that he knew of the case of Mr. Merritt, and considered it a most remarkable one. Mr. Palmer Merritt had come to him one day and asked him if he could give him anything that would help his brother, Ezra Merritt, who was suffering untold agony with pains in all his joints, his back and his head. Mr. Merritt stated that his brother had tried everything, and could find nothing to help him and that the doctors could give him no ease. One doctor from the United States had told him positively that there was no help for him, and that death only could set him free from his agony. Mr. Merritt further told Mr. Eastman that his brother wished to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills and asked him if he thought it would be any use. Mr. Eastman advised him to try them, as wonderful cures had been worked by their use. Mr. Merritt acted on his advice and continued the use of Pink Pills until he is now a well man and sound as ever.

The editor then drove over to see Mr. Merritt, and found that gentleman sound and hearty, looking over his cattle in his farmyard. Mr. Ezra Merritt is a well-to-do farmer owning two fine farms about 3½ miles west of Smithville, in the township of South Grimsby. When the newspaperman told the object of his visit Mr. Merritt expressed his willingness to give him the fullest particulars of his case, and we cannot do better than give it in his own words: "The first time I was troubled," said Mr. Merritt, "was on July first, 1891. We commenced haying on that day and I felt sore and stiff in all my joints. I now believe the trouble originated through my washing some sheep in cold water the preceding April, when I went into the water and stayed so long that when I came out my legs were numb, but I did not feel any bad results until July as I have said. I gradually grew worse until I could scarcely do anything. I kept on trying to work but it was a terrible struggle, and the way I suffered was something awful. Every joint in my body was stiff and intensely painful. As time passed on I gradually grew worse, the pains went into my back and at times my agony was almost unbearable. I had tried all home-made remedies but without avail. I then consulted a doctor but his medicine had no effect. At the time of the Smithville fair a doctor was over here from the States and I consulted him. He said my case was hopeless, and I need not expect anything but death to relieve me from my pain. As winter came on the pain got into my head and my sufferings were something terrible. About dark the pain would start about my ear and work up until it reached the crown of my head. As morning came on, the pain in my head would subside, but the pains in the rest of my body never left me, and at last I grew so bad that when I would lie on my back I could not get up, to save my life, without assistance. Although I had not lost my appetite I became weak, so bad that though I could walk around I could not stoop to lift a pound. I became so weak in this way that I got discouraged and lost all hope of ever getting better. It was about this time that I heard of the wonderful cures by the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and Mr. Eastman, of Smithville, advised that they be given a trial. My brother got me a box and I took them but felt no good results. I took still another box and still no perceptible benefit, and I felt so weak and discouraged that I decided not to take any more. At this time a lady from Hamilton came to visit at our place and she strongly advised me to continue using the Pink Pills. She had known Mr. Marshall at that city and knew that his case was bona fide. I thought it useless to continue, but at the urgent solicitations of my friends I did so, and by the time I was through with the third box I began to feel a benefit from them. This gave me hope which did not again waver, as I found myself steadily growing better, and continued the use of the Pink Pills until now I am as well as ever I was in my life. I know that it was Pink Pills that saved me when all else had failed, and I have no objections whatever to having the story of my cure being published, as it may be the means of helping some other sufferer back to health and strength and gladness." Mr. Merritt further said that he had no fear of a hard day's work, and has not had the slightest return of the pains or the stiffness in the joints.

Returning to Smithville, the editor again called upon Mr. Eastman, and was informed by that gentleman that his sales of Pink Pills were something enormous, Mr. Merritt's cure having something to do with the increase in sales lately. There are other cases also in this vicinity little less than marvellous, of which we may speak later on.

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are a perfect blood builder and nerve restorer, curing such diseases as rheumatism, neuralgia, partial paralysis, locomotor ataxia, St. Vitus' dance, nervous headache, nervous prostration and the tired feeling therefrom, the after effects of la grippe, influenza and severe colds, diseases depending on humors in the blood, such as scrofula, chronic erysipelas, etc. Pink Pills give a healthy glow to pale and sallow complexions, and are a specific for the troubles peculiar to the female system, and in the case of men they effect a radical cure in all cases arising from mental worry, over-work or excesses of any nature.

These Pills are manufactured by the Dr. Williams' Medicine Company, Brockville, Ont., and Schenectady, N. Y., and are sold only in boxes bearing the firm's trade mark and wrapper, at 50 cts. a box, or six boxes for \$2.50. Bear in mind that Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are never sold in bulk, or by the dozen or hundred, nor in any form except in packages bearing the company's trade mark and any dealer who offers substitutes in any other form is trying to defraud you and should be avoided.

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills may be had of all druggists or direct by mail from Dr. Williams' Medicine Company from either address. The price at which these pills are sold make a course of treatment comparatively inexpensive as compared with other remedies or medical treatment.

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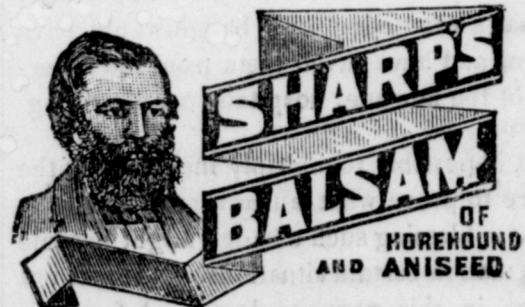
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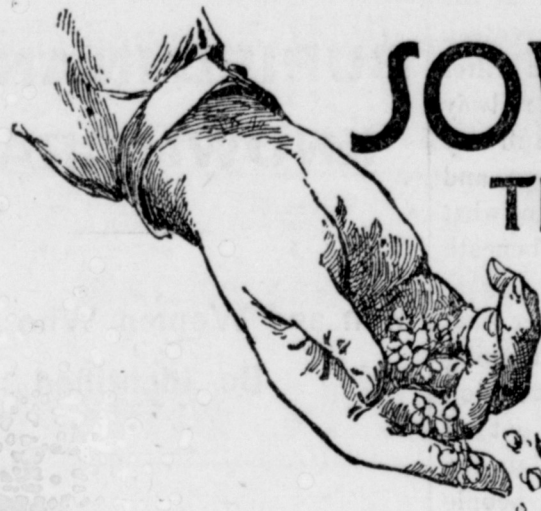
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