

SATURDAY EVENING, APRIL 13, 1901.

# THE MISFORTUNES OF PORTO RICO

## Hers Has Thus Far Not Been a Happy Lot Under American Rule--Yet She Is Submissive and Very Different From Peevish, Arrogant Cuba.

**P**oor little unfortunate Porto Rico! She did not inveigle the United States into a war in her behalf, nor having received our aid does she try to shut the door in our face. She welcomed our troops, has neither asked for independence, nor talked of revolution. She has only suggested that having been accepted as a part of the United States her people should share in the rights and benefits of its citizenship. Her course has been vastly different to that of her peevish sister, Cuba. She has been submissive instead of arrogant, hospitable to Americans, not even craving self-government.

**A Combination of Woes.** Disappointed in not receiving the prosperity she expected, she has hardly complained when her people have starved by the thousands, and her commerce was almost destroyed. This had been her condition for eighteen months, when I landed at San Juan, her capital, one year ago this week. Her tobacco and sugar crops for 1898 and 1899 were still tied up by the tariff, and after overflowing the warehouses were stored in temporary sheds. The planters, for lack of money, were unable to proceed with cultivation, and the sugar cane was beginning to rot from infection.

The entire coffee crop, the chief staple of the island, had been destroyed by a hurricane. The Spanish had carried off most of the silver, and there was a lack of currency for what little trading there was. Business was at a standstill. The merchants would not trust the planters for stores, and the peons who worked upon plantations were suffering for food. Our government was feeding over 100,000 of them to keep them from starving. This had been the situation month after month, and still congress had done nothing towards readjusting the tariff which prevented reciprocal relations.

**Porto Ricans Mildly Reproachful.** It was the anniversary of St. John, usually a feast day, but this time it was celebrated by fasting and prayer. All the stores were closed and the people gathered in the plaza in the center of the city. With the members of the chamber of commerce at their head they marched slowly in a body to the palace and stood silently before it.

A committee entered and presented a petition which set forth in mild terms the "utter inability of the island to hold out

much longer under existing conditions," and stated that "distress and alarm is daily becoming more harassing in all branches of trade owing to the virtual lack of a fixed and definite understanding for its transactions, and that now grave apprehension for the future is generally entertained by all our merchants, while owing to the enormous depreciation of property, ruin is staring the majority of our planters in the face."

**Cheers Instead of Curses.** General Davis, the military commander, was ill, and Adjutant General Hall was unwell. So it devolved upon John Van R. Hoff, the chief surgeon, to make a little address in reply to the petition which was that General Davis should exert his influence to get congress to act speedily in fixing the island's commercial status. This he did, speaking very gently as if he were addressing a Sunday school, virtually saying: "There, there, be patient and good and everything will be all right soon."

Thus assured, the committee withdrew, after shaking hands all around, and the crowd after giving three cheers for General Davis and the United States, departed as quietly as it had gathered. I did not hear one angry word, nor a vehement expression. Under similar circumstances an American crowd would have roared itself hoarse, if it did not do something even more violent. A Cuban crowd would have jabbered like a flock of parrots, and showered maledictions upon everything American.

**The Delay of Congress.** Not so these mild-eyed Porto Ricans. They simply looked doubtful and kept their thoughts to themselves. Another month passed and congress after showing a disposition to dodge it finally took up the Porto Rican question. Then, although President McKinley had said in his message that the island should be accorded free trade, it developed that probably there would be only a reduction of the Dingley tariff duties.

"But this is unjust," wailed the unhappy Porto Ricans. "Don't we belong to the United States and can't we have the same privileges as Hawaii and Alaska, and besides, has not your great McKinley told us we could have free trade in his mighty message?"

But congress kept on talking and talking until the desperate islanders were willing to accept, and desiring that would enable them to sell their products, and it is an end to everything earthly, and at

last congress, to placate the Connecticut tobacco growers, placed the tariff on Porto Rican export at one-fifteenth of the Dingley duties, and then, ashamed of this, agreed that the collections on Porto Rican exports should be returned to the island and expended upon a supporting the civil government and public works to give employment to the people.

**Our Word Not Kept.** But alas, this has not been done. Since the filing of the cases in the supreme court involving the constitutionality of the Porto Rican act, the treasury department has been withholding the duties collected at our ports so as to be able to



A TYPICAL PORTO RICAN VILLAGE.

refund if the law is found unconstitutional. The court took a recess and some time this month it will take up the cases. In the meantime the building of roads and the public works that were to be paid for out of the returned duties has not been undertaken, and the Porto Rican cities are filled with crowds of the unemployed.

In almost any other place in the world something more serious than the mobbing of an American school teacher would have occurred under similar conditions. Of course, the duties could have been paid and the improvements carried on, congress making an appropriation to reimburse the imports in case the supreme court holds the government is without constitutional authority to impose tariff duties upon Porto Rican products.

**How the Dingley Tariff Works.** But, of course, it is Porto Rico that is involved and Porto Rico must wait. It is preposterous that our tobacco and sugar raisers and manufacturers fear the little island's competition, although they professed it, for Porto Rico does not raise enough of either article to keep up with even our increase in consumption. But, then, free trade for Porto Rico would mean that awful thing, a precedent, the entering of free trade with Cuba and the Philippines should they accept American protectorate.

Now it might seem as if we were not really injuring Porto Rico if we kept our word and paid back the duties (which we haven't done up to date), but consider how it is keeping her from doing manufacturing and confining her to merely raising raw materials. Take tobacco. One-fifteenth per cent of the Dingley duties on leaf tobacco is 5 1/2 cents per pound on leaf tobacco, but upon manufactured goods, such as cigars and cigarettes, one-fifteenth of the Dingley duties is 7 1/2

cents per pound, and with 25 per cent ad valorem added, is 77 1/2 cents per pound, as against 4 1/2 cents per pound upon the raw material. It can be seen from this that Porto Rican tobacco must be brought to the United States for manufacture.

**Cuba Misses a Chance.** If the Cubans had brainy leaders, or if the business element were in control of the constitutional convention instead of a lot of wild-eyed, scheming revolutionists they could take the fate of Porto Rico for a text and preach our congress a sermon that would not be forgotten. Suppose the Cubans, instead of shouting for "Cuba Libre," and denying the right of the United States to protect its interests, should say: "To give the United States supervision over our foreign relations, with power to limit our indebtedness, as well as to have troops and naval stations on our shores means an American protectorate. We demand in return reciprocal relations. We do not wish to give everything and receive nothing. We do not want to have duties charged upon our exports after you have destroyed our trade with other countries as you have done with Porto Rico."

If this argument was made, the Platt resolution could hardly have been forced through congress, for the tobacco and the fruit interests would fight it, and possibly the sugar trust would add its influence, although we are compelled to buy sugar abroad greatly in excess of the amount that Cuba can supply. Congress could

and rocks, and every vestige of cultivation were piled up in the valleys. The fruit buds of the peons were destroyed. No fruits were left.

In the course of an 80 mile drive across the island I was not able to buy a banana, and as this fruit with the plantain furnishes 50 per cent of the food of 600,000 people, two-thirds of the population, it is no wonder there was starvation.

The coffee crop was entirely wiped out and 90 per cent of the sugar plantations badly damaged. The loss of property was estimated at \$10,000,000, but taking into consideration that it would require five years to establish the coffee vegas the loss was nearer 50,000,000, a crushing blow to an island that isn't much larger than one of Minnesota's big counties and hasn't as large a population as Philadelphia.

**Overwhelmed With Disaster.** And this happened just at the time when the people were undergoing severe crisis as the sequence of a war, the withdrawal of capital from circulation, and an almost complete loss of markets. Recuperation has been retarded by the delay of congress. As they could not realize on their crops the sugar plantation owners could not borrow to plant again and their plantations were already mortgaged to the extent of \$30,000,000. They could not furnish supplies even to their laborers, for the merchants would not trust them. For one government to feed the poor peons was to bankruptize them, but it had to be done for they would die like sheep into out making any fuss about it. Some would even drag themselves out to the cemeteries so as to be handy for burial. The deaths from inanition, another word for starvation, from Sept. 21 to Jan. 31, a year after the storm, were 21,286.

A casual visitor landing at one of the ports would see nothing to indicate that out of the 87,000 people on the island two-thirds were destitute, but back from the military road where their shacks were perched like bird cages on the mountain sides he scattered through the valleys I found conditions that exceeded all stories of distress.

**Not Much Better Now.** That conditions are not much improved this spring is shown by a petition to the civil governor for an extra session of the legislature last week to appropriate money to be loaned the planters to put in this year's crops.

The huts of the natives are generally little more than thatched leaves supported by poles for roofs as a shelter from the sun and rain. The sides are walled in with the bark of the palm tree with a single opening for a door. About ten feet square is the average size. A few dishes made from gourds, two or three of cheap earthenware, and generally one large glass tumbler to be used by all after the fashion of a loving cup, constitute the household effects of the average Spigotti, as the American soldiers call a native.

Their ignorance and ignorance is as complete as could be conceived. They cultivate little ground and own none of it, living almost entirely upon wild fruits and roots. The ringing of a church bell on Sunday gives them about all the knowledge they have of the passing of time. I

see that it is said of the Porto Ricans who have been taken to Hawaii to work upon the plantations there that they gave evidence upon their arrival there of coming from more impoverished conditions than any other laborers ever brought there, Portuguese, Norwegians, Galicians, Chinese or Japanese. They brought with them only clothing that had been provided by the agents, and had neither bedding nor cooking utensils. At home their children go naked until 10 years of age, and the men wear the cheapest of cotton garments corresponding to our pajamas, and the women Mother Hubbards.

**Not a Difficult Proposition.** The future of the island has no perplexing problems. The people have not the revolutionary ideas of the Cubans, and have not acquired the habit of taking to the bush and turning bandits when things correspond to our pajamas, and the men wear Mother Hubbards.

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**Education Much Needed.** There is a great field for philanthropy in Porto Rico and opportunity to work off the surplus of missionary zeal. There are no deep-rooted race prejudices, social, political or religious, as there are in China. The children are as bright as those of other lands, but it will take compulsory education to make the majority of them go to school. The desire for education noted in Cuba has not been here. A public school system on the American plan has been established, but not enough money by half has been provided to make a proper beginning.

Of the dozen or so towns on the island only the three ports, San Juan, Ponce and Mayaguez, make pretensions to being cities. The first two are about 40,000 each in population and there is considerable rivalry. Mayaguez has a population of about 15,000. San Juan is distinctly a Spanish town which dates back to the second voyage of Columbus, but in Ponce and Mayaguez there is less of the prison-like architecture, and the houses are more picturesque, and are built of wood, some actually having front yards. One residence, called Switzerland, at Ponce, has spacious grounds, with no less than ten fountains, a summer house, statues, baths, and a wilderness of flowers.

There has not been such an admixture of negro blood as in Cuba and the Spanish and West Indian characteristics are about evenly balanced. Americans have been more cordially received into the society of the towns than in Cuba, but in business dealings the people have been quite clamish and American stores get little but

American patronage. The American cocktail is popular, and must have a cherry in it, or it will be refused.

**As to the Resources.** The commercial opportunities are not likely to attract the investments of millionaire syndicates as in Cuba. The resources of the island are entirely agricultural, and what little manufacturing there is is allied to it. There is so little promise of mineral wealth that scarcely any geological examination has been made. There isn't enough timber to furnish the lumber needed on the island, and cheap American lumber is in demand.

Coffee is the chief crop. The exportation reached the high-water mark of \$13,379,000 in 1896. Porto Rican coffee has not been introduced in America, but is in big demand in France, Germany, Austria, Italy and Spain, where it commands a higher price than any other.

Sugar comes next, 1899 being the banner year when exports amounted to \$6,919,000. American labor-saving machinery and better methods of cultivation could easily quadruple the production for the soil, which has never known fertilizing, is still twice as productive as that of any of our sugar lands, while the cane throws up its ratoons for at least four years and does not need to be planted annually.

**Tobacco Supply Is Limited.** The tobacco crop only reaches an average yield of about 10,000,000 pounds, about one-half of which is consumed on the island, while the export value of the remainder will probably approximate only \$1,125,000. There are no great tobacco fields or factories as in Cuba, but the methods of curing and manufacturing, except in a few instances, lack the care and skill that is bestowed upon the Cuban product.

That as good tobacco can be grown here as in Cuba may be argued, however, from the fact that the great proportion of the crop has been sent to Havana, and when stamped "Havana," sold as such in the United States without the difference being detected, even by connoisseurs. The land is well adapted to tobacco-raising is limited, however.

**Fruit Growing the Best Investment.** The possibilities for fruit growing would dazzle the Florida orange grower who sometimes loses crop after crop from frosts and the Californian who succeeds only by expensive irrigation. The productiveness in proportion to care exercised would be at least double here. There are no groves, and oranges, lemons, limes, bananas and a score of other tropical fruits grow without attention in a profusion that supplies the island. There could easily be developed a tremendous export business, although it has been but little attempted thus far. Cattle grazing also offers opportunities that discount those of this country for there is neither drought nor winter and the cattle can feed on splendid grasses all the year around.

**Needs Railroads Badly.** The great and crying need of the island is transportation facilities for as a rule it costs more to get products to ports for shipment than it does to raise them. When a few railroads and electric lines are provided, there will be opportunities for both capital and labor within moderate restrictions, for the island is less than a hundred miles long and only forty wide and is not exactly an empire. The climate is the most salubrious of any of the West India islands, yellow fever being almost unknown. But it will be almost impossible for the average American living there the year around to escape malaria in one form or another.

Porto Rico will probably be a great winter resort some day. The weather is delightful, and any desired temperature can be secured according to the altitude. The mountain scenery is hardly excelled in either America or Europe. It is almost kaleidoscopic in its beauty, and a splendid military road which winds over the range takes one through a panorama of perfect tropical loveliness.

There are great caves yet unexplored, and mountain recesses only to be reached by trails which are sufficiently dangerous to be attractive to the venturesome, while there are springs both medicinal and thermal which are said to possess wonderful curative qualities.

—Smith B. Hall.



STREET SCENE IN SAN JUAN.



DRYING COFFEE IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE AT LARES.

## CHINESE CHOIR IN AMERICAN CHURCH

### Chinese Musical Ideas That Sound Harsh and Strange to Western Ears Are Laid Aside Here.

Correspondence of The Journal. San Francisco, April 6.—The only Chinese church choir in the world pours out its soul in sacred song twice every Sunday in the Presbyterian Chinese church in Stockton street, San Francisco. It is a remarkable choir in every way, and far from shocking the ears of Caucasians, rather pleases them. In the congregation to which this choir sings are many Americans and they are quite in love with the innovation. Those who have heard celestial music made in the restaurants of San Francisco's Chinese quarter will not remember it with unalloyed pleasure nor associate it with the music of the spheres. To unaccustomed ears it sounds wheezy, whiny, falsetto and flat. It is usually accompanied by cranking and grunting instruments and squeaky ditties which sound like the very hysteria of music.

But this choir is entirely different. Of course it required years to accomplish this result, but in those years the zeal and hope of Rev. I. M. Condit and his missionary wife knew neither flickering nor waning. As a result, Dr. Condit presides Sunday after Sunday at the church in Stockton street; a Chinese congregation composed of men, women, children and infants in arms attends for worship, and sufficient advance has been made to have the music of the service rendered by a double quartet of male and female voices.

Years of preparation with an older generation, it is true, were necessary before that church choir of Chinese could blossom into a well organized and harmonious life, but the positive advance made by the young people themselves is extraordinary. When, in 1868, Dr. Loomis effected a Presbyterian church organization among the Chinese, he found difficulty in bringing the men and women together for worship. There was a religious and social chasm that the men shrank from crossing. Concessions were made and the women were allowed to worship behind screens and curtains. As time wore on prejudices commenced to lose their hold. It was in 1870 that Dr. Condit came to work as a Chinese missionary. Curtains and screens began to be lowered, finally a disappear, but the men kept to one side of the church and the women to the other much as did our Puritan ancestors less than two centuries ago; just as did the Friends and the Quakers a half a hundred years ago, and as they do still in many cases for the matter of that. Even today, there are many church galleries where, by an unwritten regulation, the men affect the east or the west, the north or the south gallery, and the women the other. There was no positive reason for the division with the occidental worshiper, while with the oriental there were not only traditions, but inexorable laws that regulated all such things and degraded



MRS. WING, THE ORGANIST.

won anklid. At the Chinese church the demarcation is still apparent, but it is fading away, the children helping in the process of obliteration, for the girls and boys run back and forth from father to mother, and Dr. and Mrs. Condit are erasing the lines more and more by impressing on their converts the beauty and sentiment of families kneeling together in prayer.

But the choir marks one of the most positive advances, for in it young men and young women stand side by side and their voices blend in hymns of praise, and

blend sweetly, rhythmically and devoutly, too.

The Occident, in a pride of self-complacency that seems better suited to the east than the west, has, as a rule, contemptuously refused to give any consideration to the music of the Orient, brushing all thought of the subject aside with the conviction, rarely questioned, that that out of China, musically, comes nothing but squeals and discords. Yet the Chinese are scientifically and naturally a musical people. They have been positive and set in their ideas on music as they have in almost everything else; they have clung to their idea of harmony, their five tone pentatonic system, though understanding the divisions of the chromatic scale. They have disregarded our "si" and "mi" notes as being quite as useless as an extra finger on the hand. They have also chafed at the idea of ending a musical composition in a fatted key, which sets our western teeth and taste ajar. Accompaniments to songs are written in fourths and fifths and must be played andante or adagio, all of which is trying to unaccustomed souls. While clinging to their own technique our system is familiar to the Orient, which cannot be said of their system with us. Of it is they are woefully ignorant; but they will have nothing of our semi-tones, and knowing of our consonant major thirds and sixths, our minor thirds and minor seconds and ninths, they go along their own sweet way, which seems so discordant to us.

A few months ago Dr. Condit had built for this new choir an organ, left to one side of the preaching platform, which was old and revered in China, that the four young girls, the four young men and the organist, who compose this choir had to sacrifice when they raised their voices in Christian worship. Yet sweet, rich, harmonious voices they are. They reach, in their sweet, rising, sharp, flat, natural and accidental written, and are more moderate to time and note values than many an occidental choir.

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something which they are devising ways and means to purchase.

Mrs. Wing, a little Chinese matron, who was brought in the Home of the Occidental Board of Foreign Missions, where she first learned to sing and play accompaniments. Now she is married and has a home of her own, and spends the afternoon of every day visiting among her people as a Christian missionary. Between times she takes music lessons and practices with the choir.

William Philip Brewer, a young American, is choir master, and is devoted and interested in the work, and stimulates the members. The vocalists are: Soprano, Miss Suey Lin of the Occidental Mission Home, and Miss Frances Lowe, a pupil of the Denman grammar school; alto, Miss Besie Caroline Ahtye, who is devoted to music, a pupil of Professor Telesner, organist of the First Presbyterian church, and sufficiently advanced in her studies to interpret with pleasure Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Palestrinski, and Yoke Yon, a tiny ward of the Occidental Mission Board, where she is cherished with much affection; tenor, Yew Owyang and Chee S. Lowe, who is truly the inspirator of the choir. He attends the polytechnic of the island school; bass, Ng Poon Chew, managing editor of the Daily Chinese paper, and Joy G. Lowe of the Clement grammar school. The last two are thoroughly Americanized. They will enter the University of California when they have finished the courses of the local high schools.

The members are all fond of music. They read by sight and sing well. There is a richness and sweetness in their voices that cannot fall to both please and surprise. One feels, while listening to the correct harmonies flowing with ease and in cadences grateful to cultivated western ears, that these young people have swept away the accumulated dust of centuries and have blossomed into freshness and beauty and grace under the rays of a new civilization.

## MITCHELL'S DEBATERS VS. YANKTON

### DAKOTA UNIVERSITY AND YANKTON COLLEGE MEN TO MEET AT YANKTON ON MAY 6.



LAURITZ MILLER. GUSTAVUS LOVINGER. J. M. DEVERS.

**Summer Tours.** It is rather early to start, but not too early to think about your trip, and as a great deal depends on the start you make, start right by taking the Northern Pacific's "Lake Superior Limited" via the "Duluth Short Line," leaving Minneapolis at 2:00 p. m., connecting with all Great Lakes steamer lines at Duluth, or their "North Coast Limited" (on May 5th), for the Yellowstone Park and Pacific coast tours. Watch for our announcement of summer excursions.

**"Like Getting Money From Home."** We all like to hear from home—not all of us necessarily expecting money enclosed—and the only way to insure hearing is to write a letter to the folks at home. A splendid opportunity is offered for those inclined to write, in the observation car on the Northern Pacific's "Lake Superior Limited," where is provided a beautiful writing desk well stocked with the finest linen stationery.



AFTER CHOIR PRACTICE.

"PRAISE GOD, FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW."