

THE MERIDIONAL.

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY.
SUBSCRIPTION ONE DOLLAR A YEAR.

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Telephone 46.

Entered at the Postoffice at Abbeville,
La., as Second-class mail matter.

RAILROAD TIME TABLE.
East bound 10:42 a. m.
West bound 12:54 p. m.

SATURDAY SEPT. 2, 1905.

Diversity of Opinion.

The Cuban Rice Bill as Viewed by Leading Papers.

The New York Sun's much discussed article on the Cuban rice bill is as follows:

Some months ago an American lobby representing the rice interests of Louisiana and Texas brought pressure to bear on the Cuban Congress for the purpose of inducing that body to increase the duty on all rice imported into the island. The proposed increase, affected by the 40 per cent advantage given by the reciprocity treaty, would open the Cuban market to the American product, which the Cubans cannot now afford to buy. Seeing only a possible benefit to American trade, and without competent knowledge of the results of the bill or the methods by which it is being forced upon the Cubans, various American papers have given the movement their approval.

In 1904 Cuba imported 196,439,462 pounds of rice, of a value of \$3,861,307, or practically two cents a pound. All except an insignificant quantity was Asiatic rice, imported chiefly via Europe. England supplied nearly 60 per cent of it, Germany about 30 per cent, and the remainder came from various countries. About 4,500,000 pounds, valued at \$90,000, was supplied by the United States. As the consumption for 1904 was a fair average of Cuba's annual requirement, the trade is evidently worth having. But the American people neither need nor want a trade which is almost choked out of a weaker neighbor, against the wish and contrary to the interests of the weaker country. If we cannot get business by fair and open methods, or without playing the bully, we could better maintain our national self-respect by getting along without it.

The present Cuban duty on rice is \$1.20 per 100 kilos (about 200 pounds) for shipments from all countries except the United States. The rate on rice from this country, under the reciprocity treaty, is only 72 cents. The so-called ley de arroz, or rice bill, proposes an increase to \$2.75 per 100 kilos, which would give to the United States an advantage of \$1.10, or one-half a cent a pound over all competitors. To this there might be no objection if it did not mean a large increase in the cost of an article of diet which is in Cuba quite what flour is in the United States. It is the staple food of the people. And the proposal is that every Cuban peasant and workman shall pay an annual sum from his pittance for the benefit of American rice growers and American and Cuban transportation companies.

It is claimed by the promoters of the measure that the increased cost would be trivial, that the rate paid on present imports is \$1.20, and that the new rate on imports from the United States would be \$1.05, an increase of only 45 cents on 220 pounds, or less than a quarter of a cent per pound. Assuming Cuba's total supply to be obtained from this country, which it would not be, even that would add nearly \$500,000 a year to the island's cost of living.

There are several interesting features in this movement to which attention may be called. When Cubans who have been induced to support such a bill advanced, they at once became cause open to suspicion, argument made by an in the Cuban House is that present reciprocity treaty is not

fair to the United States. The fact is that a special agent, General Tasker H. Bliss, virtually dictated the terms of the reciprocity treaty, having at all times and in all items, as an expert authority, clearly in view the equalizing of American competition with that of all other lands. If we did not get all that properly belongs to us we need no Cuban advocates to protest against the unfairness of the result.

Another argument is that the advantage given to Cuban sugar in our custom houses is one of the causes of the deficit in our revenues, and therefore Cuba should do what she can to help us out of our financial hole by increasing, even at her own cost, her purchases from us. Such arguments are silly and ridiculous. If they were less so they would be as disgraceful to us as they are to those who utter them. Another argument widely used is that if this advantage is not given the present treaty will be abrogated and no new treaty made. Those who use that argument, whether Cubans or American, officials or laymen, go far beyond the bounds of any justification.

American rice growers cannot supply the rice required by Cuba nor can the product of American fields be sold in competition with the rice of Saigon and Rangoon. The total American production last year was about 470,000,000 pounds, out of which about 75,000,000 pounds was exported. In addition to our home production we imported for domestic consumption more than 100,000,000 pounds of rice, rice flour, rice meal and broken rice. It would, in view of these facts, be interesting to know just where we are to get the 200,000,000 pounds needed by Cuba. It certainly cannot come from our domestic production, because we do not produce it. If it be a question of supplying the cereal from the Far East, a proposition to which the promoters of this scheme would object strongly, we fail to see why American traders, with the present 40 per cent tariff advantage, may not now compete with England and Germany.

The truth of the matter is that the Cuban rice bill, in its conception and the methods which have been used to foist it on the Cuban people, is discreditable to the United States. It should receive no official support, and should receive vigorous opposition and condemnation from the press. It was jammed through the Cuban House, is hung up in the Cuban Senate, and should it pass the Senate would be vetoed by the President were it not for his fear that the United States would charge him with showing favor to England and Germany.

Outside of a financially interested clique the rice bill is condemned from one end of Cuba to the other. Should its promoters succeed in jamming or bullying it through the Cubans must expect to see a cotton clique, a machinery clique, a wine lobby, a glass and crockery group, a boot and shoe aggregation, and a long procession of other interests demanding monopolistic privileges in the Cuban custom house.

The New Orleans Picayune thinks retaliation should take the place of reciprocity. The announcement that the Cuban Senate rejected the rice bill by a vote of 11 to 1 will prove something of a disappointment to the American rice interests. The measure, had it become law, would have furnished a wider market for Louisiana rice by enabling it to compete on more favorable terms with foreign rices in Cuba. The bill provided for a small increase in the duty on rice imports, which would have encouraged the planting of more rice in the island itself, and by allowing the preferential tariff on American rice provided the reciprocity treaty our Louisiana rice would have been directly benefited.

As the measure had already passed the lower House of the Cuban Congress, and as President Palma was understood to favor it, confidence was felt in its passing the Senate, notwithstanding that it was understood that a vigorous fight was being made on the bill in some quarters. It now appears that the opposition is stronger than was supposed, and the Liberal Party threatened

to make the measure an issue in the forthcoming presidential campaign if President Palma's administration sought to encompass the passage of the bill.

The Cuban Liberals opposed the rice bill on the ground that it would increase the cost of one of the main food supplies of the people. The argument that the small preferential that it would give American rice was but a poor return for the benefits arising from the reciprocity treaty with the United States was disregarded, although strong requests were sent from Washington urging favorable action, and President Roosevelt himself is reported to have written a personal letter to President Palma asking that the bill be passed.

It is well to remember that the reciprocity treaty now in existence between this country and Cuba was strongly opposed in Congress, on the ground that Cuba was given immense benefits for which she could make but a very meager return. All opposition was frowned down by President Roosevelt, with the statement that we were in duty bound to aid Cuba, even though we received nothing in return. The Cubans have evidently taken him at his word, since they have refused to pass a bill which would give a great American industry a slight preference in their markets, although they enjoy a preferential 20 per cent in our markets for their immense sugar crop of a million tons and more as well as for their important tobacco crop.

The fact of the matter is that there is no sense of obligation to us in the Cubans whatever, and it is further a fact that they feel in no way indebted for what this country did for them in 1898 and during the years immediately following. They cordially dislike Americans and chafe under the nominal restrictions placed on them for their own good by the Platt amendment.

It is now to be hoped that the Administration will have its eyes opened and understand how little the Cubans appreciate what has been done for them. The reciprocity treaty ought to be repealed at the earliest possible moment and Cuba be forced to pay the same duties on her sugar imports in the United States which all other sugar-producing countries have to pay. Certainly Louisiana has every reason to denounce the reciprocity treaty, which greatly damages our sugar interests, particularly now when the rejection of the rice bill deprives our rice from reaping moderate benefits which might prove some small offset to the injury done the sugar industry.

The Times-Democrat says it is an exhibition of the prejudice to and suspicion of the United States:

"The famous rice tariff bill has finally been defeated in the Cuban Senate by a vote of 11 to 2. The Times-Democrat announced this defeat some time ago, before the actual vote had been taken on the measure, but when it was known that it was destined to failure, for almost ever since the measure has been before the Senate it has been recognized that there was no chance of success."

"While originally offered in the interests of the rice growers of Louisiana and Texas, who would have been greatly benefited had the duty been raised a year ago, conditions have so changed in the South with this season that no special interest was felt in the proposed law. It would have been of no benefit to our rice growers, but, on the contrary, would have greatly inconvenienced them. We have no rice where-with to supply the Cuban market had it been opened to us, as it was thought a higher differential would open it. It would have placed us to great disadvantage in Cuba by showing that we are unable to supply the island with the rice it needs. For this reason, because of the embarrassment that the passage of the law would have caused us, but little has latterly been done by the Louisiana and Texas interests involved to press it.

"None the less, the defeat of the measure cannot but be regarded as a remarkable display of Cuban politics and an exhibition of the prejudice to and sus-

tion of the United States existing in the island.

"The law was suggested from this country and strongly urged from here. Cuba has been greatly benefited by the reciprocity treaty with the United States, and it was suggested that it should show its appreciation of what we had done to help Cuban planters by doing something to help American farmers. The measure was urged as an act of gratitude, and the State Department at Washington laid the matter before the Cuban government, and President Roosevelt even sent a letter to President Palma, it is said, in favor of the bill.

"The lower house of the Cuban Congress seemed most favorably disposed and after an earnest debate passed the bill, whereas the Senate vetoed it by a majority of more than five to one, without any debate whatever.

"The explanation lies in Cuban politics and the approach of the Cuban presidential election. The party friendly to the United States, finding that the opposition was making capital out of the question, veered around and voted with the opposition against the bill. Perhaps we have no reason to complain of this manifestation of Cuban politics, for we have, not infrequently, seen something of the same kind in our Congress."

The following is the Havana Post's last appeal to the Cuban Congress in behalf of the bill, in its issue of August 18:

"The figures which have been given by the New York Sun in arguing against the rice bill are so absurd as hardly to merit attention, but as a few people may be misled by the erroneous statements of this rich paper, we will again refer to its ridiculous pretention that the United States has no rice to export. Would President Roosevelt, we want to ask, do such a ridiculous thing as express the hope that this rice bill would pass so as to provide a market for American rice, when there was no American rice? Of course not. Would the assistant secretary of state of the United States urge the Cuban minister regarding the rice bill if the United States had nothing to gain? Of course not.

"Where do the figures which come from the Sun come from? Are they not manufactured either in the office of the Sun or among the opposition down here in Cuba. Instead of quoting these figures off hand the way that it does, why does not the Sun go to the department of agriculture and ask Secretary Wilson regarding the capacity of American rice industries? The reason is plain: the Sun did not want the truth, because the truth would not serve its purposes.

"Cuba has nothing for which to thank the New York Sun. When the Sun speaks of Mr. Palma, the beloved president of this republic it characterizes him as a man of a 'weak mind, and without backbone,' statements in which there is just as much truth as in the absurd figures which the Sun has quoted in reference to the rice bill. The Cubans know these sentiments of the Sun and even the political opponents of Mr. Palma do not relish having their chief executive spoken of in the way that it does and for that reason, if for no other what the Sun says will have little effect upon the affairs of Cuba.

"But there is one reason above all other that should concern the senate in the passing of this bill. That is the fact that President Roosevelt wants it. The president of the United States compromised himself in order to secure reciprocity for Cuba, and if Cuba shows their evidence of appreciation he will be able to show that reciprocity is appreciated by the Cubans. That the bill is desired by the United States department of state is evidenced by the interview a few days ago between Assistant Secretary Adee and the Cuban minister, Mr. Gonzalo de Quesado, when the latter was urged to urge his government to pass the bill. But the best reason for the Cuban senate to pass the bill is the fact that it will help Mr. Roosevelt."

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Raising Filipino Rice.

Experiment Farm of The Bureau of Agriculture.

The Third Annual, published July 1 by the Manila Daily Bulletin, which is replete with beautifully illustrated articles treating on the many varied industries of the Philippines, contains the following interesting write up on the rice farm at Murcia Tarlac:

The soil of this farm is poorer than that of most of the rice farms of the islands and is not as level as it should be to give the best results. About 1,000 acres can be put under cultivation. Eight hundred acres have been cleared and diked. Six hundred acres are now growing rice and 200 more will be planted by the middle of October. The last wet season's crop consisted of about 30 acres, on which the yield was very good. Four hundred acres were planted for the dry season with a quick-maturing Japanese seed never previously tried in the Philippines. The experiment resulted in failure, the Japanese rice not producing 20 per cent of the crop afforded by the regular Philippine dry-season rice, "inita." The Japanese rice proved too weak to hold its own against the strong tropical grasses.

The native method of planting rice is in seeding beds and then transplanting by hand and the American method of direct seeding by the use of drills have both been tried. With the faulty methods of preparing land employed by the Filipinos it is doubtless better to transplant, as the young plants are thus given a good start over the weeds which might otherwise choke them out, but when land has been properly prepared the planting of rice with drills is feasible and gives excellent results.

It is found that horses and mules stand the heavy work on the rice farm as well as in the Southern States of America. A native teamster with four mules plows four acres of land per day, while a native plowman with 4 Chinese oxen, of which some 10 head are in use on the farm, plows 2 1/2 acres per day. The ordinary Filipino, using 2 carabaos, is able to plow about one-fifth of an acre per day. Two carabaos are used in order that they may be interchanged every two or three hours.

Some 85,000 bushels of rice were threshed for the neighboring people, the work extending over an area of approximately 125 square miles. Its purpose was to demonstrate to the Filipinos the advantage of the steam thrasher. This machine got so much more rice from the stalks than they had been accustomed to obtain by tramping it out under foot after it had stood for weeks and been subject to the depredations of thieves and rats that they at first conceived the idea that rice hidden inside the separator was allowed to flow from the spout of the machine, thus augmenting the real output.

A period of three months is ordinarily consumed in threshing rice by native methods, and 25 per cent of the crop is often lost. Native methods of hulling and cleaning are very crude and the valuable by-products are all lost, while rice threshed by steam power is ready to go to the cleaning mill at once and 20 per cent of the rough rice is saved in bran and polish, which make excellent cattle food. The rice crop being thus quickly disposed of, the farmer and his laborers have time to put in other crops. As a result of the demonstrations made, several steam threshing outfits have been ordered by Filipinos.

A complete outfit for steam plowing, harrowing, seeding and ditching has been ordered by the bureau, and upon its arrival in October a considerable increase in the area cultivated in rice can be made. A good straw baler has been installed at Murcia. It costs about \$3 gold per ton to bale and ship rice straw in Manila, where there is quite a market for it at \$10 per ton.

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SCARCITY OF LABOR

Harvesting of Louisiana's Staple Crops Requires Extra Help.

Beginning with August, and extending up to the new year, the labor forces of Louisiana are employed during the major part of that time in the harvesting of the great crops of cotton, sugar cane and rice grown in this State, harvest of the latter crop conducted when cotton picking is in its prime stage and completed before sugar making begins, says the sugar planters Journal.

Of the above three, we not counting corn since it is cultivated in a minor degree as a side crop, rice is the easiest and quickest removed, for it ripens earlier and more collectively than do either of the other two crops, and is of such nature as to allow of its removal with mechanical means unaided. While having the advantage of being susceptible to harvest with a far less number of hands than is cotton or sugar cane, its uniformity in maturity, and danger to loss from heavy wind and rained storms, make it imperative that full laboring force be employed to effect its saving. Consequently, rice farmers are often known to stand ready to pay greater prices for necessary labor than are the other agricultural interests of the State. However, with a material shortage of the rice crop this season, and the curtailment of the acreage in the sugar belt formerly devoted to cereal, no undue anxiety is felt by rice planters as to their ability to secure adequate labor for the harvest that has just begun, and should they be favored with fair weather, the taking off of the crop can be conducted cheaply, since the grain is most all in an upright position, no storms having occurred thus far to prostrate it and so lengthen and increase time and cost of cutting and deterioration of quality.

The cotton planters this year are face to face with an embarrassing situation as regards taking off their crops of the fleecy staple, for they are confronted with short yields and accompanying good prices, and these reduced yields will accordingly cause pickers to be paid greater prices per hundred, which the planters can ill afford in view of the cotton crop shortage. The consequenc-

es may be that the hands from the cotton parishes will probably leave those districts this fall in greater numbers than usual to accept work in the remunerative and more agreeable cane fields, in this manner leaving the cotton grower short handed to get along the best he may with the remaining pickers left him.

Of the Louisiana agriculturists most uncertain as to their labor supply for the 1905 harvest, the chief are the sugar planters, who with larger crops than ever raised before, are now perplexed as to the source from which the thousands of needed laborers may be drawn. This would not be their position, or rather it would not be strained to the degree it is, were the existing quarantine regulations not liable to extend into the first part of sugar making, and the planters up to then continue to be subjected to the present embarrassing quarantine restriction enforced by parish against parish and neighboring States against this State. Fortunately, there was comparatively little or no cotton planted on sugar plantations this year as compared with 1904, and the labor that was last year directed to picking sugar-estate cotton will this fall come in handily for the breaking up of land and prior grinding planting operations. By the time the sugar making campaign is on, however, our resourceful planters will in all likelihood have found the means of providing for laborers in great numbers to come to them from the cotton districts of Louisiana and near-by States, as is usually done, though this may not be effected very largely until the campaign is well under way. The shortage in the cotton crop, as pointed out, should prove an important factor in the bringing about this desideratum, and it appears to us that the cotton field hands will necessarily be the chief class of outside labor we must look to for aid in taking off the cane crop, inasmuch as it seems no material labor gains will now be had this season through Italian and other immigration.

Attacked by a Mob

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