IN THE MOUNTAINS OF PORTO RICO.

One Hundred Miles Among Our West Indian Hills With Government Mules.

Queer Features of Life in the Country—Something About the Tobacco Fields—A Land of Palms and Bananas, Where Oranges Cost Four Cents a Dozen and the Cotton Grows on Trees—A Look at the Villages and Interior Cities of Our Switzerland of the Tropics.

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SAN JUAN, Porto Rico, Aug. 12.—Let us take a trip together over Uncle Sam's new island. I can give you no idea of its beauty without you go with me. We will start at Ponce and travel leisurely across Porto Rico, making notes upon the way. We shall go over a trip I recently made and reproduce it in the notes I took on the ground. Our conveyance is a battery wagon, such as is used by Uncle Sam's telegraphic operators in time of war. It is as big as a hall bed room, and so fitted out with long cushioned seats that we can sit up or lie down at will. Our motive power is four of Uncle Sam's government mules. They will go as slow or as fast as we like, and we shall get relays of new mules at noon every day.

THE MILITARY ROAD.

The route we shall take shall be over the famous military road, made at an enormous cost by the Spaniards. It winds its way across the mountains from the coast of the Caribbean sea to that of the Atlantic through one of the most beautiful regions of the world. It is so smooth and free from dust that you will not need to wear old clothes, and you can ride as comfortably upon it as upon your asphalt or macadam at home.

I despair of giving you a conception of this highway. There is nothing better in the United States. It is smoother than the driveways of Central Park, New York, and better constructed than the roads in Soldiers' Home park at Washington. There is not a pebble, not a rut in it, and still it has been cut right out of the mountains. It is twenty feet wide and more winding than the Mississippi river. At times as we go over it we shall be hanging to the sides of precipices, and we shall wind about innumerable horse shoe curves. Now the road may be seen both above and below us, and again we may trace its wanderings for miles about the hills.

HOW THE ROAD IS KEPT.

As we go we shall see hundreds of peons working on the road. They are thought to have a fat job, for they have employment all the year round. They toil from sunrise to sunset and their wages are 30 cents a day. At intervals along the road we pass square buildings, the homes of the officials in charge. Each gang has its overseer, whose chief sign of office is a leather bag, much like a woman's shopping bag, in which he carries the money to pay off the men.

The length of the military road is eighty-one miles. I refer to the main trunk line. There are branches, over which we shall go, which make thirty or forty miles more, giving us a trip of more than 100 miles.

Maj. Hill, the civil engineer in charge of the public works of Porto Rico, says that the Spaniards had altogether eleven military roads, and that their original plans included the whole island. He estimates that the cost of this road over which we are going was probably $2,000,000. It was, however, constructed after the extravagant methods of the Spaniards, and if made today it should not cost more than $10,000 a mile.

THROUGH THE SUGAR PLANTATIONS.

We begin our ride at Playa, the port for Ponce, driving first to Ponce city, two miles away. We go past the ox carts and pack trains which are bringing goods to the coast, stop a moment at the commissary department for supplies and then make our way out through the sugar plantations to the foot of the mountains.

Vast cane fields are to be everywhere seen on both sides. The black earth is covered with a rich growth of pale green, out of which rise large buildings, the sugar factories, their smoke stacks leaning, as it were, against the sky. The most of the coast is lined with sugar plantations, the most of which are of vast extent, and not a few of which are making fortunes for their owners.

We go over mountain streams in which scores of washerwomen, bare footed and bare legged, are sitting in the water and pounding the dirt out of the clothes. Others have spread the washed garments out on the grass and are sprinkling them from the streams in order to bleach them.

IN THE HILLS.

Now we are on the edge of the hills. How dry they look in the distance. Many of them seem rough and bare. They make us think of the Alleghanies in August—for at this point we miss the rich tropical luxuriance we expected to find in Porto Rico. It will be different further on.

Notice how the clouds rest on the tops of the mountains. Many of the peaks are hidden and fleecy white masses nestle here and there on the higher slopes. This is so throughout Porto Rico. There is plenty of sun but the hot rays are often tempered by clouds. The air is moist, but there is always a breeze, and even at midday in the mountains the heat is not very unpleasant.

Many of the hills are covered with grass. There is one upon which fat cattle are feeding, and here is another which looks for all the world like any field of the United States. It is fenced with barbed wire. Further on are fields bounded by prickly hedges of wild pineapples. The pines are so sharp that you cannot crawl over them, and they serve well to keep in the stock.

THE COUNTRY HOUSES.

Where are the farm houses and where are the barns? Farm houses as we know them are not to be seen in Porto Rico. Here and there is the home of a planter, a building made of boards with holes in the walls for windows and with a pair of stairs reaching from the ground to its first floor. The houses are built high off the ground, and, as in the cities, the well-to-do people all live upstairs.

As to barns, there is, I venture, not one in the country. The cattle and horses feed out of doors all the year round. It is never cold here and there is always good pasture.

All along the road and scattered over the hills we see the homes of the peons. They are little shacks made of boards or palm bark. They are so poor that you would not think them fit for your cow. You could put up any one of them for less than $5, and few are more than fifteen feet square. We see more of these shacks as we go on our way up the hills. Some of them are to be reached only by mule paths and are in such steep places that it would seem that even a mule could not climb up to them. Still those little huts are the homes of the peons, who are glad to be allowed to live in them, going back and fourth to their work. There are no gardens about them, for they must buy all they eat. Some have a few chickens and now and then you see a black razor-backed hog or two tied to the side of a hut. It is always tied. Nothing is allowed to run at large in Porto Rico, and hogs are tethered by driving stakes in the ground and fastening them to these by ropes about their necks. In some places chickens are tied and in others you see horses and cattle out in fields all fastened to stakes.

A PORTO RICAN VILLAGE.

Now the government mules have been stopped in order that we may take a look at one of the small towns of our new island. We are in the village of Juan-a-Diaz, or of "John of God." It consists of a plaza or public square with a big stuccoed church facing it, and of about twenty houses or so built of stucco and wood, together with a lot of shacks made of palm leaves and boards, the homes of the poor.

The little town with all outdoors to build in is made in solid blocks. Each house has a door and a few have holes for windows, but no glass.

We can look into some of the rude homes as we go by, for the doors are open. There is but little furniture, some have hammocks and in one or two we see beds. Many contain cots made in the fashion of saw bucks with canvas stretched over them, so that they can be folded up and set aside in the daytime.

The people come to the doors and look at us. They all dress in cottons, the poorer women wearing little more than cotton skirts and jackets. Not a few of them are bareheaded and all are barefooted. Some have naked babies in their arms and naked children run about the streets. They are bright-eyed little things of all colors, from jet black to Jersey cream. Many of them look lean except at the waist, where their stomachs protrude to an enormous extent. This comes from their diet of vegetables and fruits, especially bananas.

ORANGES AT 4 CENTS A DOZEN.

As we wait a man goes by with a load of oranges. He is leading a mule, which has two baskets slung over its back. Each holds about three bushels, and he is peddling the fruit from house to house. We stop him and ask the price. He tells us the fruit is exceptionally fine and that he cannot possibly sell them for less than 4 cents a dozen. We take a hundred and store them into one of the boxes of the battery wagon, to eat on the way. They are full of juice and deliciously sweet. Their skin, however, is thicker than that of our oranges at home, and we shall eat them a la Porto Rico, and this is by paring off the outer or yellow cover of the skin and leaving only the white. Now we slice off the top, and clapping the orange to our mouths such out the juice. I tell you it is a dish for a king.

ARBONITO—ON THE ROOF OF PORTO RICO.

ON THE ROOF OF PORTO RICO.

Leaving Juan-a-Diaz we go on our winding way up the mountains. We climb higher and higher, hanging to the sides of the hills, until at last we reach Aibonito, the pass over the range which divides the island. We are now a half mile above where we started and are on the roof of Porto Rico.

We are in one of the most beautiful parts of Uncle Sam's new Switzerland, in one of the most picturesque regions of the world. As far as we can see on all sides rise green hills, spotted here and there by the dark shadows of the clouds. Billowy mountains roll one over the other on all sides until they lose themselves in the sky. Below us we can see the military road. Just above are the Spanish earthworks which commanded the road when we invaded the island, and we can climb up and stand on the very spots where their cannon thundered a warning to the troops.

Further on our journey we go down a branch of the military road to visit Guyamo Heights, where our troops were attacked when they made their way up from the coast. Here you can see the military road for miles winding its way like a white snake up the hills. It was perfectly commanded by the fortifications. Indeed, some of the best of our officers think that had the Spaniards tried to hold Porto Rico the country is such that we could not have conquered them.

THE BEAUTIES OF THE TROPICS.

I have spoken of Porto Rico as Switzerland. It is like Switzerland without the ice and snow, and still it has beauties which Switzerland has not. The trees are those of the semi-tropics. Long lines of green hang down from their branches. Orchids as big as a peck measure wrap themselves around their limbs, and not a few of them have a veil of Spanish moss. Others are great masses of bright red, yellow or purple flowers. I saw one tree twenty feet high covered with great balls of white wool. It was a cotton tree and the cotton bursting from the balls was just like the cotton produced in our Southern states.

On the Atlantic side of the island I reached a region of ferns, in which there were fern trees from twenty to thirty feet high. I had myself photographed standing beside these trees and at the same time gathered some maiden-hair ferns, which had branches as fine as the most delicate lace.

PALM TREES AND BANANAS.

Let us notice the vegetation as we travel down the north slope of the mountains. See those fields of bananas which cover the sides of the hills. The plants are twenty feet high. They have leaves of soft green a foot wide and as tall as a man. Their blossoms are of a rich maroon, and those which have opened are of a blood red.

What a lot of palm trees there are and how many varieties. We saw cocoanuts down on the coast. Up here in the mountains the most conspicuous trees are the royal realms. They spot the landscape, standing out like tall spires against the hills. Now and then we see a bread fruit tree, whose fan-like leaves flop about in the breeze. Now we pass a coffee plantation, and after leaving the town of Cayey we ride for miles through mountains covered with tobacco. This section is one of the best tobacco-raising regions of Porto Rico. The hills are covered with dark green plants and long tobacco sheds in which the leaves are dried and cured run up and down the mountain sides.

THE SOIL IS RICH.

As we ride over the island we get a good idea of its soil. It is wonderfully fertile, but so rugged and ragged that you would not think it could be cultivated. If it were arid it would be as rough as the Rocky mountains. It is only the climate and the moisture that keep it green and fertile. The air is full of water and the conditions are such that all seeds will grow if you can get a covering for them. If you build a brick wall here and do not paint it within three years a moss will have formed upon it, in which you can grow lettuce.

In our journey we notice the different classes of land in Porto Rico. I have already referred to the sugar plantations of the coast. Further up you come to the plantations of coffee, tobacco and bananas, and at the very top the pastures. There are also pastures lower down, and in places the tobacco and the coffee grow clear to the mountain summits.

It is wonderful indeed how rough some of the cultivated land is. The mountains run down into valleys of a wedge shape. Much land is cultivated which would be left untouched in the United States. This is so on the hills, which are so steep that you would hardly think the crops would hang to them, so steep that in the United States the rain would wash all away. Here, however, the moisture gives the soil a thick vegetation of earth binders, and it does not wash as with us. I believe that the whole island is susceptible of cultivation, and that it will at some time be a great garden patch largely devoted to fruits and vegetables for our city market.

INTERIOR CITIES.

Coming back now to our trip over the mountains, let us look at the towns at which we stop over night. We are going slowly, and are taking four days for the journey. We spend two nights at Cayey. It is a fair sample of an interior Porto Rican city. It has about 4,000 inhabitants, and covers about as much ground as one of our towns of 500.

It has a church and a plaza, and a barracks for soldiers. Its houses are nearly all one-story cottages, built close to the street in blocks of two or three. They are all small, and some of the best could be made for $250 apiece in the United States. Many of them would not cost $100. Nearly all are of wood, and not a few have iron roofs. None are plastered, and none have windows or chimneys. The cooking is done upon charcoal; there is no need of fires for heat. Few of the houses have gardens about or behind them, and none have gardens in front.

A PORTO RICAN HOTEL.

The hotel of Cayey is in the center of the town. It is a one-story building, containing a parlor and sitting room at the front and a dining room at the back, with bed rooms opening out into them. The kitchens are in the rear.

We sleep at night on iron bedsteads. Our spring mattress is made by stretching a sheet of canvas over the framework. Our pillows are small and tough, and our covering is usually an army blanket.

The greatest discomfort comes from the fleas. These attack you as soon as you lie down and feed upon you until you rise. We find this so in the hotel at Caguas further on, and, in fact, in all the country hotels.

Outside this, the living is not bad. We have coffee, oranges and eggs for breakfast, and soups, roasts, stews and desserts for luncheons and dinners. Our desert is usually a combination of orange peel or cocoanut sweetened with sugar into a form of preserves, and we end each meal with a ripe banana, a cup of coffee and a bit of Porto Rican cheese. The food is quite as good as you get in a $2-a-day house in the United States, and the prices charged are much less.

—Frank G. Carpenter.

Margaret Desmond's Loyalty.

Boston Post.

In the city of Hartford, Conn., a young girl is walking slowly and thoughtfully home from the large store where she is employed. It had been an unusually busy day for Margaret Desmond, as customers seemed to prefer her to any other salesgirl in the store. She was always pleasant and obliging. She was pretty, too. If ever truth and purity shone in a face, it surely did in hers. Her figure was fine, and her eyes were large and brown. As years went by, the large, soft, brown eyes took on a deeper meaning. Suitors came to her, but they came in vain. And now, at twenty-three, Margaret is still unmarried. "She will never marry," said one admirer. "She is cold as an icicle," said another. "She doesn't seem to care whether a fellow loves her or not. I can't understand her at all."

But perhaps there is reason for Margaret Desmond's coldness, and the world does not read rightly the calm, indifferent manner.

Margaret has spent the last day before her vacation at the store. She has promised to spend her vacation taking care of a sick neighbor, Mrs. Denly, and now, as she nears her home, resolves to go to her that night. Mrs. Denly had lived near her for years, and Margaret Desmond had become dear to this lonely woman. Mrs. Denly had at one time been happy. She had two sons, Jack and Robert. But one day a great blow fell on them all. Suddenly Jack Denly disappeared. For awhile there were stirring times at Mrs. Denly's home; lawyers were seen coming often, then ceased altogether, until finally Jack Denly's name ceased to be spoken and he seemed to pass away from everybody's memory. Then Mrs. Denly had a long illness, and when she recovered at last it was to go about the house the shadow of herself. During her illness Margaret Desmond was her nurse, and her tenderness to the heart-broken mother was inexpressible.

It is night at Mrs. Denly's home. The door opens and Margaret Desmond enters. Bright as the room is, her presence seems to infuse new light into it. Robert Denly greets her pleasantly. Then she goes to his mother. Robert Denly gazes after her with longing eyes. His soul in his face, he follows every movement. He loved Margaret Desmond, and, coming back, as he had that day, after an absence of several weeks in the city, he had hoped to see some sign of emotion in her, but her welcome, kind as it had been, had not been kinder or warmer for him than for any friend. He was sorely disappointed, and said: "If any one comes and wins her I think jealousy would drive me mad." That same day he said to her: "Margaret, I love you, I worship you; will you be my wife?" He drew her close to him, so close that she almost touched his lips; then suddenly she resisted. Slowly, and with a look of agony, he let her go. "I understand you, Margaret; you don't even like me," he said. "Robert," Margaret answers, "I do like you. You are dear to me as you are. I would have loved you as a sister; in any other way I could not."

That evening Robert said to Mrs. Denly, "Mother, don't you think Margaret is strange? She does not seem to care for marriage at all."

Mrs. Denly looked closely at her son for a moment, then said, "Yes, my boy, I do. There is something about her that I cannot understand. She is worth loving; she has had the best of offers; young and old have been in love with her; but her mind doesn't seem to run that way. My boy, I wish you could win her." "I wish so, too," thinks Robert to himself, laughing at his mother's concluding remark. "Why, mother, I have a letter to give her, and I came near forgetting it."

Robert finds Margaret and gives her the letter. He watches the lovely face light up, the little hand tremble, and turning away, explains, "By Jove! She doesn't look indifferent now. I wonder who sent that letter." Margaret went to her room, kneels for a moment, perhaps, in silent prayer; then reads her letter with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes. Could her admirers see her now would they say she was incapable of loving? I think not.

The radiant face at this moment tells a different story. A few weeks after this letter came, Robert and Margaret were conversing pleasantly before her intended return home, as Mrs. Denly had recovered from her illness, when the door opened and a bearded man, with brown eyes, stepped in.

Margaret stood for one moment as if paralyzed. Then, at one bound, she was in the arms of the stranger, clasped close, and sobbing for joy, on his shoulder. A moment after, before anybody had spoken, she cried: "Oh, Jack, dear Jack!" when a warning sound and motion were both given. But Mrs. Denly had heard.

"Jack!" she said, coming forward, with a strange, uncertain step. The stranger put Margaret gently aside. "Mother," he said, with arms outheld, and in a moment that good, motherly face lay upon his bosom.

They thought she had fainted with the joy but she had only lost her strength. She soon recovered it again, and was resting against the warm, beating heart of the son she had thought forever lost to her. "Yes, mother, I have come to you after years of separation, the same Jack Denly. I never took that money, mother, but everything seemed to point toward my guilt, and I could not bear it. I was desperate when I went away. Twice I tried to kill myself, but this dear face," and he turned to Margaret, "stood between me and my despair. Her loyalty saved me.

"She said: 'Jack, I know you are innocent, and nothing can ever change my confidence in one I have known since childhood.' She was my pure, little love even then; and she never forgot me or looked down upon me. And in this great trouble she was my truest friend. Her letters, her affection have made me what I am. We have met more than once, but I would not come home, until I read a published account of the false charges, and my own proven innocence. I have brought the paper with me for all to read." Robert Denly listens attentively to Jack's interesting conversation, and chuckling to himself says: "I think I know now who sent that letter." Then clasping his brother's hand he said: "Jack, you have come to claim Margaret, I suppose. I love her, too, but she has refused my love. She has been loyal to you all these years. She is worthy of your love. I cannot be jealous of you, brother, and I give you a glad welcome home."

Robert's words were a great surprise to Jack Denly. Returning his brother's warm clasp he said: "Robert, sometimes a man cannot express in words his most powerful feelings. It is so with me at this time. You love Margaret, yet you do not envy me my good fortune in having won her love. You are dearer to me than ever, Robert, and I ought to be grateful. Home again to a loving mother, a true and faithful brother, and to Margaret, 'my darling.'" My story draws to a close. Margaret Desmond and Jack Denly were married, and their perfect happiness is the result of Margaret Desmond's loyalty.

In Death's Protection.

A heavy, wet sea fog, out of which guns thundered.

"Convict escaped," muttered the people in the villages, most of them with a hope that he might get clear away.

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On the outskirts of one of the villages a gloomy looking house, standing in its own grounds, and surrounded by ornamental clumps of evergreens. It had been occupied now for some months by strangers—a widow and her son; none seemed to know them, they had no visitors—they were, to the country folk, a mystery.

"I must be near him, Chris," was the widow's plea to her remaining son. "I know he is innocent, and I like to feel that he is not far away—and yet how far!"

But, though the convict in the great prison entered in the books as Exham, the widow and son were known as Murray.

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The gloom thickened as night approached; d ness would soon settle over all.

Through the driving mist which was now t ing to rain, a man approached the house. For last ten minutes he had been lying beneath the ping shelter of a Portugal laurel. Now, at the s of distant voices, he had crept from his hiding p He looked round in despair. Through the thicke gloom he could just discern the house. Above lower windows a heavy string course ran; it him an idea; there were but a few more minute daylight left; if he could climb up there he w be safe for the next eight hours or so. He th it seemed possible; there was a waterspout, and s fairly stout vines of Virginia creeper. The vo came nearer; he sprang forward, and after a mi of wild exertion lay full length upon the stone le panting for breath.

The voices were close by; he had been jus time

"In here you saw him, eh?"

"Ay, master! I sin mun 'bout quarter agone!"

"In here, men! Spread yourselves!"

"Right, oh!"

"Two of you to back Keep sharp lookout n You stay along o' me, Thompson!"

A pealing ring at the door bell, then silent w ing.

The man on the ledge listened, holding his bre

"Now, young woman, who lives here?"

"Mrs. Murray, officer—wili you kindly sp soft?"

Then a man's voice.

"What's this—what do you want?"

"Want enough, sir. One of the convicts esca this afternoon and was traced here."

"Here!"

"Yes, sir—seen only a few minutes ago. I n come in, please, and search the house."

"That you can't do—my mother lies dangero ill."

"Afraid we must, though."

Then another voice.

"Ah, Sergeant Makepeace! Look here, it's possible, you know. I shan't allow you in with a search warrant. I wouldn't answer for patient's life. Mrs. Murray is dangerously ill—dy I fear."

"Well, Dr. Stewart, you see, sir, it's a seri business—and you a magistrate."

"Yes, Makepeace; and for that reason I tell to get a warrant—if you can. Why, man, the p oner wouldn't be such a fool as to come here."

"I don't know, sir—they generally runs some silly place or other—besides, he was seen"—

"Ah, well—you'll have to stay outside the d and that's all about it. If we find him inside, wh we shall know what to do with him."

The doctor could not have explained what m him hesitate in the middle of his speech. An abs ghost of an idea had crossed his mind that wretched convict might have hidden there after

The sergeant and his men turned reluctan away as the door closed softly behind them. Ni had fallen, and the thick drizzle made it dark a grave.

"He'll be off sure as a gun. We'll search outhouses and keep a watch anyhow. This r hasn't been falling long enough to soften the grou There'll be no tracks to follow. I'll get a warr though."

As they walked away the hunted creature the ledge drew a breath of relief, and, letting head lie on his arms, heard through the silence the night the soft hiss of the rain as it fell around him. At any rate, he had time for conside tion.

For half an hour he lay there in the darkn his head buried in his arms, perfectly secure, thankful for the breathing space. He was think hard what he should do next. The soft, warm su mer drizzle enveloped him and melted him to the sk At last it began to chill him. In discomfort raised himself from his warm place, and shiver A ray of light shot out into the darkness in front him—a window! He crept toward it; then, cautio ly raising his head, he peered in. An empty b room—a man's room by the garments hanging on door. He might climb in and steal a suit of cloth It was a casement window and unlatched. He almost screwed his nerve up to this venture w he heard a voice; another window had been ope further along. He shrank against the wall. voices ceased.

"I'll see who they are," he said, and again crept onward. With infinite care he raised his he and found he could look right into the room past edge of the blind. Two men stood with their ba toward him. They were looking down upon so one in bed. They spoke in low murmurs. Presen the younger turned so that his side face came i view. The watcher, with a sudden gasp, shra back.

"Chris!" he whispered, astounded.

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"What was that? Did you hear?"

"No, I heard nothing," said the doctor.

"What is it?" murmured the sick woman.

"Nothing, mother; but I fancied I heard so one call 'Chris.'"

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The man outside had again laid himself flat the stone ledge; he was trying to gather his scatte wits.

"Chris! By all that's merciful, they've c here to be near me! That man at the door said Murray' was ill. Can it be mother under a fa name? If so, I'm safe!"

For sudden illumination had come; he had cided what to do.

He crept backward to the window into which had first looked.

"By George! I'll chance it, anyhow," he sa and, listening a moment, raised himself and climb it. Then he closed the window and drew down t blind.

"Quickly he stripped himself of every stitch clothing, flinging it under the bed. Then he went the washstand and scrubbed vigorously at his han and face; having got these fairly clean, he delibera ly searched the drawers and presses, and, choosi the garments which seemed most suitable, dress himself from head to foot. Then, going to the gla he surveyed the result.

"Yes, I shall pass," he said, for he saw a go looking, gentlemanly fellow, dressed in quiet tas who had a quasi nautical look due to his close shav face.

"I must run the chance of the house bei searched. Hawkins would know me if they bri him along. Well, now, to see Chris," and, having out the lamp, he quietly opened the door.

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Within the next room death was at hand, a the dying woman wailed for her missing son.

"Why is he so long in coming?"

"Tell her he has been sent for," whispered t doctor; "it will quiet her."

Chris bent over and whispered