THE WEST INDIES.

A Descriptive and Historical Article The Future Territory of the United States. The West Indies is the collective name given to that large number of islands lying in the Atlantic, between the two great natural divisions of the American Continent, and extending from the coast of Florida, in North America, to that of Venezuela, in South America. Adopting a classification indicated by nature, geographers have divided these islands into three groups:-First, the Lucayos or Bahamas; second, the greater Antilles; and third, the lesser Antilles. With the exception of the more northerly of the Lucayos, the West India Islands are all within the tropies. The Baha an group consists of several hundred islands, most of which are of very insignificant size-mere keys. in fact, destitute of vegetation, and uninhabited. This group lies on the southeast coast of Florida. The greater Antilles are the four large Islands of Cuba, Hayti, or Saint Domingo, Ja-maica, and Porto Rico; and the lesser Antilles comprise all the small islands extending from Porto Rico to the Gulf of Paria, those lying south of a given point in the direction whence the trade winds blow being known as the Windward Islands, and those to the north of that point as the Leeward Islands. There is something very striking in the geographical position of the greater and lesser Antilles. Commencing with Cuba, situated at the entrance of the Gulf of Mexico, and terminating with Trinidad, off the southeastern coast of Venezuela, these islands describe an irregular curve completely inclosing, so to speak, the sparkling Caribbean Sea, whose waves perpetually dance in the glow-ing rays of a tropical sun, and whose bosom is rarely swept by storms; Jamaica, however, forms an exception. Lying just within the curve, this island is sheltered on the north by Caba and on the east by Hayti, while to the south and west her towering mountains look down grandly on the bright and beautiful sea that washes her coasts. In point of scenery and fertility these islands, taken collectively, are not surpassed by any other part of the world. AREA, MOUNTAINS, BIVERS, ETC.

The total area of the West Indies is computed at 96,030 miles, being nearly equal to that of Great Britain and Belgium taken together. Of this area the greater Antilles number 84,333 and the lesser Antilles and Bahamas 11,197 miles. Spain owns the largest part of the West Indies, her possessions there—Cuba and Porto Rico—embracing 51,148 square miles. The Dominican and Haytien republies divide be-tween them 27,690 miles. England bears sway over 15,633 miles; France holds 1013 miles; Holland, 369 miles; Denmark, 127 miles, and Sweden, 25 miles. The largest of the islands is Cuba. which is about 800 miles long, with a breadth varying from 25 miles in its narrowest part, to 130 at its widest. Next comes Hayti or St. Domingo, being about 400 miles in length, and from 40 miles wide near its eastern extremity to 135 miles at its centre. The third in the list in point of size is Jamaica, which is 160 miles long, with an average breadth of 40 miles, Porto Rico follows, its breadth being about 100 miles, with an almost uniform breadth—the shape of the island being that of a parallelogram—of about 38 miles. Trinidad, a splendid island full of natural wealth, is 50 miles long, and has an average breadth of about 33 miles. The rest of the islands are small, numbers of them being nothing better than keys, or sand banks, and others varying in length from 10 to 25 miles, and in breadth from 3 to 10 miles.

All the large islands, and many of the small ones, are extremely mountainous, the mountains in some places rising to a height of several thousand feet above the level of the sea. They form, generally, a continuous chain, running through the centre of the islands, in the direction of the east and west, and are, most of them, wooded to their very summits. The lower ranges of hills, branching off from the main range, are also thickly wooded. Most of the islands are abundantly watered, innumerable springs gushing from the sides of mountain and hill in every direction; but there are few large rivers, and of these not more than four or five are navigable for any considerable distance from their mouths, except by small, flat-bottomed boats. Jamaica boasts the loftiest and grandest mountains, its cele brated Blue Mountain peak lifting its head, almost continually enveloped in fleecy clouds, more than 8000 feet above the level of the sea; Hayti the finest rivers, among which are the Yaque, the Yuna, and the Artibonite, all splendid streams; and Cuba the most fertile plains. The coasts on the south side of the islands are generally low and swampy, and on the north side rocky and bold; but everywhere they present numerous indentations, affording many snug havens, and several capacious and secure har bors, some of which are not surpassed by any of the finest harbors in other parts of the world, there being four or five in which the combined navies of Europe might ride in safety.

PRODUCTIONS AND RESOURCES. In no part of the world is there a greater variety of valuable vegetable productions than is to be found in the West Indies. First in the list of those possessing a commercial importance stands the sugar-cane, for the cultivation of which fully nine-tenths of all the low-lying lands are admirarably adapted. Next comes coffee, the plant flourishing in all the hilly and mountainous districts, and yielding large crops annually of the valuable berry. Pimento or allspice—indigenous to the Island of Jamaica alone—may be had in abundance simply for the trouble of gathering, the tree growing wild in most parts of the country. Ginger, too, of the finest quality, is produced in abundance at a very trifling outlay of labor, as is also arrow-root of the very best description. Tobacco, which was found by Columbus in use among the aborigines, is suc cessfully cultivated in most of the islands. Cotton grows spontaneously, and is a perennial plant, the tree bearing abundantly, even in poor soils, and the staple of the article being generally both fine and strong. The Indigo plant is a common weed in the plains, and the cocoatree flourishes in the uplands. Then there are the cabinet woods, and dye-woods so highly prized both in this country and Europe-thbrilliant fustic, the ruddy logwood, the rich grained mahogany, the fragrant cedar, the delicate rosewood, the gorgeous yeecs, and others too numerous for mention here. As to the fruits and vegetables, it would require a small volume to describe their variety and their excellence. Some of the former are well known in this country, such as the pincapple, the orange, the shaddock, and the banana, but the finest varieties of the pincapple are never exported, being too delicate to keep beyond three or four days, and the flavor of the imported orange is never equal to that of the freshly-gathered fruit. There are others, however, of the rarest excellence, which can be enjoyed only in the place where they are grown, their perishable nature not admitting of their being transported to any distance. Such are the luscious neesberry; the juley mango; the aromatic guava; the peach-like chere-moyd; the unripe cocoa-nut, with its limpid "milk" and delicate, jelly-like pulp; and the flavorous granadillo, whose blossom is that queen of flowers, the beautifully variegated, exquisitely tinted grandiflora. The list of field and garden vegetables includes nearly all the kinds successfully cultivated in the more southerly parts of the North temperate zone, besides a number peculiar to the tropics, Maize grows well in the plains, and the swampy districts produce rice of a superior quality. Edible roots, such as yams and cocoas, are universally cultivated, and give an abundant yield. As to the mineral resources, these are great,

but as yet little has been done toward developing them on a scale commensurate with their portance. In many parts of the Island of Jamaica there are unmistakable indications of large deposits of copper ore. The mountains in the southeastern part of Cuba are rich in copper, as has been satisfactorily proved by the large quantities of valuable ore every year taken out of the famous Cobre Mines of that island. But in point of mineral wealth the palm belongs to the Island of Hayti, of which it has been said that "if we may give full credence to the uni-versal statements of writers upon this branch (mineral resources), it presents itself before us | truth. The blacks, numerically strong, are so-

with the aspect of a other California." During the period of the carly Spanish possession, the leand yielded at abundance of the precious the period of the carly Spanish possession, the island yielded at abundance of the precious metals. According to the historian Herrara, there was at that time a mint at Buenaventura, which coin of from \$225,000 to \$230,000 per annum; and Oviedo testifies that the Government royalty of one-fifth yielded annually \$6,000,000 to the National treasury. This refers to Zold; but specimens of rich silver ore have also been found in several part. alto been found in several parts of the island, and in the Southeastern Division there is an extensive copper region which has been pronounced by competent scientific authority, after careful survey, equally rich in promise with the celebrated copper district of the south side of Cuba. Immense beds of coal have been dis-covered in the Bay of Samana; rock salt is found in large quantities on the south coast; marble is plentiful, and native iron, lead, nickel, antimony, bismuth, zinc, cinnabar, and cobalt must be added to the list. There can be no doubt that when stable government shall have succeeded in Hayti to the era of incessant political revolutions, thus affording free scope to enterorise, and security to capital, this Island will vield an amount of mineral treasures far exceeding the returns it gave to the rude and fitful mining operations of its first European musters.

POPULATION. The aboriginal inhabitants of the West Indies, amounting, at the period of the discovery, to about 1,500,000, have all disappeared, with the exception of a handful of Caribs in the Island of St. Vincent, descendants of the tribe that was found living in that island and some of the neighboring ones when they were first visited by the Spaniards. Spanish oppression and cruelty did their work so effectually that in less than a century from the time when Europeans began to settle in the islands, the aborigines had een virtually exterminated. The present population of the West Indies, according to the most recent returns, is, in round numbers, 3,500,000. Of this Cuba and Porto Rico have between them 1,480,000; Jamaica has 450,000; Hayti, 800,000; and the Bahamas and the lesser Antilles number 770,000. The Island of Barbadoes is the most populons of all the Antilles, being, indeed, quite as densely peopled as China. Only 21 miles long by 14 in breadth, it has a population, ac-cording to the census of 1861, of 132,727, or about one thousand inhabitants to the square nile. From 1851 to 1861, after allowing losses from an epidemic of cholera, the popula-tion increased by nearly 40,000 souls. This little island affords perhaps the most remarkable instance in the world of population pressing upon the means of subsistence, for production has been pushed in Barbadoes to its utmost limits almost every acre of)and in the island being under cultivation, while of additional mouths to feed "the cry is still they come.

The population in all the islands is made up of whites, browns (or people of mixed blood), and With the exception of Cuba and Porto Rico, the blacks everywhere greatly outnumber the other two classes, the average proportion being as follows:-Whites, 4 per cent.; colored 19 per cent.; blacks, 77 per cent. Thus, in the sland of Jamaica, the last census taken in 1861 gives 14,000 whites and 82,000 colored people igninst 354,000 blacks. In Cuba the case is different, the whites preponderating over blacks and colored together. According to the census of that Island, taken in 1861, the total population was 1,400,000, of which number 794,000 were whites, 225,000 free persons of color, and 371,000 slaves. The Haytlen nationality is composed entirely of blacks and mulattoes, the only whites in the country being foreigners and the consular representatives of foreign powers; and here the proportion of the colored people to the blacks is even smaller than in the island of Jamaica. This is, however, reversed in the neighboring republic of Santo Domingo, in which there are still many of Spanish descent and the people of mixed blood largely exceed the blacks in number.

SOCIAL CONDITION The state of society in the West Indies is very peculiar, as might be expected from their past as well as their most recent history. Its most striking feature is its heterogeneous character. Such a mixture of blood as we have in the Antilles is perhaps nowhere else to be found to the same extent on the face of the globe. Latin race, the Anglo-Saxon, the Teutonic, the Celtic, the Scandinavian, the African, the Monand the Hindoo are their purity; besides which there are large num bers in whose veins the blood of two or more of these various races commingle in different The introduction of Chinese and degrees. Hindoos in the West Indies is of comparatively ecent date; but many of these immigrants of both races have married among the black and the colored classes, have become converted to Christianity, and have adopted the islands their home. That part of the population which is of African descent—by which is to be understood the people of African-European blood as well as the blacks—is, as we have already seen, by far the most numerous; but the dominant race is the Caucasian, which here, as elsewhere. asserts and maintains superiority over the other races by virtue of its higher intelligence and its indomitable energy. With the single excep-tion of Hayti, the white man rules everywhere in the West Indies. The Governorships of the different colonies are all held by whites. A few men of mixed blood are here and there to be found on the bench, but, these excepted, the judiciary and magistracy are white, and the same remark will apply to the different legisla-tive bodies, where such exist. Most of the pulpits are filled by elergymen of fair complexion and unmixed blood. The principal merchants are chiefly whites, the large landed proprietors are nearly all whites, and so are most of those who practise law and medicine. Next to the whites, in point of social standing, come the colored people, as distinguished from the blacks. Of ate years education has done a great deal for this class, among whom are to be found a goodly increasing number of men who achieved distinction at some of the first universities of Europe. The colored people are gradually working their way, in the British colonies especially, into all those departments of public and professional life from which, not much more than a quarter of a century ago, they were jealously and rigidly excluded, and are making good their claims to a fair share of the honors and emoluments of the public service. blacks, thanks to slavery, are everywhere the lowest in the social scale, the "hewers of wood and drawers of water being everywhere and almost exclusively of the African race. slands where slavery still exists, viz., Cuba and Porto Rico, their condition is deplorable; and in the free islands, embracing all the other parts of the West Indies, they have not yet recovered from the blighting effect of the accursed system, although they are steadily marching forward in the path of improvement. Among the Haytien blacks, however, are to be found a number of very superior men, possessing rare talents, cultivated, with polished man-fitting them to shine in the highly highest circles of society. In all the free Islands popular education is in a very backward state, and the intelligence of the masses is consequently much below par, comparatively few of them being able to read, and fewer still to write Schools, however, are multiplying, and the people are learning to appreciate the value of education. There is a good deal of religious feeling among the blacks, but it lacks depth, and morallty is generally at a low ebbamong all classes, although the licention ness which was universal thirty years ago has of late greatly diminished in most of the islands. On the whole, the cause

of civilization is moving forward in the West Indies. It makes slow progress, it is true, but considering what slavery is, in its demoralizing, imbruting effects, the movement could hardly expected to advance at a more rapid rate.

The facts just stated are calculated to correct The facts just stated are calculated to correct two errors very common both in Europe and the United States. The one is that the greater part of the West Indies is possessed by the negroes, who exercise a controlling influence over society, and hold the Government in their hands. The other misconception-and this arises from the first-named one—is that no civilization worthy of the name is to be found among the native population of the Antilles. It will be seen that both of these assertions are wide of the

life, in every institution of society, the purifying and elevating influences peculiar to Christian civilization are actively and successfully at work. sensibly ameliorating the condition of the whole

INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE. Industry in the West Indies is by no means so multiform as it is in most other parts of the civilized world, being devoted principally to the production of a few staple articles of commerce. Of these sugar takes the precedence, next comes coffee, then rum, and lastly tobacco. The Spanish coloniss stand first in the production of sugar, Hayti in coffee, the British colonies, espe-cially Jamaica, in rum, and Cuba in tobacco. Besides these staples, the West Indies export large quantities of molasses, of dyewoods and cabinet woods, and a number of minor articles, such as pimento, ginger, arrow-root, cocoa, beeswax, and honey. Previous to emancipation of the slaves, in 1838, the British colonies were far in advance of all the others in the raising of both sugar and coffee; but that event led to the abandonment of a large number of plantations, their proprietors not having sufficient capital to work them profitably under the new system of labor inaugurated b freedom, and emancipation being followed in less than eight years by the triumph of the free trade policy in England, whereby the differential duties that had theretofore operated as a protection to the British colonial producer against his foreign competitor were abolished. Cuba and Porto

Rico, their labor force largely recruited every year by means of the transatiantic African slave trade, shot ahead of their old rivals, especially the production of sugar, thereby reversing the former relative position of affairs. Fifty years ago, for example, Cuba exported 100,000,000 pounds of sugar, and Jamaica nearly double that quantity; to-day the latter exports only 60,000,000 pounds a year, while the former ships annually over 400,000,000 pounds. During the half-ceutury the sugar production of Jamaica has fallen off full two-thirds, while that of Cuba has been more than quadrupled. It must not be supposed, however, that the free islands are retrograding industrially, or that there is truth in the off-repeated statement, maliciously circulated by men of pro-slavery sentiments, that the emancipated negroes cannot be induced to work. The great bulk of the people work for themselves on their own holdings-work hard and steadily too; and if exports have fallen off, productions for domestic consumption have largely increased, to the improved comfort and the greater happiness of the masses. As a consequence of the altered state of things in the British Antillean possessions brought about by emancipation, and of the creation of a peasant proprietary, wealth is more generally diffused now than was the case in the days of slavery.

The products of the British colonies are nearly all exported to England; those of the French colonies to France; those of the Spanish colonies principally to Spain, the United States, and England: and those of Hayti to the United States, France, and Germany. The West Indies have no manufactures of fabrics or hardware, being dependent for these upon European com tries, and to some extent, especially as regard agricultural implements, upon the United States. from which latter too they import large quantities of flour, butter, lard, cheese, pork, beef, candles, and lumber. The import trade of the British Islands with the States has been steadily increasing for several years past, keeping regu lar pace with the improving condition, with re-spect to material wealth, of the emancipated class, a large proportion of the products of whose independent industry finds its way to this com-

y. While nearly all the sugar and rum oduced in these colonies on the large antations by hired labor is sent to England, nost of the coffee raised by the small settlers for themselves is shipped to the United States. The exports from Cuba to the United States, consisting principally of sugar, molasses, and manufactured tobacco, are immense, statistical returns showing that from the three principal ports of shipment, viz., Cardenas, Matanzas, and Trinidad de Cuba, they amount in value to about \$17,000,000 a year; but the imports from the States are insignificant in comparison with the exports hither, a result which is owing to the restrictive commercial policy of Spain toward that island, which is compelled to take from the mother country might obtain elsewhere at cheaper rates and of better quality, and this not to protect the in-dustry of the island, but simply to benefit the royal treasury. The duty in Cuba on United States flour, for example, is so high \$4 per barrel—as to be in fact prohibitory. These remarks apply to Porto Rico likewise.

THE PAST AND THE PUTURE. As there is no fairer region on the face of God's earth than the West Indies, so no part of the world has been more terribly cursed by the vil-lainy of man. Time was, indeed, when so universal was the reign of injustice, tyranny, and cruelty in the Caribbean, and so complete and revolting the demoralization of society in all the colonies, that the words of the poet might have been appropriately applied:-

"Here every prospect pleases, And only man is vile." The great bane of the Antilles has been negr

slavery. In some of them, however, an autidote has been applied, whose effects have been so far of the most satisfactory character; and in those parts where the poison still actively works there s ground for hope that curative agencies will oon be in full operation. With slavery over thrown in Cuba and Porto Rico, the West In dies, thereby completely delivered from the first slave ship that crossed the Atlantic more than three centuries ago, will at once enter upon new career. What is likely to be their destiny Cuba, the most important island of them al cannot, if delivered from the Spanish yoke stand alone. Confederation will be forced upon her by the necessities of her new position and independence will thus become the ster ping-stone to incorporation with the United States, the only power to which she can lool for genuine sympathy and practical aid in establishing a government that shall be at once free, orderly, and progressive. Hayti, weak in her isolation, and a prey to internal discussions and eivil war, is already feeling her way towards annexation to this country as the only means of saving that republication of government which her people love s well, but which they have been unable to work out successfully for themselves, as well as of developing her immense resources. With Cub and Hayti integral parts of the American Union the people of the other islands will soon perceiv it to be their interest to exchange the depende condition of colonists for citizenship in a goo commonwealth; and that point once reacher nothing short of annexation will satisfy the aspirations. The "signs of the times" clearly indicate that the age of colonies is drawing to a close. As far as the Western Hemisphere is concerned, through the wretched management of Spain they have ceased to exist almost throughout the length and breadth of the southern half of this continent. Other and better agencies will bring the colonial system to an end is the northern half of the continent also, the islands adjacent thereto, as well as in all the tropleal regions of the New World. It is not improbable that before the rising generation shall have passed away, the Stars and Stripes will be floating over the whole of the West in-dies. N. Y. Tribune.

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