

SOMETHING ABOUT THE ISLE OF PINES

UNCLE SAM'S NEW ISLAND POSSESSION.

Situated to the South of Cuba It Guards Effectively the Entrance to the Caribbean Sea But Has Never Been Developed—Marble Quarries and Forests of Fine Timber—Impassable Swamps.

From the Washington Star.

Assistant Secretary of War Melick-John made public today a report just received from the collector of customs at Havana, Colonel Tasker H. Bliss, in relation to a recent visit made to the northern part of the Isle of Pines by Captain Fred S. Foltz, Second Cavalry, collector of customs at Batabano.

Captain Foltz states in his report that he spent upward of three weeks at the northern part of the island. He was unable to visit the southern portion on account of an impassable swamp, which is accessible only by sea. Captain Foltz states, however, that the southern portion of the island contains considerable mahogany and other valuable hardwood.

Captain Foltz remarks that the surface is a plateau with an elevation of some fifty to one hundred feet above the sea, broken by ridges of hills or cliffs that project abruptly here and there above the general level surface. The soil, generally speaking, is of firm sand mixed with some clay and gravel, all of which makes good roads even in rainy weather by merely clearing away the brush.

Two mountain ridges at the northern end of the island have an elevation of some 1,500 feet. These ridges are composed of lime stone and marble. The other ridges in the center of the island are much lower, less precipitous and are formed of gray sandstone and red rock and gravel containing iron ore.

The southern part of the island is composed of what is locally known as "dogtooth" coral rock. The southern coast is rocky and dangerous, containing only one small harbor, Carapachiray. On the southwest of the island is a capacious anchorage.

The only two landings on the island are New Gerona, on the Rio Las Casas, and Jucaro, the latter on the Rio Santa Fe. These are accessible by vessels drawing five feet of water or less, but at the river mouths being very shallow.

LIKE PARTS OF FLORIDA.

The central part bears yellow pine, mostly tall and straight, although there are considerable tracts of very fair sawlogs. As you approach the western, northern and eastern coasts the pine disappears and the country becomes a savanna, covered with a thin grass and dotted with scattered trees and palms.

Captain Foltz says that after a careful investigation he finds that the only land belonging to the state is contained in some sixty or about fifty acres each, and scattered about within three miles of New Gerona. These lots seem to be those left after the land had been plucked over. They are generally in the worst locations, practically worthless, and contain nothing but mangrove swamps, with here and there a short stretch of sandy beach.

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THE CIVIL EXPENSES OF THE GOVERNMENT formerly amounted to only about \$7,000 per annum, of which \$4,000 came from the Bank of Spain and \$3,000 were collected from the sale of tobacco, either directly, by export duty of 15 cents on each sack of charcoal and 7 cents on a cord of wood.

MARBLE IN THE MOUNTAINS. The only mineral product of importance in the island is the marble. This marble is found in the mountains east and west of New Gerona on the north coast. Some fifty years ago these marble quarries were worked extensively, and there are evidences that much money was put into the enterprise. For some reason, however, which was not ascertained, the work was discontinued, and in order to discourage it levied a duty on the sand used in sawing, which was hauled from the shore a considerable distance. This tax killed the enterprise.

There are at present two small saw-mills in the island. Only one is now in actual running order. There is a large area of pine forest, but the logs are not found in large tracts, but in scattered patches along the hills, which is suitable for tobacco patches rather than sugar plantations. The demand for consumption in the island is small, and the freight rates to the mainland high. Hence the only agricultural product that commands a ready cash market is tobacco.

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beef, and would also probably maintain a store for the sale of provisions. In this case the proprietor of the camp would become liable for dues, but, on account of the usually inaccessible location of the camp, these dues were difficult of collection. The quantity of mangrove and other scrubby wood, Captain Foltz states, is practically unlimited. All the coast of the island and the keys to the north are covered with this growth of mangrove and other scrubby wood, and, as far as could be ascertained, the crown does not appear to have collected any dues for the privilege of cutting. The dues seem to have been simply in the nature of town taxes levied on the woodchoppers' camps in order that they should not, by leaving the established towns, escape the burden of taxation. It is believed that the impression that dues were paid to the state for the use of its timber lands in the Isle of Pines, has arisen from an erroneous understanding of the system explained hitherto.

Since the first of January last the taxes named, like all others, have not been paid. The alcalde of the island (an officer in the Cuban army) either did not feel themselves sufficiently secure to enforce payment, or found it to their material interest to allow things to run themselves. As a consequence of all this the bridges are in need of repair, the schools closed and the clerks living from hand to mouth without any remuneration.

NEW GERONA THE CAPITAL.

The island contains but two towns, New Gerona on the north coast and Santa Fe in the center. The former numbers some 300 inhabitants; the latter 150 persons. The entire population of the island is about 2,000. The capital is New Gerona. It is situated on the only town, and Santa Fe, fifteen miles distant, is officially a suburb. Captain Foltz recommends that the towns be made officially independent of each other, as Santa Fe possesses a port at Jucaro, seven miles distant. Such a course, he thinks, would stimulate the commercial and municipal activity of the towns.

New Gerona is described as advantageously situated on a picturesque plateau at the base of the Casas mountains, and is some thirty feet above the level of the sea, as well as of the swamps at the mouth of the river. The site is well drained, exposed to constant breezes and seems to promise reasonable freedom from malarial influences. The water of the town comes from a magnesium spring, said to be very beneficial in cases of stomach trouble. Baths have been built into which water from the spring is conducted. Just outside of the town limits, on an open plateau, are the barracks. They are a large stone building, with a central court, capable of accommodating comfortably 200 men, with shelter, and, if necessary, affording troops to double that number. New Gerona also possesses a wharf, at which the steamer Protector from Batabano lands once a week. The articles exported are charcoal, tobacco, poles, roofing tiles, railway ties and lumber. New Gerona has no hotel. Invalids do not usually stop at this point, but proceed at once to Santa Fe, in the center of the island, fifteen miles distant, over an excellent natural road.

BATHS AT SANTA FE. Santa Fe has two hotels, the Caballeros and Santa Fe. The town also contains thermal baths about blood tempering. The medicinal springs contain iron, calcium and sodium, which are very favorably known to the people of Havana, many of whom visit them in the summer. The Spanish government formerly had an official surgeon at this point, who continues to collect consultation fees of \$1 in gold from each person who desires to take the baths, the patient subsequently paying twenty cents for each bath. It is recommended that this forced medical consultation be discontinued before taking a tepid bath.

Jucaro, the river of Santa Fe, is on the Santa Fe river. Steamers touch once a week. The only wheel vehicles are the ancient volante and the ox cart. No schools were in operation when the island was visited. The revenues having been completely cut off, the only government functions were at a standstill. Taxes formerly collected at these points of the island went to Havana, from whence one-fourth was afterward remitted to the inhabitants. The only dues collected directly by the authorities in the island were the dues for slaughtering cattle and selling beef. Even these taxes no longer exist, as there are practically no cattle in the island.

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Sunday-School Lesson for April 16.

Jesus Teaching Humility.

JOHN XIII, 1-17

BY J. E. GILBERT, D. D., LL. D., Secretary of American Society of Religious Education.

CONTENT.—Having rested in the home at the Passover, our Saturday, Jesus proceeded with His disciples on the first day of the week, Sunday, to Jerusalem. The triumphal procession, formed spontaneously by the enthusiastic people, announced His coming to all. On the way to the temple He taught in the temple during the day, repairing each evening to the beautiful home at Bethany. On Wednesday He remained in His retirement, while Peter and John at His direction went into the city to prepare for the Passover. On Thursday, which introduced the sixth day of the Jewish week, He again visited Jerusalem accompanied by His disciples and sought the upper room for the observance of the Passover. As He entered the room Jesus expressed His great satisfaction in being permitted once more to celebrate the feast. (Luke xxiii: 15.)

LOVED.—Our lesson presents to us first a brief statement of the thoughts and feelings of Jesus as He approached the Passover. (V. 1.) First He came to it knowing that His hour had arrived when He should depart out of this world. He had long anticipated that event, and had frequently predicted it. (Matt. xxv: 19) striving to make His followers also aware of His crucifixion, but that had always been represented as future. But now He saw that one day only remained for the work of His ministry. Second, His eye, which had all along been directed toward those who had called to Himself, continued with peculiar tenderness and solicitude. Dull pupils they had been, unable to understand His teachings. (John xii: 23) but after His departure they would herald His gospel. (Matt. xxv: 19) and build His church. (Matt. xxi: 18) and for these reasons He cherished them as near and dear friends. It was that love that grew sweetest and strongest in the dying hour.

BETRAYED.—Over against this affection of Jesus we have the attitude and disposition of His disciples. Satan had previously entered into one of them, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who had already conferred with the chief priests and Pharisees, to betray Him to the Lord. (Luke xxii: 3-6) While the supper advanced this man's thoughts were enwrapped with the scheme of betrayal by which his name would be forever clothed with infamy. (V. 2) Nor were the other apostles free from fault in that hour. As Jesus sat at the table, (Luke xxii: 14, 20) a contention arose among them, "which of them should be accounted greatest." It has been presumed that they disputed concerning their proper places, desiring to sit to the right of Jesus, and to be seated finally to John. (John xiii: 25) Thus had come up, even in this most sacred place, a question which had before been much agitated. (Matt. xxv: 1) exhibiting the quality of the men whom Jesus loved and trusted.

WASHED.—That was a dreary outlook for the cause of Christ. After His three years' ministry He was surrounded by a company whom He would deem unworthy of a place in the church—some of them, indeed, ambitious. With infinite patience He determined to give another lesson. Rising from the table, laying off His loaves and girding Himself, He pro-

ceeded to wash the disciples' feet. This was not usually obtained even in the towns of New Gerona and Santa Fe. It being rumored that the Spanish government was to seize all the cattle not owned by the islanders, and the purchasers immediately snipped the animals to Havana. The island is a paradise for pigs. The vast variety of wild fruits and seeds furnish them abundant food. Parrots are found in large numbers and are yearly exported. The shallow waters about the island abound in an excellent quantity of fish and lobsters.

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ceeded to wash the disciples' feet (verse 12). "Ye call me Master and so I am," He said, desiring them to know that He had not relinquished His place. What He did was not because He had abdicated His authority—indeed, He had reaffirmed it with Peter. He would not be accused less than He had been. He would claim as before complete supremacy, and that He would make the basis of an example for them (verses 14 and 15), urging them to do by each other what He had done to each. That does not mean, when some small sects suppose that foot-washing should be perpetuated in the church, a practice that might become very vulgar and offensive, under certain circumstances. It does mean that these men who had disputed about His deity and greatness, and that all Christians afterward, should be anxious to serve one another. And there sat Judas, the traitor, hearing these wonderful words (verse 11), yet cherishing his wicked purpose against the innocent.

DECLINED.—That some of the disciples allowed Jesus to wash their feet without objection is proof of their ignorance. But when He rose and dipped the towel in the water, and then poured the water on their feet, and wiped them with the towel, they were astonished. He knew His origin—having come from God. He knew His destiny—expecting to return to God. He knew His attitude—all things had been committed to His hands (Heb. ii: 8). He had therefore voluntarily humbled himself to serve men unworthy of him (Phil. ii: 8).

YIELDED.—Jesus did not abandon His purpose because of this reply, but He presented an alternative. Peter must be washed or he would have no part (partnership) with Jesus (v. 8). He did not signify that a little water applied to the feet was essential to Peter's discipleship. It did signify that the will of the apostle must submit to the Saviour's requirements, otherwise there could be no relation between them. (Matt. xii: 20) He was willing to go beyond the Lord's requirement, a feat not uncommon in our day. His true obedience requires only the meeting of the command, and Jesus replied that what He had set out to do was all that He should do, all that was required to fulfill His purpose and seal His own to Himself (v. 10).

EXPLAINED.—It is quite probable that some one discerned the meaning of Christ's act, but to make it plain to all, having completed His task, He were seen. Beef is such a luxury that it is not usually obtained even in the towns of New Gerona and Santa Fe. It being rumored that the Spanish government was to seize all the cattle not owned by the islanders, and the purchasers immediately snipped the animals to Havana. The island is a paradise for pigs. The vast variety of wild fruits and seeds furnish them abundant food. Parrots are found in large numbers and are yearly exported. The shallow waters about the island abound in an excellent quantity of fish and lobsters.

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ENFORCED.—The virtue of humility was thus set forth by the example and precept of Jesus. It must now be made attractive, and the disciples must have motives for its cultivation. No one performs a good act or cultivates a good quality without a correct intention. This was the precept toward Him. Jesus therefore offered the virtue by two important principles. First, "The servant is not greater than his Lord" (verse 16). The disciple must not seek to be above his Master (Matt. x: 24). Here Jesus makes Himself the pattern for all His followers. What they see to Him they may imitate, and they must discard. No rule could be simpler. It is at all times applicable. The study of Christ and the imitation of Christ constitute the great business of life. The foot-washing scene in the upper room was the precept toward Him. Jesus therefore offered the virtue by two important principles. First, "The servant is not greater than his Lord" (verse 16). 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