LETTER FROM HAVANA.

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showed herself to the greatest advantage, and some of the combinations of Cuban and American colors made a beautiful effect—the pale blue of Cuba against the navy blue of American, the brighter red as against our own dark stripes. The yellow and red bars of Spain were conspicuous by their absence, and with the exception of the one flag flying from Morro Castle I seen no others. But let us pass on and take in other sights along Havana before darkness overtook us. There is the Dairy and milkman of Cuba another reminder of the 16th Century. Of all the places one would wish to find in Havana a dairy is certainly the earliest to the newcomer. You see the cows munching their feed at the very entrance of these places, and if you were unable to see, your sense of smell would direct you aright to a place where milk is sold fresh from the cow. There is decided objections to having the stable so close to the living apartmants, place of business, etc. yet the chances for the dishonest milkman are greatly diminished. Next door to the Dairy I refer to in this instance was a butcher shop, and it seemed to me this was a well selected location but I would prefer to have my butcher shop, dry goods store, etc. a mile away. We journeyed on feasting on the luxurient gardens which surround some of the cases along the way, the tall cocoanut trees, palms and banana trees lined the route, especially as we neared the city limits. Reaching a small suberb, called Punta Grande, I think, we seen by the street lights that we were approaching an eating house of some description. We were all nearly famished and lost no time tumbling out and in to this way-side hostelry, which must have resembled the old time inns which many years ago lined the Lancaster turnpike and old Conestogo road.

It required a good appetite to eat a meal in this place and still better constitution to digest it, we were aided in the latter by the roughness of the ride before us. All the bread (palm) I have seen in this country is abominable and is possibly a mixture of gum arabic and unrolled flour. You can tear it apart much better than cut it with a knife. I asked for a glass of milk in this cafe, looking forward to a nice cool drink such as can be obtained at any eating house in the United States, but I was doomed to disappointment again. A mug resembling a shaving cup as nearly as anything I have seen was placed before me and a boiling liquid poured therein from an ancient looking pitcher of stone. It was milk all right but hot enough to boil eggs. I was obliged to order what I wished to eat according to my limited knowledge of Spanish so you can readily appreciate I had very little variety. It was quite dark now and we were still two or three miles from our destination. It was no trouble to keep on the right road as we had but to follow the wagon trains of the army which used this road continually. When we first caught sight of camp fires we made a halt and inquired for directions to First Division Headquarters, which we had anticipated would be established before we reached camp. We were greatly disappointed to find that no arrangements had been made for our accommodation for the night, and that we would have to take it in true soldier fashion. Without lights of any kind it was no easy matter to locate our camp equipage but each and every one of us scoured the grounds for tents and tent fixtures. We found two large hospital tents plenty large enough to shelter the party. We were all novices at putting up tents and the darkness added greatly to our discomfiture, but we were full of determination to pass our first night on Cuban soil in true soldier fashion. With the tents up another very important question stared us in the face. Where were we to find cots or blankets? These had been sent out during the day, but had been covered up with other stuff in such a manner that it was some time before we located them. In fact, we only succeeded in finding the cots and at the time felt satisfied to leave the blankets go. We turned into our improvided quarters feeling as high spirited as possible, but tired out completely. By using our overcoats for cover we managed to catch some sleep, but the early morning hours were sufficiently cool to make us all shiver and wish for good old blankets. Everybody had an inclination the next morning to get up early, in the fact the moon was high in the heavens when we turned out, and day light was still a long way off. Fire was made in front of our tents to cook what we could gather together for breakfast. We fared better than we expected. Some hard tack biscuits were found together with a piece of salt bacon and all hands prepared to do full justice to this bounteous repast. It was good enough for us hungry Americans and I am sure I never relished anything better than a nice browned piece of bacon cooked over a hot wood fire on the end of a pointed stick. The trouble was the end of the stick would sometimes burn off and away went our bacon into the fire. We fished it out again and tried it over and I assure you it lost none of the flavor by the operation. Some water was found nearly barreled up for use of the camp, but as warm as the milk served at the way-side restaurant. It tasted good though when no better water could be fund. As daylight made objects for some distance distinguishable all eyes were centered on our location as we all wanted to see how we were going to like our new abode. It was a grand picture we had before us. Reports of the place had not been exaggerated, and we were all delighted with our surroundings. The situation of Camp Columbia is on the highest ground in Havana Province I believe and overlooks the city of Havana from most any quarter. Beautiful green hills and valleys lie between us and Havana, dotted thickly with small villages, the summer homes of Hovana's wealth. Not more than three miles distant on one side of camp is the broad Atlantic with a fishing hamlet here and there in plain view from our headquarters. Many of the much talked about block-houses which had been erected by the Spanish army for the protection of Havana could be seen, and on every hill top for miles around forts large and small were in plain sight. I believe as much as fifteen of these forts can be seen plainly with the naked eye from any part of camp. Manned by an American army Havana could never be taken and it would have been a costly victory to American arms.

Tropical vegetation in all its richness covers this part of the island as I suppose it does wherever you go. However, whenever you look there are unmistakable signs of neglect and ravage. What have been the richest of plantations at one time now show waste and decay. Indications point plainly to the force of the insurgent arms even in Havana Province as it surely must have been the case that planting was suspended for some time past in this section. Gradually this state of affairs will disappear as American enterprise and good government takes hold of the island. The very richness of the soil is apparent at a glance and under proper cultivation there are no richer lands in the whole world I dare say. It is hard to say from one's own observation at present what have been the staple products in this section, but doubtless truck farming, tobacco growing, the cultivation of tropical fruits, etc., would be best adapted to the said hereabouts, Havana affording a ready market for all these products. I have taken frequent strolls across the country to learn the mode of farming practiced by the Cubans, and it is almost beyond belief that people of this advanced age should be so ignorant or unprovided with modern farming utensils. Everything that I have seen used in tilling the soil has been thrown aside in our own country a hundred years ago. I have seen illustrations of the first plows used in America and I have now seen the actual implement used as a cultivator by Cuban peasantry. Oxen of very small stature take the place of horses pretty generally throughout the island and do not draw their loads by means of the well established yoke around their necks, but by means of a rectangular block of wood placed one across the forehead of the beast directly beneath the horns and a wood arrangement behind the horns, the two being fastened together by means of thongs and then roped or chained to the tongue of the cart. You will see by this that the poor beasts are unable to turn their heads in any direction and to make matters worse a shifting of the load on the cart to the rear almost lifts the poor animals off their fore feet. I consider this a most cruel manner of providing means of locomotion and a custom that ought to be abolished at the earliest opportunity. Ponderous carts, small mules and oxen, prevail here. I feel safe in saying that our four mule escort wagons in the army service draw smaller loads than some of these solitary animals—mule or ox. The district of Havana is still the rendevois of several thousand Cuban soldiers who have not yet, to my knowledge, been requested to resume civil life. I have heard of no unpleasantries where these soldiers come in contact with our own, and they seem to respect the boys in blue to the fullest extent. What the necessity is for keeping these men in arms in a province containing perhaps 25,000 American soldiers, I have not fathomed as yet. A camp of five thousand Cubans are about three miles from our headquarters, and much nearer than that to some the regimental camps of the 2nd division. It is very evident that good discipline prevails on both sides. But I am wandering from the channel I had drifted in at the outset and wished to follow as closely as possible that I might confine my letter to current events, and not descriptions of what I saw. Orders came on Saturday morning to break camp and move to another site close by but more accessable and in a good many ways more desirable for camping purposes. It was short work to get our equipment together and established in our new quarters, and with our experience of tent building the night before, we all felt confident that we could put them up again without the assistance of a detail. This we did to all appearances as good as professionals, except that we drove less pins for the stay ropes than was afterwards found to be sufficient. When everything was gotten into ship-shape it was nearly dark and another day in Camp Columbia gone. At sun-down a few clouds began to appear here and there accompanied with a right smart breeze which which boded no good for us. Our tents begen to writhe and twist and the fly continually striking against the top canvass made enough noise to imagine we were experiencing the tail end of a West Indian hurricane. Tired men are glad enough to accept such shelter as is offered them and we paid little attention to the threatening torm ouside, but turned into our little cots for the night and were soon fast asleep. Heavy squalls with a deluge of water from time to time awakened us to our sensee, but not for long. About 3:30 in the morning a terrible squall struck us, tearing up tent pins, overthrowing cots, baggage, etc. and completely demolishing our canvass home. The five sleepers on the windward side of the tent came to their senses in the open air partially coveered up with debris, under a downfall of rain in inky darkness. I was one of these unfortunates. The other five were missing for a time, but had fared better than we had, their only inconvenience being the amount of debris piled upon them which was sufficient to protect them from the rain and wind.

To be continued next week.