

o'clock we were steaming under the frowning fortress of El Morro, into the harbour of Havana, the capital town of Cuba.

Cuba, the pearl of the Antilles, of all those splendid provinces which attested to the genius of Columbus; and the fortunes of the Escorial alone is left to Spain, the earliest and the latest memorial of a brittle glory. Pronounced by Columbus to be the fairest land the eye had ever gazed on, it is in truth one of the most favoured countries in the world, both as regards its charming scenery and its abundant natural resources. Cuba possesses a number of the finest harbours in the world, that of Havana being surpassed by Matanzas, and some half dozen others on the west and north coasts. The climate, though tropical, is marked by an unequal distribution of heat at different periods of the year, indicating a transition to the climate of the temperate zone. The hottest months, July and August, do not give a greater average than 83.8°; the coldest, December and January present the mean 69.8°; the changes, however, are very rapid. More than four-fifths of the extent of Cuba consists of lowlands, there being two or three ranges of mountains, a point in the mountain group of Sierra-del-Cobré attaining an altitude of 7,674 feet. Cuba produces, in addition to tobacco and coffee, a variety of attractive fruits, among them being the pineapple, cocoanut, grape, melon, orange, lime, lemon, citron, date, banana, fig, guava, and mango. Its population is estimated at 1,500,000, of which some 600,000 are Cubans or Creoles.

Havana, or Habana, population 200,000, lies on the north-west side of the island, not far from the Florida Channel, and with its long lines of warehouses, its gaily-painted houses, and numerous strangely-fashioned church towers, presents a pleasing picture to the visitor as his vessel wends its way through the shipping in the commodious harbour. The houses, like those of the Spanish Main, are chiefly of one storey, very solidly built, with enormous windows, which in lieu of glass casements are protected by brightly-painted iron gratings. Hackney carriages are very numerous, upwards of 6,000 being in daily use; the fare to any place in the city being 8d. for two persons, the price per hour 2s. There are several good hotels and restaurants,



HAVANA CATHEDRAL.

three or four theatres, and numerous churches in the city.

At nine o'clock my camera was put into the native boat, and, going ashore at the Custom House wharf, I found the official had gone to breakfast, and would not return till eleven o'clock, another example of the Spaniard's way of managing business. There was no help for it, so leaving my case in charge of the baggage man, I, with others, drove through the town to look at the hotel. The natives somewhat stared to see a long line of carriages (containing

helmet-clad Englishmen and ladies, and a drive of about a mile landed us at the hotel Telègrafo, where we alighted, and at a money-changer's hard by, exchanged some of our bright, clean-looking gold pieces for the dirty, flimsy notes used in Cuba, getting about twelve of their depreciated paper dollars for each sovereign—five cents, equalling a penny. Fancy, a bank note for a penny! We passed some very fine shops, filled with Spanish, French, American, and English goods; and over the narrow business streets were stretched awnings of coarse canvas, from which depended swaying painted calico signs, setting forth the proprietor's name and wares. The roughly paved streets are bordered by side walks, so narrow that two persons cannot pass each other on them, one having to step down into the rather steep gutter. There were few or no ladies in the street, it not being the fashion for Cuban ladies to venture out unattended. Negresses are met in plenty.

At eleven o'clock I went back to the Customs wharf, but no officer had arrived; a messenger, however, started for him, and in a few minutes I was able to put my traps in the waiting lobby, and drove about the town to see what I could see.

Nothing particularly striking caused me to erect my tripod till we were opposite the Fortress of El Morro, which, together with my next attempt, the Cathedral, was backed by the interminable blue sky, too dazzling bright and cloudless for the highest photographic results. In the Cathedral, a building in the old Spanish style of architecture, service was going on, and being without a guide, I was unable to find the tomb of Columbus, who lies buried here. Resuming my carriage I exposed a plate on a street view, and, finding nothing else of interest, closed my tripod for the day.

In the afternoon a few of our party visited one of the large cigar factories, and saw the process of manufacturing cigars by rows of operatives, each seated at long tables. After purchasing a few boxes, we returned to the hotel to dine, and in the evening went to one of the theatres, where, between the acts of the drama that was being enacted, some performers gave pleasing representations of Spanish castinet and other dances. The audience, composed almost exclusively of Creoles, was enlivened by the presence of a huge Chinaman, evidently a person of some importance, who, from his private box, seemed immensely to enjoy the performance. Many of us went on board the ship to dine; the row off in the cool evening air was delightful, the oars sending the fiery phosphorescent spray high up in the air.

The next morning, after an early breakfast, a steam launch called for us, and again, through the influence of some of our passengers, we were able to get ourselves attached to a special train, the Capitan General's car being placed at our disposal. At seven o'clock we left the station, on our way to see the celebrated caves of Bellamar, at Matanzas, some sixty miles by rail from Havana. After leaving Havana, we passed through a well cultivated country, the crops looking green and healthy, and dotted here and there were sugar mills of large extent. Cocoa-nut and date palms were abundant, and everything seemed prosperous and flourishing.

At about ten o'clock we reached the city of Matanzas, where we found an admirable breakfast awaiting our arrival. At eleven o'clock, *volantes* were at the door, and we were soon on our way to the Cumbre Hills and the beautiful Valle de Yumris. From these hills are to be obtained the best views of Matanzas and the distant sea.

Viewing the cave and the return journey occupied the remainder of the day, and the yacht was not reached till nine o'clock at night, the anchor being raised very shortly afterwards. Stretching away northward we felt that we were, at last, homeward bound. After a somewhat monotonous run of twelve days, we reached the Island of St. Michael's.