

M.A. and LL. B. in 1892, and in 1894, three years after his admission to the bar, the degree of LL. M. He is the author of works on the merchant shipping acts, on the marine insurance act, on "Economic Ideals," on "Island Economy," on tariffs, and on land and labor, and is a writer of numerous articles and papers, economic, legal and nautical. Although nephew of a lord (Lord Overton), Dr. White is accounted both by radical Liberals and the other side, as an unequivocal disciple of Henry George.

✦ ✦ ✦

IF.

For The Public.

What wondrous things would come to pass
If Christians for a day
Should shape their conduct to their creed,
And practice as they pray.
How low would current values fall
Held now so highly priced,
If men believed in God at all,
And really followed Christ.

JOSEPH DANA MILLER.

✦ ✦ ✦

ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES OF SAN DOMINGO.

For The Public.

In our immense territory of varied resources, a high tariff policy, while injurious, has not been the industrial calamity it has been in such small states as the Dominican Republic, which occupies the eastern two-thirds of the island of San Domingo.

Discovered by Columbus on his first voyage, San Domingo was his headquarters for many years and the repository of his bones. In 1697, the western or Haitian part of the island was captured by the French, but the eastern part was only under their control from 1785 to 1809. In 1821 the Dominicans allied themselves with Bolivar and his Columbians and threw off the yoke of Spain, but the next year they were subjugated by President Boyer of Haiti. Their independence of Haitian rule was gained in 1844, and has been since preserved with the exception of a four-year period (1861-65) under Spanish control.

With a Congress of 12 senators and 24 deputies, a President, a cabinet of 7 members and a supreme court, their political organization resembles ours. As the Republic for generations has been the prey of political adventurers, revolutions have been perennial; and the nation has thus had no opportunity to enjoy that progress which Macaulay asserts may exist under even oppressive regimes that preserve internal tranquillity. With the standing army of about 2,000 men now garrisoned in the strategic cities, and with the custom houses (formerly the purses of impecunious revolutionists) under Uni-

ted States control, the republic has now a good chance of recovering from its vice of rioting.

Unlike Haiti, whose population is almost entirely African, full-blood negroes in the Dominican republic, are in the minority. The bulk of the population are Spanish mulattoes, with a dash in the interior of aboriginal blood. The leading politicians and merchants are usually white, though the governors, generals and other men of influence are often black. There is no color line drawn in either political or social life. The population is about 700,000, but is so concentrated in the ports and railroad towns that much of the total area of 20,000 square miles seems like a primeval wilderness.

When the United States took charge of the Dominican custom houses in 1905, the national finances were in a chaotic condition. This chaos largely sprang from the misrule of President Heureaux, who was practically dictator of the republic for most of the period from 1882 to his assassination in 1899. His regime succeeded in contracting a national debt of some \$30,000,000, mostly squandered on Heureaux's prodigalities, on subsidies to keep powerful politicians quiet, and on usury to money-lenders. After an investigation by United States agents, the various debts were scaled down to a total of about \$20,000,000, which was issued in 5 per cent bonds. Fifty-five per cent of customs revenue is applied annually to interest and sinking fund of the bonded debt.

The present tariff is assessed on most articles ad valorem at a general rate of about 75 per cent. The practical result is that the consumer pays nearly double the price for imported articles as compared with those British West Indian islands with a revenue tariff of 10 per cent. This results in a very high living cost, as native products include few manufactures, and even such essentials for the workers as wheat, maize, rice, codfish, cooking oil and kerosene are mostly imported. As the daily wage of the common laborer varies from 40 cents with rations, to 70-80 cents without, his condition would be miserable were it not that his sunny nature requires little to satisfy it in this beautiful island with its equable climate and luxuriant verdure, so like his ancestral Africa.

Until the United States took the custom houses, not only was there a robber tariff but only a fraction of its exactions reached the treasury, for rebates to influential importers were common. Since the total custom revenue has been collected, there has been for the first time a surplus over the running expenses of the government to devote to public improvements.

Municipal revenue is raised (after the Spanish custom) from business licenses and from stamps on property transfers and mortgages. In this way enough has been obtained in the towns of 10,000-20,000 people (as the capital, Puerto Plata, San-

tiago and Macoris) to do some paving and lighting; but the inability to levy a direct property tax hampers the extension of needed public improvements.

On alcoholic liquors the tax is so low that good native rum is sold for 2 cents a glass or one-fifth its price here. It is a curious fact that the sad results predicted for the policy of cheap liquor by the high license advocates have not ensued in San Domingo. I saw few drunkards during my sojourn of several months in various localities, and even regular moderate drinking is not a common native habit.

Most interesting is the system of land tenure. A large part of the Republic's area is held in large tracts whose title was originally derived from the Spanish crown. As in the case of the Spanish grants of Louisiana and California, these tracts have no definite boundaries, but are delimited by natural monuments as trees or hills. The grants are now owned by "comuneros" or shareholders, who are mostly descendants of the original grantees, though the possibility (until recently) of transferring such shares has, in some cases, introduced alien shareholders. Each grant is covered by a definite number of shares (called pesos), and the owner of even one share has the right to work any part of the grant not already in use. If he gets too hoggish he may be enjoined by suit of a co-owner.

While this communal system insures free access to the land for the large part of the native Dominicans who are land shareholders, it discourages both immigration and wagon roads. At present there are few of the latter on the island and everything for the interior has to be transported by packhorse (except along the two short railroad lines). This expensive transportation and the land grants explain the sparseness of the rural population.

Before an individual title can be obtained to any fraction of a land grant, it must first be divided by legal process, and this can only be done with the consent of shareholders and considerable delay and expense for surveys. Even if individual farm-owners should be willing to pay the cost of wagon-road building through their land, a continuous road between farms would be negated by the many intervening grants, whose shareholders could seldom afford to pay a proportionate road assessment on their little cultivated areas. The government proposal to build these roads from the proceeds of the tariff will benefit the landowners at the cost of the working population.

I believe it possible to develop the island along just and democratic lines by the following reforms, though their inauguration will require a strong and tactful government. The landowners of Spanish countries are the leaders of the illiterate working class and control public sentiment in their own interests. This was well illustrated in Porto

Rico where even the direct property tax made the Yankee regime unpopular, though its introduction greatly increased the selling value of the aristocrats' land by the public improvements it made possible.

Such oppressive import duties as those on quinine and the clothing and food of the peasantry should be abolished at once and the remainder of the tariff removed by easy stages. A uniform system for a systematic survey of the republic should be inaugurated along with a general decree for the compulsory division of the land grants among their shareholders. It will then only require a gradually increasing land-value tax to cause the present landowners to either cultivate their land or offer it for sale at an attractive price. The division of the land grants would make it practical to radiate continuous wagon roads from each port and railroad center with the funds obtained from the land tax.

As primary schools have now been established in the more populous districts, the crying educational need is for instruction in improved methods of agriculture. The native farming is most primitive, the tools being only a pointed stake for planting and a hoe and machete for weeding, while a plow is almost unknown outside of the great sugar estates. It is probable that the system of model government farms, located strategically in each cultivated district, would achieve quick results as it has done in our Southern States. A central agricultural school and a staff of scientists to study soils and plant-culture should also be established.

The nation contains a considerable number of men highly educated in the United States or Europe, but aside from law, medicine and the church they seem to be restricted in occupation to mercantile lines. The last (as in all Spanish countries) are well organized in contradistinction to the primitive agriculture which must have aid from government and from European practical horticulturists in order to reach the development proper to the island's great area of fertile, well-watered land.

Much of the country is still covered with primeval forest which needs only improved ways of transport to become a valuable asset. The minerals are under the Napoleonic code and belong to the state instead of the land-owner. A large quantity of placer-gold was extracted by the Spanish conquerors but the present mineral resources are unpromising. The rugged surface insures good drainage and makes the island the healthiest of the Greater Antilles. The climate of the coast is tempered by the trade winds and much of the elevated interior is cool and well adapted to the labor of Southern Europe.

Starting from the present backward condition, the introduction of free trade, land-grant partition and survey, land-value tax and agricultural

education, should work wonders in a decade. Experience in other countries has shown all these reforms to be safe and practical, but whether they will be applied in San Domingo or not depends on its political leaders. Should they decide to step out from the darkness of traditional ways and prejudices into the light of scientific economics and altruistic statesmanship, they would be astonished at the favorable results of their action.

ROBERT B. BRINSMADE.

BOOKS

A VIEW OF THE HARVESTER CAPITALIST.

Cyrus Hall McCormick by Herbert N. Casson. Published by A. C. McClurg & Co., Chicago. 1909.

The romance of the reaper, with its hero an industrial demi-god and its finale the feeding of the world, is Mr. Casson's story. It is a relief to the eye to view history across fields of wheat instead

of battle. Yet over both there lies a haze. This story is romantic. Is it true? Partisan historian the author most evidently is. So the reader, not believing in ex parte trials, suspends hero-worship until the other litigants have spoken.

ANGELINE LOESCH GRAVES.

✦ ✦ ✦

FOR YOUNG MEN.

Personal Information for Young Men. Published by R. F. Fenno & Company, 18 East Seventeenth St., New York, N. Y. Cloth, 50 cts.

This is the third of a series on Personal Purity, by Ernest Edwards. It is a strong, frank and rational discussion of a subject which has been too long postponed. No one can estimate the waste of manhood it might have saved had it appeared a generation sooner. An anatomical, physiological and hygienic treatment of cells, glands and brain, it leads on to considerations of generative subjects in a cleanly manner, treating, also, of the psychological relation of human generation to thought and affection. A book for every youth

From the Month's Correspondence.

THE PUBLIC,
Chicago.

Southfield, Mass.,
Mar. 7, 1910.

Dear Sir:

A copy of one of your folders dealing with the policy and purpose of your publication has come to my notice. If there is anything calculated to weary a man who has any fellow feeling for his neighbor and his welfare, it is, in my estimation, the present condition of the press which purports to tell the news and give reliable information concerning the affairs of the nation and world. You read a statement and no sooner do you begin to form conclusions on the basis of the supposed news than along comes another purveyor of the "pure unadulterated article" who quietly informs you the other fellow's statement is all rot.

Honest, it gets to one's nerves; what is the fact anyway? Being of such a frame of mind I am moved to chance another dollar for the sake of discovering what your publication does to help a man out or in.

Your proposition looks good, but not being in a position to test every statement I suspect I shall have to depend upon the general impression made by the paper. I am enclosing the dollar for a year's subscription to The Public.

Yours very truly,

IVAN H. BENEDICT.