



BY CAROLINE WASHBURN ROCKWOOD, AUTHOR OF "IN BISCAYNE BAY."



HE Gulf Stream was dashing by us—so strangely, fascinatingly blue—when the cry, "KEY WEST!" drew all eyes to the dazzling, seagirt city.

There it lay, like an oblong pearl set in opals and emeralds.

Even Byron's muse lagged far behind this reality when, gloating over the glories of Italian coloring, he wrote :

" Filled with the face of heaven, which from afar
Comes down upon the waters; all its hues,
From the rich sunset to the rising star,
Their magical variety diffuse:
And now they change; a paler shadow strews
Its mantle o'er the mountain: parting day
Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues
With a new color, as it gasps away,
The last still loveliest, till—'tis gone—and all is gray."

Through the jeweled death of day, into that sudden gray of sleep-land, our good ship bore us,

past the silent fort, past the government houses, until we touched the shore of the largest, the least known and the most malign city of the land of flowers.

What a chattering and rushing broke upon us, like a sudden swarming of excited birds, leader-lost and distrait!

African density of perception, Cuban variety of shiftlessness, Conch indifference and native laziness climax themselves, individually and collectively, on the arrival of a steamer at the Key West wharf.

The primary puzzle was, how the gang plank over could be safely placed, under existing circumstances.

To every active, available man on shore, stood, lounged, lay and stared at least a dozen tatterdemalions of the most pronounced types, from atoms of humanity hardly out of arms to shriveled age; each, alike, armed with the universal local emblem, a cigar.



THE SPONGE MARKET.

The waiting Cubans crowded the outer edge of the wharf, shrilly welcoming their friends on board, who, in turn, shrilled back their queer, broken-backed Spanish acknowledgments, accompanied by violent gesticulation and facial demonstration.

Nothing more abjectly wretched than those Cuban voyagers ever paid tribute to the tyrant *mal-de-mer*, and nothing more artificially and defiantly brilliant in complexion and costume ever turned backs upon their sufferings, and, with ecstasy in every movement, stopped upon *terra firma* at the first possible moment. Indeed, they hardly waited for the gang plank to establish a secure hold for either terminus before flying to meet the beloved "Juans," "Marias," "José's" and "Ignacios," who met them more than halfway, in midair, and completed a blockade that threatened danger to all involved.

Through the uncertain dusk artificial lights began to send opposing rays across the unfamiliar scene, revealing the low shops, larger warehouses and curious interiors that happened in their path.



A KEY WEST SERVANT.

Our captain, intent upon his ship and all its responsibilities, scorned Argus-eyed, and out of all the confusion brought a safe and comfortable landing of our party, to say nothing of our goods and chattels, with as cordial words of parting as though we had not been the daily torments of his life for ninety-two hours.

Talk about the patience of Moses! It shrinks into positive insignificance when compared with the heroic endurance and unwearoutable courtesy of our captain, who met the flood of inane questions consequent upon an attendance of scores of landlubbers with the smile of an angel and the wisdom of a Solomon.

"You will not find much to interest you in Key West, I am afraid," he said, as he bowed us down the side of the steamer.

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It was regarded as going directly in the face of Providence, I believe—this determination of ours to get at the "true inwardness" of a place that everybody had a bad word for; but we started at an immense advantage. We had a welcome awaiting us and a pleasant foothold promised us among the "leading families," nor did we have to pause for the lack of either an unnecessary moment.

No sooner were we safely on land than warm Southern greetings allayed our strangeness and dispelled the dangers of our ignorance. It did not in the least matter that we were only "friends of friends" of our host and hostess, with no other claim upon their hospitality than an introduction by letter. From the moment of our meeting until that of our regretful departure we became the objects of unremitting devotion and delicate attention, which would have made a wilderness blossom as a rose, and which changed our self-imposed task of local investigation into days of delight.

But let us be just before we are even generous. To the newly arrived, hotel-bound stranger the brief glimpse of Key West likely to be his between the departure of the New York and the arrival of the Tampa steamers is depressing. Instead of arriving at sundown, after the glare of the day has quite passed and the evening sea breezes have taken possession of the heated streets, he generally finds himself suddenly dropped into the midst of a motley collection of broken-down carriages, whose single horses seem to share the fatigue and indifference of their shabby drivers.

He looks up and down long, flat streets, whose old-time shade trees fell into ashes in the great fire of six years ago, and experiences for the first time the direct rays of a tropical sun that resolve all his energies into one absorbing desire for shadow and rest.

No friendly hand or word guides his footsteps to any of the cool, roomy houses where such luxuries can be had for the paying. No timely advice suggests a walk "just around the corner" to one of several hotels where questions can be answered.

The "cabbies" eye him with designing nonchalance, and he feels a sort of gratitude to the only one who is energetic enough to meet him, take his luggage in charge—as well as himself—and finally deposit both at the door of the "biggest hotel in town, sar."

To be sure, his charges are just four times too high, and the short distance has been a *Via Dolorosa* that threatened with every step a fractured back or a dislocated knee. The vehicle, too, seemed a probable trap for all known dirt and disease incidental to heat and thriftlessness. Key West streets, during the dry season, are horrors of alternating sand and rock, and, after a rain, are only less horrible to those who prefer damp unpleasantness to stifling dust.

The Key West Boniface, however, stands ready to comfort and mitigate such introductory trials, and then comes the turning point of the traveler's experience. If he is philosophic enough to keep out of the streets until they lie in shadow, in the meantime taking his observations from a breezy veranda, or, as the Key Westers call it, gallery, enough will pass under his eye both to interest and instruct him.

But if he succumbs at once to the unquestionable lack of many Northern comforts, and will not accept any substitutions, it is well for him (not to speak of others) that his stay should be short.

For ourselves, we slept the sleep of the contented on that first night, but not until after we had listened to something like—judging from the noise—seventy-five thousand roosters, whose clarion tones must be heard afar out at sea, and who never fail to usher in the eleventh hour. They crow with appalling vigor for about fifteen minutes—a vigor that outdoes even the "jingle car" as it clashes along the streets on its last trip of the evening.

It seemed no more than five too-fleeting moments after that closing feature of our first day before we were again recalled to consciousness by a voice that Salvini would have raved over. A peep through the blinds revealed a stalwart African, whose iron-gray hair alone evidenced overmaturity. He was pushing before him a large wheelbarrow filled with fish, and called aloud, at brief intervals, with inspiring cheerfulness and unctious: "Fresh! Fresh! Fresh! Nice fresh salted fish! *Rabirubias!*" (Spanish mack-



CONCH HATS.

eral.) "Nice! Nice! Nice! Fresh! Fresh! Fresh! Groupers!"

As he strode along, he would vary his announcements, as follows: "Nice, splendid rabirubias! Nice, fresh salted groupers! Fresh! Fresh! Fresh!"

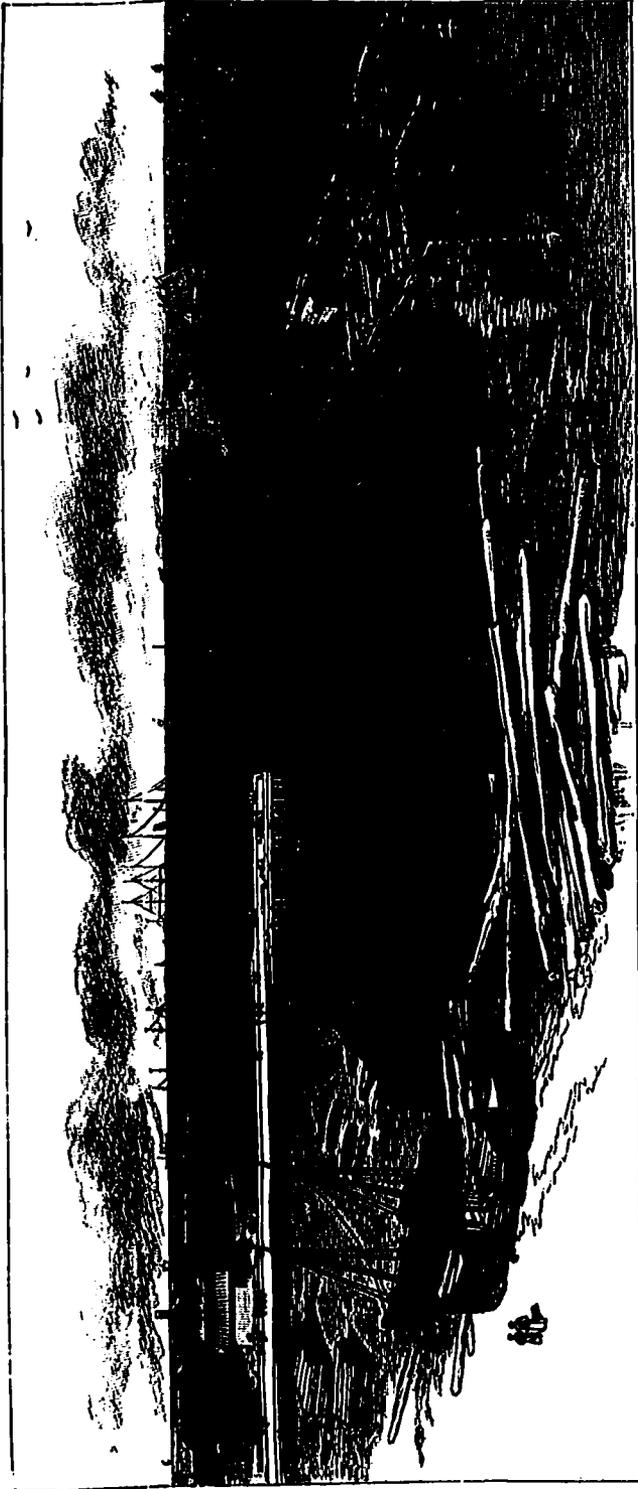
We could not understand the long word until it was translated, but it paid to catch that early-dawn glimpse of the handsome old Cuban darky, and to breathe that sweet, early breath of day; and nothing loath were we to accept our host's invitation, a few days later, to go to early market.

It was difficult to awaken, and still more difficult to keep awake, at four o'clock in the morning; but, once out in the freshness of daybreak, we felt as if treading on air.

We Northerners never experience the intoxication of bare existence, as it is felt under Southern skies.

The atmosphere was like laughing gas—full of childlike mirth and irresponsible glee.

The sky and sea reflected each other, careless



SEE WEST HARBOUR.

of rivalry, and the night-cooled earth and trees gave forth a subtle, charming fragrance.

We went into a coffeehouse, and wondered at the perfection of true democracy there illustrated. In one corner sat two negroes; in another, a quartet of sunburned spongers; next them, the son of a millionaire merchant and a famous contractor were in earnest conversation with a newspaper man and a navy officer; in a third corner, but a few feet beyond, was an ex-sheriff and party of sightseers.

The floor was uncovered and unpainted, as were the tables, but both were as immaculate as scrubbing could make them.

The coffee was superb, and—oh! shades of our New England ancestors!—so were the doughnuts we ate with it.

Everybody looked comfortable, and such miseries as scorching heat, fatigue, insects and hubbub seemed unknown quantities.

On the blue waters of the harbor lay at anchor several of the aristocratic white squadron—the *Yorktown*, *Atlanta*, *Chicago* and *Boston*. A fleet of fishing boats lined the wharves, having paid their daily fees of fifteen cents, and so become temporary proprietors of their positions.

We inspected many of them, as they cleaned their stock and sold them to the street vendors, among whom was our boll-toned monger already referred to.

The boats often belong to some man in town, who lets them "on shares," allowing \$2.50 a week per boat to two fishermen for rations, and taking one-third of the catch in payment.

The display of dressed fish, ready for cooking, at the morning market, is hardly to be equaled anywhere, and the character studies that meet one at every turn are worthy of a special article.

While listening to an energetic bargain between a fisherman and a fish vender a weather-beaten



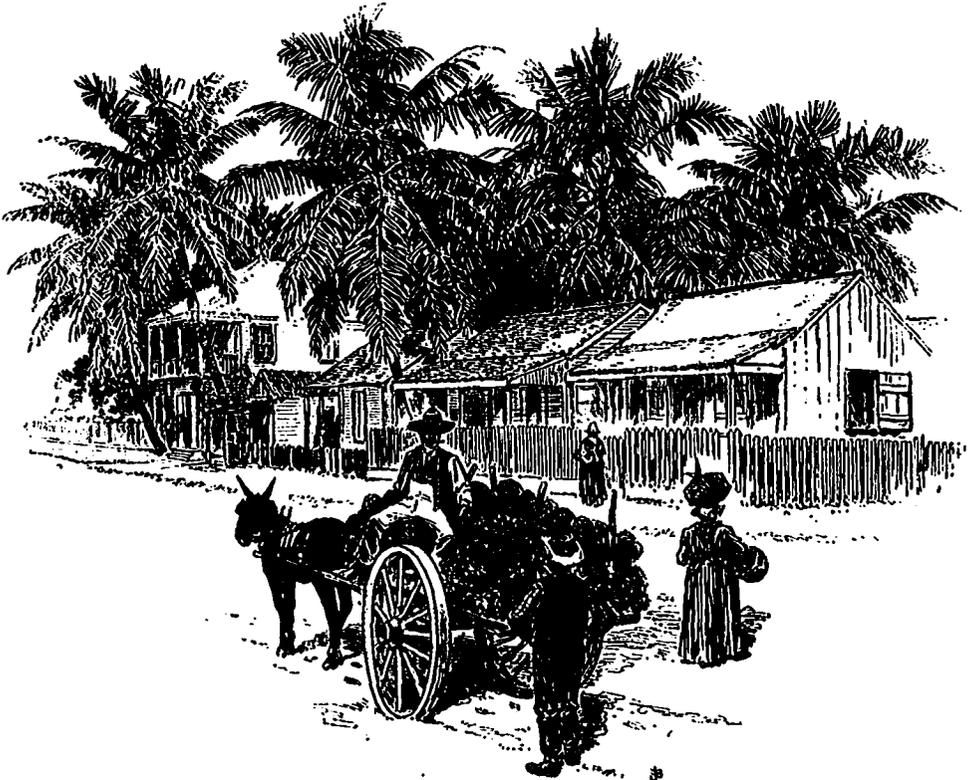
GREENE STREET, KEY WEST.

old dory appeared around a small schooner, and our astonished eyes beheld a speck of a darky boy, not more than six years old, sitting in the stern, with the end of an old cigar in the corner of his mouth, at which he was puffing with the air of a veteran smoker. In his right hand he held a stick about two feet long and six inches

wide, that he was using as a paddle, having found the legitimate polo too massive for his tiny hands to wield.

As he passed the schooner, one of the men laughingly called to him to lend them a hand at hauling some pineapple crates on to the deck.

He at once removed the cigar stump with an



HOMES OF CUBAN CIGARMAKERS.

experienced air, and answered, with convulsing dignity: "*D'I look like I'se er 'orso?*"

In strolling home, after a two hours' experience as varied as it was novel, we stopped to inhale the fragrance and note the abundance of pineapples that were being shipped North. They are not raised on the Island of Key West, but on the keys along the coast and on the West Indian Islands, the Porto Rico pines being immense in size and delicious in flavor.

When nearly at our walk's end a strangely touching picture arrested our footsteps, as we inadvertently glanced through the open door of a small Cuban home.

The room was not more than ten feet square, uncarpeted, unpainted, and more like a shanty than a house. At the further corner from the door, and in plain sight of every passer-by, and as though inviting inspection, was a shrine of linen and lace—coarse, but white as drifted snow, and trimmed with natural flowers.

On the lounge beneath it, which was also covered with white and decorated with flowers, lay what looked exactly like a waxen doll, dressed in white, flower-crowned, and covered with a lace veil.

Its little hands were clasped upon the motionless breast, and the great black eyes were half open, as if just yielding to gentle slumber.

Before the lounge on the floor was placed a white linen sheet, on which stood four burning candles, a lamp and more flowers. A few chairs stood against the wall, and the morning sunlight fell across the rough floor and upon the edge of the candle-lighted shrine. Apparently the dead baby lay unguarded.

Instinctively we turned away, fearful of intruding, but were assured that the Cuban parents desired the public to look upon their child before it was put in the tiny white coffin that stood at its head.

On stopping into the room, the father came to meet us. He looked like a boy, and when we asked him if he would like a picture of the little one he clasped his hands eloquently and tried to make us understand that he wanted one "so much," but all his money had gone for the bridal dress and veil and coffin of his baby.

Then the girl mother came in from a side room, where she could sit and watch the little figure and weep, unseen. It was pitiful to see the agony in her face, and useless to try and suppress the tears of sympathy that would flow for her; but we were glad to promise them the coveted picture, and to know, later, that its possession brought a little comfort to their hearts.

The Cubans are a strange and childlike race,

with no prudential inclinations except in connection with their superstitions.

On the death of a member of the family the corpse is enshrined for a few hours. If it is an unmarried female, whether infant, child, young or old woman, it is clothed as a bride—the bride of death—and often is placed in a sitting posture, with open, staring eyes.

Directly after death all articles of the deceased's wearing apparel, and whatever has been used in the last illness, is burned or otherwise destroyed, and after the burial the family desert the house of death and find a new home.

This custom would impoverish a less lightly burdened householder than the ordinary Key West cigarmaker, but means little more to him than stepping into a neighboring street and empty two rooms, with his possessions in his arms, and no outside assistance involved or needed beyond his active family.

They are creatures of the hour. When the cigar factories are all running, and wages are high, the women deck themselves in silks and satins, laces and cheap jewelry. They eat and drink, and smoke and chatter, completely satisfied with the plenty of the moment, and ripe for any extravagance. The men appear in white linen suits and flaming ties, with their small feet incased in high-heeled boots, and bright sashes about their waists. Out of work, however, they gather in the coffeeshops and play cards, or disappear into worse and more retired haunts, where play and excitement run high. Cock fighting is a Sunday pastime, and riding Mexican horses in John Gilpin fashion a common sight on Sunday afternoons. As regards their family relations, the men are jealous husbands, devoted fathers, and most patient and romantic lovers. The women are simple in their wants, industrious, and, until married, never unguarded.

One of our greatest delights was to take the horse cars about half past seven o'clock, and ride through the Cuban quarters just as the festivities were beginning.

Often would we find ourselves in the midst of sights and sounds as unfamiliar and as puzzling as though we had been dropped, by magic, into Cuba or Spain.

The car drivers and conductors are Cubans, the former seldom speaking or understanding English at all, while the latter carry their linguistic accomplishments only far enough to know when to stop the car in response to an English request, and how to shout "All right!"

Often our fellow passengers were entirely from the Cuban population; the women plainly dressed, without head coverings and gloves, while their

daughters were something marvelous to behold, in the amplitude and befeathered splendor of their white hats, the ghastliness of their powdered faces as contrasted with their wonderfully beautiful and dark eyes and sweeping lashes, their carmine-touched cheeks and lips, and the varicolored costumes so dear to their hearts.

These Cuban girls are as coy and coquettish as ever girls can be. When a man of their race is first inspired with a desire to woo a maiden his methods are as thoroughly un-American as they possibly can be, also.

Instead of calling upon her, he spends days, weeks, and perhaps months, in haunting the immediate vicinity of her home. He paces back and forth on the opposite side of the street, sits at the door of a convenient coffeehouse stoop, or leans against a neighboring tree; from whence he can command the comings and goings of his innamorata. If she, perceiving him, deigns such encouragement as covert smiles, nods and lingering glances, between times, he finally gains entrance to her house, and then follows the most open and pronounced lovemaking that eloquent eyes, lips and heart can express, with a duonna constantly at hand, to say nothing of an interested public.

The Cuban houses, with very few exceptions, are one-storied and two or three roomed, with narrow piazzas running across their fronts, and wooden shutters at their windows.

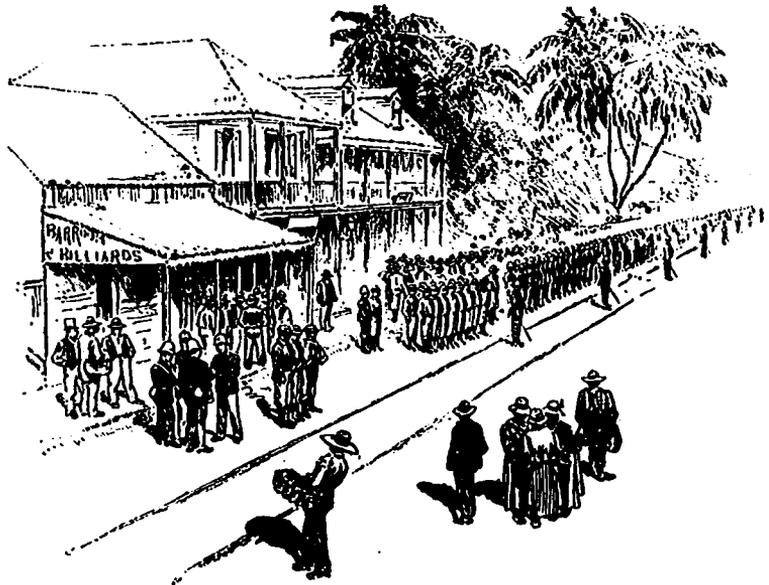
The poorer Cubans content themselves with Japanese simplicity as to furniture, except in the matter of rocking chairs. A rocking chair is, to Key Westers in general and Cubans in particular, a necessity only second to food. They can be comfortable and happy in sleeping on the floor, eating off laps or cooking out of doors, but when work is done for the day, and the hour has come for the white muslin dresses, bright ribbons, gay flowers and lovers, my lady must have her rocker, *el madre* must have hers, Don Juan his, and whoever else is stupid enough to in-

trude must also rock, rock, rock, until the duonna gets too sleepy to sit on guard another moment. Then the *adios* are said; Don Juan swears by the stars above and the eyes of his love that life will be a blank until he again resumes his "rock"; the *señorita* gives his hand a gentle parting pressure that sends him off in a seventh heaven of rapture, and the wooden shutters bar him out into the fragrant night.

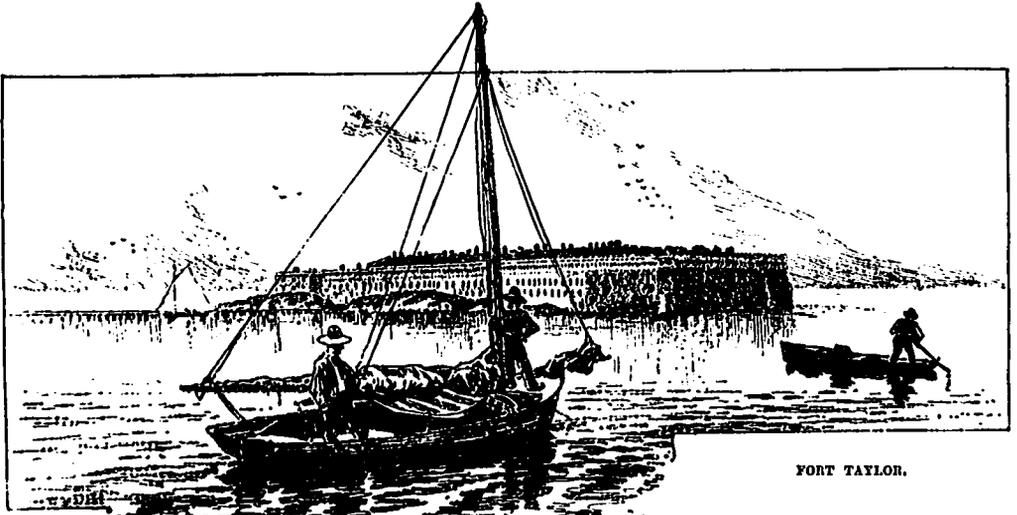
We learned to look for two favorite sets of lovers as we passed their houses in the horse cars, and must always hope their romance lived and grow into something as delightful as its incipient stages seemed.

They always sat side by side, directly opposite the open door, with their chairs against the wall and the light from the hanging lamp full upon them. The elderly person that filled the office of chaperon sat a few paces away, sometimes at a table and sometimes at the open window, but never (that we could discover) with any other occupation at hand than the watching of these lovers.

The cars, with their crowd of evening patrons, passed and repassed. Men and women lazily lounged back and forth on the sidewalk, and anyone that liked looked in upon those lovers, but it seemed to make no difference to them. They billed and cooed into each other's happy young faces as radiantly as though the moonlight alone looked down upon them, and, on a



A NAVAL REVIEW ON SHORE.



FORT TAYLOR.

The latter defies the over-vigilant duennas who hover over the pretty Cuban girls quite as successfully as, further north,

“ He laughs at bolts and bars;
At guards and locks and keys.
This naughty elf ignores papas,
And flies, manmas to tease.”

particularly propitious occasion, when the guests screened one pair from their chaperon, we were charmed to see the rash youth steal a kiss, that was as rashly but as quickly returned.

After all, youth and love are much the same the world over.

A good-looking young American was sight-seeing in Havana, not long ago, and, chancing to spy a pair of lovely eyes looking not unkindly upon him from a grated casement, doffed his hat and smiled his appreciation of their gentleness. He was instantly rewarded with an airy kiss, thrown from the tips of the slender brown fingers, and as instantly horrified by the appearance upon the scene of an ugly old damo who administered a sharp slap on the cheek to her rash charge, and pulled the girl out of sight.

It is pleasant to chronicle the fact that our Koy West lovers were not caught.



DEAD CUBAN BABY LAID OUT FOR BURIAL.

There are a few Cuban families of large wealth who have adjusted themselves, more or less, to American methods, and who take a prominent part in local matters. The great cigar manufacturer Gato is the most prominent among them, and owns street after street of houses where his men and women workers live, with the children too young to work, and the boys and girls from ten years old upward, who are often initiated into the family occupation long before they should leave the public schools.

The Cubans have schools, but education is not compulsory, and, from all we could gather, the intellectual and artistic status of that portion of the Key West population is not a subject to become ecstatic upon.

The four distinct grades of citizens may be designated as native whites, Conchs, Cubans and negroes.

The first comprise all white residents, exclusive of those coming from the Bahamas, and include representatives from all parts of this country, and also from many others.

I was surprised to discover upon numbers of the old gravestones in the cemetery the names of Connecticut men—particularly Mystic men.

The widow of one of them, a character of more than seventy years, was lingering over the resting place of her departed spouse, and proved a treasury of information.

"There's Mrs. _____'s husband over there. She's put a load of sand on him," she said, with a doubtful inflection in her voice, and a like expression on her face.

Whether the doubt was connected with her neighbor's sandy tribute or her own lack of similar attentions to the mound at her feet, we can never be sure. She told us that in '42 a Mystic man, becoming impressed with the number of his comrades that went down to Key West and grow rich in wrecking and fishing, was also impressed with the idea that it was his duty to go

to Key West and open a store where these riches could be expended.

He carried out the idea, made a large fortune, and, after death, was buried in the cemetery a few feet from where we were standing. The curious part of it all was in her own words: "There ain't a single soul of his name left on the island to-day."

The Conch element is unique. Many of them would pass anywhere as unadulterated cockneys, but a veritable Londoner is quick to assume and defend the superiority of his birthright, and apt to resent any fellowship with the partners of his distinctive misapplication of the letter *h*.

A curious division in families in this use and misuse of that letter is often seen in Key West. There are instances of several sisters, born and educated in the same atmosphere and living within short distances of each other, who speak English as unlike as though some had grown up under Bow Bells and others on Southern soil.

As a class, the real Conch exhibits the deliveration and conservatism of his English antecedents. This is constantly evidenced in the public highways of Key West. There are numbers of men and women living there to-day who prefer the discomfort and danger of their neglected streets,

their sand-suffocated lungs and their sand-ruined possessions to the easily gained deliverance from both quite unnecessary blots upon their fair island city. "What's good enough for my father is good enough for me," is their lazy answer to all cries for progression, and they go still further, in feeling it a kind of impertinence and intrusion on the part of Northern or Southern agitators of new methods, and refuse their land, their vote and their sympathy.

Happily the day of old things is beginning to pass away. As the old *holdbackers* die off their places are taken by men who have traveled more, and can see the possibilities of their climate,



A KEY WEST PRT.

water ways and coast, and already the streets are undergoing reconstruction; electric lights are being introduced, a fine chime of bells makes sweet music from the tower of the Episcopal church, and a new courthouse is approaching completion.

Socially, Key West is in a transition state. The time for universal intermingling and general personal intercourse which existed a few years ago, when the place numbered but a few thousand, has passed. It is no longer a little town where all one's friends can always be included in an invitation to tea, and the courtship and marriage of anybody on the island involves everybody's opinion and dictum. Neither is it a large enough city to rob either opinion or dictum of immense weight for or against the well-being of all couples involved. Consequently, there has sprung up a temporary lull in social matters, and a definite classification of moral, intellectual and spiritual work, in private and public schools, societies and churches. Most of the large social gatherings, aside from marriage festivities, are given under the auspices of one or the other of these heads, and small "teas" "at homes" and dinner parties are rare.

The wives of the naval officers stationed at Key West are shining examples of energetic hospitality, and are ably seconded by their husbands. Commander Winn has been stationed at Key West for many years, and is vastly popular with all classes, as is his generous, great-hearted wife.

Paymaster Smith and his accomplished wife keep open house in their delightful quarters, and the old fort, of many more hilarious than sanguinary memories, is the centre of social enjoyments.

When Mrs. Winn sends out her invitations for a picnic at the fort, in honor of an incoming government vessel, Key West puts on a new air of brightness and bustle. The "Fort Taylor" etiquette on such occasions demands nothing more than freshness and comfort of toilet, and the result is apparent in the pretty cambrics and wash dresses worn by the women and the easy carriage of our naval officers, who fully appreciate an opportunity to dance in the cool halls, rest in the deep casements, frolic over the delicious viands that Mrs. Winn's magic wand has produced, or play tennis on the shadowed court. The word picnic takes to itself an absolutely new and glorified meaning in Fort Taylor, and, in the absence of a sufficient number of dancing men, the girls are quite ready to dance together, or still more ready to rest in the seclusion of one of the great casements and talk over the merry scene before them.

Public balls, given by the officers of visiting ships, resident military organizations and indi-

viduals, are quite in vogue; but there is little commingling of the Cuban and American elements at these social gatherings, each seemingly preferring its own peculiar place of meeting, methods and people.

The homes of the wealthy Key Westers are generally large, square structures, with upper and lower verandas and a general regard for air and light that at once strikes the stranger.

If only the wicked love darkness, and it be true that all loving the light are righteous, there can be no doubt about the goodness of nine out of ten of these islanders, for they scorn hangings, screens, window shades or curtains, and trust entirely to the blinds at windows and doors and to the netting over their beds for all the privacy, shade and protection from flies and mosquitoes that they get.

To be strictly truthful, the exemption from both of the latter pests was as unexpected as it was grateful.

Not until the last of April did we need to unfurl the voluminous lace affair at the head of our bed, and although we were in Key West until the middle of May, at no time were we more inconvenienced by them than at most summer resorts in the North.

But of that little wicked "skipper," considered quite unmentionable north of Mason and Dixon's line, much might be said. That its ways are more devious than the "Heathen Chinee" of historic unreliability, and altogether past finding out, is a lesson too soon and unavoidably learned everywhere in Florida.

There is no escape from their erratic investigations, and no gainsaying their instantaneous powers of commanding attention. All that can be done in the way of relief is easily learned, however, and after a short time one becomes hardened even to that tropical plague, the elusive flea.

It is a more than difficult undertaking to put the peculiar charm of this curious and unique city on paper. One must see the radiance of air and water and sky, to approach a realization of its never-failing beauty.

One must stroll along the queer byways; note the applications and usages of the soft, coarse Conch hat, as it adorns a bright-eyed cigarette coquette, eclipses a schoolgirl, surmounts a darky or a Conch sponger, or is blown back from the face of a street urchin, to say nothing of its value as a vegetable, flower or egg basket. Then there are the wonderful sponge houses, with their specimens of nature's freaks in unexceptional models of hats, old and new, scrap baskets, etc., so true to their originals (or, more correctly speaking,

duplicates), that they have to be handled inside and out before it is possible to believe that they grow in exactly those shapes.

The cigar factories are another interesting field for investigation, from their first bales of Havana leaves—each bale containing eighty bunches or carrots of the fragrant (?) weed—through the stages of “casing” or dampening, stripping the leaf from the stem, classing of wrappers and drying of “fillers,” to the fine art involved in rolling the result of all these processes into cigars and properly packing them for the New York houses that sell them.

We were peculiarly fortunate, again, in our cigar-factory experience. Our kind host acted as guide, and so insured for us the courtesy and personal attendance of one of the partners of the house. Of course every door flew open and every secret stood revealed. Three facts remain graven upon our memories. First, the colors of the finished cigars are as various and unlimited in shading as are the greens in foliage; second, the women that work over them grow to look like them, in complexion; and third, the courtesy of one and all was only equaled by the generosity of the head of the house, who presented us with a fine box of “*Rosa Española*,” that certainly intensified the rapture of some of our male relatives, on our arrival among them a week later.

Here we are, back in the street where we started from; and there are two specimens of “little nigs” for you. Just see that mite smoke. Yes! he is smoking, certainly. Why, every negro and Cuban in Key West that can get a cigar or a pipe is at it early and late; even the American women often become slaves to the habit. “What is your name, my boy?”

“Harris, marm,” he returned.

“What is your little brother’s name?”

At this question the diminutive puffer dropped his great black eyes and dug his bare toes into the ground, but Harris seemed ready with the required information. “He ain’t my brudder, marm. He is Herbert Grober, marm. I hain’t got no brudder, nur nottin.”

Poor little fellow! He looks as if he was likely to have “nottin” in the way of clothes much longer. Did you ever see such rags! “Here, Harris, will you take this?” holding out a ten-cent piece to him; “and give this,” handing him another small piece of silver, “to little Herbert.”

“Thank you, marm,” replied Harris, as he took both pieces, and tried to make the young Grober accept his; but nothing could overcome the latter’s embarrassment, and the last seen of them, Harris was pulling his old Conch hat with one

hand, in a kind of repressed ire of “dat little nigger’s badness,” and clasping the gifts in the other, while Herbert still maintained the imperturbability possible only to babes and royalty.

As we rode homo from that factory a bright-blue cart, drawn by an old yellow horse and driven by an Italian, passed us. The man rung a resonant bell that made us think of a New England school, at the end of recess, and followed its strident tones with the following declaration, made in a falsetto voice: “El—ice—cream! El—ice—cream! El—ice—krumm-m-m! Ico—cream, yellow kind, white kind, red kind, all kinds of kind!”

He would stop now and then to rest a moment, or to deal out a portion of his cream, but we could hear his voice long after he was out of sight.

The negro confectioner that passed the house every morning was his dangerous rival, both professionally and musically, and, in a really rich voice, sang much the same sentiment, to the following setting:



El-ice-cream, El-ice-cream, El-ice-cream.

In the afternoons the small boy vendors made their tours through the chief streets and squares, with their homemade candies, etc., displayed upon the paper-covered waiters that they carry in front of them suspended from the shoulders.

One of them quite eclipsed all the others in effective coloring. He was as black as ink—good ink—and splendidly made. On his wool was perched a broad-brimmed Conch hat, with a band of bright-yellow cotton cloth ornamenting the few inches of crown still adhering to the original article. His cotton shirt-waist was blue, and the white strings that served as suspenders were carefully wound around some variously sized buttons that hold in place his white duck trousers, from the lower ends of which shot his shining black legs.

His eyes were large and full of fun, and his teeth gleamed like polished ivory as he gayly cried: “Nice, fresh homemade candy! Peanuts and popcorn! Roll up, tumble up! Matters not how you get up, so as you bring your nickel up!”

These street merchants suffer only slightly more from the sandstorm that prevail during dry periods than the more ambitious and pretentious owners of shops.

With inexhaustible waters on every side, those blessed Key Westers swallow the fine coral dust in their food and in their drinks, and slyly

ineffectually in their homes, and pay tribute to it in marred goods of every kind. Delicate clothing becomes grimy and soiled in a week. The dainty housekeeper despairs of her standard neatness. Boots and shoes become a reproach after two steps across the street; and worst than all, delicate eyes and throats smart from the constant irritation of those misplaced particles.

And yet we left Key West with great regret and many tender memories, for a few yards of rubber hose can triumph over dust; early morning and the late afternoon bring ample outdoor comforts; the sea is always tempting the yachtsman, the lover of fishing adventures and the seeker after subma-

rine wonders; the gardens blaze with bloom, the nights with moonlight or starlight, and the great, healing, revivifying sun can be depended on to shine ninety-nine days out of every hundred for at least ten hours out of the twenty-four.

Then the Key Westers are glad to welcome, quick to make at home, and charmingly unwilling to say "farewell" to their guests; and that is most flattering and beguiling to the human heart.

All in all, let us join in a toast:

To the city that's built on a Key:
To her guests, whosoever they be.
May both grow in all ways that be blest:
Long life, health and fame to Key West!



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