

The Future of Cuba.

The probability that Cuba will become, sooner or later, an independent State, and the clear possibility that she may become, in certain contingencies, a State of our Union, make the problem of her commercial future both to her and to us one of the highest interest and importance.

Before the insurrection, the Custom-houses in Cuba collected annually something like \$16,000,000 of import duties and \$2,800,000 of export duties on American trade, while the officials and traders secured additional sums, estimated as high as \$8,000,000. All these annual revenues were drags on the productive energies of the colonies. It is clear that with such charges and exactions abolished—as they would be, for example, with annexation—these energies will be powerfully assisted. And, again, with free institutions established in the island, either with or without annexation, American capital, enterprise and labor, will find a larger field, and American productions and manufactures a better market.

Cuba saved from devastation and properly governed, will, whether independent or annexed, unquestionably add to the prosperity of our people. But it is impossible not to note with apprehension the gradual destruction of property at present in the island. Recklessness and frenzy are now at work to prostrate its productive powers. Soon after the first revolutionary movements, VALMASEDA began the destruction of property; the patriots attacked and paralyzed the copper mines; estates were burnt or confiscated; the volunteers seized authority regarding internal management from the hands of Spain; executions, murders and sequestrations became general. At such a rate, the "Pearl" has been rapidly diminishing in price.

What we must do, however, in our present discussion is to take the normal condition of Cuba in time of peace. In considering the productive capability of the island, we suppose that the following might be a fair estimate of its *lacion*, official and otherwise:

The sum officially published in Madrid, marking the portion of Cuba in the general budget, 1866-67.....		\$32,852,233
Amount collected from lotteries.....		\$9,300,000
Additional paid by the community for the same.....		700,000
Total.....		\$10,000,000
Less 25 per cent. of the \$9,300,000 included in the general budget.....		2,325,000— 7,975,000
Total.....		\$40,528,233
Two per cent. additional on income tax for corporation service.....		2,376,644
Private donations paid for smuggling articles subject to import and export duties, not reported at Custom-house..		7,500,000
Total sum in gold paid by Cuban population before the war.....		\$50,404,877

There is no more striking proof of the importance of the present wealth of the Queen of the Antilles than the foregoing figures, and nothing can so well justify all efforts made to save Cuba from destruction in the interest of the commercial world, even were there no reasons of humanity to move our better feelings.

If, out of the 370,000 slaves of that island, 250,000 were to be found able-bodied laborers, their wages, at the rate of \$6 per month, would amount to \$18,000,000—or little over one-third of the exactions heretofore borne. These figures will show that to abolish slavery is not to curtail the prosperity of Cuba, provided persecutions, war and incendiarism are stopped at once. But there is very little time to lose in stopping the work of destruction which has already gone so far.

The aggregate exports of the nine more important ports for the six months ending on the 30th of last June give the following items, showing a marked decline:

	1869.	1868.
Boxes of sugar.....	1,126,000	1,090,524
Hogsheads of sugar.....	365,218	435,407
Hogsheads of molasses.....	291,322	337,110
Tonnage for the above.....	628,822	695,184

The partial increase in some ports is owing to a precipitancy in bringing produce to market, which will cause a corresponding diminution in the six months to come. The last news of incursions at Jaguey Grande, which lies in the meridian of Cardenas, sounds the alarm among the rich plantations of the West, heretofore unharmed. And, in general, it may be remarked that next year the diminution of products will be much greater, because many of the plantations that contributed to the present crop have since been ruined or paralyzed.

There can be, of course, no doubt about the conclusions to be drawn from these facts and figures. The productive power of Cuba will one day be greatly increased under the healthful stimulus of free institutions. But in the meantime the island is retrograding fast. Alike on commercial and humanitarian grounds, it is desirable that the friendly offices undertaken by our Government regarding Cuba may result in very prompt restoration of peace and prosperity to the island.