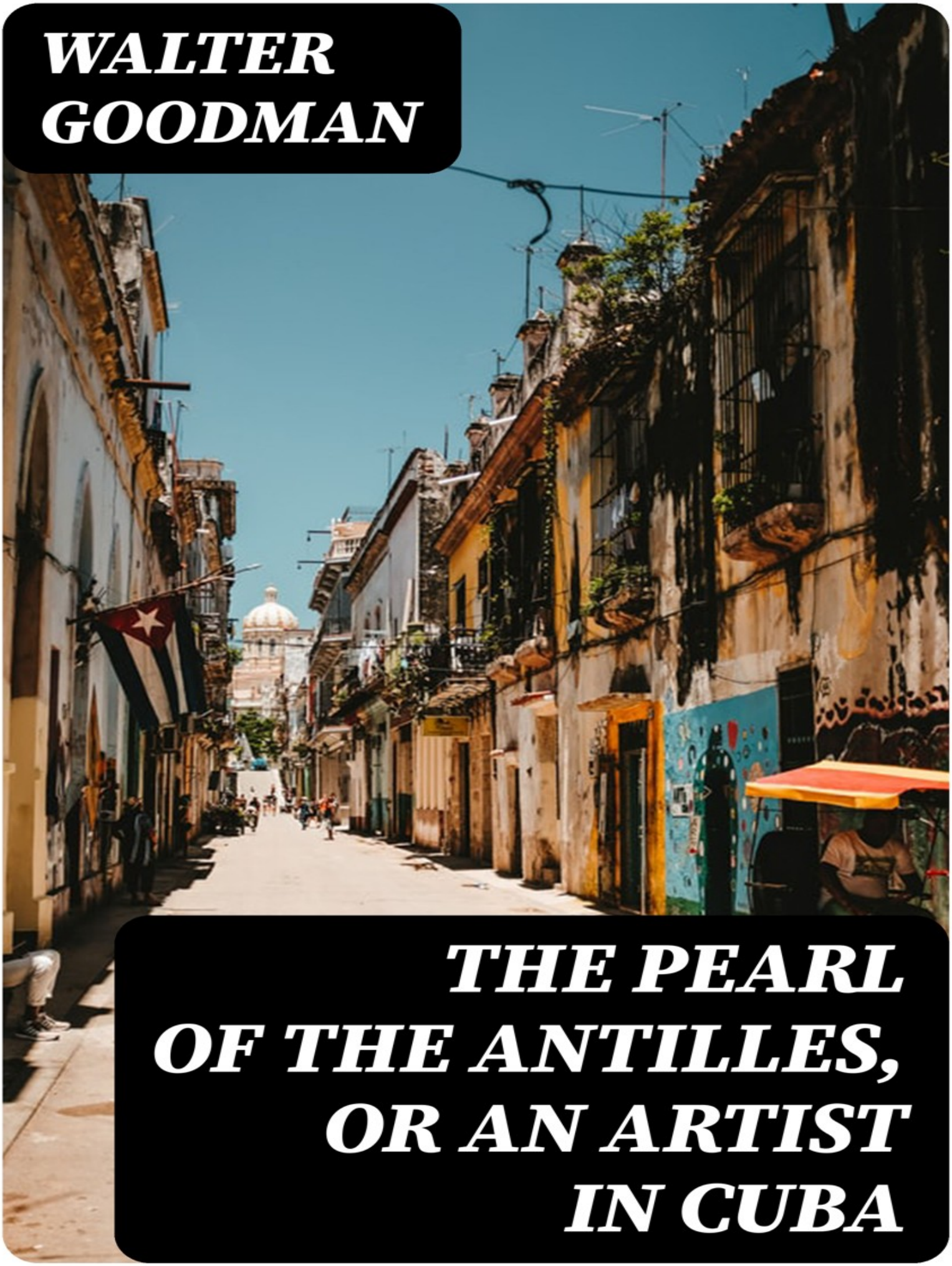

WALTER GOODMAN

THE PEARL OF THE ANTILLES, OR AN ARTIST IN CUBA

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PREFACE.

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Cuba having lately become a prominent object of attention, both to Europe and America, I venture to think that any trustworthy information that can be given respecting it, may prove acceptable to the reader. I approach my task with no great pretensions, but yet with an experience acquired by many years' residence in the Island, and an intimate intercourse with its inhabitants. I arrived there in 1864, when Cuba was enjoying uninterrupted peace and prosperity, and my departure took place in the first year of her adversity. Having thus viewed society in the Island under the most opposite conditions, I have had various and ample opportunities of studying its institutions, its races and its government; and in availing myself of these opportunities I have endeavoured, as far as possible, to avoid those matters which are alike common to life in Spain and in Cuba.

As I write, Cuba is passing through a great crisis in her history. For this reason my experiences may prove more interesting than they might otherwise have done; nor do I think that they will be found less attractive, because it has been my choice to deal with the subject before me from the point of view rather of an artist than of a traveller or a statistician.

Perhaps I may be allowed to add, that the matter contained in these pages will be almost entirely fresh to the reader; for, although I have included a few papers which I have from time to time contributed to *All the Year Round*,

Cassell's Magazine, and *London Society*, I have taken care to introduce them in such a manner as not to break the continuity with which I have endeavoured to connect the various parts of my subject.

In explanation of the title chosen for this volume, I may remark that 'the Pearl of the Antilles' is one of the prettiest in that long series of eulogistic and endearing titles conferred by poets and others on the Island of Cuba, which includes 'the Queen of the Antilles,' 'the Jewel in the Spanish Crown,' 'the Promised Land,' 'the Summer Isle of Eden,' 'the Garden of the West,' and 'the Loyal and Ever-faithful Isle.'

WALTER GOODMAN.

22 LANCASTER ROAD,

WESTBOURNE PARK,

LONDON: 1873.

PEARL OF THE ANTILLES

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CHAPTER I.

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A CUBAN WELCOME.

Our Reception at Santiago de Cuba—Spanish Law—A Commemorative Feast—Cuban Courtesy—Coffee-House Politeness.

My companion and brother-artist, Nicasio Rodriguez y Boldú, is a native of Cuba, and as he has signified his intention to visit his birthplace in the West Indies, we bid 'addio' to fair Florence, where for three years we have dwelt

together and followed our profession, and, embarking in a French steamer at St. Nazaire, we set sail for the Pearl of the Antilles.

Our official reception at Santiago de Cuba is far from cordial. Before we land, the Spanish authorities meet us on board, and, after a careful inspection of our passports, present each of us with what they call a 'permit of disembarcation,' for which we have to pay sixteen reales 'fuertes.' Having, so to speak, purchased 'tickets of admission' to the Spanish colony, and having also deposited our luggage in the 'cloak-room' of the establishment—which in this instance is represented by a custom-house—we naturally expect to be favoured with a 'bill' of tropical performances. No such bill is, however, presented to us; but as a substitute, we obtain full particulars by application, within a month after our arrival, to the chief of police. From this functionary we learn that our 'tickets of admission' are available only for one quarter's sojourn in the island, and that if we desire to remain for a longer period, an official 'season-ticket' must be procured. The authorised programme of the 'Loyal and Ever-faithful Isle' is divided into a great many Acts. One of these acts announces that 'no foreigner is allowed to reside more than three months in the island without procuring first a carta de domicilio (habitation license), which he may obtain by a petition supported by the consul of his nation.' The carta de domicilio will enable the foreigner in question to dwell unmolested in this strangely governed country for a period not exceeding five years; but he may not leave the island,

neither may he remove to another town, without a pass from a Capitan de Partido, a Celador, or some such official.

The chief of police moreover tells us that, conformably with another act or article in his code, the 'applicant' must represent himself as a Catholic; that he must take the oaths of fidelity and vassalage before the governor, and that within the prescribed five years 'a foreigner must be either naturalised, or he must leave the country.'

Yet another act proclaims that during the first five years of his residence, 'the said foreigner may not carry on nor may he possess a shop, a warehouse, or become a captain of a vessel. He may, however, have a share in a company or firm of Spaniards.'

But the strangest mandate of all is that which denies to 'any inhabitant whatsoever' the privilege of moving from one house to another 'without giving notice of such removal to the chief of police!'

Thus much for our welcome by the authorities of Cuba!

The Cubans themselves are, however, more obsequious. Long before we have anchored in the Cuban bay, the news of our arrival has reached the ears of my companion's friends, who hasten to greet us from little canoes with white awnings to ward off the rays of the scorching sun. Having landed, and satisfied the authorities, we are escorted by a number of these friends to our future residence, which we had decided should be an hotel. But my partner's friends will not hear of our lodging at a strange place, and one of their number, who claims close relationship with Nicasio, succeeds in persuading us both to become his guests. He accordingly hails his two-wheeled quitrin, and drives us to

his dwelling. The rest of our friends follow on foot, and are invited by our host, Don Benigno, to partake of the sumptuous banquet which has been prepared in honour of Nicasio's return to his native country. Several ladies are present, and with these in light muslin dresses—the gentlemen in their suits of white drill—the long table with its white covering—the spacious dining-hall with its white-washed walls—and the glare of the sun which pours in from numerous windows and open doors—the scene is enlivening, to say the least of it; while a singular contrast is supplied by the sombre appearance of the slaves who serve round the condiments.

Of course my companion is lionised and made much of on this occasion, and his friend—whom everybody addresses, on account of his nationality, as 'el Caballero Inglés,' is treated with every show of attention. Being fresh from Europe we are both examined and cross-examined upon the questions of news, and to satisfy all demands requires no inconsiderable amount of oratory. Healths are drunk and responded to by some of the company, and Don Benigno's nephew, Tunicú, delivers some appropriate verses of his own composition, which he has dedicated to his kinsman Nicasio.

It is not the custom in this country for the ladies to retire after a meal, and leave their lords to their cups and conversation, but everybody remains seated until black coffee and big Havana cigars are handed, the cloth has been removed, and our host's baby—a girl ten months old attired in nature's vestments—has been placed for general inspection and approval in the centre of the festive board.

When everybody has sufficiently devoured with his or her eyes this kind of human dessert, Don Benigno's lady—Doña Mercedes—proposes to adjourn for music and dancing to the reception-room—an apartment which is little better than a continuation of the dining-hall; the boundary line between the two chambers being defined by a narrow slip of wall.

The musical entertainments begin with a performance on the piano by a sun-burnt young lady attired in a low-necked, short-sleeved dress, who accompanies another young lady who essays a patriotic song commencing:

Cuba, Cuba! mi patria querida,

in which she assures her audience, in Spanish verse, that there is no place like Cuba, and no country more fertile and picturesque than the Pearl of the Antilles. This favourite ditty is called a Melopea, or words without a melody—the words being simply 'spoken,' and closely followed on the piano by lively music.

This song and another having been disposed of, partners are selected and the Danza Criolla—a popular Cuban valse—is for the rest of the afternoon (for it is still broad daylight) performed. The guests then depart; and after a little conversation with Don Benigno and his family, Nicasio and I are conducted by a black domestic to our dormitories. Here we indulge in a siesta, and otherwise refresh ourselves till the hour of dinner.

Those of Nicasio's friends who have been foiled in their attempt to secure us for their guests, console themselves by exhibiting their hospitality in other ways. We are overwhelmed with invitations to pass the temporada, or season, at their estates in the country, and so numerous are

these invitations that, were we to accept them all, two years would scarcely suffice for the fulfilment of our engagements.

During the first weeks of our residence in Santiago, the hospitality which we receive in various ways is sometimes overpowering. Wherever we may wander some unknown friend has anticipated our arrival, and secretly provided for our wants. We turn into a café for refreshments, and when we offer to pay for what we have ordered, the waiter refuses to take our coin, while he assures us that our repast has already been paid for! Subsequently we discover that the proprietors of all the restaurants and cafés in the town have been instructed by some mysterious person or persons not to accept payment from 'Don Nicasio Rodriguez y Boldú and his English companion,' but to 'put it down to the account.' Whenever we visit the theatre, the same pecuniary objections are raised; and upon one occasion, the haberdasher to whom we apply for a dozen shirts à la créole actually refuses to favour us with a bill!

These attentions are, however, short-lived, for my partner, after permitting them to exist for a reasonable length of time, publicly gives out that unless this overpowering hospitality altogether ceases, he and el Caballero Inglés will remove to a less demonstrative town. This warning takes effect, but still the tendency to 'stand treat'—which is a special weakness in Cuba—manifests itself in other ways.

I go into a café where some creoles—utter strangers to me—are grouped around one of the marble tables. If I happen to be accompanied by a lady, every man rises and

salutes us. If alone, I am offered a seat and refreshments; for under no circumstances, and in no locality, does a Cuban eat and drink without first inviting his neighbours to partake of his fare. 'Usted gusta?' (Will you partake of this?) or 'Gusta usted tomar algo?' (Won't you take something?) is a Cuban's grace before meat.

These, attentions are not, however, confined to feeding. They are adapted to everything that a Cuban possesses. If I admire any article or individual belonging to a Cuban—no matter whether the object of my admiration be a watch-guard—a handsome cane—a horse—a gun—a slave, or a pretty child—I am invariably assured that it is mine (Es para usted), or that it is my servant (Un servidor de usted). When I ask a Cuban where he lives, he promptly replies: 'At your house,' in such-and-such a street, number so-and-so; and whenever such an individual favours me with a letter, I always find the document addressed: 'From your house' (Su casa).

In short, I never know what politeness means, nor what extensive West Indian possessions are at my disposal, till I live amidst the luxuries of the Pearl of the Antilles!

CHAPTER II.

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DAILY LIFE IN CUBA.

A Cuban Home—My Bed-Room—A Creole Breakfast—Don Benigno and his Family—A Cuban Matron—Church-going in connection with Shopping—An Evening Tertulia—A Tropical Moon.

Like most of his neighbours, Don Benigno keeps 'open house' in more than one way. The huge street-door of his habitation remains unclosed at all hours of the day and evening, and anyone who pleases may walk in and partake of the Don's hospitality.

Don Benigno's house is constructed after the pattern of the good, old-fashioned Cuban dwellings, with an eye to earthquake, heavy rains, and excessive heat. So careful is a creole to provide against these casualties, that his residence serves less as an abode for comfort than as a place of shelter. It has a single storey, and is roofed with Roman tiles. The walls are of lath and plaster, or mamposteria, as it is called, and the beams which support the roof are visible from the interior as they are in a barn. Some of the apartments are paved with marble, while others are paved with brick. In the centre of the spacious reception-room, or sala, is laid a small square of carpet, like a misplaced hearth-rug, on which stand twelve rocking-chairs, arranged face to face like seats in a railway carriage. They are accompanied by a few footstools and some spittoons. The rooms are not overcrowded with furniture and ornaments, and these scarce commodities stand out in bold relief against the white-washed walls and bare flooring. The chairs and sofas are all cane-backed and cane-bottomed. Tables are not plentiful, and curtains are employed as adornments for some of the doors instead of the windows, which are also devoid of glass. An elegant gas chandelier is suspended from one of the cross-beams of the sloping roof, and a couple of unserviceable console tables, with their

corresponding pier-glasses, complete the decorations of the sala.

No fire-stoves are required in any chamber except the kitchen, and the latter being situated in the patio, or court-yard, at the back of the premises, the residents in a Cuban house are never troubled with any other smoke than that which is generated by tobacco.

As for the dormitories—the one which I occupy might belong to a holy friar. There is an aspect of cell and sanctity about everything in it. The furniture is nothing to speak of, and the bed, which is called a catre, closely resembles a tressled apple-stall with a canvas tray. When not in use, the catre is shut up and whisked away into an obscure corner. When required for sleeping purposes, it is opened, and the bed having been 'made' with a couple of sheets and a pillow, it is planted in a cool place, which often happens to be the centre of the apartment.

The monotonous appearance of the white-washed walls is relieved by coloured lithograph drawings of saints and virgins, and against one of the walls is placed a table decorated like a small altar with a white lace-trimmed cloth upon which stand some gilded candlesticks, vases containing artificial flowers, and a large wooden statuette, gorgeously painted and embellished. This image represents the patron saint, Santiago, beneath whose feet burns night and day a small oil lamp. The object for which this luminary is intended is ignored by me for many days, and meanwhile I use it, when nobody is looking, for the lighting of my cigarettes. My authority for this sacrilegious act is derived from my companion, Nicasio, who is a liberal-minded

Catholic, and as I find he also performs the same ceremony in his own dormitory, my conscience is relieved. Equally mysterious are a couple of dry fonts which have in all respects the appearances of china watch-pockets. I make use of one for the accommodation of my time-piece, until I am informed that only holy water is allowed to repose within its sacred embraces.

In fine weather my slumbers at night are uninterrupted, but when it rains—and in Cuba it never rains but it pours in bucketfuls—my rest is at intervals sorely disturbed. I dream that a thousand belligerent cats are at civil war on the Roman-tiled roof above me, and that for some unknown reason I alone expiate their bloodthirsty crimes, by enduring a horrible penance, which consists in the historical torture of a slow and perpetual stream of liquid which dribbles upon my bare cranium. I awake suddenly to find that my nightmare has not been unfounded. Something damp, proceeding from the sloping roof, drops at regular intervals upon my forehead. By the light of the patron saint who watches over me I perceive that the rain has found an inlet through a gotera in the roof. A gotera is a hole in the tiles, formed during the day by the action of the baking sun upon the mortar, which yields to its cracking influence and leaves an aperture. Rising hurriedly in the dead of night, I remove my catre to a dry corner, and at the same time place a basin beneath the spot from whence the drops of rain issue. Once more I awake under the same moistening influence. A fresh gotera has arisen over my dry place of repose. Again I shift my ground, and use an empty pail for the accommodation of the intrusive element; but fresh goteras

appear wherever I pitch my catre, until, having circumnavigated all the safe coasts of my tempestuous apartment and exhausted every receptacle for water, I take up my bed and deposit it in an adjoining chamber, which happening to be unoccupied and free from goteras, allows my slumbers to remain undisturbed till morning.

Don Benigno's family take what we should call breakfast, but which they term 'tienta pie,' in their respective sleeping chambers. At six A.M. a dark domestic enters my dormitory with a cup of black coffee and a cigarette. Later, this is followed by a larger cup of milk qualified with coffee, or, if I prefer chocolate, the latter in an extraordinary thick form is brought. The beverage is accompanied by a Cuban bun or a milk roll with foreign butter: for as the native cow does not supply the material for that luxury, the butter used in Cuba is all imported in bottles like preserves.

Eleven o'clock is the hour appointed for breakfast. This is a substantial meal and appears to be breakfast, dinner, and supper rolled into one. Every item of food is served as a separate course, of which there are more than fourteen different 'fuentes,' or dishes, on the table. A plate of eggs and sliced bananas fried in butter constitutes the first course. A second course is represented by a dish containing a combination of boiled rice and dried cod-fish, or 'bacalao,' with tomato sauce. 'Serence,' with 'congri,' is a Creole dish composed of Indian corn, rice, and red beans, and forms course number three. Sambumbia, anis, and chimbombó, are native vegetables prepared in a variety of palatable ways. An olla podrida of sweet yams, pumpkins, white beans, bacon, sausage, and cabbage is another favourite

dish; and, lastly, fish, flesh, and fowl in a dozen different guises complete the bill of fare. This sumptuous repast having been washed down with Catalan claret, some West Indian fruits and solid-looking preserves are partaken of, and the indispensable cigar or cigarette and wholesome café noir are handed round.

Breakfast over, the Don's family disperse, each to his or her occupation. The children retire to their schoolroom, where the different masters (for in Cuba there are no 'out-door' governesses) engaged for their instruction arrive at their prescribed hours, give their lessons, and depart. A master is provided for every branch of learning and for teaching every art except that of dancing, this accomplishment being naturally and easily acquired by the graceful little ladies and gentlemen themselves.

Don Benigno retreats, after breakfast, to his office, where he transacts his business affairs, which seem to consist chiefly in lolling in an easy chair with a long cigar between his lips, while he watches his escribano, or clerk, as that functionary makes up accounts and writes letters.

As for the Don's lady, Doña Mercedes, she may be described broadly as a sleeping partner, her department in the firm being literally the sleeping department. After disposing of her housekeeping duties, which are briefly accomplished by handing the black cook a certain sum daily for marketing purposes, the worthy lady passes the rest of the day with a fan in a rocking chair, in which she sways and fans herself cool. Doña Mercedes has a youthful appearance from her neck upwards, but being somewhat corpulent, her figure scarcely corresponds with the attractions of her face.

Being, however, attired in a loose linen gown which falls like a sack, ungirdled and uninterrupted, from her fair shoulders to her remarkably small shoes, the protuberances of her person escape notice, and, with her jet-black hair neatly and tastefully arranged, she may be said to represent an agreeable type of the Cuban matron.

It is often a matter for wonder with me, how Señora Mercedes and her friends contrive to keep their hair in such perfect order. Cuban ladies being gifted by nature with a wealth of hair require no artificial aid; but I am told that their heads being once 'dressed' for the day remain intact till night, a fact which I can easily credit, seeing that no ceole lady assumes either bonnet, hat, or other covering for the head, when she takes her walks abroad.

But Doña Mercedes is not always such a helpless member of society as I have represented her. She is possessed of a warm, generous nature, and this quality often prompts the good lady to perform many useful acts of kindness and charity to those who are in need of her benevolence.

Between one and three in the afternoon, Don Benigno and his family indulge in the wholesome luxury of a warm bath; for, despite the climate, a creole, when in town, rarely immerses his or her body in perfectly cold water. The water intended for bathing purposes is sometimes placed in the centre of the patio, or court-yard, where, under the powerful influence of the sun, it is soon warmed to any reasonable degree of temperature.

Ablutions over, the indispensable siesta is enjoyed by everybody, on catres or in hammocks; for the heat of mid-

day is insupportable, and repose after a bath is considered salutary.

After the siesta, Doña Mercedes and her young daughters, accompanied by her adopted child—a girl of ten—do what the ladies of many other countries do late in the afternoon. They attire themselves fashionably and take a stroll in the Plaza or a drive in the Alameda, which is the Rotten Row of a Cuban town.

Whatever shopping Doña Mercedes contemplates is effected in the cool of the early morning after her devotions at the church, whither she repairs at the hour of six A.M. Church-going is a serious undertaking with the good lady. Firstly, she and her daughters must be becomingly attired, and on this occasion black lace veils are included in their toilettes. Besides prayer-books, rosaries, and fans, the devotees must be provided with small squares of carpet and toy-like chairs of papier maché inlaid with gold and pearl ornaments. These articles of furniture are conveyed to the sacred edifice by some young negress servants, for with the exception of a few wooden benches, a Cuban church offers no relief to the weary flesh.

Having entered the church, Doña Mercedes proceeds to moisten the tips of her ungloved fingers in some holy water from a font, and after duly crossing herself, extends her hand to her daughters, who touch it and thus partake of the blessed liquid. The black attendants then spread the fragments of carpet, place the chairs, and retire to a dark corner of the building. The ceremonies begin. Doña Mercedes and her daughters follow the ecclesiastic in their miniature prayer-books, and alternately kneel and cross

themselves when required to do so; gaze with a devout expression at their favourite saint, and tell their beads; take a mental note of their neighbours' dresses, fan themselves, and exchange nods of recognition with acquaintances—till a little bell from one of the side-chapels tinkles for the final ceremony of elevating the host.

Matins over, the ladies betake themselves to the principal thoroughfares, where the best shops are to be found, and when their purchases have been made they return home, calling on the way at the houses of their friends.

When there is no performance at the theatre or the promenade in the military square, Don Benigno holds a tertulia in his balcony.

A tertulia is a reception, or social gathering, and may be held at any hour of the day; but the best time for a tertulia is the cool of the evening.

The five o'clock dinner being over and digested, Don Benigno sallies forth—cigar in mouth—upon his covered balcony, or coridor, as it is called, which in length and breadth strikingly resembles the platform of a small railway station.

'Traigan las balanzas!' drawls the Don, and in answer to his summons a couple of negroes appear with a number of rocking-chairs, which they place—when the moon is at its brightest—in a shady corner of the verandah. Here we all seat ourselves, and await the arrival of any guest who may 'drop in' for a sociable chat and a cigar.

Don Francisco—the chief doctor of the town—is usually the first to appear. He is followed by Señor Esteban, the

lawyer, Don Magin, the merchant, Don Felipe, the sugar-planter, and one or two young creoles whose avocations are doubtful. As each guest appears, everybody rises and salutes him elaborately. The visitors are all attired for the evening in black alpaca coats, white drill trousers, and waistcoats, patent leather thin-soled boots, and bran new 'bómbas'—a bomba being the slang term for a tall beaver hat.

For some moments the company assembled remain speechless, and no sounds are heard in the silent evening but the swaying of the rocking-chairs and the creaking of the gentlemen's stiffly-starched trousers. Presently someone produces a neat home-made cigarette case, and before selecting a cigar or a cigarette for his own consumption offers it to all the males present, who accept of his generosity. The conversation, in which those who are not already asleep join, now becomes general. The weather, and the state of the coffee and cane crops, are all duly discussed, together with the theatre and the last ball at the Philharmonic. Politics are lightly touched upon, for two of the gentlemen present are Spaniards, and for obvious reasons a Cuban usually avoids all topics which concern the government of his country. Occasionally someone who is well-read in the day's newspaper, essays a mild discussion with somebody else who has not seen the paper for a week; but as Cuban periodicals are under official control, they are not remarkable for their political veracity, and the well-read member of the company usually gets the worst of the argument.

Learning that my companion and I contemplate establishing a studio for the practice of our profession in the town, everybody offers us his advice, and recommends to our notice certain houses suitable for art purposes. Don Esteban, the lawyer, favours us with his legal opinion, reminding us of the law which prohibits a foreigner from setting up in business on his own account; but we assure him of our intention to 'go into partnership,' and that as one of us is a Cuban born, we have no uneasiness.

It is considered fatal to sit under the rays of a Cuban moon, so when that luminary is visible to any occupant of the balcony, his rocking-chair is immediately shifted into a shadier part. But, in doing so, extreme care is taken lest the occupant should reseat himself with his back inclined in the least manner towards his neighbour, as a Cuban would rather suffer any personal inconvenience than be discovered in this impolite posture.

No refreshment of any kind is offered by our host during the tertulia, but if one of the company feels thirsty he calls for a glass of iced water, which is accordingly brought to him by a slave, who, if necessary, qualifies the harmless beverage with 'panales,' which is a kind of cake prepared with white sugar.

Other tertulias are being held at neighbouring houses. Those who have no balconies to boast of, place their rocking-chairs in the passage or hall of their dwelling, while others, who have neither the one accommodation nor the other, deposit their receptacles for the weary on the pavement in the street. The black domestics form a tertulia on the door-steps or squat together in dark unoccupied

parts of the corridors. Their jabber is incessant and occasionally requires a gentle reminder. Sometimes one of their company essays a wild melody, accompanying his song on a primitive instrument of his own manufacture.

Throughout the evening the streets are utterly deserted, and as, moreover, they are badly illuminated with gas, the aspect on a dark night is not cheerful. But on a bright, moonlit night, such as that to which I have referred, artificial lighting is altogether dispensed with. The moon in the tropics is, for astronomical reasons, brighter than it is elsewhere; but as regards Cuba, another reason might be derived from the fact that, metaphorically speaking, a slave country and a badly governed one into the bargain, is about the darkest spot in the habitable globe. At least, in Cuba the lamp of Heaven shines with increased brilliancy, illuminating alike Spaniard, Cuban, freedman, and bondsman!

CHAPTER III.

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ART-PATRONAGE IN CUBA.

Our Studio—Our Critics—Our Patrons—Still-Life.

Assisted by Don Benigno's nephew Tunicú, Nicasio and I in time meet with a residence suitable for art purposes.

Our habitation consists of six rooms on a single floor, with a wide balcony in front, and a spacious patio, or court-yard, at the back. We have no furniture worth mentioning; furniture in Cuba being represented by a few cane or leather-bottomed chairs, some spittoons, and a small square of carpet. But our walls are well hung with works of art in various stages of progress, which, in a great measure,

compensate for the otherwise barren appearance of our apartments. Our studio is a spacious chamber on a level with the street which it overlooks. The windows occupy more than half of the wall space, are guiltless of glass, and are protected by iron bars. The accessories of our strange calling lend an interest to our domestic arrangements, and form a kind of free entertainment for the vulgar. To insure privacy, we have sometimes curtained the lower half of our enormous windows; but this contrivance has always proved ineffectual, for in the midst of our labour, the space above the curtains has been gradually eclipsed by the appearance of certain playful blacks who have clambered to the heights by means of the accommodating rails. Gentlemen of colour have little respect for the polite arts; they look upon our sanctum as a sort of permanent peep-show, and upon us as a superior order of photographers. Primed with these delusions our Spanish Sambo comes for his carte-de-visite at all hours of the sunny day, persuaded that we undertake black physiognomies at four dollars a dozen; and when we assure him that ours is the legitimate colouring business, and that we have no connexion with Señor Collodión up the street, our swarthy patron produces a ready-made black and white miniature of himself, and commissions us to colour it in our best manner.

The press of Santiago dubs us 'followers of the divine art of Apelles,' and an inspection of our works of art is thus described in one of the local papers:

'We have lately visited those industrious gentlemen Don Nicasio Rodriguez y Boldú and El Caballero Inglés Don Gualterio who, as the public are aware, have established a

studio in Cuba for the practice of the divine art of Raphael and Michael Angelo. It is the duty of every art-loving person to inspect all temples of the beautiful whether they be represented by the luxurious palaces of the great or the humblest cottages on earth. Knowledge reveals itself in the dullest as well as the brightest localities, for true genius can abide anywhere.

'He who, like ourselves, has frequently traversed the Calle de Santa Rosa, must have observed that in that street stands a priceless casket, which being open leads to the studio of the two distinguished followers of the divine art of Apelles to whom we have referred.'

After continuing to indulge in this poetical strain for another paragraph or two, the enthusiastic writer is recalled to his duties of art-showman, and proceeds to describe in glowing colours all that is contained in the 'priceless casket,' open for his inspection. He lingers lovingly over a large copy of Titian's 'Venus' which, together with other pictures and unfinished sketches, we had brought with us from Italy. He is perfectly enraptured with the charms of the painted goddess, from whom he can scarcely tear himself away even on paper, and he concludes with the remark that, 'after contemplating this life-like representation of nature, the spectator is disposed to touch the canvas to convince himself that what he beholds is merely a painted shadow of the reality!'

Sketches and portraits next occupy his attention; 'and if,' he adds, 'the visitor's curiosity is not satisfied with the representations of men and women, he can relieve his vision by regarding beasts and birds, which, although only

depicted upon canvas, appear to be endowed with animation!'

In spite, however, of these and other published tributes to our genius, we find that high art, at least, does not pay in our part of the tropics. Regardless of posterity, therefore, we abandon the sublime, and offer our art services for anything that may present itself. A bonâ fide painter is a rarity in the town I am describing, so Nicasio and I are comparatively alone in the fine art field. Our patrons are numerous, but we are expected by them to be as versatile as the 'general utility' of theatrical life.

Nicasio finds a lucrative post vacant at the public 'Academy of Arts'—an institution supported by the municipality of the town. There is a great dearth of 'professors of drawing,' owing to the sudden resignation of a gentleman who previous to our arrival had been the sole representative of 'the divine art of Apelles.' The academy is a dreary apology for a school of art. The accommodation is scanty, and the 'models' provided for the scholars or 'discipulos,' as they are grandly styled, consist wholly of bad lithographic drawings. The post of professor, however, yields a fair monthly stipend, and it being offered to and accepted by my companion, contributes no inconsiderable item towards our united income.

We are overwhelmed with portrait work, but most of it is connected with defunct people, for we cannot induce our patrons to believe that a living person is a fit subject for our brush. And so it often happens that we are summoned from our homes, doctor-like, at all hours of the night, to hasten to the house of a moribund, for the purpose of making such

notes as shall afterwards serve as guides for a replica of the late lamented in his habit as he lived.

One of our first applicants for this kind of patronage is Don Magin, the merchant, whose acquaintance we have made at Don Benigno's tertulia. The Don stops me in the street one day, and with a disturbed countenance tells me that his only child—a girl of three—has been lately buried. Will I, or my partner, be so good as to restore her to life on canvas? I agree to undertake the work if Don Magin will provide me with a guide in the shape of a photograph.

'I am sorry to inform you,' says the Don, 'that my poor child never sat for her photograph.'

'Then,' I remark, 'I will be satisfied with a slight but faithful sketch, or even a coloured miniature.'

'I regret that I cannot supply you with any representation of my departed daughter,' replies Don Magin.

'How then can you expect to possess a portrait of her?' I enquire.

'Easily enough,' he answers. 'It is true that I have no actual likeness of the child; but equally good guides are at your disposal. I can provide you with the little dress, the little hat, the little shoes and socks which she was accustomed to wear. I have also taken the measure of her height, and the size round her pretty waist. I can furnish you with minute particulars respecting the colour of her complexion, hair and eyes, and I will show you a lovely child who resembles my own in many ways. Besides this, my Engracia was considered to bear a strong likeness to her father. Make her appear so also in the painting; introduce the accessories which I have mentioned; take a notion or

two from the girl that I will send, and I am convinced that the result will be satisfactory to both of us.'

In vain do I endeavour to show the impossibility of such an achievement; the merchant will not hear of refusal, and as an inducement for me to make only a trial, he offers me a large price, promising to double the amount if I succeed to his liking.

It is a source of infinite consolation to the distressed old gentleman—who by the way is very grey and wrinkled—when I finally agree to make a trial; but I warn him that his anticipations about the result will never be realised.

Sanguine and happy, my strange patron departs, and in due course I receive the various articles he had specified. The pretty child serves well enough as a model for the proportions of the figure, and attired in the garb of her late lamented playmate, she enables me to devote every attention to the detail. I am also able to crown the little pink dress with an infantile face, whose hair, eyes, and complexion I colour according to instructions; and with the introduction of a landscape background and with a stray flower or two arranged in the foreground, the sum total is a pretty picture which, on that account, leaves at least a 'balance in my favour!'

The portrait (?) having been placed in its gilded frame, my patron is invited to inspect it.

For many long moments Don Magin contemplates the work without uttering a word. His countenance, which I watch with an anxious eye—as yet expresses neither approval nor the reverse.

Does this portrait on my easel remind the bereaved parent of his lost offspring?

It does! yes; there faithfully depicted are the very dress, the very little hat, and the still smaller shoes which she was wont to wear in life! The figure, complexion, colour of eyes and hair, are all hers to a shade. In short, a resemblance to his child gradually developes itself before the old gentleman's vision, till at last clasping both my hands, and with tears in his eyes, he declares that I have succeeded far beyond his best expectations.

In this instance everything terminates like the last scene in the drama, where the aged father recognises his long lost child. But work of this nature does not always end so satisfactorily.

Happily, portraiture is not our only resource. We hold important professorships in colleges, schools, and ladies' academies, where we impart every accomplishment in which drawing-paper and pencils are used, including the art of caligraphy, missal-painting, and designing for fancy needlework.

Whenever a strolling company of Spanish players encamp for the season at the theatre, our services are required as the company's special scenic artists. The demand for scenery at the Teatro Real Cuba is, however, small; a divergence from its standard repertoire being considered as next to an infringement on public rights; so our labours rarely extend beyond an occasional property, or 'set' in the shape of a painted 'ancestor,' a practicable piece of furniture, or a bit of bank for introduction into the elegant saloon, the cottage interior, or the wood scene. Once only