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ECONOMIC SITUATION IN CUBA.

We have been asked to publish the following extract of a letter by Mr. A. J. Thompson, of Havana, to the "Louisiana Planter," which carries moral and tells a good tale.

Last season I saw a young negro who had just received \$50 as a cane cutter for work of probably two weeks. He wore patent leather shoes, white flannel trousers, a straw hat with a silk band and a gold ring and stick pin. With his \$50. he bought at the plantation store ten silk ties at \$3 each and two bottles of perfume at \$10 a bottle.

Another instance of some of the past economic errors of Cuba came to my attention during one of my long horseback rides through the interior.

About noon one day we came to a little hut with an earthen floor. The occupants were a man of about 50 and his wife four children.

My companion and myself asked for a little coffee, intending to proceed on our journey afterward; but in the truly delightful manner of the Cuban guajiro (farmer) he insisted on our dismounting and entering his hut. The family had just had their almuerzo (noon meal) and on the rough nailed boards constituting the dining table were a package of cut sugar from Brooklyn, two empty cans of the finest boneless French sardines on olive oil, empty cans of breast of chicken, three empty cans of California giant asparagus, two glass jars of costly American bacon and a tin of golden rusks. These things are expensive enough in any big city in the United States, but to find them in the in-

terior of the island of Cuba means that they cost the consumer about three times the original retail price.

After coffee the farmer said he would accompany us to the town, about eight miles away, and begged a minute or two delay while he chased round and caught a pig. He tied its legs with heavy cord (made in the United States) lifted it on his saddle (made in the United States) and so joined us for the journey to the town store.

This man carried the pig to the store and sold it for cash, and with this cash in the same store, he loaded his saddle bags with tins of sausages made in Chicago, tins of lard, rice, more bacon in glass jars, ink fish in cans, pate e fois gras, French peas and preserved California fruits.

This is only one instance of the economic errors of the people and for which they are now paying the piper. But this man still has his wonderful land and still grows his rich cane. All he asks for now is the money to pay his laborers so as to harvest the cane and keep the fields clean of weeds.

During the recent high prices of sugar conditions in Havana reflected the opulence of sugar farmers. They poured into the city, where some of them walked on sidewalk for the first time in their lives. Their pockets were full of gold and their heads devoid of any sane methods of handling it.

They bought high-priced American and foreign automobiles and paid liveried chauffeurs their own price to drive them—with gasoline at 54 cents a gallon.

A farmer entered the largest diamond stores in Havana. He was wearing the typical Panama hat of the country folks the rest of his custom was a blue shirt with pockets like a coat and with the tails outside his trousers and a stiff starched pair of crude linen trousers creased down the sides and a pair of screaming new yellow shoes which squeaked at every step of his stockingless feet. He said to the attendant: "I have no jewelry of any kind, and I want to get fixed up."

He selected a jewelled gold watch, a pearl and platinum chain, two handsome Oriental sapphire and diamond rings, a beautiful pearl and diamond scarf pin and a gold and diamond cigarette case.

"Well Chico, how much is all this?" The clerk figured and replied "\$10,500."

The farmer looked at his purchase again and said "Well all right but put

in about 4,500 more and then I'll be all right."

That farmer is back now on the farm. He is eating rice and beans and working eighteen hours a day. His lands are producing the same old 1,000 tons of cane a caballeria and instead of paying his cane cutters \$7.50 to \$10 a day he is promising them \$1 a day and their food.

The farmer can keep this up as long as he has the rice and beans but our bankers and politicians must see that his supplies do not stop, otherwise his fields will grow full of weeds and instead of producing 1,000 tons of cane a caballeria of land he will be producing only 100 tons and that will soon reflect itself in Cuba's ability to produce sugar at low prices.

If this is neglected \$600,000,000 of American capital now invested in the sugar industry in Cuba will be partially or totally lost *Barbados Standard*.

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