Cuba and Porto Rico, with the Other Islands of the West Indies, Their Topography, Climate, Flora, Products, Industries, Cities, People, Political Conditions, etc by Robert T. Hill

Review by: H. G.


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Book Notices.

references throughout the book are ample, modern and very well selected.

The introductory chapters, devoted to the origin and development of land forms, and treating of the work of the various constructive agencies, have nearly all been somewhat amplified and brought up to date. The greatest differences between the old and the new are found in the chapters devoted to what may be called Regional Geomorphology. In no part is the improvement and enrichment more noticeable than in the two chapters devoted to North America. The arrangement and treatment is here very new and satisfactory. We find a very adequate and helpful analysis of the features of North America, and particularly the United States, that has been made with the most modern results of American geographers in hand. The text here is helped by a number of well chosen plates, that are of service to an American as well as to a European reader. With Suess's La Face de la Terre as a collateral help, the student of comparative geomorphology has in this book a very ready source of reference. The more than 100 pages added to the first edition are a welcome and satisfactory addendum that make the book much more serviceable.

Perhaps the most pleasing feature to note is that while in America, the birthplace of so much that has had an important influence on the geographic thought of the world in the last few years, we are still without a manual in geomorphology, our French colleagues have not only produced a manual of great value, but have been obliged to have a reissue. We commend the spirit and work of our friends across the water, particularly this latest evidence of geographic progress.

R. E. D.

Cuba and Porto Rico, with the other Islands of the West Indies, their Topography, Climate, Flora, Products, Industries, Cities, People, Political Conditions, etc. By Robert T. Hill, of the U. S. Geological Survey. New York, The Century Co., 1898. 8vo, pp. 28 + 408, with index. 8t illustrations.

This book is, as the title indicates, a geographic story of the West India Islands. It opens with a broad outline of the geography and oceanography of the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea, the American Mediterranean, as Mr. Hill aptly characterizes it, with its shores and islands. Taking up each of the larger islands in turn, he describes at length its coast, relief, rivers, valleys and plains, its climate and life, its population, government, industries and resources, the social condition of the people and its cities. To Cuba are devoted, in this way, 112 pages, to Porto Rico 40 pages,
to Jamaica 50 pages, and to Haiti 60 pages. The Lesser Antilles and the other smaller groups are of necessity treated more briefly. The work ends with chapters on "Geologic Features," "Race Problems," and the "Future of the West Indies."

Mr. Hill is a geographer, in the broadest and best sense. He has travelled extensively during the past 5 years in the region here described, studying its geology and geography, and the social and economic conditions of its inhabitants. As a result, we have in this book a masterly description of our new possessions and their neighbors, a live description born of the keen, sympathetic interest with which he has so recently studied them.

Not the least interesting part of the story is the great diversity of races found in these islands; the Spaniards, Cubans and blacks of Cuba, the mulattoes of San Domingo and the French-speaking negroes of Haiti, the blacks of Jamaica, with a slight sprinkling of English, and so on. The absence of intercommunication among these islands has led to curious phases of development or non-development of their peoples.

Regarding the Cubans Mr. Hill is optimistic, and many will not agree with him that the Cuban is of superior clay to his father, the Spaniard.

We regret to note the misspelling* of the name Puerto Rico in the title and throughout the book.

The dress of the book is pleasing; the print is excellent and the illustrations, half tones, are beyond criticism. H. G.

* Porto Rico, it seems proper to say, is the true English name for the island of Puerto Rico. It holds its ground by the same right as Spain, Saragossa, Brittany, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Vienna and thousands of other names. The U. S. Board on Geographic Names, constituted in 1890, has made the form Puerto Rico obligatory in Government publications, and the changed relation of the island to the United States will give some extension to the use of this official spelling; but the right English name will remain, and the people of this country, spell as they may, will continue to pronounce Porto Rico.

Mr. Hill's work is that of a right-minded and conscientious man, making a true report of what he has seen and studied. His good faith and modesty are evident, and the reader hesitates to hold him responsible for the maltreatment of words and names. Such forms as Plaza des Armas (p. 64), Cape Maici (p. 132), la virazon (p. 52), might seem to be mere slips; but Tazon (pp. 65, 71) and El Junki (p. 133) disturb the mind with doubt. If any name is well known in Cuba it is that of Tacon, and the cedilla is as foreign to modern Spanish as to English. Does any one write Andrew Jackson?

The name of the flat-topped hill near Baracoa is El Yunque (the anvil). To spell it El Junki is to make an impossible Spanish word.

In the second edition, which must be called for, these faults should be corrected.

—EDITOR BULLETIN.