

LIFE IN THE SPOTLESS TOWN OF WILLEMSTAD

Truly Dutch in All But Blood and Language—From It Little Old New York Was Once Ruled—Why Men Starve and Talk of War.

By FREDERIC J. HASKIN.

(Copyright, 1908, by Frederic J. Haskin.) Washington, Nov. 7.—"Spotless Town," exclaims the American traveler who beholds for the first time the capital city of the Dutch West Indies. Like a bit of Holland transplanted to the tropic seas, Willemstad expresses its loyalty to the Netherlands in the spotlessness of its houses, in the redness of its tiles, in the cleanliness of its cobblestones and in the length of its burghers' pipes. Most of its Dutchmen are black as to face and kinky as to hair, but they are Dutchmen just the same.

Willemstad is the home of 30,000 of the 40,000 people who live on the island of Curacao. Here centers the quarrel about the trans-shipment issue which threatens to cause war between Holland and Venezuela. Here every Venezuelan revolutionary leader, at one time or another, has found asylum. Simon Bolivar, the first, lived here in exile. Cipriano Castro, the last, lived here while organizing his scheme to take possession of Caracas.

Castro's decree prohibiting trans-shipment of cargoes at Willemstad, and the consequent cessation of all commercial relations between Curacao and Venezuelan ports, has brought the people here to the verge of absolute starvation. The Dutch government is expending a thousand dollars a day to feed the destitute. If the Dutch by diplomacy or war cannot bring about a revocation of that decree, there will be nothing left for the government to do but send ships to transport these people to Surinam, Holland's other possession in South America. Curacao is a barren island, it has no water, it has no rain, it has no products. It exists merely as a sort of international freight junction.

Looks Good, Just the Same.
Withstanding its present poverty, Willemstad is a delight to the eye. It is built on both sides of the narrow entrance to the harbor of Santa Anna. This entrance, shaped like the neck of a bottle, is but 500 feet wide. The houses are close down to the water's edge on both sides, and neatly built walls make the roadway seem like an artificially constructed canal. This neck suddenly opens into the lagoon, a deep body of water three miles long and nearly as wide. In it the whole of Admiral Sperry's fleet might lie at anchor, and not one of the ships could be seen from the shore, only a mile distant. Admiral Cervera's fleet hid there during the early days of the Spanish-American war. Just now there are three Dutch men of war in the lagoon, but they are entirely out of sight of the narrow neck of the bottle.

The narrow neck of the bottle is crossed by a pontoon bridge, the inspiration of an American engineer who objected to chartering flat-bottomed Dutch gondolas every time he wanted to cross the street. The bridge is built on a number of piles driven into the bottom of the float has a gasoline engine in it. When a ship knocks at the door of Willemstad for admission to the port, the gasoline engine is started and the whole bridge is swung around until it lies flush against the seawall at one side of the entrance. The ship passes through the lagoon, the gasoline bridge piercing chugs chugs its way through the water, and the pedestrians stroll over, dry shod.

Ruled New York From Curacao.
On each side of the narrow entrance, and at the corner of the sea, is a fort. High above the city on a hill is another fort, which overlooks both the entrance to the harbor and the deep lagoon. These forts are ancient and obsolete, although they have a few modern guns. Fort Amsterdam and Fort William are over two centuries old. Fort Nassau boasts of the antiquity of over 800 years. The new wireless telegraph station and the semaphore signaling apparatus are the only things to convince one that he has not waked up in the days of the pirates of the Spanish Main. These forts were built to protect Willemstad against the depredations of pirates and of the pirate allies—the kingdoms of Spain and England.

It is hard to realize that New York was once an outlying appanage of Curacao and that Manhattan island was once governed by a Dutch governor who lived in this old Fort Nassau. It is interesting to know that it was in defending this city against the British that Peter Stuyvesant, now famous of the Dutch governors of New Amsterdam, lost his life. One is convinced that none of the proud Knickerbocker families of modern Gotham need be ashamed of this ancient seat of their ancestors.

Where Seat Still Counts.

The walls of Fort Amsterdam once included all there was of the city and was not healthy to live outside of fort walls in the West Indies when Sir

Henry Morgan was flying the Jolly Roger. But the town grew so rapidly that there wasn't room inside the walls, so the streets were made narrower and narrower. Some of these are only three feet wide and the upper stories of the houses often touch.

Inside the fort, as it has been reconstructed and made smaller, is the old Protestant church. The present edifice was erected in 1729 and is still as good as new. To this church belong all the old Dutch families of pure blood. The negroes and the Caribs and the "mixed-bloods" are all Catholics. The distinction is so sharp that the oldest inhabitant of the pure Dutch colony was pointed out to the oldest Protestant in the town. There are about 1,000 Hebrews, most of them descendants of those driven from Spain to find refuge in Holland during the days of the stadtholders. They have an orthodox synagogue and a reformed temple. The Catholics have a half dozen beautiful churches.

A Most Wonderful Language.
Oddest and quaintest of all the odd and quaint things of this old town is the language. Everybody speaks "papiamentu," which is a language peculiar to Curacao. It is built upon a foundation of good Holland Dutch, and the superstructure is of concrete made by mixing Spanish, English, French, Portuguese and the dialects of the valley of the Congo. No mortal man but one born in Curacao can speak it—almost everybody understands a little of it, and everyone who speaks it can carry on a fairly good conversation in any one of the dozen languages of the world. It is a great convenience for the visitor, because he may speak to anyone in his own tongue, and he will be understood. The people of Willemstad are polyglots. They have no need for Esperanto.

Once Famous for Boons.
Curacao's chief claim to fame has been the delicious liqueur which bears the name of the island. Curacao was not always barren. Formerly there were a great many orange trees of a peculiar variety, and from the skin of these oranges was manufactured the liqueur. But there was some unexplained change in the meteorological conditions in this part of the world, and the rain ceased to fall upon the island. The orange trees died, and the business of making the liqueur was transferred to other islands. The culture was practically killed, and now there are only a few small irrigated gardens at the edge of the sea. There is no fresh water on the island, and every drop that is used must be brought in schooners from some other West Indian island or from Venezuela.

Forced to win his living from the sea, every man in Curacao is a sailor. Everybody on the street talks ships. In the lagoon and along the sides of the neck of water which divides the town, scores of idle schooners. They are idle because President Castro of Venezuela has refused to permit them to sail. Every one of them were formerly engaged in legitimate trade, and some were smugglers. But just or unjust, they are idle now.

On the streets the men who used to man these schooners are talking about war. They are hungry and their children are being fed by a charitable government. Side by side with these sailing forces to stay in port, walk the Venezuelan exiles. They are the men who cannot go back to their own country until Castro is deposed or dead. They, too, talk of war.

Out in the lagoon are anchored three Dutch men-of-war—the Jacob van Heemskerck, the Eireland and the Gelderland. The people of Willemstad look to these warships as their only hope. If their guns do not reduce Castro's pride, if their power is not sufficient to bring succor, no hope is left. That is why the voice of Curacao is for war.

Aside from the warlike talks and the sheen of the battleship guns in the harbor, Willemstad is as mild and docile as if it were the capital of the kingdom of peace. Naked brown babies roll in the narrow streets, laughing at the yokes of men and the quarrels of nations. Young girls in gay kerchiefs and bright gowns stroll along the waterfront, ready to smash the heart of a sailor jack when he comes in from the sea in his ship. White-clothed men sit in the windows of the club house, smoking long pipes and watching the sunlight dance on the water. The people are clean, the houses are clean, the streets are clean. It is the charming spotless town of Willemstad. One cannot but feel that his heart is with these people in their quarrel with Venezuela. For it is a matter of life and death with them. Since Castro has his pomp and his millions and his power, why should he put a blight on this old Curacao? Why not live and let live?

SAYS GOMPERS LABOR'S CHOICE

Walter McArthur Assumes to Speak for Coast Workers—Denver Fight.

(United Press Leased Wire.) San Francisco, Nov. 7.—"Samuel Gompers will be elected unanimously to the presidency of the American Federation of Labor." This statement was made today by Walter McArthur, editor of the Pacific Coast Seaman's Journal and one of the most influential labor leaders in the west.

"The Pacific coast will send a solid delegation to the Denver convention in favor of Gompers," declared McArthur. "This talk about Gompers being deposed and ousted from the presidency of the federation is all bosh. The laboring men are more than ever enthusiastic for him."

McArthur stated here today that Andrew Furuseth, manager of the Sailors' union of the Pacific, one of the largest labor unions in the world, would be a candidate to succeed Gompers. Furuseth is not in the city, but McArthur said he could say positively that Furuseth would not be a candidate.

Furuseth has always been a supporter of Gompers, and he would continue to support Gompers until the last gun was fired.

Chicago, Nov. 7.—President Samuel Gompers, Secretary Morrison and John Mitchell, with 200 delegates, departed on a special train for Denver today to attend the convention of the American Federation of Labor, which begins Monday. Gompers declared that he did not know what the convention would do regarding the formation of an independent labor party. He declined to discuss the possibilities of his being elected.

Denver, Nov. 7.—Delegates arriving for the annual convention of the American Federation of Labor, which will meet next Monday, today refused to discuss their attitude on the threatened move to depose Samuel Gompers from the presidency of the organization. Year after year the attempt to depose Gompers has been made, and as regularly defeated. This year, however, it is rumored, a stronger feeling has arisen against him on account of his recent action in openly supporting Bryan and attempting to throw the organization officially in the support of the Democratic candidate. Although many measures of vital interest to the laboring men will be considered, it is predicted that political matters will occupy a great deal of the delegates.

The federation is expected to take a decided and definite stand on legislation affecting labor, particularly the treatment of labor in the courts.

NEW JUDGES ON SUPREME BENCH

Four May Be Named by Taft—Fuller Six Years Past Retirement Age.

(Special Dispatch to The Journal.) Washington, Nov. 7.—Associate Justice Rufus W. Peckham reached his seventieth year today, and consequently adds another to the list of members of the supreme court who are eligible to retirement. It is a pretty general rule among the members of the court to take advantage of the law which permits them to retire with full pay when they have reached the age of 70, though in the case of a few members who have been blessed with robust health they have waived the rule and have continued to grace the wool sack for several years after they have reached the age of earned retirement. At other times the exigencies of politics have caused them to hold on or retire before the usual time. Chief Justice Peckham, who is 70, may be filled with men of their own party.

Four Eligible to Retire.
Now that the complexion of the national administration has been settled for four years to come, it would not be surprising if there should be some changes in the personnel of the supreme tribunal before many months have elapsed. Chief Justice Peckham, who is 70, John M. Harlan, associate justice, who is only three months the junior of the chief justice, David J. Brewer, associate justice, who will be 71 next June, and Justice Peckham, who was 70 years old today.

Taft May Name Them All.
President Roosevelt is not likely to have an opportunity to name a member of the supreme court, but his successor, who will take office in March, will in all probability have the naming of at least four members of the court to take the place of those now eligible to retire. Chief Justice Peckham, who is given nearly six years more to the arduous task of weighing every matter coming before the court, would have had to give. He is a hale and hearty, well-preserved old man, and bears his 70 years as if they were 60. Through for the time he is chief executive, Mr. Taft is compelled by precedent and good taste to keep out of politics, he is yet a staunch Democrat, and among his friends it is an open secret that he has held on to his high position during the past year because he hopes that President Roosevelt might be succeeded by a Democrat and that as a consequence he would be able to return to the wool sack. Now that the next president is known, there is nothing to prevent the chief justice from retiring whenever he so desires.

Harlan and Brewer Republicans.
Next to Chief Justice Peckham in point of years comes Harlan. He is a man of large physique, and seemingly as full of health as the best of men. But he has reached an age where most men seek rest from active affairs, and his retirement before long is expected. He has been an exceedingly active career. He comes from Virginia, his Kentucky, his ancestors were Virginians. He is a Republican, and in 1876 he was the Republican candidate for governor of Kentucky. He has been an associate justice of the supreme court since 1877. The associate justice David J. Brewer became eligible for retirement last year, having been born in Asa Minor in 1837. Justice David J. Brewer was a missionary to Turkey. Whether he intends to avail himself of the privilege to retire in the near future is not known. He appears to be a man of excellent health. In politics he is a Republican.

Peckham Is a Democrat.
It is believed that Justice Peckham will probably avail himself of the opportunity to retire. During the past few years his health has not been of the best, and in one year ago it was rumored that he was likely to quit the bench. He took his seat in 1905, succeeding the late Howell E. Jackson of Tennessee. He is a Democrat but was never very active in politics. At the time of his appointment by President Cleveland he was a justice of the supreme court of appeals of New York. He is a native of Albany and had served as district attorney and corporation counsel of that city before he became a judge. He is highly esteemed by his associates on the supreme bench, as well as by all others who know him.

Countess Can Go Ballooning
Los Angeles, Nov. 7.—Countess Olga Ihl, the beautiful young German woman who came to Los Angeles a few days ago from her castle in the mountains of Mexico, is today considering an invitation to accompany Horace Wild, pilot of the balloon United States, on the transcontinental race which starts from this city November 15.

Learning that the countess came to California seeking adventure after her quiet life in the southern mountains, Dick Ferris, manager of the contest, suggested that Pilot Wild invite her to enter the race in his balloon. Accepting the suggestion, Wild last night wrote a letter to the countess, offering to carry her in his balloon as far as her home in Mexico, and there make a special landing if she did not desire to complete the journey.

FRANCE AND GERMANY QUARRELING AGAIN
(United Press Leased Wire.) London, Nov. 7.—It is reported that France and Germany have again engaged in a violent disagreement over the Casa Blanca negotiations and it is asserted that the new trouble has resulted from the action of the Kaiser, who is said to have insisted in the dispute. The conference between Ambassador Cambon, representing France, and Secretary von Schoen, representing Germany, is said to have been practically broken off.

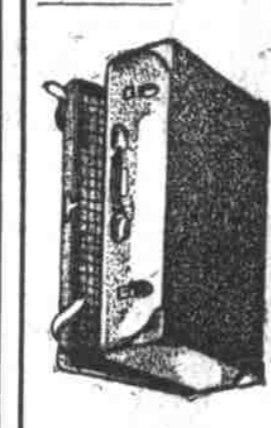
After virtually accepting the French form of declaration, von Schoen is reported to have insisted on the inclusion of two additional paragraphs. The first paragraph was an expression of regret on the part of France that her soldiers had interfered with the prerogatives of the German consulate. The other concerned the French officials at Casa Blanca.

The request was summarily refused by Ambassador Cambon, who stated that the proposal was distasteful to the French government. He has been informed of the changed attitude of Germany. It is believed the Kaiser suggested that Germany demand the additional paragraphs.

After the French ambassador had made known his disapproval of von Schoen's proposal, the German diplomat proposed that the French and German notes be united. Cambon declined to consider the proposition.

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