



# Cuba's New Mining District

*The Story of a Great Undertaking  
and About the Man Behind It.*

By JOHN VAVASOUR NOEL

THE Spanish conquerors of the sixteenth century who forced their way into the wilderness of the Western Hemisphere cared little for the agricultural opportunities offered in the New World. Mineral wealth, that which lay beneath the rich surface soil, alone appealed to them; to find gold, "great heaps of gold," and incidentally to convert, or failing, to kill off the natives, seemed to form the substance of their dreams, the basis of their ambitions.

The aborigines of Cuba, the Siboneys, wore gold ornaments, and occasionally exhibited small nuggets, but the source of the latter was never revealed to the Spaniards of that day.

Owing to the fact that nearly all of the mountains are covered with forest of hardwoods, below which lies a comparatively deep carpet of humus and rich soil, these early prospectors for gold and other mineral wealth found it difficult to discover anything worth while; all was covered up with the rich tropical vegetation of the West Indies, and Cuba from the viewpoint of the gold seeker, was regarded as a failure.

Copper was found in a few isolated spots, notably "El Cobre," a little west of the harbor of Santiago de Cuba, and many years afterwards stray boulders and small outcroppings of the same metal were encountered in the mountains of the Province of Pinar del Rio, but the veins were illusive, and the Siboneys preferred death to labor in the mines, or listening to the precepts of Christianity, as presented by the early conquerors, hence it was that by the middle of the sixteenth century most of the natives had succumbed, and their conquerors, having little fondness for work, gave the island up in despair as a field for gold discoveries. Not until the early part of the nineteenth century did the presence of those enormous deposits of iron ore found throughout the mountain districts of Santiago Province present themselves to the outside world as a profitable commercial proposition.

Nearly all of the great iron deposits there lie within a few feet of the surface, and on the western slopes of the Sierra Maestra it is necessary only to scrape the dirt from the side of the hills, take out the ore and send it down to the sea coast by gravity. The same proves true of the Mayari mines on the north coast, just back of Nipe Bay, where the deposits need nothing but washing with cold water. The soil being thus removed at little cost, the iron is ready for shipment to the smelters of the United States.

Valuable deposits of iron ore have been located from time to time in the western end of the Island, but usually the problem of transportation to the coast has discouraged mining in that locality. As a result of the present demand for copper, brought about by the war in Europe, together with the high prices offered for that metal, rumors of old abandoned mines in the Province of Santa Clara and Pinar del Rio have recalled the fact that many years ago, a century or more, early Spanish prospectors, poking over the hills, frequently found small outcroppings of copper, and in some cases sunk shafts for shot distances, removed the ore and conveyed it to the coast by muleback. The low price of copper at that time, however, and the scarcity of



MANUEL LUCIANO DIAZ.

labor which followed the abolition of slavery, discouraged serious work on the part of the old timers, but traces of their efforts still remain at various points on the north coast, and some of these abandoned claims are now attracting attention.

Pinar del Rio Province has particularly furnished the sensations of the past few years in mining circles and is likely to rival its old eastern rival, at least in copper. Here in addition to a number of minor operations, two remarkable mines have been discovered and are now in full exploitation, the "Matahambre" and "El Canada." Of the first the story follows; the second belongs to former President Gomez and is very rich.

It was Dr. Alfredo Porta, Mayor of the city of Pinar del Rio, who had faith in the great desolate mining regions of western Cuba and who set about prospecting in the most careful way. After many years of patient work he "denounced" or laid claim to some 2,200 acres of mineral bearing land and obtained titles thereto. The district is 95 miles from Havana in the Organos range of mountains which extend from Guanajay to Cape San Antonio. But this was but a part of the work and large capital was required to develop these prospects. Negotiations took place with foreign capitalists, and after a period of delay and discouragement, Dr. Porta had the happy inspiration to seek the aid of a man who had all the qualities necessary for success in a battle with Mother Nature.

Don Manuel Luciano Diaz, one of the great figures of the Island, of whom more later, was at that time busily engaged in the practice of his profession as a consulting engineer. Dr. Porta succeeded in arousing his interest, and Mr. Diaz at once grasped the proposition in a business-like manner. He caused a thorough investigation to be made, engaging experts from the United States and other places until he was fully convinced that there existed a large deposit of high grade copper worth fighting for. He then closed the deal with Dr. Porta and the work began; and it was a great fight, in which a large sum was risked before positive results were obtained. The public only sees the results but takes little account of the early struggles, the financial risk and the other factors necessary to success.

Active work started in January, 1913, and since that time a great mining enterprise has been developed out of which 142,000 tons of ore have been extracted. The initial steps meant engaging thousands of workmen, the building of a road to the sea, the erection of bridges and wharves at Santa Lucia Bay, all under the technical direction of skilled and highly paid engineers. Quarters had to be erected and much preliminary work done before a pound of ore could be extracted. Ten months later, on November 7, 1913, which will always remain a memorable date to Mr. Diaz, who shouldered the responsibility of this great enterprise, the first shipment of ore was made on the steamer "American." It consisted of 1,488,372 pounds of copper ore, 22 per cent fine, consigned to the United States Metals Refining Company of Perth Amboy, N. J.

"Matahambre," the great copper find of the day, is located in the Province of Pinar del Rio, North Coast of Cuba, at about nine miles from Port of Santa Lucia over a dirt road. By water it is one hundred and ten miles from Havana. It may also be reached by land taking the highway to Cabezas and by trail from Cabezas to "Matahambre." On a straight line the distance is six miles from the sea by the cable tramway which carries the ore to the port.

At "Matahambre" there are numerous modern and substantial buildings, needful for the purposes of a modern mining camp, such as the administration building, ample warehouses, stores, laboratory, compressors, repair shop, steam power, electric light and ice plants and a concentrator. There is also a well fitted club house, a sanitary hospital with a modern operating room, a schoolhouse, also a post and telegraph office and quarters for the rural guards.

At the shaft there are two cage and ladder compartments, now about 550 feet deep, while the lowest level is about 1,000 feet. The character of the ore is chiefly composed of chalcopryite, malachite, bornite, calcocite and black and red oxides. About 7,000 tons better than 10 per cent and about 4,000 tons concentrates are mined each month, and the total production up to date is about 142,000 tons. Each ton of ore running better than 13 per cent contains about an ounce of silver and some gold running 0.003 per ounce. In pockets some remarkable copper has been found running about 80 per cent.



GENERAL VIEW OF THE MATAHAMBRE MINE.



THREE SONS OF MR. DIAZ.



D. FORD McCORMICK, CHIEF ENGINEER.

In this busy place, located in the desolate hills of the Organos mountains, some fourteen hundred men find employment and have made the place quite a thriving community. Here, under the skillful technical direction of D. Ford McCormack, the engineer in charge, the able superintendance of Mr. Martin Young, and the various assistant engineers, work a-plenty has been mapped out for the next seven years and Mother Nature with the aid of man's energy will give to the world millions of tons of copper which will be turned into millions in gold, honestly earned by those who had the courage to take the chances.

A reference to the man who made "Matahambre" possible is imperative, because he is one of Cuba's supermen and entitled to mention in spite of the modesty which made the securing of this information somewhat of a diplomatic mission.

Manuel Luciano Diaz was born of Cuban parents on a coffee plantation near Havana, where he lived until he was nine years old, when his parents moved to the capital, in which place he attended school. Later he was sent to the United States and graduated from the Troy Polytechnic Institute which gave him a splendid foundation of technical skill. Here he also absorbed desirable qualities in the American character, particularly the direct method of dealing with all the questions and an indomitable perseverance.

On his return to his native land he became identified with the Western Railway of Cuba, and built the section between Artemisa and Pinar del Rio, being in charge for eight years and later chief engineer of the entire system. In 1894 Mr. Diaz resigned to become General Manager and Chief Engineer of the Matanzas and Savanilla Railroad for eight years, until President Palma asked him to serve in his Cabinet as Secretary of Public Works, which office he filled with a deep, public-spirited interest at a pecuniary sacrifice. During his administration many important public works were carried out, among them being the building of new streets, the first Malecon extension, the great sea wall and Havana's pride, the making of Ayesterán Avenue, the paving of Central Park and the continuation of

the Prado from the Park to the Pila de la India. He also continued the highway construction begun by the first Intervention.

The great Agricultural Experimental Station at Santiago de las Vegas which has been of such inestimable value to the Cuban farmer was conceived by Mr. Diaz, whose practical mind saw its urgent necessity. He planned the entire organization and arranged for the staff. He also organized the remarkable Cuban exhibit and representation at the St. Louis Fair, of which he was an honored and distinguished guest. On his way to that city he became the official guest of



TYPE OF HOUSE FOR STAFF.



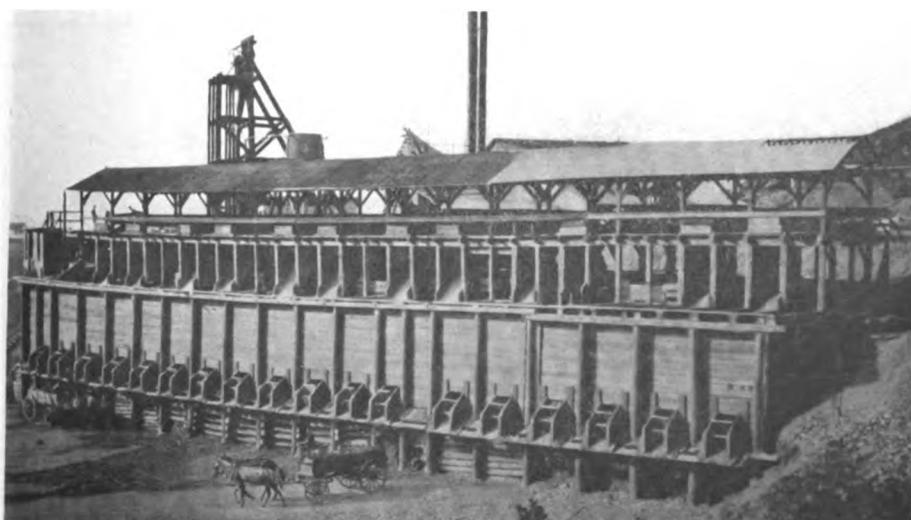
FOUNDATIONS FOR NEW CONCENTRATION PLANT.



THE CLUB HOUSE.



HEAPS OF ORE AT SANTA LUCIA.



ORE BINS AT MATAHAMBRE.



MINE TIMBERS AND WASHING PLANT.



PANORAMA OF HOUSE AND GROUNDS.

both Louisiana and Texas and spent several pleasant weeks, honored by many kindly attentions, in the sugar, rice, forest and sulphur belts of Louisiana as well as in the cotton and oil districts of Texas.

Mr. Diaz resigned his post in 1905 to engage in private practice, organizing the Havana Central, of which he became soon afterwards the Vice-President and Chief Engineer. In 1913 he was appointed Consulting Engineer of the United Railways and the Havana Central and resigned in 1915 to look after his fast-growing mining interests.

During his busy political and professional career there were two incidents of special note indicative of the man's character. The first deals with his just but very unpopular attitude of the subject of the transfer tax payment as here related, and the second was the long fight, both as an official and later as the representative of the railway interests, to secure the site of the present splendid railway station in Havana, of which everyone is so proud. Both these events brought him into the limelight of publicity and subjected him to much unfair criticism. Nothing daunted, he followed the dictates of his conscience and allowed time to do him justice, which has amply been the case.

As Chairman of the Cuban Railroad Commission, somewhat on the lines of the American Interstate Commission, Mr. Diaz had to take a firm stand against most of his colleagues in the matter of the transfer tax alleged to be due by the Cuba Railroad in 1904 when it was about to issue its bonds. The amount involved, about \$160,000, rested on the interpretation of the law's exemptions and it would have been very damaging to railroad progress in Cuba if the tax had been collected. Sir William Van Horne claimed to have been assured exemption under the very law in question and Mr. Diaz agreed with him and fought the issue to a successful finish. His act did much to encourage the development of railway construction and general investment and brought far greater returns than the petty sums collectable under the narrow interpretation of the law.

Many will remember the great "Arsenal" controversy in which charges of graft and undue influence were made and which gave so much material to writers and caricaturists. It all arose from the desire on the part of the Council to remove Villanueva station without giving the railway a proper site and no indemnity, claiming that the land belonged to the State.

Mr. Diaz argued that the land belonged to the railway, having been bought from the Spanish Government in 1836. He conceived the idea, and this was three months before he resigned from the Cabinet, of expropriating the old navy yard (Arsenal) and some adjoining lands which would give the railways a water-

front and a station in the heart of the city but apart from the centre.

In the meanwhile Mr. Diaz resigned and later when he became identified with the United Railways as their Consulting Engineer, he began to negotiate with the Government for the navy yard site, which he secured for his company after a fight of two and a half years. He was greatly helped in his task by the assistance given him by President Gomez, who realized the importance of a terminal station properly located, such as was finally built.



OUTCROP AT MATAHAMBRE.

What occurred when Mr. Diaz resigned from the Cabinet in 1905 is another illustration of the high regard in which he was held by those in charge of big interests who admired his honesty, fearlessness and ability.

Twenty-four hours had not elapsed before he was the recipient of many telegrams from London, New York, Canada and other places offering him lucrative posts, notably Sir William Van Horne, who greatly admired him for his courageous stand on the transfer tax question.

Mr. Diaz has a great love for nature and for livestock. The establishment of the Agricultural Experimental Station was an official act, but he has on his own farm and estate, as a private citizen, done much in experimental work, particularly in livestock. His importation of registered cattle from Holland is the finest obtainable, and his registered famous bull Ferdinand is free to those who desire to improve the breed of their stock.

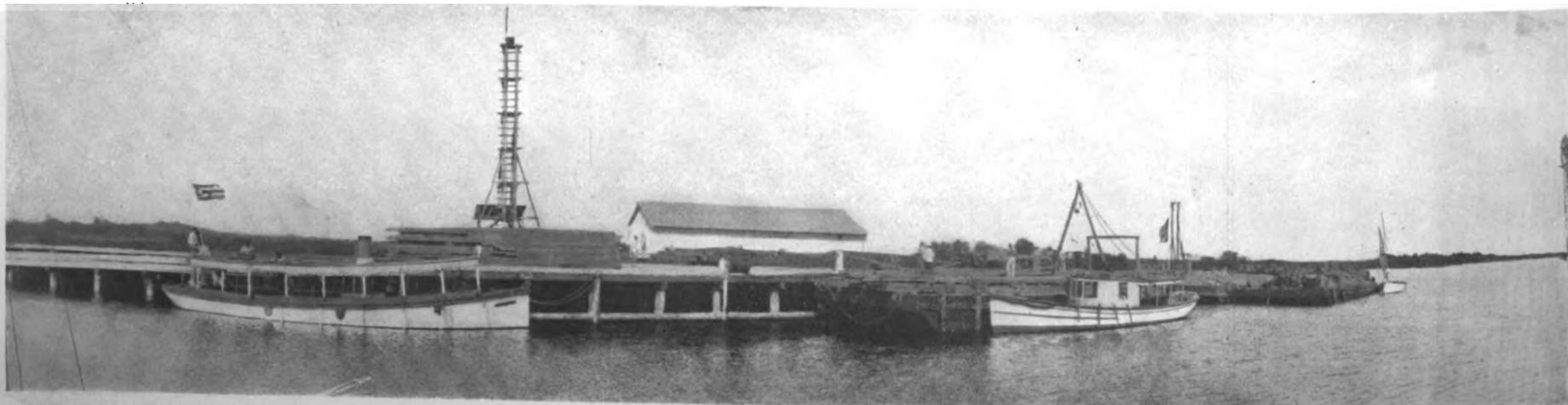
The crowning gem of Mr. Diaz's material possessions for artistic beauty and horticultural delight is his country estate on the outskirts of Havana, opposite the hospital and church of S. Paula, in a spot which less than two years ago was a field of overgrown brush. Here on a plot covering 20 acres erected a magnificent mansion, set in a wondrous garden, in which he and his family have lavished enthusiastic care. The outbuildings harmonize with the surroundings and every detail is in sympathetic accord.

A few miles from the city is his farm "Turibacoa" covering about 125 acres and modeled on modern lines, where he is carrying on some interesting experiments.

The splendid house of Mr. Diaz was built by the well-known firm of Snare & Triest, under plans suggested by them and with the personal direction and interest of Mr. Diaz, who did much of the designing. The style is Queen Anne blended with Spanish Renaissance and the harmonious lines, viewed from all angles, are remarkable. It presents the artistic beauty of a northern home as well as the spaciousness and familiar effect of the best examples of tropical architecture. The frame, floors and roof is of reinforced concrete and the walls are of native brick faced with terracotta of mate color. The interior finish is selected cypress and native mahogany in natural finish. The roof is covered with "Ludovico" red tile. Stairs and wainscoting are marble in various colors and the floors "mosaic terrazzo." Interior walls are stained in delicate shades or in white finish.

The entrance on the ground floor is through an ample porte-cochère and deep portico, running open to sides and corners. This house is one of the few in Cuba that has a cellar with basement entrance for servants containing kitchen, store and wine rooms, refrigerating plant, very comfortable servants quarters and many modern conveniences. On the ground floor the entrance is into a wide hall drawing room famous a splendid marble stairs, with a living room to the left and billiard room to the right, with library beyond. Following this in a corner is the guest's suite and on the opposite side of the house three bedrooms and bath.

On the next floor are two suites, with double bedrooms and bath, each having delightful open air porches. There is a terrace with pergola on the roof of the



PLANT OF THE MATAHAMBRE MINE AT THE PORT OF SANTA LUCIA, SHOWING DOCKS, LAUNCHES AND THE TERMINAL SUPPORTS OF THE AERIAL CABLEWAY WHICH BRINGS THE METAL FROM THE MINES.



PANORAMA OF HOUSE AND GROUNDS.

Photos American Photo Co., Havana.

porte-cochère. There is a spacious attic which can be utilized for storage or more bedrooms.

Mr. Diaz, Vice-President of the Cuban American Horse Show, to be held January, 1918, has always been an enthusiastic horseman and is a good judge of horse-flesh. His stable contains some very fine horses, among them the great "Pierpont," a six-year-old Kentucky horse of great pedigree, sired by "Sterling Chief" out of "Ellen Terry." He has won countless blue ribbons at horse-shows in the United States and Cuba. Another wonderful animal is the stallion "Califa," of Andalusian breed; also "Princess," a Kentucky mare; "Pecos," a thoroughbred; "Free Will," "Oriental," "Golden," "Ideola," thoroughbreds, and others.

Mr. Diaz was married in Havana to Doña Francisca Martinez and 13 children have blessed this happy union. His grown sons, Manuel D., Antonio H., and José R., are identified with him in the conduct of his many business interests. They were educated in the United States and ably share their father's responsibilities and join in his aims, ambitions and interest for Cuba.

In every country one finds those whose nature has endowed with great vitality, powerful brains and big hearts, as well as others who have acquired by industry and perseverance dominant traits which place them head and shoulders over their fellowmen. Whether by natural God-sent gifts or by acquirement these leaders in the environments which circumstance has placed them, make history, and their biographies are usually instructive and illuminating reading. Manuel Luciano Diaz is one of these, and the story of this great mine and his



MR. DIAZ ON HIS FAVORITE KENTUCKY THOROUGHBRED "PIERPONT."

action thereon is but an incident of a busy life. True it has brought him material wealth, but there are other things of his accomplishments which he cherishes as greater victories, because they have benefited his beloved Cuba.

And in the above life story there is a wonderful example to young men and a great inspiration. In addition, his beautiful home and garden, his accomplishments in agriculture and livestock are a model and guide for his countrymen and doubting foreigners. They give the lie to the slanders that in Cuba things cannot be done as in other lands on account of climatic and other adverse conditions. Mr. Diaz has proven by example that with certain modifications dictated by common sense people may in this wondrous land enjoy the comforts of civilization provided they possess, if only in part, the dominant traits of Mr. Diaz's character, namely, faith, courage and perseverance. His motto is: "Be sure you are right and then go ahead."

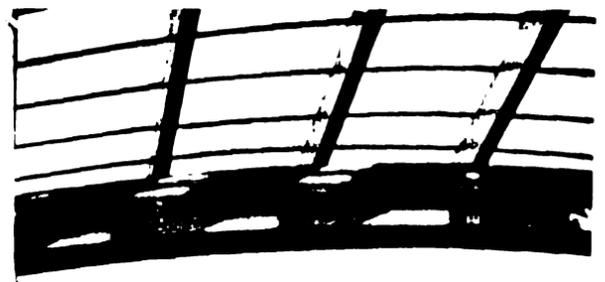
**GREAT ARGENTINE PROSPERITY.**

From *The British Export Gazette.*

Conditions in the Argentine, according to one of our correspondents at Buenos Aires, appear to be about on a level with advices received in recent months. Money is plentiful, demand is eager, but stocks generally are low, and prices are consequently high for nearly all commodities. On the other hand, the approaching harvests promise to be exceptionally poor, drought and locusts having occasioned considerable damage in all directions, though to a less extent than in Uruguay, where something like agricultural disaster



MR. AND MRS. DIAZ, THEIR SON, MANUEL, TWO DAUGHTERS AND GRANDCHILDREN.



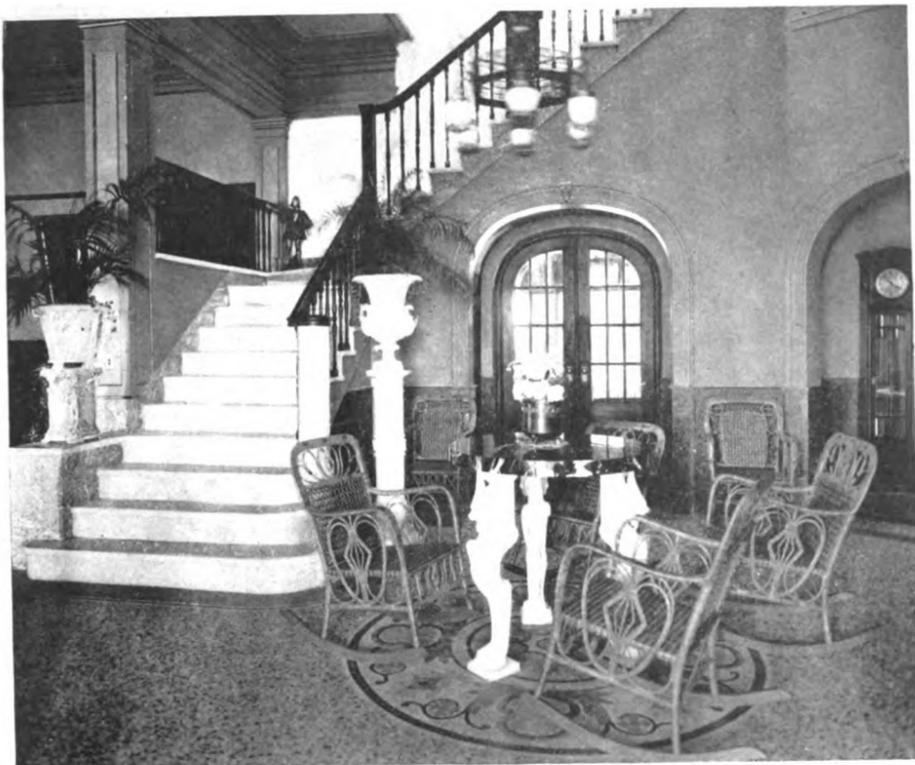
*Cuba's New Mining District continued. On this and the following page are Views of the Residence and Live-stock of Mr. Manuel Luciano Diaz*



MR. DIAZ'S BEDROOM.



THE DRAWING ROOM.



ENTRANCE HALL AND STAIRCASE.



THE LIBRARY.



THE BILLIARD ROOM.



FRONT VIEW OF THE DIAZ RESIDENCE.



'HOLSTEIN BULL "FERDINAND."



ANDALUSIAN STALLION "CALIFA."



ANOTHER VIEW OF THE HOUSE.

is anticipated. That the shortage will make itself felt is inevitable, but fortunately the high prices obtained for produce during the last two years will help to soften the less prosperous times ahead, and commerce should not unduly suffer.

How really prosperous the Republic has been may be gathered from the returns of liabilities in commercial failures just published for the first 11 months of 1916. These amounted to \$93,365,000 less than in the corresponding months of the previous year, the actual amount being \$96,665,000, against \$190,020,000 in the previous period. That cannot but be regarded as a satisfactory record, and is in striking contrast to the condition of affairs shortly before the war.

Further evidence of the prosperity that has prevailed

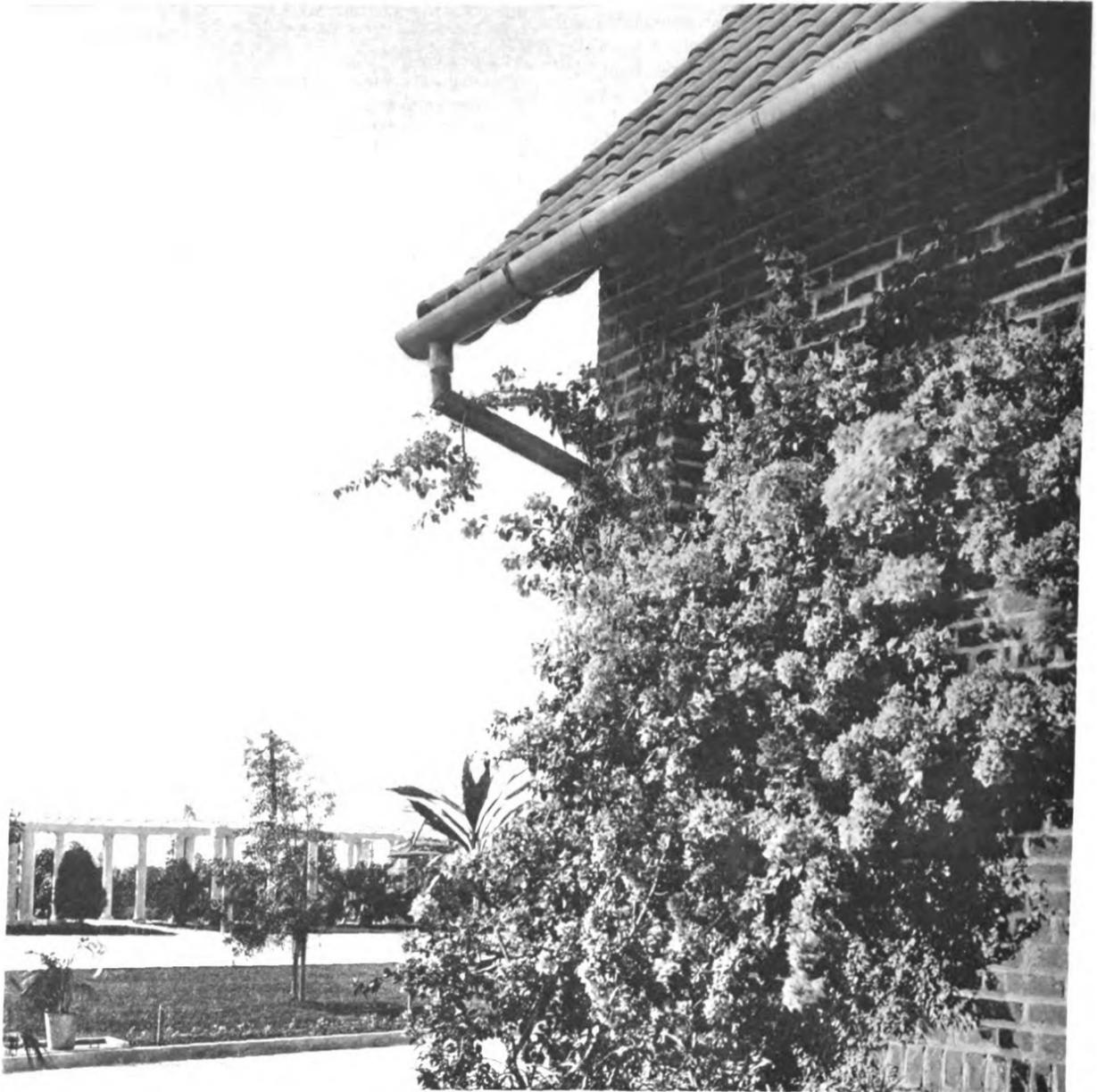


"PIERPONT" IN ACTION.

is furnished by the reports of the great trading companies. Messrs. Harrods (Buenos Aires), Ltd., for example, made a profit on last year's working, after providing \$34,455 for depreciation, of \$268,230, the record for the 12 months having been one of continuous prosperity. The South American Stores (Gath and Chanes), Ltd., again are able to show a profit of no less than \$1,117,195, after deducting the debenture service and income tax, comparing with \$627,265 in the previous year. Such evidence needs no comment.

**THE POPULATION OF BUENOS AIRES.**

The official computation of the population of the city of Buenos Aires now stands at 1,596,000.



A CORNER OF THE STABLE WALL.



FRONT VIEW OF THE STABLES.



A GROUP OF HOLSTEIN CATTLE.