

PREFACE.

Information concerning the island of Cuba has been of an exceedingly unsatisfactory character until the search-light of American inquiry was thrown upon it from the beginning of the war for Cuban liberty early in 1895. Although our next-door neighbor to the south, with a perfect winter climate and a host of interesting and picturesque attractions for travelers, tourists had been comparatively few, measured by the numbers that might have been expected. All of the reasons for this were those which naturally followed the characteristic Spanish rule of the island. Publicity was not welcomed, inquiry was not welcomed, travelers were not welcomed. The cities and the accommodations they offered were in many ways far behind those of like age and size in the other countries of the globe. Railway construction and the making of highways had lagged disgracefully, because the exorbitant taxes collected were looted by the officers of the government as their own spoils. No other country so near to the highways of ocean commerce and so accessible from the United States was so little known.

A few travelers had journeyed to Cuba and had written books descriptive of their experiences, which were read with interest by those who had access to them. But these books were usually simply descriptive of the people, the manner of life, the scenery, and the things of surface interest. It is proverbial that Spanish rule conceals the resources of a country instead of exploiting them. The person of inquiring mind had no way in Cuba to obtain prompt information concerning the material facts of the island's wealth of resource, because the Spanish authorities themselves knew nothing about it. Spanish statistics are notoriously unreliable and incomplete. No census of Cuba worthy the name ever has been taken, and there are few schools and few sources of accurate information. With all this handicap it was a foregone conclusion that the casual traveler should confine himself to the things that were visible and that were near to the usual paths of travelers. So until the beginning of the Cuban war for liberty no book could be obtained which told the things which one really cares