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Travel Diary: November 29, 1914

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November 29, 1914, afternoon.

At four o'clock Friday, November 27, Doctor Pedro M. Ruiz came and talked to me until 5.40 P. M. He is a most intelligent man, devoted to the subject of his ten year's work. He gave me the volume of statistics which show his administrative ability and thoroughly modern methods. The principal exports of Venezuela, in the order of their importance, are coffee, ~~xxxxxx~~ hides, rubber, cacao, goat skins, balata (rubber), asphalt, tonka beans. In 1912 Venezuelan exports were as follows:

\$25,260,908 divided principally as follows:

| | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|------|
| To United States | 39.22% of total | \$9,907,604 | gold |
| " Great Britain and colonies | 6.47% of total | 1,038,551. | " |
| " Germany | 15.61% of total | 3,942,709 | " |
| " France | 27.37% of total | 6,914,175 | " |
| " Spain | 5.80% of total | 1,464,377 | " |
| " Holland and colonies | 2.82% of total | 712,350 | " |

Venezuelan import, 1912, total \$20,568,940 divided principally as follows:

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------|--------------|------|
| From United States | 33.22% | \$6,832,438. | gold |
| " Great Britain | 20.83% | 4,284,886 | " |
| " Germany | 15.56% | 3,199,389 | " |
| " France | 12.73% | 2,618,330 | " |
| " Spain | 4.58% | 926,445 | " |
| " Holland | 8.01% | 1,647,666 | " |

The imports from the United States consist of agricultural implements, arms and ammunition, automobiles, flour, foodstuffs, canned meat, butter, cement, cotton goods, drugs and medicines, electrical apparatus, manufactures of iron, lard, machinery, kerosene oil, barb wire.

In the Venezuela of today, with its federated system of alleged states, all revenues are collected by the central government, which uses some 84%(?) of the whole. Of the remaining 16% the municipalities get about 12%, and the states about 4%. These revenues are given them by El Centro. Before the war of

1858-1863 Venezuela had a centralized government. Then taxes were locally levied. The Federation fought for is much more a centralization than the previous situation. Federation, I gather, was used as a cry by leaders in bidding for the support of people like the llaneros, who are independent and suspicious, and desire to be left to themselves and not to be interfered with by Caracas. In that same struggle, Paez, the llanero peasant, ultimately turned up as the leader of the party of the aristocrats, while Monegas(?), an aristocrat, arrived as the leader of the pueblo. Such are the anomalies of politics where selfishness, not principle, is the invariable motive.

Then I called on the MacGoodwins and then went for a chat with Mr. and Mrs. Dolge. Dolge still believes in the richness of the former Orinoco Company's concession. I have heard from others, too, that there is a valuable deposit of iron there. Then I dined with Spencer and his mother and Roberto(?) Guzman Blanco. He is just back from Europe, - a highly venerated snob. He thinks those who would be the successful leaders if there were a revolution would be worse than Gomez, and see no issue from the present state of affairs. He whines about the exclusion from government of the educated and honorable gentlemen who had always existed in Venezuela, and talks as if, if they had power, things would be honorably run. Meanwhile, this class are actuated solely by self-interest and try to grow fat in the frying pan rather than risk a new fire. Other people think that these educated and venerated gentry would be just as dishonest if they ran the government. In fact, some say that in Venezuela every single man has his price. I am informed one may go straight to Gomez with offers of money for business help. The last man I talked to, who has lived many years in Venezuela, states it would be quite impossible to get contracts or do business without bribery. He gave some amusing accounts of corruption. Caracas is the center of it. Almost all the learning and cultivation, the worst of the corruption and also the worst of the immorality, is centered in the capital, where loose morals, in the European style, seem also to be the only permanent effect wrought upon

the Venezuelans by a residence in Paris. In the Caracas smart set it is said even the usual feminine virtue is undermined, partly perhaps as a result of the sickening bootlicking and sycophancy of the wealthy toward Castro or whatever other brute may be in power over their fortunes. In Margarita once a woman murdered her husband. The judge of the Supreme Court agreed to have her whitewashed for 35 onzas (1 onza equals \$16). The lowest court blandly acquitted her. Since every decision must be confirmed by a higher court, the next court pronounced her guilty. This was because, once free, she failed to failed the supreme justice more than 15 onzas. She went to the judge and made good the remaining 20 onzas, whereupon the Supreme Court again reversed the decision and transmuted her from a murderess into a respectable woman. At Cumana or Barcelana or Guanta, the port of Barcelona, a man of some means, ^{resident in Ciudad Bolivar} married a girl by the proxy of his best friend. He then wired and asked his best friend to let his wife live with the latter's wife until he could later come to get her. The best friend brought about the pregnancy of his friend's wife. The latter, returning to discover this, brought suit for divorce. That it should be granted was inconvenient to the best friend and also to the new wife, so those two proceeded to bribe the court and prevent the divorce, The court calmly having all the facts sworn away and resting on the fairy tale that a spurious baby had been maliciously introduced, and that, in short, that what had happened had not happened. When a chartered ship was loading magnesite at Margarita, the customs officer calmly demanded, finally in writing, a personal graft of Bols.2 a ton. This being refused, he sent an officer with twenty ~~officers~~ soldiers to stop the loading, by force if necessary. For a bribe of one onza the officer supplied a written copy of his orders. Armed with these documents, but only after about a week's delay and an appeal through the Venezuelan Minister in Washington, when many telegrams to Gomez had been ignored, was the work allowed to proceed. Gomez was persuaded to sack the imprudent officials concerned. The Captain of the

Venezuelan customs officers was on board his steamer, and was met at the port of landing by her husband. When her trunk came aboard, the steward noticed that it was exceedingly light, and when it left the statement it was exceedingly heavy. He reported this fact to the Chief Steward, who is responsible for table linen and all articles in the dining room, and who had been missing a great deal on the trip. After a talk with the Captain, the trunk was broken open while the woman was on deck talking with her husband, and found to be full of silverware, linen napkins, tablecloths, etc., all belonging to the steamer. They were taken away, and the woman and her husband notified. She promptly fainted, but the Captain said he had to leave the case rest there, for if he had prosecuted, he would have had no end of restrictions placed in his way and that he was "afraid" to do anything. The priests, it seems, are vilely immoral, and use the confessional for the debauching of young girls.

The Margarita population of 30,000 is Indian, with a dash of Spanish, and comparatively very little African blood. The place is almost unique in having no mosquitoes and no fevers. The industries are fishing and salting fish. There are cod, king fish, etc. in great abundance for salting, canning (for which a Venezuelan has the exclusive right) and fertilizer. This industry was looked into by Canadians, but as usual the Venezuelans tried such a hold up at the start that the foreigners thought, "if this is the graft now, what will it be if they get us tied up with an investment!" , and no development was undertaken. The other industries are pearl fishing, which is excellent; the government salt monopoly mines; and this company, the Magnesite Mining and Manufacturing Company, which is an American one, subsidiary to the American Carbonate Company, a New York Corporation, for which Charles Freeman is local manager. Their market is ~~xxxx~~ New York, and they are probably going to buy a steamer for one shipload a month. They have twelve miles of railway on the Island. The local population is healthy, industrious, and generally pretty good. They are keen to learn, but have no school although Margarita is now a state. Even such a man

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as young Doctor Iturbe will ask a foreign friend to bring him some expensive clothes from the United States and will never think of paying for them, evidently expecting the man to be satisfied with hopes of his brother's political influence. Even Asuncion Rodriguez, a fisherman, I think, who through relatively fine character and honesty, has grown to be the great leader of the Oriente, would probably think nothing, if he were in power, in going halves in the granting of some concession. If European companies meet these methods halfway and bribe to do business rather than not get the business, what are Americans to do here in the zone where the national interest requires our economic preponderance? It is the moral duty of the American Government and of American capital to assure than preponderance. If this duty is paramount, as I believe it to be, I see nothing for it but for us to deal in the most honorable way, but when an important concession cannot be got without paying for it, then to pay for it out and out, however distressful it be to touch such demoralizing conditions. Another factor on the same side is the fact that the resulting development will help civilize and elevate the people. On the same score, our millions^{aires} and our government should support American schools which would take young children and educate them up for their professional or commercial studies at American universities. In this way we could gradually leaven these people and create a less rotten atmosphere. The presence of our enterprises would go far in the same direction. We should imitate the German schools in Caracas, Brazil and elsewhere, and the German newspaper organs. We should imitate the Protestant missionary work which makes it true that in Guiana, on the Venezuelan side of the line, the people are half naked, filthy, and debased, and on the British side comparatively self-respecting, neat, and useful.

Near Guanta there are very valuable coal mines owned, like the Barcelona railway, by the Venezuelan government. The electric plant in that locality, by the way, is American. The Canal makes those coal mines very valuable. An American Company should

of money had to be given Gomez. (Later on there will be time enough, by good offices in some political upheaval, to give back to the Venezuelans a proper share of what Gomez shall have grafted). All this will be better for the Venezuelan people than the stultifying of their country's development through a squeamishness which is quite natural, and in doing what is necessary to start that development in each case. Venezuela never wanted royalties and substantial investments. The Venezuelans want cash down. Well, a fair contract and with some cash down corresponding to expenses in promoting, might be profitable, from a business point of view, to perpetual royalties. Back of Guanta and Barcelona there are said to be good potreros for fattening cattle and some good llanos. By horseback the journey from Ciudad Bolivar to this point can be done in four days. With coal and cattle and a bit of railway it sounds like a hopeful region.

Up to now, the educated are more dishonest and worse men than the simple people. A little good foreign blood seems to tell to a certain extent. The African strain, especially mixed with Indian, comes out badly. The people have visible courage when in excited groups and for the brief duration of the excitement, but the utter lack of moral courage is perhaps their most hopeless quality. Foreign education or influence changes them greatly for the better, but put back in the purely Venezuelan environment everything wears off except such bad foreign things as they may have picked up, and they perhaps become more dangerous because more plausible blackguards. This is due, doubtless, to the utterly worthless education and the utterly vicious environment in which Venezuelans live in Venezuela. I hear that even Doctor Sanabria is shown up as dishonest in our Senate's printed correspondence regarding Castro.

(The following notes were taken by Mr. Goedeke from information supplied by Mr. Bongartz in conversation with Mr. HW and from Mr. C. Clark of the American Legation:

From Mr. Clark: One third of the exports of Maracaibo consist of Colombian coffee. Ignacio Andrade was President of Venezuela just preceding Castro. The Minister for Foreign Affairs who succeeded Matos was Doctor Andara, followed by Doctor Manuel Diaz Rodriguez, who was succeeded by the present Minister, Andrade. The present constitution of Venezuela permits the election of relatives of the President to the presidency. Foreign interests in Venezuela consist of railroads, asphalt, petroleum, tramways, telephones, cable, cotton mills, electric light, and commercial houses (mostly German). There is a German school which has always received a subsidy for its support from the German Government, and its teachers are all sent out from Germany. It is a primary and intermediate school. The Venezuelan government nominates the clergy, and the appointments must be made by the Church from the nominees. The law of "patronato" refers to this system.

From Mr. Bongartz: Falcon generally is troubled with long droughts. Sometimes there is no rain for several years, and there is always famine. The population comprises Indians, negroes, Spanish, all mixed.

The whole run of the foothills is good for fattening cattle. Rest of llanos grass no good except for raising. Barcelona and Puerto Cabello are shipping ports for cattle at odd times. At Barrancos there is a salt meat factory. The cattle business is very bad, as they can only be sold to agents of Gomez. Gomez in his official position charges high for licenses, etc. The cattle for the Guianas come from Ciudad Bolivar. The dry season, if prolonged in llanos, kills thousands of cattle. Malaria is prevalent. The rainy season in the llanos is from May to October. The cattle for Cucuta from from llanos of Tachira, Zamora and Apure.

Cumana, Barcelona, and Sucre are bad, but not so bad as Falcon. It is usually dry in those places, and there is not much business. In Sucre cocoa is raised.

Bolivar and Amazonas are important for the rubber they produce. Ciudad Bolivar has about 12,000 people. It is a place like Cumana in size. Ciudad Bolivar is the port for the trade

of Zamora, Apure, Bolivar, etc.

Coastwise traffic is monopolized by the Venezuelan government.

Blome's head house is in Caracas. It has branches in La Guayra, Puerto Cabello, Barquisimeto, Maracaibo and Ciudad Bolivar. The capital is the same, but each branch is run as a separate establishment. The houses at Caracas, LaGuayra, Maracaibo, and Barquisimeto, import mostly drygoods; the Ciudad Bolivar house imports provisions, principally. The bookkeepers and cashiers are Venezuelans. The partners, travelling men, etc., are Germans. The Venezuelans employed are not promoted.

Business morality is about the same as that at home. Phelps gives credits, and has not lost more than the average loss at home with this sytem.

There are eight big German houses in Maracaibo and the region thereabout. The Tachira people especially are hard-working. The estates are mostly small, although there are some large ones.

At 8.15 Saturday morning, November 28th, we were seen off by a number of friends, and rode down the track to Zigzag, which we reached in half an hour, accompanied by Mr. James Flynn, the Scotch Manager of the railroad, and Mr. Harfine, the British Minister. There we stopped half an hour at the Flynn's charming house, and Mrs. Flynn, a charming woman, gave us tea. The road down is east around a spur of mountain, and then down a valley marked by a river that now runs underground, barren of cultivation and used chiefly for raising goats. It is a reddish clay soil, rather arid and short of rain. Just before Zigzag one is able to see through the notch the blue Caribbean, which opens out quite wonderfully from there down, where we run into more cultivation and some coffee plantations, and a tiny village or two before we come to the shore at a place called Matuta(?)/ Along there the couple of hundred yards land to the beach bears groves of cocoanut trees. A few minutes later we arrived at the LaGuayra station (10.30 A. M.). I met Doctor Stuart, the P. H. and M. H. S. physician, and walked with him through the little garden and around to the quay, where an American Red D steamer, a Frenchman, and our own Royal Mail steamer, the "Berbice", were lying in a space formed by a cement jetty. The village looked rather neat, and as we sailed away, about 12.15 P.M., we saw that most of La Guayra lay just around the point in a quebrada at the foot of high mountains rising steep and picturesque all along here, and wooded above the halfway point. Above the village east of the main town, which village seems to be adobe and tiled roof and clustered on the clay hill, is an old gray fort. The lights on the steamer were put out at 8 P.M. I talked with Mr. Freeman after dinner, having spent the afternoon in making up some sleep. This morning early we sighted Margarita. The shipping harbor is at the west end. There is a village near the mines east of the middle. The island looks fairly green, pretty, and quite mountainous. They raise a little sugar and maize, but have to import food, as the water supply is small and the rainfall entirely inadequate. The island is ninety miles long, with an

the west harbor nearly a year in 1900, and during the time continually sounded and also examined the island in the greatest detail. At the east end we stopped for less than an hour off the village of Pampatar, and Mr. Freeman got off to go to his house near the main town, around the next point on the east, called Porlamar. We arrived at 8.45 and left about 9.15 A.M. North of the Island we could see two little rocky islands. Now we are steaming away. The Venezuelan coast line, thirty miles distant from Margarita, looks like the island, long and mountainous. The island has some signs of old craters. Both it and the coast seem to be our old friends, the Andes, straying far away from home. This morning I have been talking to Mr. C. Beutinger, representing Atwater & Company, Pocahontas Steam Coal, Hite and Rafetto, Lincoln and Fairmont Gas Coals, 1 Broadway, New York. He served long in our army in the Philippines, although born in Germany, and is, I gather, a good salesman.

I hear even great companies like the Westinghouse will not meet British methods of competition. The British will take one-third down, one-third on delivery, will send a competent man (the buyer paying steamer fare and salary to this mechanic) to set up the plant and run it a while, and the last one-third down after this. Of course our people must do this. Even with the small manufacturer, let the small manufacturer borrow from his bank at 6%, let, if necessary, the commission merchant (with the goods for security, if required) borrow at 7% to replenish the capital of the manufacturer, let the commission merchant charge, if you like, 8 or 10% on the deferred payments of his customer, who can be vouched for by a mercantile agency or bank. Let the American bank on the spot lend to the South American merchant, if you like at 12%. Every American citizen will make money, and a great deal more money through extending credit, without which he will not even do any business at all. And yet even now some American firms are demanding cash against documents in New York, i.e., full payment in advance. Can anything be more fatuous?