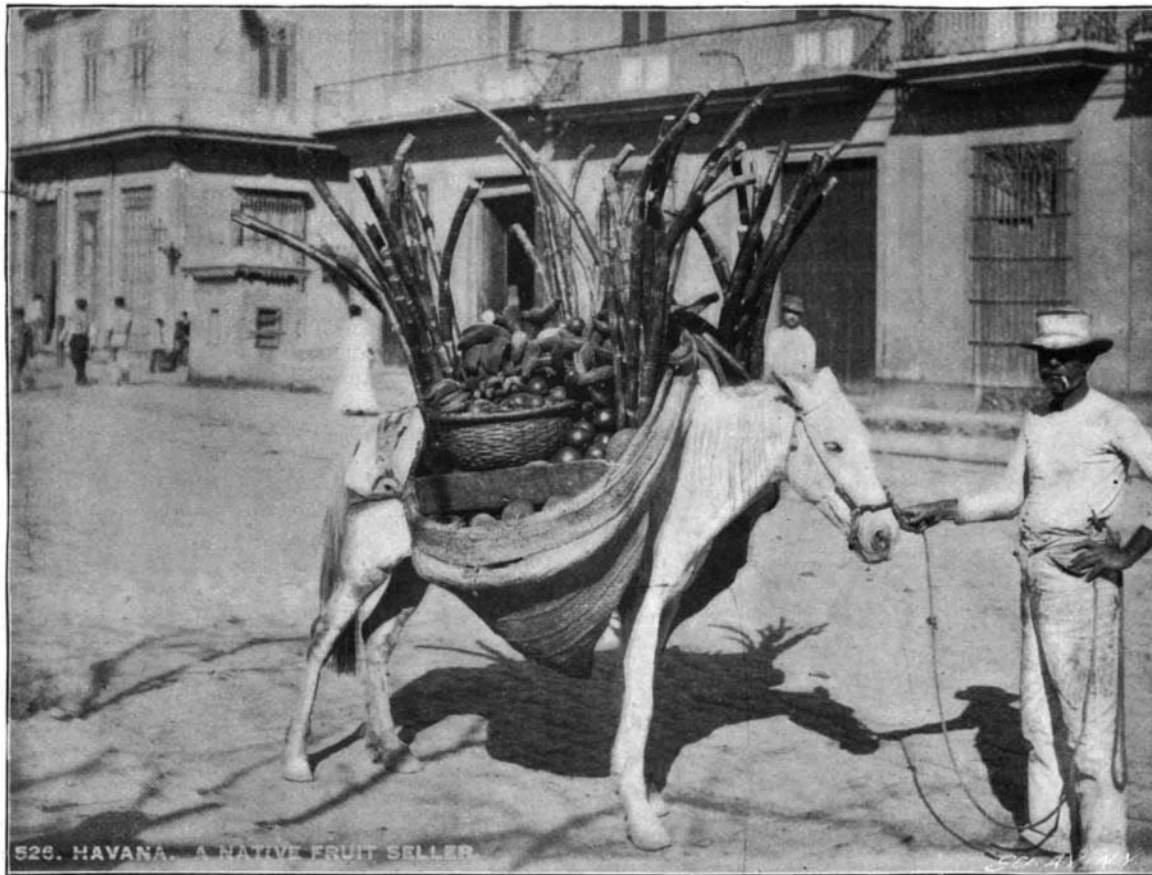


### THE BANANA AS THE BASIS OF A NEW INDUSTRY.

The banana grows well in our new possessions in the West Indies, and we have no lack of delicious fruit which has great food value as well. Unfortunately, however, bananas do not stand long sea voyages, and the result is that a considerable market is closed to them. Bananas can, however, be dried and converted into a flour called "bananine," which may prove to be the basis of a very valuable industry. France, understanding the advantages it will be possible to derive from the banana plant, has sent a commission to the United States and Central America for the purpose of studying the banana industry upon the spot, and it has also been suggested by M. Charles Patin, of Belgium, who has investigated the subject, that the banana plant will prove the subject of important agricultural operations in the Congo and destined to produce cheap food for the working classes in Belgium. According to Humboldt the banana has forty-four times more nutritive value than the potato, and according to another authority on dietetics it is twenty-five times more so than good white bread. Since flour can be produced from it at less expense than that obtained from wheat, it is permissible to believe that the products of the banana plant will furnish the working classes of many countries with wholesome, nourishing food at the lowest possible cost. Bananas besides being nutritious are very easy to digest and may be used by the sick, since they are perfectly adapted to weak, delicate stomachs. The article is a direct product of the banana that has reached its complete development. The fruit is peeled by slitting the skin longitudinally and giving it a rotary motion with the hands. The peel having been thus detached the fruit is cut into thin transverse slices which are dried in the sun or in a furnace. It is then only necessary to bray or grind these slices in order to obtain a fine flour therefrom. In Central and South America hand mills are in use for grinding corn for corn bread, and such apparatus are admirably arranged for obtaining from the slices of banana either the banana meal or an impalpable flour made through simple grinding without any passage through a sieve.

There is another branch of the banana industry; this is the drying of the plantain, which is done in the following manner. The bunches are gathered in quantity as they approach maturity and are suspend-

ed in a shed in order to allow the fruit to finish its ripening, say for four or five days, then the fruit is peeled and placed on mats and exposed to the sun. For the first two days the fruit is turned over every two hours, but after this they are turned only once a day. At the end of six or seven days they are sufficiently dry to be put into boxes or baskets like figs, or assorted ac-



THE BANANA TRADE IN CUBA.

According to their length, and are then put up in bundles, as is done with vanilla beans. These plantains, packed in boxes and wrapped in tin foil, may be preserved indefinitely. The flavor of the dry banana is somewhat strange at first, but the palate soon adapts itself to the taste.

### A REMARKABLE FIRE IN NEW YORK.

There occurred on the morning of Thursday, February 9, a serious fire on South Street, New York city, involving a number of buildings and a loss of property estimated at about three-quarters of a million of dollars. Nearly all the buildings in the block bounded by Front, Moore, South, and Whitehall Streets were practically burned out. As soon as the firemen arrived at the scene they were convinced that it was a fire of great importance, and by ten o'clock all of the apparatus and firemen south of Twenty-fifth Street had been called out, and two fire boats were also hard at work. The fire was fanned by the wintry blast, threatening great

damage, and it might have burned two or three blocks in that part of the city if it had not been for the great heroism of the firemen, who succeeded in limiting the conflagration to one block. Some of the buildings were nearly a hundred years old and were perfect fire traps, so that it was a most difficult operation to fight the fire successfully. All the time that the fire burned the

water froze as it struck the buildings. The fronts were coated with ice, and from the cornices and window sills hung huge icicles which were frozen into the most fantastic shapes, as the wind had blown the water in process of freezing. The fire escapes on the fronts of the buildings supported icicles which were sometimes the height of an entire story. The ladders which the firemen had placed against the buildings when they first arrived were soon slanting pillars of ice, and there was no resemblance to a ladder left. The spaces between the rungs were frozen solid and the ladder was soon two or three times its original size. Each wire was covered with a coating of ice, and even the elevated structure in Front Street was incrustated with ice and long icicles depended from it. The firemen moved slowly around in the street below, carrying almost their weight in ice, and it is needless to say that they suffered severely, and those in active service had

to be relieved at intervals. The fire boats, as the tide fell, were soon left aground, as they had come up very close to South Street, and they soon pumped streams of mud against the South Street buildings, and the muddy water hung down in dark chocolate brown icicles. The flag pole on South Ferry Hotel became so weighted with ice that it bent until the tough ash pole formed almost a semicircle. Firemen very seldom have to work under more discouraging conditions than those which existed at this fire, in which the temperature ranged from zero to two degrees above zero, and the northwest wind blowing at a velocity of thirty-six miles an hour. Our photographs were taken shortly after the fire, and show the front of one of the



FIRE LADDER HIDDEN BY ICE.



FRONT OF A BUILDING INCRUSTED WITH ICICLES.