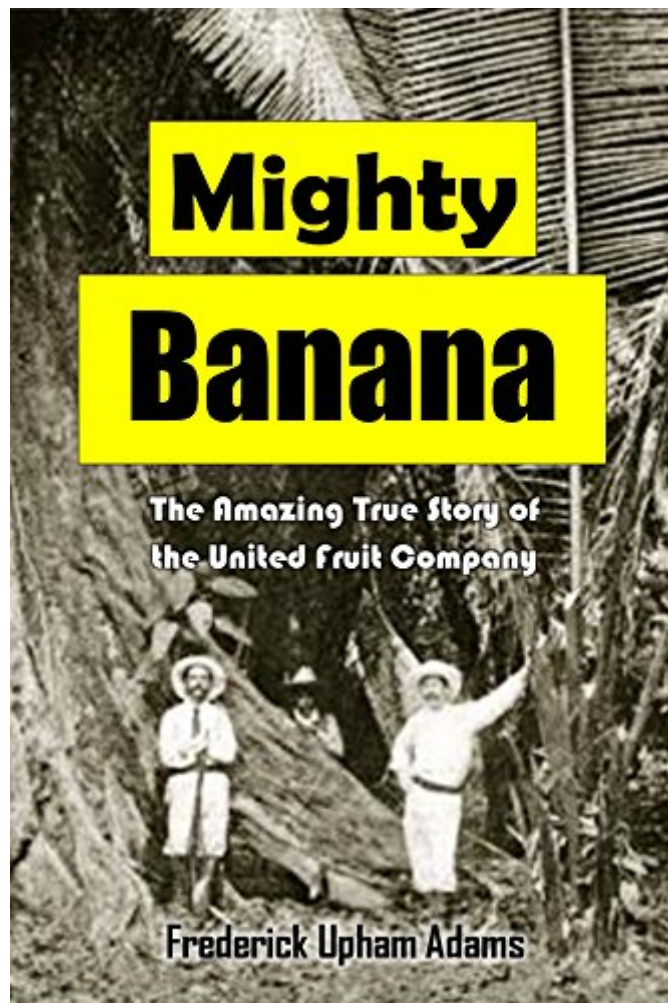




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# Mighty Banana: The Amazing True Story Of The United Fruit Company (1914)



## Synopsis

“The United Fruit Company’s political and economic achievement is a commanding achievement that needs to be studied and Mr. Adams has given us some very interesting material.” - Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science  
In 1914, the famous author and reformer Frederick Upham Adams published "The Conquest of the Tropics," a lengthy 400-page book on "the story of the creative enterprises conducted by the United fruit company." It is from this lengthy book that chapters on the banana industry have been excerpted and republished here for the convenience of the interested reader. (Lengthy topics such as Central American healthcare, the Cuban sugar industry, and country histories have been omitted here with the goal of preserving a focus on the banana industry.) Adams’ writings on the United Fruit company were well-received at the time of publication: “Absorbing, ... the story is one of decided interest, ... a genuine storehouse of information.” - Bulletin of the Pan American Union  
“Interesting and informing ...” - Boston Transcript  
Contrary to the writings of muck-raking self-appointed "historians," who typically seek out the evils of big business and disregard for “income reasons” the great constructive work which they have accomplished, Adams has taken a different tact in his writings on the United Fruit Company. Adams details how the banana industry, in order to secure its own existence, carried the message of civilization and sanitation into the swamps and jungles. It made livable an inhabitable portion of the globe. This alone would entitle those who have accomplished it to the commendation of the world, but greater things have been done. An entirely new article of food had been brought to temperate North America by the enterprise of the United Fruit Company. From the humble beginning of Andrew W. Preston and his associates, who invested \$20,000 to promote the banana business in 1885, the United Fruit Company, importing 24,975,640 bunches of bananas a year, has gradually grown. The conquest of the tropics was not alone a commercial enterprise, all of the tropical pests breeding malaria and yellow fever had to be vanquished. Prior to 1885, the year the Boston Fruit Company was organized, bananas were little known in the United States. They were regarded as a luxury and were sold for any fantastic price dealers could command. The transportation of the fruit was a perilous undertaking as bananas are exceedingly perishable, and ship owners who attempted their transportation were gambling at long odds. The crop was uncertain and hurricanes and floods frequently destroyed the yield of an entire district. Adams writes: "The normal death-rate of a typical Central American seaport, in the years prior to the advent of the banana industry, was not less than 150 annually out of a population of 1,000 ! This is fully ten times what it is now. It was almost sure death for an unacclimated foreigner to remain a week in these unsanitary surroundings. The wealthy citizen of Costa Rica or Guatemala who wished to go to

London, Paris, or New York on business or pleasure approached the Pacific port from which he was to sail in fear and trembling, and thousands who longed to make such trips could not be induced to take the risk."Adams' whole work is replete with illustrations of the advantages of production and distribution that big producers enjoy over the small producer, and how the small producer is benefited by contact with large enterprises. The book is a travelogue and romance as well as an industrial history.Frederick Upham Adams (1859 â “ 1921) was an American inventor, writer, editor, and political organizer. He was the author of "President John Smith"; "The Majority Rule League of the U.S."; The Kidnapped Millionaires"; "John Henry Smith"; and "The Bottom of the Well."

## **Book Information**

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