

CHAPTER V

PANAMA OF TO-DAY

THE situation of Panama Viejo was beautiful. It stood upon a wooded coast. A wide expanse of savanna stretched behind it, and beyond this ranged the mountains, from the summit of which Morgan's men looked down upon the doomed city. The natural features of the position did not lend themselves to defence and but slight attempt at fortification was made. At the time that the city was founded, and for a century thereafter, there did not appear to be any necessity for providing against attack. Spain was supreme on Terra Firma and in the neighboring seas. To reach Panama a hostile force would need to make the journey round Cape Horn, or to cross the Isthmus, and both of these undertakings were considered too difficult to be seriously considered as possible contingencies.

Drake's excursions to the Pacific and the sack

of Panama by the buccaneers rudely awakened the Spaniards to the fact that their position on the mainland was no longer secure, and that their important cities must in future be strongholds. This consideration precluded all thought of rebuilding Panama on its original site and a new one was sought in a less accessible location. The point selected was a spit of volcanic rock jutting into the bay. Here the new city was founded, in 1673, by royal decree, the formal dedication taking place on the spot which is now occupied by the central plaza. Extraordinary inducements to build were extended to the former inhabitants of the old capital, which was entirely abandoned by official order.

The work of fortifying Panama was carried out regardless of cost. Upwards of \$11,000,000 were spent upon the walls and auxiliary defences. Most of the large buildings were constructed with a view to withstanding attack. A great wall completely surrounded the city. It was from 30 to 40 feet in height and in places as much as 60 feet broad. On the inland side, a deep moat stretched from one arm of the bay to another, cutting off the point on which the city stood. This moat was not filled in until some time in the fifties.

Panama as reconstructed was the strongest city in the New World. Sharp, and other pirates, came and looked it over, but decided that it offered no opportunity for successful attack. The armament of the battery, which stretched along the sea wall, was sufficient to annihilate a fleet of that day. Another condition made the position peculiarly difficult of approach. In the Pacific, the tidal oscillation is about 22 feet, so that a vessel anchored near the shore in deep water, may find itself high and dry a few hours later. The rock upon which the city is built runs out into the sea with a gradual slope, and, at low tide, a mile and a half of tufa is exposed. This is extremely slippery, and a party attempting to reach the walls over it would have had great difficulty in maintaining a foothold, not to mention the risk of being cut off by the returning tide.

The old walls of Panama have been pulled down for the most part, but small portions remain here and there. One of these is to be seen on Central Avenue, almost opposite the church of La Merced. This remnant affords a very fair idea of the size and composition of the wall on the land side. One of the main gates was near this spot. The battery, or sea

wall, remains practically intact. It used to be a favorite promenade of the population of Panama. For Americans the old sea wall should have a peculiar interest. Here, in the days of the "forty-niners," parties of voyagers to California used to spend much of their time eagerly gazing seaward for a sight of the vessel which was to bear them on the way. Sometimes the weary wait would extend into weeks, and frequently an epidemic of yellow fever, or some other virulent disease, would break out in the meanwhile. Under such conditions U. S. Grant, who was on his way to the Pacific Coast with a detachment of troops, passed many dreary hours sitting on these weather-worn parapets. The spot is associated with memories of many prominent and picturesque characters. Here the debonair Lola Montez, in male attire and smoking a cigarette, habitually walked of an evening, with a score of attendant admirers. One who was present, has described an occasion when De Lesseps stood in the midst of a group of distinguished visitors and from the sea wall presented to their imaginations a picture of crowded sails bearing down upon the entrance to the finished canal. This was only two years before the

débauché, but the great promoter spoke with such eloquent conviction that his hearers were persuaded against their better judgment and returned to France, as he had determined that they should, with glowing reports of the enterprise.

Under the sea wall, or rather built into it, is the prison. The long narrow cells run through to the face of the battery and at that end long slits in the wall give entrance to light and sea air. At the other end, grated doors look upon a small courtyard, in which one or two police, armed with rifles, patrol day and night. The cells are cool, but necessarily damp. The unfortunate who is consigned to this prison has an indefinite stay before him, for the wheels of Panama justice move spasmodically and, unless they be greased, with deadly slowness.

In the early eighties a case containing \$50,000 in gold, which was designed to pay the crew of an American war vessel in Panama harbor, mysteriously disappeared from the warehouse of the Panama Railroad. Seven Americans were arrested on suspicion and thrown into Chiriqui Prison, as it is called. There was no evidence against these men. Indeed, it was said that they were arrested to

shield the true culprits, who were generally believed to have been Panamans. After several months without trial, the Americans were released, but never received any indemnity for the confinement, which probably wrought permanent injury to their health.

A few years later, two British subjects were incarcerated in the same place for months without any specific charge being brought against them, and despite the protest of their consul. These occurrences, and others of a similar nature, took place under the government of Colombia and during the French occupancy of the canal district, but, as I shall presently show, like miscarriages of justice have happened since Panama's independence and during our tenure of the Canal Zone.

One afternoon I leaned upon the parapet of the sea wall, looking down into the prison courtyard. Beneath me stood about a dozen of the prisoners, begging in whining tones for nickels and cigarettes. Their brown backs were bare. In fact, they wore but one garment, a pair of trousers. As I learned later, this condition of semi-nakedness was deliberately maintained for the sake of facilitating cleanliness. I asked one after another what he

was confined for and in nearly every case the answer was: "For beating a policeman," at which the representative of the force who stood nearby, leaning negligently upon his rifle, smiled appreciatively.

Presently my eye fell upon a white man, who stood a little apart from the rest in the shadow of a tree. He was a fine looking young fellow, — hardly more than a boy, in fact, — clean-skinned and muscular, with a frank engaging countenance. Then, and in the course of several visits to him afterwards, I learned his story. We will call him Jones. Jones, then, was the son of a man holding the position of superintendent of an important division of the subway system in New York. The boy had been well brought up, but the desire for adventure led him to leave home against his father's wish. He came to Panama without letting his people know of his whereabouts and secured work in connection with the dredging operations of the Canal. His quarters were in Colon and there he seems to have got into bad company. One of his companions, a Panaman named Dufour, suggested a robbery to him. Jones declined to take part in the affair. It was carried out, nevertheless, and Dufour was

arrested on suspicion, which pointed very strongly to him. Jones, who was known as a companion of the suspect, was haled before a magistrate in Colon, where an examination was held in Spanish, of which language the boy did not understand half a dozen words. There was no one present to represent or befriend this American citizen and employe of the Isthmian Canal Commission.

Jones and Dufour were confined in Chiriqui Prison. In a few days the latter, whose father is a well-to-do saloon keeper, procured bail and with that his troubles ended. The Panaman authorities would rather have the bail than the man at any time. The former means so much net profit; the latter more or less expense. When a person secures his liberty on bail, no more need be heard of his case, unless he is very insistent in his demands for a trial.

Jones, held merely on suspicion of having some knowledge of the crime, was cut off from the world at large and apparently forgotten. When I came across him, he had been several weeks in confinement. He had no means of communicating with anyone who might help him. His fellow-prisoners were negroes, or Panamans of the lowest class. He had not

sufficient clothing, nor even the means of writing a letter.

The Canal Zone authorities made no enquiry about this man. After he passed into the keeping of the Panama Government, the Commission apparently washed its hands of him. There is something obviously wrong about such neglect. An American citizen in the remotest part of the world would be looked after by the nearest consular representative of his country under similar circumstances. In this case the consul was absent from his post on leave and his deputy did not seem to have known anything about Jones. The Panaman authorities should be required to notify the Commission immediately after making an arrest of a Canal employe and it should be the duty of the district attorney, or his assistant, to protect the man's legal interests.

I was impressed with the truth of the boy's story, and also convinced that there was very little of the criminal in his make-up. I decided to see what I could do for him and as a first step called upon the vice-consul with a request that he would secure for me permission to visit Jones in the prison. In response, I received a letter from the Governor of the

Province, saying that a pass would be issued to me if I would state on what day I proposed to make the visit. This did not suit my book at all, and I decided to try a simpler method. Driving to the prison, I alighted with as great an air of importance as I could assume and bustled through the gateway, the sentries on either side presenting arms. Walking to the guardhouse I briefly asked the captain on duty for Jones, and a policeman was immediately ordered to show me to the man's cell. I found him much more cheerful and uncomplaining than I believe that I could have been myself under the circumstances. He was anxious to be brought to trial, of course, and somewhat indignant because, on the day before, he had been informed that the authorities had decided to charge him with being the principal in the robbery.

To cut a long story short, I despaired of moving the wheels of justice through the vice-consul and appealed to Mr. Squiers, the American Minister at Panama. He took the matter up with as much expedition as possible, considering the painful deliberation with which official business is conducted in all Latin-American countries.

Jones had been in prison about a month when I went up-country, where I was absent three weeks. On my return I learned that Mr. Squiers had written to the boy's father — who knew nothing of his whereabouts during all this time — and had come to an understanding with the Panaman authorities that when money to send Jones home should be forthcoming, he would be quietly released.

I returned to the States and, about two weeks later, received a Panama paper containing the account of Jones' escape from the prison. No doubt he would have been released soon, but it gave me some satisfaction to learn that he had settled the matter for himself. What afterwards became of him I have never learned.

Two more illustrations of Panama justice will be given to show that, while always devious in its course, it is quite as apt to work in favor of the guilty as of the innocent.

One of the Panama Railroad Company's locomotive engineers was one day annoyed by a negro insisting upon jumping upon the foot-board of the engine which was being used for switching. At length, completely losing his temper, the engine driver struck the negro on the head with a coupling pin and killed him.

Company were in the heart of the city. They occupied a large building which still stands in a corner of the Cathedral Plaza. Around this square were a number of substantial buildings and a few comfortable residences stood in the streets that lead off it. But, for the greater part, the city was a squalid collection of dives, gin shops, and gambling hells. Aside from a handful of well-to-do, educated Colombians, a few employes of the Panama Canal Company, and the foreign consuls, the population of the city was made up of a very low class. The Panamans themselves were about as mixed a lot as you would find anywhere, almost every nation on earth entering into their composition. There were always a number of negroes from the canal works, more or less drunk and quarrelsome, hanging about the entrances to the groggeries. This element was reinforced by the crowd of loafers of all nationalities with whom the city was infested.

The present condition of Panama is in striking contrast with what it was twenty, or even ten, years ago. The worst sections have been cleaned out. The principal streets have been widened and all of them are paved and drained. Comparatively decent saloons, where order is

maintained, have taken the place of the low liquor shops that abounded formerly. In this connection, it may be well to say that the natives are markedly abstemious in the use of alcohol. I do not recollect to have ever seen a Panaman intoxicated.

A street railway was projected by an American corporation a few years ago, but the enterprise came to nought and it is doubtful whether it would have paid. The limits of the city are not extensive and one of the hacks, which afford sufficiently convenient means of transportation, will carry a passenger from any one point in it to any other for ten cents. There are a number of large stores, some of the best being run by Chinese, of whom there is a numerous colony in Panama.

The police seem to have been selected for their lack of stature. They are temptingly small and it is little to be wondered at that the most prevalent violation of law seems to consist of "beating a policeman." What they lack in size, they make up for in numbers. They are to be seen at every corner, and where one is at the moment, ten will appear instantly at the sound of his whistle. And that whistle is blown whenever there is anything doing. A

Panaman policeman would not attempt to kick a dog without the aid of a fellow bluecoat. I once saw an Irish-American steam-shoveller arrested in the streets of the city. He was very mellow, but perfectly harmless and good humored. He began the trouble by pleasantly chucking one of the guardians of the peace under the chin. Now to wound the dignity of a Panaman policeman is worse than to give him a blow in the face. The affronted "bobby" backed into the middle of the road and blew his whistle. Instantly his twin brother—if the evidence of the genial toper was worth anything—appeared on the scene, blowing his whistle as he ran. Presently there were an even dozen of "the finest" on the spot, each armed with a rifle—and a whistle. Meanwhile, the steam-shoveller had made himself comfortable with his back against the wall and evidently enjoyed the situation immensely. He grinned amicably at the group of helmeted pygmies while treating them to a string of choice slang, of which they understood not a word.

After a consultation, the platoon, or brigade, or whatever it was, decided to charge. They came on hesitatingly with a clatter of arms

and a shout. The genial Irish-American lazily leaned forward and buffeted the foremost on the side of the head, knocking him backwards among his fellows and disorganizing the ranks. They retired to reform and hold another consultation.

This manœuvre was performed three or four times with the same result. By this time the force had been swelled to eighteen and the canal man had become tired of the game. He wanted to sleep and quietly lay down and stretched out comfortably. Thereupon the entire detachment of bluecoats piled on top of him, reminding me forcibly of Gulliver and the Lilliputians.

At the time of Colombian rule, this man would have been shot offhand. As it was, he was merely locked up over night, after being somewhat roughly man-handled, and fined in the morning.

I was walking along one of the deserted main streets of the city, at about two o'clock in the morning, when I came across five policemen standing in front of a house from which issued the most appalling cries and groans I have ever heard. It was pretty evident that a woman was being murdered within. The policemen

continued to stand in the road, shouting " Hey there! " or words to that effect, until I wearied of the business and went on my way. But you must not imagine that the Panaman policeman is remiss in the performance of his duty. Attempt to drive a block in the city without your carriage lamps alight and you will soon arrive at a different conclusion.

The houses of Panama are of the kind best adapted to the climate. A living room or bed-chamber usually has a set of slatted double doors extending to the ceiling at either end of it. One set opens upon the front verandah, the other upon the balcony which runs round the patio, or central courtyard. In the day the doors are kept closed to exclude the light, while they permit a passage of air through the slats.

Most of the better class of residences in the city are built of stone and their ground floors are given over to stores or offices. Walls are usually whitewashed or blue-tinted. The wood-work is green and a roof of deep-red terracotta tiles surmounts the whole. The coloring, and the Oriental influence displayed in all Spanish architecture, combine to give a very pleasing effect. The patio is derived from the

Moors. It is a quadrangle, open to the sky, round which the house is built. It may be bare of ornamentation and, on the other hand, it may be beautified with flowering plants and statuary. The only stairway of the house ascends from the patio and connects with the tiers of verandahs upon which the rooms of the different floors open. These verandahs are not, like those on the outside of the dwelling, designed to be sitting places, but furnish the passage-ways.

In olden times the patio was the favorite resort of the family in the cool of the evening. It is now a more or less commonplace courtyard, without any romance about it. It may contain a fountain, but the guitar of the novels is never in evidence. As likely as not it is open to the gaze of every passer-by upon the street and probably the back doors of two or three shops open on to it.

Previous to the sanitation that was instituted by the United States authorities, the patios were the chief breeding places of mosquitoes. Each one contained a large rain barrel, into which a pipe reaching from the roof emptied itself. Now every house has connection with the water system, and its owner is compelled



PATIO OF THE PRESIDENT'S PALACE, PANAMA.



to keep his premises clean and free from refuse.

The interior of a Panama residence is somewhat bare, but the absence of draperies and carpets is conducive to cleanliness and coolness. The walls of living rooms are so high that any attempt at ornamentation would be likely to produce an incongruous effect. Only the most necessary furniture, and that of the plainest type, is used. The simple cane-bottomed chairs of a parlor are arranged in two precise rows across the room with a suggestion of cold formality that belies the character of the occupants of the house.

There is discernible in Panama a tendency among the upper class to depart from the old and tried customs in favor of those that obtain in northern climes. This is perhaps a natural consequence of the close communication of the people with Americans in recent years. So far as the movement relates to hygiene it is commendable, but not so where it interferes with distinctly picturesque and appropriate customs of the country. Plumbing is an unquestionable boon to the Panamans, but they might well halt improvement when it begins to encroach upon the architectural features of their

buildings. The invasion of galvanized iron is a case in point. It is impossible to conceive of a single advantage that it possesses over the customary tiles. The two materials are certainly not comparable in artistic effect. The metal can hardly be the cheaper or the more durable. The terra-cotta is made all over the country and will outlast two or three generations of householders.

It is to be feared that the Panamans may be led too far towards copying exotic examples in the architecture of their public buildings. The new "Palacio," which contains a large theatre at one end and the chambers of the Legislature at the other, is a garish mixture of two conflicting styles. The interior construction conforms to the Spanish-American type, but the exterior has something of the blatant aspect of a New York bank building. The venerable church of San Felipe, across the street, seems to frown down upon it in dignified disapproval.

Twenty years ago, as I remember, beautiful flowers grew abundantly about the houses and the patios of Panama. Now, they are so scarce that once I spent an hour in the search for an ordinary bunch and found them at last in the secluded garden of the *Orfelinato de San*



RUBBER TREES PLANTED BY THE FRENCH.



José,—I believe the only place in the city where they are grown in any considerable quantity, — and where the good sisters charged me an exorbitant price for them. The natives generally attribute the disappearance of their flowers to the extensive use of kerosene by the Canal Commission's Sanitary Department. This is not, however, an entirely satisfactory explanation. It is probable that the drastic cleaning up process, to which Panama was treated a few years ago, involved the destruction of most of the small plants and little or no effort has been made to replace them.

The French canal companies took great pains in the beautifying of the grounds in their possession. This was especially the case at the Ancon hospital, where the verandahs, and even the wards, were brightened by flowering plants and graceful palms. Sad to say, this otherwise praiseworthy feature of their management was a powerful agency for the spread of death and disease. The pots containing the plants were kept standing in saucers constantly filled with water. This suitable precaution against the attacks of ants created ideal breeding places for mosquitoes which, at that time, however, were not recognized as

enemies to health. The French surgeons were sorely puzzled to account for the fact that the hospital was a hotbed of yellow fever and malaria, and the originating point of thousands of cases of these diseases.

The country house of the better class of Panamans is usually a two-storied structure of stone or brick, though wood is beginning to be used extensively. The ground floor is devoted to storerooms, or given over to the use of servants, but they more frequently occupy out-buildings in the courtyard. The owner and his family reside in the upper story, after the custom which prevails in all Spanish-American countries. This arrangement is probably prompted by several considerations. Not the least potent of these is disclosed by the commonly current proverb: "Smallpox never goes upstairs."

The country house is the usual unbroken block. In place of the interior patio is an extensive yard, called by the same name. To this the same suggestion of the Orient attaches, and is especially pronounced in the case of the low mud wall and the ever-present well. The country patio always contains shade trees, and, not infrequently, vines and flowers.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHURCHES OF PANAMA¹

Among the population of the Republic of Panama there is a sprinkling of well-bred families descended from Spaniards, French, and Italians. Numerically they are insignificant, but in every other respect they are the most important element in the community. They absolutely control things political, the masses being quite willing to blindly follow the lead of one or another prominent partisan. Most of the business and property is in their hands. The members of these "illustrious families," as they are termed in Spanish-American countries, are generally well educated, it having been long the custom to send them to Spain or France for their schooling. The tendency now is to have the youths of this class taught in the United States.

¹ Portions of this chapter have been printed in articles contributed by the author to *Travel Magazine*.

Peculiar marital connections are common among the better class. As a rule, the offspring of irregular relations are well treated. Not infrequently they are legitimized and taken into the family presided over by the legal wife. In 1888, the Colombian Legislature enacted a law of which the following is an extract:

“ Art. 34. El matrimonio contraído conforme a los ritos de la Religion Católica anula ipso jure el matrimonio puramente civil, celebrado antes por los contrayentes con otra persona.

“ Art. 35. Para los efectos meramente civiles, la Ley reconoce la legitimidad de los hijos concebidos antes de que se anule un matrimonio civil a virtud de lo dispuesto en el artículo anterior.

“ Art. 36. El hombre que habiéndose casado civilmente, se case luego con otra mujer con arreglo a los ritos de la Religion Católica es obligado a suministrar alimentos congruos a la primera mujer y a los hijos habidos en ella, mientras esta no case católicamente.”¹

¹ Art. 34. Marriage contracted according to the rites of the Catholic Religion of itself annuls (ipso facto) a purely civil marriage previously celebrated by the contractants with other persons.

Art. 35. For the purely civil effects of the Law, it acknowledges

Civil marriages came into vogue following the dispossession of the Church and the eviction of the priests from their holdings. With its return, to some extent, to the former influence that it enjoyed, the Church has sought to nullify all marriages that have been contracted without its sanction and many men have eagerly seized the excuse for breaking bonds which have become irksome.

Aside from *fiestas*, which are numerous, but not so much so as they used to be, Sunday is the chief holiday. After morning services, the day is devoted to amusement and a wide choice of diversions is offered to the people. The cocking main will draw as many as the enclosure will hold. The seats rise all round the pit in tiers. Money is bet freely on the birds, and men, whose demeanor is usually dignified and self-possessed, abandon themselves to wild excitement. The choicest seats are occupied by persons prominent in the community. I have seen the Chief of Police holding a watch

the legitimacy of children conceived prior to the annulment of a civil marriage by virtue of the provision of the preceding article.

Art. 36. The man who having married civilly marries subsequently with another woman, according to the rites of the Catholic Religion, is obliged to provide maintenance for the first wife and for the children had by her, so long as she does not marry according to the Catholic Religion.

on the game cocks and a Legislator acting as referee.

Women are not permitted to attend the cock-fights, but the bull ring is open to them and they are to be seen there in large numbers on Sunday afternoon. The animal advertised as an "arrogant bull" is a phlegmatic creature that enters the enclosure with an air of being sadly bored. His "arrogance" is hidden beneath a benevolent expression and an evident disinclination to cause annoyance or harm to anyone. In fact, so meek and placid is he, that it requires a vast amount of pricking and goading to arouse his resentment in the slightest degree. The performance cannot fairly be called a bull-fight. It is bull baiting, pure and simple. Frequently the spectators become impatient of the animal's persistent nonchalance, and crowd into the ring and lend their efforts toward animating him with sticks and stones. I could not learn of anyone ever having been hurt in a Panaman bull-fight, but there is a fairly well authenticated tradition of the toro having once ripped up the breeches of a picador, who incautiously turned his back upon the beast and stooped over to pick up a cigarette. If the story is true, I hardly think that it can

be said to reflect great discredit upon the bull, for the best behaved animal might be expected to yield to such a temptation.

In recent years, a baseball game between teams of Canal employes has become a regular feature of the Sunday program. Some excellent players have been developed in the Zone, and the keenest rivalry exists between the several nines. The Panamans have not yet taken to the game actively, but as spectators they appear to enjoy it immensely.

The Jamaican negroes have imported the British national pastime to the Isthmus and a Sunday match between colored elevens usually takes place at the Colon end of the line.

In the evening the municipal band plays in the Cathedral Plaza and the people sit out on the overlooking balconies or promenade about the square. The Plaza is the heart of the city, topographically, socially and commercially. Around its sides are ranged, the Cathedral, the principal hotel, the leading bank, the Bishop's Palace, and some of the best stores.

Sunday is the day for the weekly drawing of the Panama Lottery, an institution dear to the people. Its offices are on the ground floor of the Bishop's Palace, not such an incongru-

ous situation as might appear at first flush, for the Lottery enjoys the patronage of the Church, which is a beneficiary of it in a substantial degree. The grand prize is \$7,500, paid in silver, so that the fortunate winner needs a cart to carry off his *bonanza*. Everyone takes at least one chance weekly. Tickets may be bought in all the stores and women and children peddle them about the streets.

The new theatre is occasionally visited by a good company of actors, when the Sunday night performance is attended by the *elite* of the city. For the greater part of the year, however, the theatre is in disuse.

Driving, or riding, out upon the savannas that lie adjacent to the city, is a favorite diversion of Panamans and Americans. These stretches of rich grassland, dotted with palms and other trees, afford ideal picnicking grounds. Several suburban residences are situated upon the savannas, and the wonder is that a greater number of Panamans do not live out there in the dry season.

Almost since the time of the foundation of the city, Taboga has been a favorite resort of its population and of the foreign element. It is the most beautiful of the islands that lie in



BISHOP'S PALACE, PANAMA.



A STREET IN DAVID.



the Bay of Panama. The French established a sanatorium there for convalescents, which has been enlarged and improved by the Commission.

There are many legends connected with Taboga, which is said to have been a resort of pirates before the modern city of Panama was founded. One of the stories tells how among the first ships to touch at the island was one manned by buccaneers. These men were much impressed by the young women of Taboga, who are to this day noted for their beauty. The pirates announced that on a certain evening they would give a dance on board their vessel, and the islanders were invited. When the time arrived, a pretext was found for taking the women on board before the men. As soon as they were on the deck, the ship attempted to make sail and leave with them. Many of the women, however, jumped into the water and swam ashore, whilst the men of the island put off in their canoes and attacked the vessel. At the conclusion of the fight, the pirates got away with a few of the fair Taboga damsels, but they paid for them with the loss of several of their own number.

In the vicinity of Panama are several ceme-

teries, one for Jews, one for Chinese, one which was used by the French, and another in which natives are deposited under a peculiar system of tenancy.

The native cemetery contains a large field which is well filled with graves, some of which are permanent resting places. The reader would naturally suppose that that is an almost invariable condition of a grave, but not so in Panama. Around this field are ranged tiers of niches in a stone wall. Each of these receptacles is designed to hold a coffin. When filled, the entrance is closed with plaster and the dates of beginning and end of the lease are written on the outside. The usual length of occupancy is eighteen months. At the end of this time, the lease must be renewed, if the remains are to be allowed to rest in peace any longer. Otherwise, the niche is opened, the coffin taken out and its contents dumped on to a bone pile in a small field at the back of the cemetery proper. The occupants of the *bovedas* are usually connected with the better class of families, but it is seldom that the lease of a niche is renewed more than once or twice. The poorer classes find burial in a neighboring field which is so small that it is dug up

every few years to make room for a fresh crop.

The cemetery privileges have been farmed out as a concession by the government for many years. Hence the businesslike methods of disposing of the dead which prevail. In recent years there has been a little improvement in the matter of the bone piles and dis-used coffins. Formerly there was no attempt at disinfecting them, until foreign physicians raised a stir about the matter. The old coffins were, and still are, sold second hand and often did duty for four or five successive corpses. I believe that at the present time some method of disinfection is employed, but to all outward appearance the cemetery is just what it was twenty years ago.

In this connection, Nelson says: " While on the Isthmus during March, 1888, I went out to see how things were in the new cemetery, and you can fancy my surprise at finding that all the numbers on the graves had been doubled. That large plot had been filled and over each grave was a simple wooden cross, painted black. Above was the number of the year, ' 1884,' and on the arm of the cross the number of the grave. For instance, you would

have, say, '3640' on the arm of the cross, below that '1888,' and above it in a scroll '1886.' The wherefore of it was as follows: In 1886, 3640 was the first occupant, but, as the cemetery had been dug over from end to end, he had been evicted, and twice 3640 was the number of the grave in 1888. Not only were all the numbers in that main cemetery duplicated, but they were digging over the cemetery at the back."

Time was when no city of the western hemisphere, and but few in all the world, could compare with Panama in wealth and grandeur. Two hundred and fifty years ago, the capital of the Spanish possessions in America was at the height of her glory. The eclipse was sudden and complete. Henry Morgan, leading a collection of ruffians of all nationalities, captured the city and reduced it to ashes. Among the many handsome buildings thus destroyed were thirty ecclesiastical edifices. Nothing remains of Old Panama but a few gray ruins, overgrown by jungle, above which the tower of San Anastasius Cathedral raises its venerable head. At its altar Pizarro made votive supplication on the eve of his momentous voyage to the south. What a world of romance and tragedy

centred about those crumbling walls in the palmy days of Panama!

Early in 1673, two years after the destruction of the old city, a new capital was founded on a site six miles farther west, chosen for its superior defensive situation. With the fear of repeated attack strong upon them, the Spaniards built the present Panama in such formidable fashion that Dampier and other freebooters, who approached it with sinister designs, abandoned all thought of assault at sight of its defences. A high wall, 60 feet broad along a considerable portion of its length, surrounded the place. The principal buildings were constructed with a view to their conversion into forts in emergency. This was especially the case with the churches, as their exterior aspects plainly denote. The walls are extremely thick and the doors have the proportions of unusually heavy gates. The windows are invariably sixteen feet or more from the ground and the upper portions of the buildings are frequently pierced with port-holes.

On a day in January, 1673, the royal proclamation commanding the population to raise a new city with all possible speed was read by

the Governor, on the spot now occupied by the Central Plaza, which remains, as it always has been, the focal point of the social and business life of Panama. On that occasion, the sites of the Cathedral and cemetery were marked off. The latter has long since been built over, but the former stands, and probably will for centuries to come, facing due south upon the park. The foundation of the Cathedral was immediately laid but its construction lagged, and fifty years after its commencement little progress had been made with it. Its ultimate completion was effected through the generosity of the first native Bishop of Panama. The bishop's father was an illiterate half-breed, who prospered as a charcoal burner, and finally amassed a large fortune by shrewd methods in other fields of business. He gave his only son the best education that Europe could afford and left to him what was, in those days, an enormous sum of money. This wealth, the son devoted entirely to the erection of the Cathedral, which was finished in 1760.

The Cathedral is a stately pile, somewhat disfigured by modern innovations, one of which was a bilious coat of yellow-wash, applied in honor of President Roosevelt's visit to Pan-

ama. The architecture of the edifice, like that of all the other churches of the city, is the Moorish style, familiar to us in what we call the "Mission" buildings of California and the Southwest. All the old churches of Panama — and none of them is less than a century in age, — conform to this style, but the ruins of the large monastical buildings betray decided departure from it.

The main entrance to the Cathedral is composed of three massive double-doors of hardwood, five inches thick, and bound with beautiful worked brass. The interior is divided into three aisles by long rows of pure white columns, arched on the outer sides at about twenty feet elevation and in the centre at a much greater height. The central arches alternate in form, one of almost flat construction being followed by one elongated and extending to the top of the building. The effect is peculiar but not unpleasing. In striking contrast with the white stonework is the rich deep red of the roof, which is probably made of cedar.

The Cathedral is in a remarkably fine state of preservation, although the earthquake of 1882 cracked some of the arches, and damaged

the facade. The same disturbance filled in the subterranean passage which led from the crypt to the sea-wall. Similar underground ways seem to have existed in connection with all the ecclesiastical buildings of Panama. They were probably designed as a means of escape in case of an attack from the land quarter and would have been naturally suggested by the experience of the Morgan raid.

The oldest church in Panama bears upon its front the inscription, "San Felipe Neri, 1688," evidently cut at the time of construction. It is a plain structure, but impressive in the strength and simplicity of its appearance. The front is of cut stone and the rear walls of small boulders, set in mortar which seems to be as sound to-day as ever it was. Used in this manner, or as the outer covering of walls, cement is to be seen in a perfect state of preservation in all the ecclesiastical buildings of Panama. Its extraordinary durability in a destructive climate would lead to the belief that the Spaniards had a method of manufacturing the material superior to any of which we know. Various tints were imparted to it, and a common form of embellishment was practised by setting in it, pieces of nacre, or the large mother

of pearl shells that are secured from the neighboring islands. This kind of ornament is still to be seen on the towers of some of the churches where the inset pieces have held in place for a century or more.

San Felipe is surmounted by a tower of the Moorish type, in which are the ancient bells, lashed to wooden cross pieces. The old church is peculiarly attractive by reason of the entire absence of renovation. It stands just as it did when first erected, in mute protest against the bad taste displayed in the modern buildings about it.

Nearby San Felipe is the large and interesting church of San Francisco, which was completed shortly before the Cathedral. It is made of stone, probably the tufa, or volcanic rock, that underlies the city. Its facade, now much time-worn and, perhaps, injured by earthquakes, was originally beautified by intricately carved masonry. Its ponderous doors are adorned with huge brazen knobs. Within, rows of heavy columns, supporting graceful arches, form a vista culminating in the grand carved wood altar, towering to the roof. Numerous mural tablets and marble slabs in the door, some of them bearing the coats of arms

of old Castilian families, indicate that this was, at one time, a favorite place of worship with the wealthy and titled persons of Panama. Here they came on Sunday and *fiestas*, in coaches and palanquins, their servants walking behind, with chairs upon their heads; for the churches of those days were not furnished with pews and they are only partially so now. Originally, large monastical buildings extended from the church to the sea-wall. Here and there, bits of their ruins may be found embodied in some modern structure.

The ruins of the church of San Domingo, which was destroyed by fire, attract visitors on account of the famous "flat arch." Several arches spanned the edifice, but to this alone was given the peculiar construction which excites the wonder of architects and engineers. Theoretically it lacks stability, but actually it has withstood the strain of years and the shock of earthquakes that overthrew other, and apparently much more substantial, portions of the building.

A quaint legend attaches to this curious piece of masonry. It is said that when first built, the arch fell. It was reconstructed and fell again, and so for a third time. Once more



SAN FELIPE NERI.



RUINS OF SAN DOMINGO.



it was erected and as the supports were about to be removed, the architect, who was a monk, stood beneath the arch and prayed that if it should not stand for all time, it might then fall upon his head.

La Merced stood near the landward gate of the old city wall, portions of which are still to be found among the buildings of Central Avenue, opposite the church.

While following the Moorish style, that prevails in all the churches of Panama, La Merced is distinctly original in design. The material employed in its construction is, in the main, a species of sandstone, but in parts stone brought from the ruins of the church of the same name in Panama Viejo was used, as the inscriptions upon it testify. These are, in some instances, upside down, owing to the careless manner in which the old tablets were inserted in the new walls.

Flanking the entrance are two stone chapels of pure Oriental type, surmounted by domed cupolas. One of these buildings is devoted to mortuary functions; the other contains a shrine, over which hangs a lamp that is said to have burned continuously for more than fifty years. The entrance is closed by an iron-

barred gate, in front of which one or two kneeling figures may be seen at almost any hour of the day or night.

The great side-doors, facing the Avenue, are studded with beautifully carved heads in brass and two enormous knockers, or handles, are formed in the shape of brazen angels. La Merced has the distinction of being the oldest church in Panama, after San Felipe Neri.

The church of Santa Ana bears every appearance of decay and neglect, inside and out. It was erected about one hundred and fifty years ago by El Conde de Santa Ana, whose bones repose in the vault. Judging from the inscription and coats of arms on the floor of the interior, the church was a sort of family appurtenance for several generations, and probably sank into poverty with the decline of its patrons' fortunes. The rich silver sacramental service, the lecterns of the same metal, and other property of the church sadly reflect a by-gone prosperity.

In one thing, at least, — and that no small matter, — Santa Ana is richer than the other churches of Panama. Its archives, going back to the earliest days of the city, are intact;



CHURCH OF SANTA ANA.



RUINS OF THE OLD JESUIT COLLEGE AND MONASTERY.



whereas, in every other case the church records and other documents have been mutilated by worms, destroyed, or lost.

The ruins of the old Jesuit College and Monastery extend along Avenida B, for a distance of about one hundred yards, and occupy almost the entire block behind. In places, detached portions of the ruined walls, twenty feet or more in height, stand on the very edge of the sidewalk, a palpable menace to life and limb. Shops and small dwellings have been erected in convenient corners of the ruins where economy of construction could be effected by using the original walls. The remains of this once splendid building occupy a large tract of ground in the heart of the city. Nevertheless, it is not without regret that one learns that the determination of the Government to tax church property has decided the owners to clear this site and devote it to modern improvements. In these days we are moving away from former ages so rapidly that few tangible connections remain.

This building was completed early in the eighteenth century, and was the largest and most imposing edifice in the city at the time. It was made of stone and brick and rose to the

unusual height of five stories. It did not lack architectural beauty, if we may judge from the main entrance, which still stands, facing the Avenue. The enormous doors remain intact, framed in a graceful archway and surmounted by the symbol of the Order of Jesus, a bleeding heart, carved in sandstone. The monastery had not long been built when it was destroyed by the fire which, in 1737, devoured a large portion of the city and included the church of San Domingo in its sweep.

The little church of San José is built against an angle of the ruins of San Domingo, and has stood there for probably considerably more than a century. Not long since, there died at his post an extremely aged priest who had acted as cura of San José for nearly eighty years. The church is the smallest and, perhaps, the poorest in Panama. The little wooden bell tower, in the left hand corner of the masonry facade, was doubtless originally designed for a temporary convenience and the money for a substantial substitute has never been available. The interior displays similar indications of poverty in its wooden columns and choir loft and cheap finishings. There is no attempt

at decoration. Kalsomine covers the walls and woodwork, but the gaudily dressed figures of saints on altar and shrine afford an overabundance of color.

CHAPTER VII¹

THE COUNTRY AND ITS RESOURCES

THE narrow strip of land, running east and west, and connecting the continents of North and South America, used to be considered a part of the latter, but is now generally looked upon as a portion of Central America. This classification is consistent with the physical and climatic features of the territory of Panama, which more closely resemble those of Costa Rica, than they do those of Colombia.

The Republic of Panama occupies an area of nearly 32,000 square miles, of which the extreme length is 430 miles and the average breadth 70 miles. Its inland borders, dividing it on the one hand from Costa Rica, and on the other Colombia, aggregate less than 350 miles, while its coast line totals 1,245 miles, consid-

¹ The greater part of this chapter is extracted from articles contributed by the author to the "Bulletin of the American Republics," August, 1909, and "The Independent," Oct. 21, 1909.

erably more than half of which faces the Pacific. This peculiar formation of the territory insures two great advantages; either coast is easily accessible from any point in the interior and the entire area might be brought within the scope of a railroad more readily than the domain of any other nation in the world. Surveys for such a road to extend from Panama to David, in the Province of Chiriqui, have been made and the Government has contracted with the Panama Railroad to build it.

The climate, while tropical, is much less trying than is generally supposed, the proximity of the oceans to all parts of the interior tending to temper the heat. In the dry season, the temperature averages about 76 degrees Fahrenheit, in the wet season a few degrees more, with very little variation at any time.

The rainfall on the Atlantic coast averages 140 inches in the year; on the Pacific coast, about 60 inches, and in the interior 93 inches. The dry season extends from the beginning of the year to about the first of May, but the rains do not cease and commence with the regularity they display in India and other parts of the tropics.

The greater part of the country is broken by

short, irregular ranges of mountains, varying in height from 1,500 feet to 11,750 feet. The Sierra de Chiriqui, which enters Panama from Costa Rica, contains the Volcano, 11,265 feet in elevation, Pico Blanco, 11,750 feet, and Rovalo, 7,020 feet. Between the mountain spurs lie rich, wooded valleys and great expanses of level, grassy llano.

Two-thirds of the area of Panama is forested with trees of valuable wood, the Atlantic side of the divide and the Province of Darien being the most thickly covered. On the Pacific slope, where the rainfall and humidity are less, the forest is more open and the growth of smaller dimensions. On this side, too, the drainage is better and there are fewer swamps and a less extent of mangrove thicket along the shore than upon the Atlantic coast.

The region is remarkably well watered, one hundred and fifty streams flowing into the Caribbean Sea and twice that number into the Pacific Ocean. The utility of the latter for commercial purposes is restricted by the great tidal fluctuation, which embraces a range of twenty feet. The ports on this coast are necessarily situated some distance up the rivers and long delays are usually entailed in reaching

and leaving them, for each operation must be favored by the tide. There is one point upon the Pacific littoral admirably situated for an outside port. That is Charco Azul, or Blue Pool, near the Costa Rican border. Here is a large sea hole with depth varying from sixty to one hundred and five fathoms and having anchorage around the inner edge. Charco Azul must ultimately become the principal port of Panama west of the Canal. It is situated in the section of the country where the earliest and greatest development will take place, and it is the only harbor on the coast that is always navigable regardless of tidal conditions. The coast-wise traffic that must be generated by the Canal will demand such a port, and decline to enter rivers passable only at high tide, and then solely by vessels having no more than ten feet of draft. On the Atlantic coast there are several good harbors, but, excepting for Bocas del Toro and Colon, that part of the Isthmus is undeveloped and gives little promise of settlement.

Upon the Atlantic side, the country is, for the most part, covered with heavy forest and jungle, which extends down to the water line and is composed of great trees of valuable

hardwood, rising out of undergrowth so dense as to be impenetrable without the aid of the machete. This territory presents a fine field for lumbering, but the industry cannot be carried on profitably except by corporations with large capital. Until the land is cleared, the Atlantic belt must remain an uninhabited wilderness. Even when opened to agriculture it will, owing to its excessive rainfall, be less attractive to settlers than land upon the Pacific coast. The San Blas country, east of the Canal Zone, is practically terra incognita. Its Indian inhabitants have ever been inimical to the white man and Spain failed to bring them under subjection. They acknowledge allegiance to the Panama Government and consult the President in the election of their chief but, otherwise, are permitted to manage their own affairs. With the exception of coming to Colon for salt and other necessities and bringing in large quantities of cocoanuts, they hold no intercourse with the outer world.

The Darien section is wild, forest clad, and uninhabited, save for a sprinkling of Indians. It contains the greatest extent of natural rubber growth, but otherwise presents less promise of development than does the territory to the



TWO-YEAR-OLD RUBBER TREES, MARIATO.



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF
CALIFORNIA

west of the Canal Zone. An English syndicate is operating a large rubber tract in Darien, the product of which is of excellent quality. Another large tract, worked by a Boston company, extends twenty miles on either side of Mariato Point. This concern is making extensive improvements in its property and planting several hundred thousand new trees every year. It has shipped rubber to the States of a quality equal to the finest Para product and commanding the top price in the market. The plant is also systematically cultivated by a corporation located at Las Cascadas, a few miles from the Canal line.

The rubber tree is found wild in every part of the country and the species called Castilla will thrive anywhere, if planted under proper conditions and provided with the shade essential to its healthy development. At one time, large quantities of rubber were shipped from Chiriqui, but, as it was gathered by the old native method of cutting down the trees, and replanting was neglected, the valuable stands of the Province disappeared and now the trees are to be found only in scattered specimens which, however, exhibit a vigor that indicates the results to be expected from scientific cul-

ture. The commercial cultivation of rubber is, of course, practically only for the capitalist. The individual of small means, even though he should be able to meet the initial expense, could not afford to wait for the returns, which a rubber plantation will not begin to yield before the seventh or eighth year.

There is an ample amount of latent water power at various points in the country. In the vicinity of David a very simple and inexpensive development is possible and a sufficient demand already exists to make it economically feasible. Saw mills, leather factories, distilleries, sugar refineries, etc., might be profitably operated by such power which could be also utilized to supply the city with electric light.

All the freight in the interior is carried in bullock carts or by pack animals, by far the greater part of it, aside from the banana shipments, reaching one or other of the ports on the Pacific. Except for Bocas del Toro, the depot of the United Fruit Company, David is the principal point in the interior, but Remedios, Sona, and Aguadulce, as well as some smaller ports, have a fair export trade. The City of David has about 4,000 inhabitants and is growing apace. It is situated some nine



THE PLAZA, DAVID.



miles from the coast and three from the river port of Pedregal, which is the outlet for its exports. There are a number of industrial plants in the place, such as wood and leather factories, distilleries, coffee mills, etc. Two lines, each running two steamboats, maintain a regular service between David and Panama, calling at intermediate points with sufficient frequency to meet the demands of traffic. There are also a number of small luggers carrying passengers and freight up and down the coast.

The stretch of country lying to the south of the divide and to the west of the Canal Zone is much more open than that in other parts of the Isthmus. The growth is mainly what the natives term "monte," that is, plants of moderate size with here and there a large tree. Trails and cart roads can be made through it with ease and it is readily cleared with the machete. At frequent intervals this jungle gives place to extensive expanses of savana, or llano, as it is commonly called up-country. Numerous streams present almost the only difficult places in a continuous road from Aguadulce to David and beyond. Bridges, to which additions are constantly being made, span many of them. It is in this section of the coun-

try only that any agricultural and industrial progress has been made. Along this stretch are several towns and hundreds of hamlets, but the population is very sparse and must increase many fold before the splendid resources of this region can be adequately exploited. This lack is the most serious disadvantage under which the country rests. The entire population of the Republic, including that of the Canal Zone, is no more than 300,000. Of these, perhaps, one half are to be found scattered over the interior. Chiriqui, the richest and most important province from the agricultural view point, has fewer than 100,000 inhabitants. The Indians can not be counted on to meet the demands of labor and only a small proportion of the Panamans are available for hire. Extensive immigration must be induced and, fortunately, an immediate source of supply is at hand. There are thousands of hardy Spaniards and Italians engaged on the Canal who will shortly be released. It is probable that a large proportion of these will be glad to remain in the country and take up land. They make excellent farmers, and will furnish a desirable new element in the general population.



A STRETCH OF LLANO ON THE ROAD BETWEEN AGUADULCE AND DAVID.



There is nowhere in the world richer land than that of the Republic of Panama, and the Pacific section of the Province of Chiriqui surpasses all other parts in fertility of soil, salubrity of climate, scenic beauty and conditions adapted to agricultural pursuits. The District of David is an ideal farming country. From the coast, the land gradually rises to the mountains, about forty miles inland. Stretches of monte alternate with large tracts of gently rolling llano, reminding one of the famous "blue grass" country in the neighborhood of Lexington, Kentucky, and covered with a thick mat of similar grass. Frequent streams and clumps of forest lend diversity to the landscape which has an ever-present background of mountain peaks whose heads penetrate the clouds. Finer land for cattle raising it would be impossible to imagine. The llanos furnish ample range of the best kind and rich portreros, filled with heavier growth, are fenced in upon the bottom lands.

Cattle raising is the only agricultural industry to which any intelligence and care have been devoted to the natives. By constant experiment, and selection over a long period of years, an excellent breed of cattle has been

produced. At four years of age an average Chiriqui steer will yield about 400 pounds of meat and fetch from \$30 to \$35 gold at David. The home market is not yet sufficiently supplied and it will be considerably enlarged with the opening of the Canal. The present method of shipment, which involves a steamboat journey of three or four days, prevents the delivery of the animals in Panama in the best condition, but with the establishment of the railroad from the capital to David this difficulty will be obviated. There is an abundance of nutritious food in the District. Guinea grass grows in tall bunches and savoya with a high broad blade. Del Para is a sort of creeper, introduced from Brazil. Jujuca is an extremely succulent grass that abounds in the river bottoms and can be depended on in the driest seasons. Jenjebrillo is similar to "blue grass," and gives a blade five inches in length during the rain. Sieta is a kind of sage, highly nutritious, that grows on sandy soil. Without doubt, alfalfa would thrive in this section, where the soil is a loose loam precisely adapted to deep-rooting plants.

Horse raising is not carried on to anything like the extent that it might be with profit. The



A HORSE CORRAL.



Panama market is far from being fully supplied. Only stallions are used for draft and riding, the mares being left upon the range for breeding purposes. The native horse is not large, but stocky, and has great endurance. Even more promising than horse raising is the breeding of mules, which are of greater service and command a considerably higher price.

Throughout this section the top soil is six feet or more in depth and of marvellous fertility. This extreme richness accounts for the fact that cultivation is entirely neglected. The natives cut down the monte and burn it where it lies. The ground is then ready for planting. The surface is scratched with a machete and seed dropped in. The crop is then allowed to take care of itself. There is no plowing, nor rooting; no weeding nor pruning. And, despite this haphazard method, the resultant crops are such as few parts of the earth can produce under intense cultivation. Sugar cane has been harvested continuously for fifteen years from the same field without replanting and the yield weighs eighteen pounds, and sometimes more, to the stalk. There are patches in Chiriqui where Kaffir corn has grown continuously for twenty years, without

attention, and fine potatoes are gathered from ground sown fourteen years ago. The tobacco plant is neither topped nor trimmed but is allowed to grow in unaided contest with weeds. When cut, it is hung in a hut to dry, preparatory to shipping. Scientific curing is quite unknown; nevertheless, the leaf compares favorably with that of Pennsylvania, for instance. There is every reason for believing that, with proper management, a high grade of tobacco can be raised in Chiriqui and not improbable that an excellent wrapper leaf may be grown under cover.

Coffee grows wild all over the Pacific coast region. Its systematic cultivation is limited to the Boquete Valley on the southern slope of the Volcan. The industry is in the hands of a few Americans and Englishmen who are producing a bean of superlative quality, which sells for fifteen cents gold a pound in Panama. Trial shipments to New York brought the highest prices but, since the output is far from equaling the domestic demand, there is no inducement to export. Cacao thrives without extraordinary attention, and is not subject to the wind storms which cause so much damage to plantation in other parts of the world. Little effort

has been devoted to the cultivation of this valuable crop and only one plantation is maintained under proper management. The owner of this always secured the best price for his product in the London market. A short fibre cotton grows extensively in Chiriqui. Small quantities of it are exported and sell at good figures owing to the excellence of the quality. Fibre cultivation has not yet been entered upon, although many parts of the country are well adapted to the growth of such plants, and several species of commercial value are found in a wild state. Specimen fibres sent to England and Germany have been pronounced by experts to be stronger than hemp.

In short, tropical plants of all descriptions, as well as many peculiar to the temperate zone, thrive in Panama. The varying character of the land, with its different soils and altitudes, makes it possible to raise the greatest variety of crops in a comparatively small area. For instance, on a strip running back 25 or 30 miles from the Pacific Ocean, along the shore, fine playa furnishes the best possible ground for cocoanut plantations. Back of this is excellent sugar land. Still farther back, fibres and rubber thrive. And so, in succession, tobacco,

340 Panama and the Canal To-day

cacao, coffee, and, in the higher altitudes, the vegetables of the temperate regions. Along the Costa Rican border is a belt of tropical fruit land as rich as any in the world. While oranges, grape fruit, mangoes, pineapples, papayas, etc. grow wild in different parts of the country, they are not cultivated, and large quantities are imported from Jamaica. Even the supply of bananas, of which the consumption is great, is not met by the native production.

Since the earliest settlement by Spain, a wide-spread belief has prevailed that rich deposits of the precious metals exist in the San Blas country and the report of a recent scientific expedition strengthens this supposition. But in the almost total absence of exact information it is hazardous to express an opinion as to the mineral resources of Panama. The numerous gold ornaments that have been found in the ancient Indian graves indicate the presence at one time of large quantities of that metal. It is possible that a geological survey of the Isthmus would reveal unsuspected mineral wealth. Manganese has been discovered in several places, and there is scientific authority for the statement that extensive coal depos-

its exist. Lignite of an excellent quality is distributed over a wide area. When transportation facilities are increased this will furnish fuel for industrial purposes and must prove an important factor in the development of the country.

The Republic of Panama presents a splendid field for the investment of American capital and the application of American energy and enterprise. Since the occupation of the Canal Zone by the United States, development has advanced appreciably in the interior, and especially in Chiriqui. Many public improvements are projected in this section, and it will doubtless be well settled and extensively devoted to agriculture in the course of the next decade. The Government is disposed to offer every encouragement to American settlers, and corporations may depend upon liberal treatment and the utmost security. The character of the vegetation and the lay of the land along the Pacific Coast render clearing and road-making comparatively easy and inexpensive. At present ox carts and buggies run between David and Boquete, Bugaba, Divala and other points. The construction of a railroad from Panama to David in the near future is assured, and,

with rapid transportation available, a large and profitable industry should be established. The Panama Canal will bring the world's markets within easy reach of various products of this section. Its sugar and its cocoanuts, to mention only two of the most assured exports, will find a ready sale.

The only drawback to a speedy extension of agriculture is the paucity of labor, and means of overcoming that difficulty are within reach.

The constantly increasing number of Americans who look to foreign lands for fields of enterprise fall, for the most part, into two categories — gold-seekers and home-seekers. I will not incur the responsibility of advising the former to try their fortune on the Isthmus of Panama for, although that region may contain rich mineral deposits, as many believe that it does, my inquiries have failed to elicit satisfactory evidence of such a condition. On the other hand, I can confidently assert that to Americans anxious to engage in agriculture Panama offers splendid opportunities.

Viewing the territory from the latter standpoint, a large proportion of it is excluded from consideration, leaving, however, a section suf-

ficiently rich and extensive to support several millions of inhabitants.

Such is the belt of land extending from the Canal Zone to the Costa Rican border, roughly stated, 250 miles in length by 40 miles in breadth. This is the only portion of the interior that contains any considerable population, or in which any degree of development has been attained. In both these respects the section comprising the Districts of David, Bugaba, and Alanje, is far in advance of other parts of the country and must, by reason of its superior natural advantages and industrial facilities, be the seat of the earliest and greatest development. With an extensive experience of tropical countries, I declare unhesitatingly that there is nowhere in the world a region richer in natural resources than this. Furthermore, it has the characteristic, extremely rare in the tropics, of a climate devoid of excessive heat. The mean temperature is somewhat below 80 degrees and the extreme fluctuations do not vary from this more than 10 degrees. This applies to the coastal regions; the highlands enjoy cooler and less humid atmosphere. The first four months of the year embrace the dry season. This period is entirely free from the

torridity of the tropical summer. Sufficient rain falls to keep the vegetation green and insure fresh food and abundance of water for the live stock. The rainy season extends over eight months of the year. The rainfall takes the form of heavy showers, seldom lasting longer than an hour at one time, or covering in the aggregate more than four or five hours of the twenty-four. It is only at the end of this term that the downfall is great, and during August and September Chiriqui is visited by a return of typical summer weather lasting for a month or six weeks. The lay of the land and the nature of the soil create perfect drainage. The water runs off the surface in an incredibly short while after a downpour and nothing like a swamp exists in all the region under consideration.

The land runs up from the ocean to the mountains in such easy gradients that bullock carts of the heaviest and most cumbersome build make the journey from David to Boquete without difficulty. The growth in this section is thick but of such moderate size as to be easily cleared with the machete. Expanses of llano, miles in extent, alternate with the woodland.

The reason for the long neglect of the natural

resources of this marvellously rich country is not far to seek. One of them was lack of capital; another, and a more potent one, was the unsettled condition in which the people have lived for generations past. The territory now possessed by the Republic of Panama has been, until the beginning of the present century, the seat of frequent revolutions, each one involving confiscation and destruction of property. This condition suppressed native enterprise and repelled foreign capital. Now, however, the interests of the United States in the country are a guarantee of peace and stability.

I have no hesitation in declaring that no country in the world holds greater promise for corporate enterprise, in a variety of directions, than does the Republic of Panama. The prospects for individual American immigrants must be stated with some qualifications. Any American of good character may go to Panama and secure title to a considerable tract of public land at a cost of five pesos — equal to \$2.50 in United States currency — per hectare, on condition of fencing it and reducing it to cultivation within five years. The cost of clearing will be 20 pesos per hectare, and of general labor, one peso per day. Thus a man with

\$1,500 may take up and improve 50 hectares, or about 125 acres, of land, and a very moderate knowledge of farming will suffice to insure good crops. But the question of marketing the produce involves less simple considerations. Very little public land is available along the existing lines of communication. It is not necessary, however, to resort to the settled districts in order to secure good land. The richest in the country is generally believed to be that beyond Divala and Bugaba, the outposts of settlement, and the Costa Rican border. But in this frontier region, otherwise most desirable, two serious difficulties will be encountered by the settler of moderate means — those of transportation and labor. To a company undertaking development in this section the expenditure of, say, \$5,000, in the construction of roads and the importation of laborers, would be a small matter, but to the individual, with comparatively little produce to send to market, the expense would be prohibitive. It is safe to predict that in ten, or fifteen years time, this entire territory will be covered by a network of highways and dotted with villages. In the meanwhile, I would suggest that Americans with small capital settling in Panama should



MAKING A CLEARING. THE LAND IS CUT OVER AND THE BRUSH BURNED WHERE IT LIES.



form colonies, which would insure advantages besides that of pooling the expense of road-making and securing labor. A still better plan would be to occupy land on, or near the property of some development company — of which several are projected — and take advantage of its facilities for marketing produce and attracting labor.

Of course, the quick crops, such as sugar cane and tobacco, must be the mainstay of the small farmer. But, by putting a portion of his land into an orange grove or a cacao plantation, he may, in the course of seven or eight years, create a valuable property. Almost anything that he may raise will, under the conditions that have been suggested, be salable at a profit. There already exists a number of markets in which the products of Panama, actual and potential, might be disposed of in large quantities. The Canal will bring the ports of Chiriqui into water communication with the entire coast of the United States and with practically every part of the world.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ANCIENT GRAVES OF CHIRIQUI

ALTHOUGH the Province of Chiriqui must have been often traversed by the Conquistadores, very little is said about it, or its inhabitants, in the Spanish writings that have been preserved. The Indians of that region have traditions relating to their ancestors and crediting them with a degree of development much greater than that displayed by their supposed descendants. It is a universal human trait to erect lasting monuments of one kind or another, if they be but heaps of stones, but the former people who occupied the western end of the Isthmus of Panama appear to have deliberately refrained from leaving any such traces of their existence. Not only that, but no remains of towns, or structures of any kind have been found above ground that could be connected with them.

Chiriqui was first brought to the notice of the outer world by the discovery of the graves

of a vanished race. In the latter part of 1858, two natives of the village of Bugaba accidentally unearthed a golden image of ancient manufacture. Pursuing the search into deeper ground and over a larger area, they found themselves in the midst of a *huacal*, or cemetery. The discovery could not be kept secret and in a short while a thousand men were on the spot. Out of this burial place one hundred and thirty pounds of ornaments, made of pure gold, or *tumbago*, a mixture of gold and copper, were taken in the space of a few months. The Indians had no idea of the value of these articles as curiosities, and melted them. The bullion value of the ornaments secured from twelve acres of ground exceeded \$50,000.

The search for *huacas*, as the graves are called, was extended all over the Pacific section of the Province, and several thousand Indians and Chiricanos engaged in it. With a little practice the explorers easily located the graves. The gold hunter carried a light iron rod with which he prodded the ground as he walked along. When a hard substance was encountered below the surface, further investigation generally revealed a *huaca*. It is said that, in the course of five or six years, gold ornaments

to the value of \$400,000 were collected in Chiriqui. At the present time, although a new grave is occasionally found, the yield has probably almost reached its limit.

Professor Wm. H. Holmes, of the United States Bureau of Ethnology, who has made a special study of these graves and their contents, says: "There is probably no valid reason for assigning the remains of this region to a very high antiquity. The highest stage of culture here may have been either earlier or later than the period of highest civilization in Mexico and South America or contemporaneous with it. As to the affinities of the ancient middle Isthmian tribes with the peoples north and south of them we can learn nothing positive from the evidences of their art. So far as the pottery has come within my observation, it appears to indicate a somewhat closer relationship with the ancient Costa Rican peoples than with those of continental South America; yet in their burial customs, and especially in their use of gold, they were like the ancient peoples of Middle and Southern New Granada. . . . The graves do not often seem to have had a uniform position in relation to one another or to the points of the compass. In some cases

they are clustered about a central tomb, and then assume a somewhat radiate arrangement; again, according to Mr. McNeil, they were placed end to end, occupying long trenches. He describes the pits as being oval and quadrangular and as having a depth ranging from a few feet to eighteen feet. The paving or pack consists of earth and water-worn stones; the latter are pitched in without order and form but a small percentage of the filling. . . . The flat stones which cover the cyst are often ten or fifteen feet below the surface, and are in some cases very heavy, weighing three hundred pounds or more. A single stone is in some cases large enough to cover the entire space, but more frequently two or more flat stones are laid side by side across the cavity. These were supported by river stones a foot or more in length, set around the margin of the cyst. . . . The implements, pieces of pottery, and ornaments were probably buried with the dead, pretty much as are similar objects in all parts of America. The almost total disappearance of the human remains makes a determination of exact relative disposition impossible. The universal testimony, however, is that all were not placed with the body, but that some were

added as the graves were filled, being placed in crevices of the walls or pillars or thrown in upon the accumulating earth or pebbles of the surface pavement. The relics obtained from the tombs are confined almost exclusively to the three least perishable materials: stone, clay, and metal.”

The people who made these graves were skilled in the working of metals, gold, silver, copper, and tin. They made bronze and plated other metals with gold in a lasting and finished manner. Most of the gold ornaments appear to have been cast, probably in molds of clay. The metal objects which have been secured from the graves of Chiriqui are probably for the most part personal ornaments. It is obvious, however, that many of them had an emblematical significance, and most likely that some were connected with religious functions, or, perhaps, represented idols.

The metal ornaments are found in only a small proportion of the graves, those probably of chiefs and persons of importance in the community. The workmanship of these objects betrays great and varied skill. The manner in which the different parts of complex figures were joined together is difficult to determine.



POTTERY AND STONE ARTICLES FROM ANCIENT GRAVES.



GOLD ORNAMENTS FROM ANCIENT GRAVES.



There are no traces of solder and if such a material was used it must have been of the same composition as the body of the object, and applied in such a way as to leave no marks. " At the junction of the parts there are often decided indications of hammering, or at least of the strong pressure of an implement; but in pursuing the matter further we find a singular perfection in the joining, which amounts to a coalescence of the metals of the two parts concerned. . . . All points considered, I am inclined to believe that the objects were cast, and cast in their entirety. It is plain, however, that the original model was made up of separately constructed parts of wire or wire-like strands and of eccentric and often massive parts, and that all were set together by the assistance of pressure, the indications being that the material used was sufficiently plastic to be worked after the manner of clay, dough, or wax. In one case, for example, the body of a serpent, consisting of two wires neatly twisted together, is held in the hand of a grotesque figure. The hand consists of four fingers made by doubling together two short pieces of wire. The coil has been laid across the hand and pressed down into it until half buried, and the ends of the

fingers are drawn up around it without any indications of hammer strokes. Indeed, the effect is just such as would have been produced if the artist had worked in wax. Again, in the modelling of the eyes we have a good illustration. The eye is a minute ball cleft across the entire diameter by a sharp instrument, thus giving the effect of the parted lids. Now, if the material had been gold or copper, as in the specimens, the ball would have been separated into two parts or hemispheres, which would not exhibit any great distortion, but as we see them here the parts are flattened and much drawn out by the pressure of the cutting edge, just as if the material had been decidedly plastic."

Most of the metal figures represent the human form, in more or less distorted presentment, and various animal shapes. The vegetable kingdom does not appear to have furnished models to the workers in metal or in clay. Even the conventional designs with which some of the more elaborate pieces are surrounded and the ornamentation of the pottery never includes leaf designs as might have been expected. The frog seems to have been one of the most favored forms. The tortoise,

tiger, eagle, armadillo, and dog are also frequently represented. In most of the ornaments and in many of the pieces of pottery a small loose ball is enclosed with the evident design of furnishing a rattle. A great number of bells have been found, of about the size and almost exactly like our slotted sleigh bells. Almost all the objects have little loops by means of which they were suspended from the neck with strings of deer gut, or grass.

De Zeltner thus describes one of the pieces which he secured: "The most curious piece in my collection is a gold figure of a man, seven centimeters in height. The head is ornamented with a diadem terminated at each side with the head of a frog. The body is nude, except a girdle, also in the form of a plait supporting a flat piece intended to cover the privates, and two round ornaments on each side. The arms are extended from the body; the well drawn hands hold, one of them, a short, round club, the other a musical instrument, of which one end is in the mouth and the other forms an enlargement like that of a flute made of a human bone. It is not probable that this is a pipe. Both thighs have an enlargement and the toes are not marked in this little figurine."

Among the ornaments which I secured on the Isthmus, is a figure of a tortoise, two and a half inches long and two inches broad. It is made of copper, plated with gold. The figure is perfectly proportioned, one side being exactly like the other. From each of the forefeet a comparatively heavy strand of twisted wire extends to the mouth. Each flipper is finished in a conventional design which includes a frog's head. The body appears to be formed of one piece of metal about one-sixteenth of an inch in thickness. There can be little doubt about this having been cast. Underneath, a piece of barred metal, somewhat resembling ribs, and enclosing a small metal ball, gives rotundity to the figure. This piece is attached to the former only at one end but there is not the slightest appearance of joint, so that the presumption is that the whole was cast in one piece and the lower portion bent over into position.

Nelson refers to a specimen which caused him a great deal of speculation. "It evidently was intended for the figure of some king. It was in bronze, and that surprised me greatly, because the art of casting in bronze is deemed

an art to this day, if I have been rightly informed."

The greater part of the contents of the graves is pottery, plain and glazed. This takes the greatest variety of form and color. Some of it is quite black and some light yellow, various tints of red and brown intervening. The shapes are exceedingly artistic and the formation perfect. The ornamentation ranges from crude outlines of animal forms, that of the alligator prevailing, to complex and regular geometrical designs. A distinct evolution from one to the other may be traced through a series of vases or pots. The pigment used in coloring was remarkably durable, for, in many cases, the ornamentation is as fresh as though it had been done but a year ago. The Indians pay little regard to the pottery and the greater part of it is broken and thrown aside. At least, that used to be the case, but of late years the graves have yielded little else, and the *huaca* hunters are glad to get the profits that accrue from the sale of the less valuable articles.

I came across a native in the neighborhood of Divala, from whom I obtained some unusually good specimens, but could not induce him to tell where he had secured them. I after-

wards learned that he had discovered a cemetery in an unoccupied spot on the outskirts of the village. He naturally wished to get the full benefit of his find and resorted to a shrewd measure for insuring that object. The place was thickly covered with vegetation, but lay near one of the beaten paths and the discoverer feared that some passer-by might light upon it in the same manner as he had done. Taking a lusty rooster to the spot by night, he tied it to a tree and so left it. Before long the villagers began to talk about the mysterious cock which could never be seen, but which crowed at all hours of the day and night. Soon the spot had gained a reputation for being haunted and any one who had to go by it hastened his footsteps. The originator of this ruse deserved of better success than he experienced. The villagers noted his frequent visits after dark to the vicinity of the haunted spot and following one night, found him at work with a machete, opening a grave by the light of a lantern. The next day the entire village was at work in the *huacal* and its treasures were soon exhausted.

Implements and utensils, always of stone, are found in quantities in the graves. Large pieces



VILLAGE OF DIVALA.



of sandstone, which take a great variety of forms, were evidently used to grind corn. These are often two feet or more in length, and perhaps as high. The top is concave and in some cases a stone roller is found which fits into this surface groove. Usually they are made to represent some animal, the jaguar or puma most frequently furnishing the model. Occasionally the grindstone is circular in form and surrounded by a mass of curiously carved figures. The workmanship and ingenuity displayed is simply marvellous. A great variety of stone chisels and hatchets have been taken out of these burial places. They were undoubtedly the implements with which the grindstones were carved and seem to have been the only durable tools used by these people. They are finely polished and perfectly proportioned, many of them having surprisingly sharp edges.

Some miles distant from David, standing upon the open plain, is an object which some persons have tried to connect with the grave makers of ancient Chiriqui. This is a huge boulder, called the *pedra pintada*, or painted stone. A variety of hieroglyphics are cut on the surface of this stone and many of them

have been painted. It is possible that these inscriptions may be of Indian origin and date back a considerable time, but it appears to me to be absurd to try to establish a connection between them and the *huaca* builders. The paint, of course, is of comparatively modern origin, and there is no radical resemblance between the pictures and characters on this great stone and the figures taken out of the graves, or the ornamentation of the pottery. Then again, if the ancient inhabitants of Chiriqui left this monument, it is passing strange that it should be the only thing of the kind surviving them. The *pedra pintada* has probably been in its present condition during many generations. Although it is not described in any writing of which I am aware, the grandfathers of living Chiricanos spoke of it as an old landmark and the local Indians declare that it was there in its "painted" state when their people first came to that part of the country, which was certainly not less than one hundred and fifty years ago. But that would leave a gap of several centuries, at least, between the carved boulder and the last of the *huaca* makers.

More than one scientist has made an effort to solve the mystery of the ancient people of

Chiriqui, but none with satisfactory result. A doubtful authority once claimed to have discovered in one of the graves an article made of a certain stone, which he declared was not to be found in its natural state at any place nearer to Chiriqui than Behring Strait. Assuming this to be true, it affords a foundation for a very pretty conjecture.

The most puzzling feature of the question is the absence of any remains above ground. It must be supposed that a people who had reached the stage of development indicated by the metal and pottery work, and who displayed not a little structural skill in the fashioning and construction of their graves, must have made dwellings of stone which is abundant all over the country. But, if they did so, how has the last vestige of such buildings disappeared? Probably we shall never know any more than we now do about the matter.

The presence of so much gold in the graves has led to the belief that it was plentiful in this region. Although the mining operations of late years have not yielded satisfactory results, it is quite possible that rich deposits do exist and that they will be discovered when closer attention is devoted to prospecting.

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There are records of the Spaniards having mined successfully at a spot near the Costa Rican border in Chiriqui. Many attempts have been made to discover this mine and recently it was rumored that a party of Indians wandering through an unfrequented district had come across some old cast iron church bells, which are believed to indicate the site of the settlement that stood in the vicinity of the lost mine.