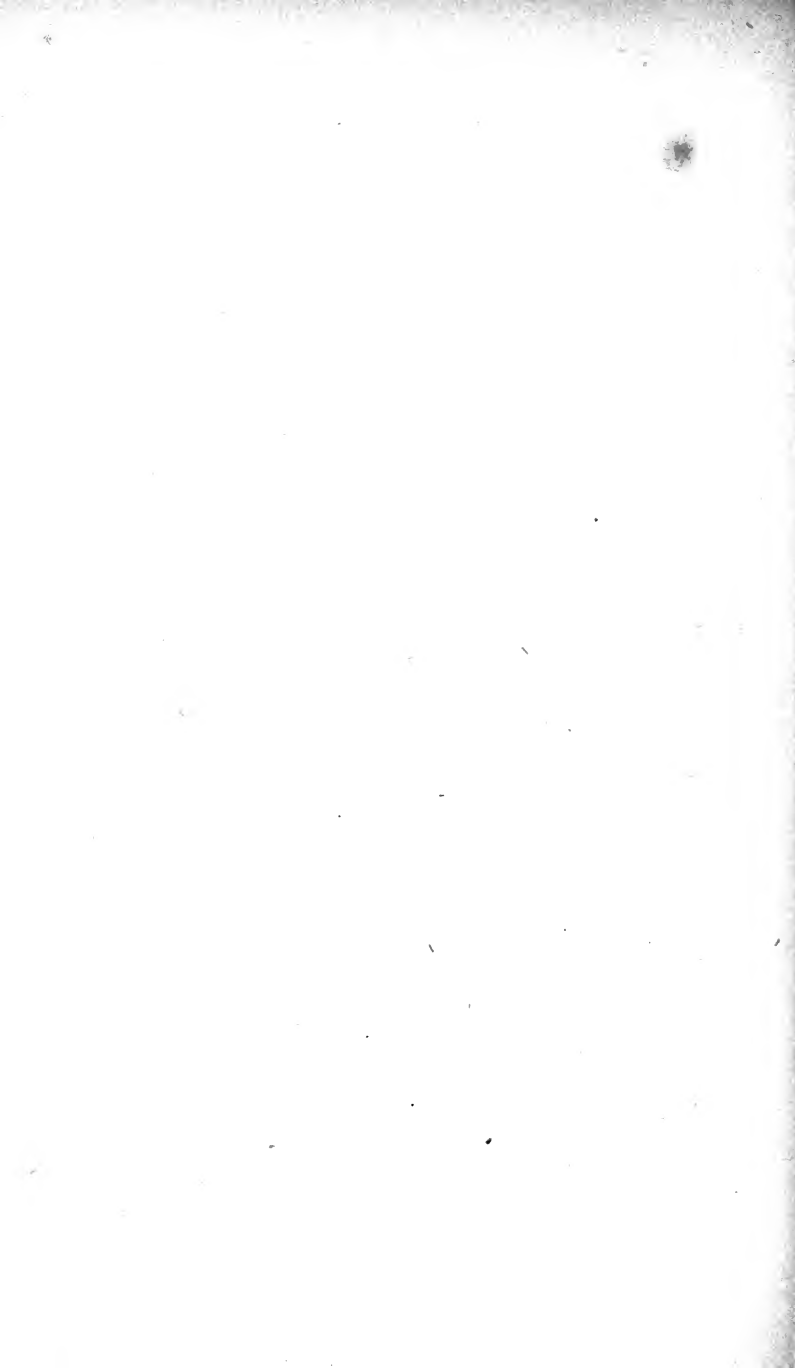
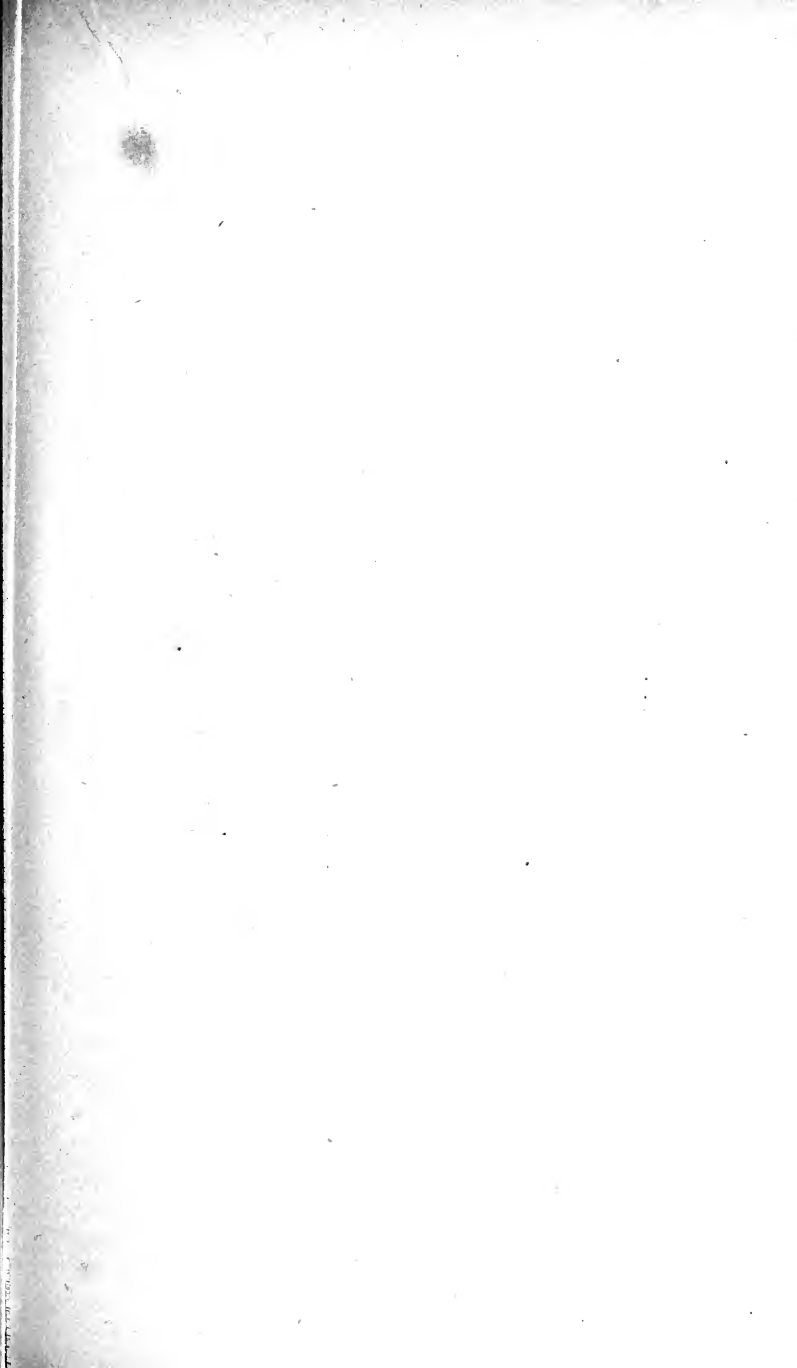
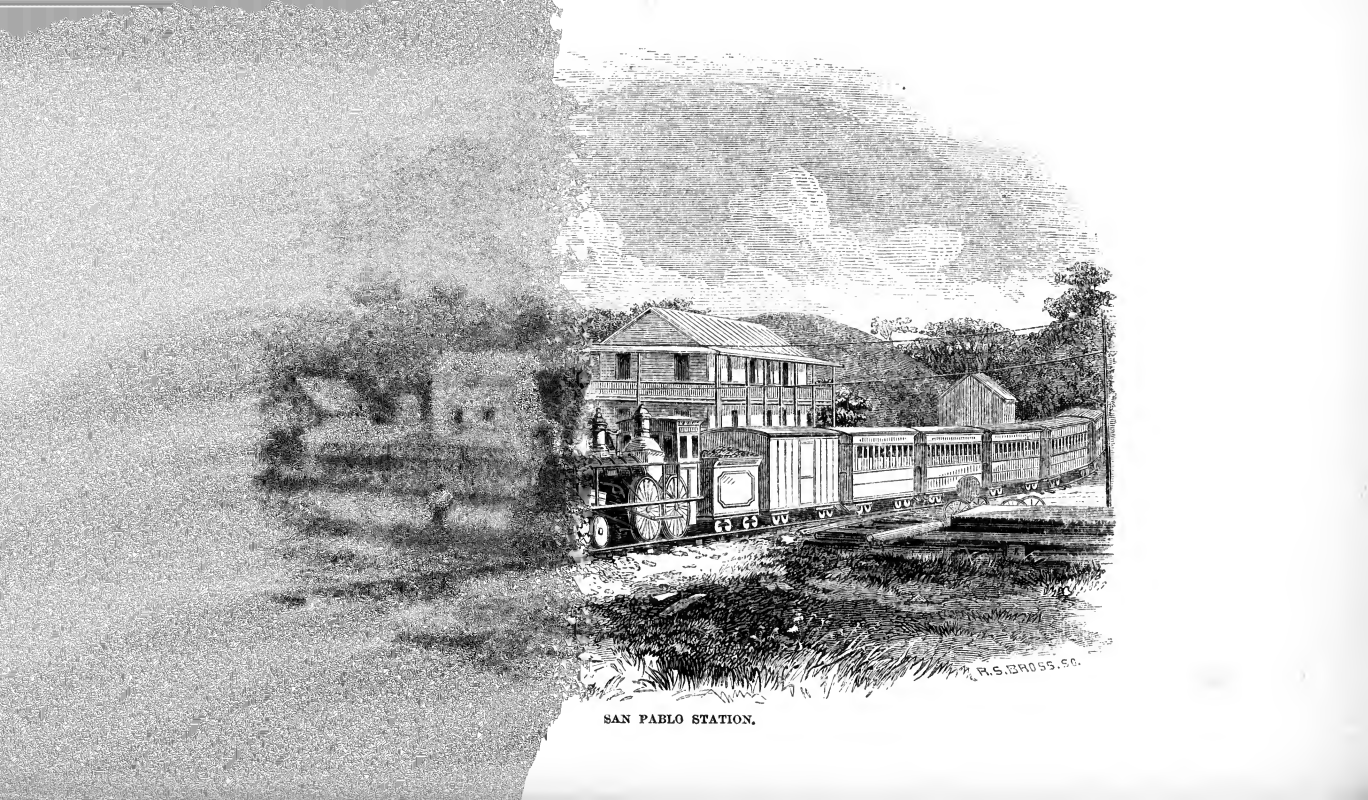


BRIDGE ACROSS THE RIVER CHAGRES AT BARBACOAS.







R.S. BRADY SC.

SAN PABLO STATION.

lands, bounded by high precipitous hills, meets the view; while the river, broad and swift, curves around like a horseshoe through its deep channel on the left and behind, displaying along its banks groups of a gigantic species of branchless ceiba, that breaks the outline of dense palm and cocoa groves.

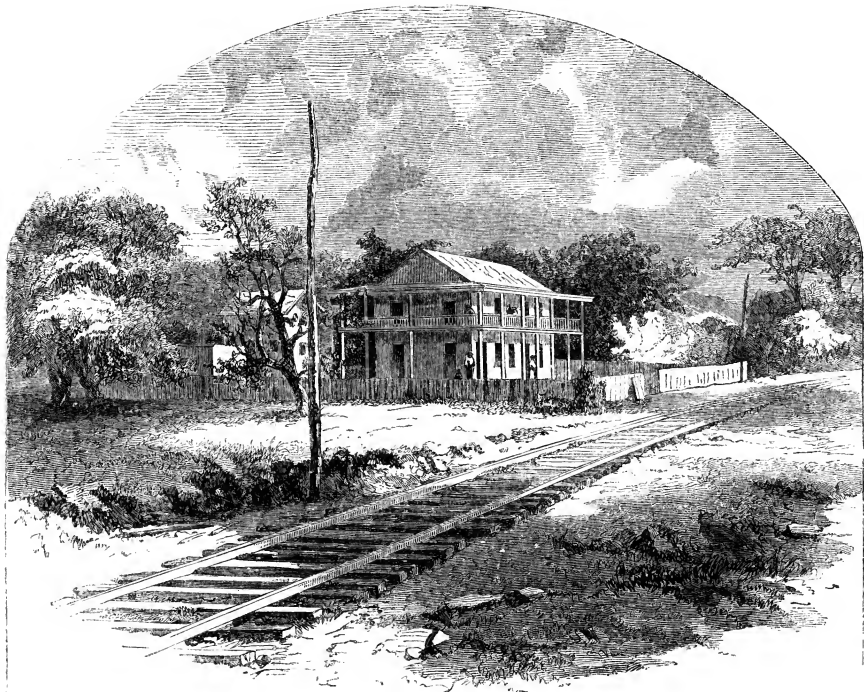
The cultivation of the lands at this point is said to date back for more than two centuries, and to have been worked originally by the Jesuits. At about half a mile from the bridge the San Pablo Station is passed, and a little farther on a fine quarry of recent volcanic rock; from thence, through occasional cleared and cultivated lands, you pass to the station at Mamei and the native town of Gorgona, noted in the earlier days of Chagres River travel as a place where the wet and jaded traveler was accustomed to worry out the night on a raw hide, exposed to the insects and the rain, and in the morning, if he was fortunate, regale himself on jerked beef and plantains. The road now, leaving the course of the river, passes on through deep clay banks and rocky cuts, presenting little novelty beyond the magnitude of the labor expended upon them in establishing the railway, until, sweeping around a hill, the beautiful meadow-lands of Matachin open to the view. Here, rising in their stateliness, the classic sheaves of the royal palm shed an air of Eastern beauty over the landscape. A native village dots the foreground; on the left the waters of the Chagres, broadened at this point by the Rio Obispo (its greatest tributary), is seen through the ceiba groves that skirt its banks, while on the right and in front the scene is bounded by a group of conical hills covered with short grass and studded with palms. The completion of the Panama Railroad in 1855 was here celebrated with great ceremony and rejoicing, and the corner-stone of a monument to its originators and constructors was erected upon the crest of the highest and most beautiful of these hills.

The railway has several side branches at Matachin, and is the usual point of meeting for the trains from either terminus. As there is usually a little delay on such occasions, the natives take advantage of it to traffic with the passengers. Almost every hut displays something for sale:

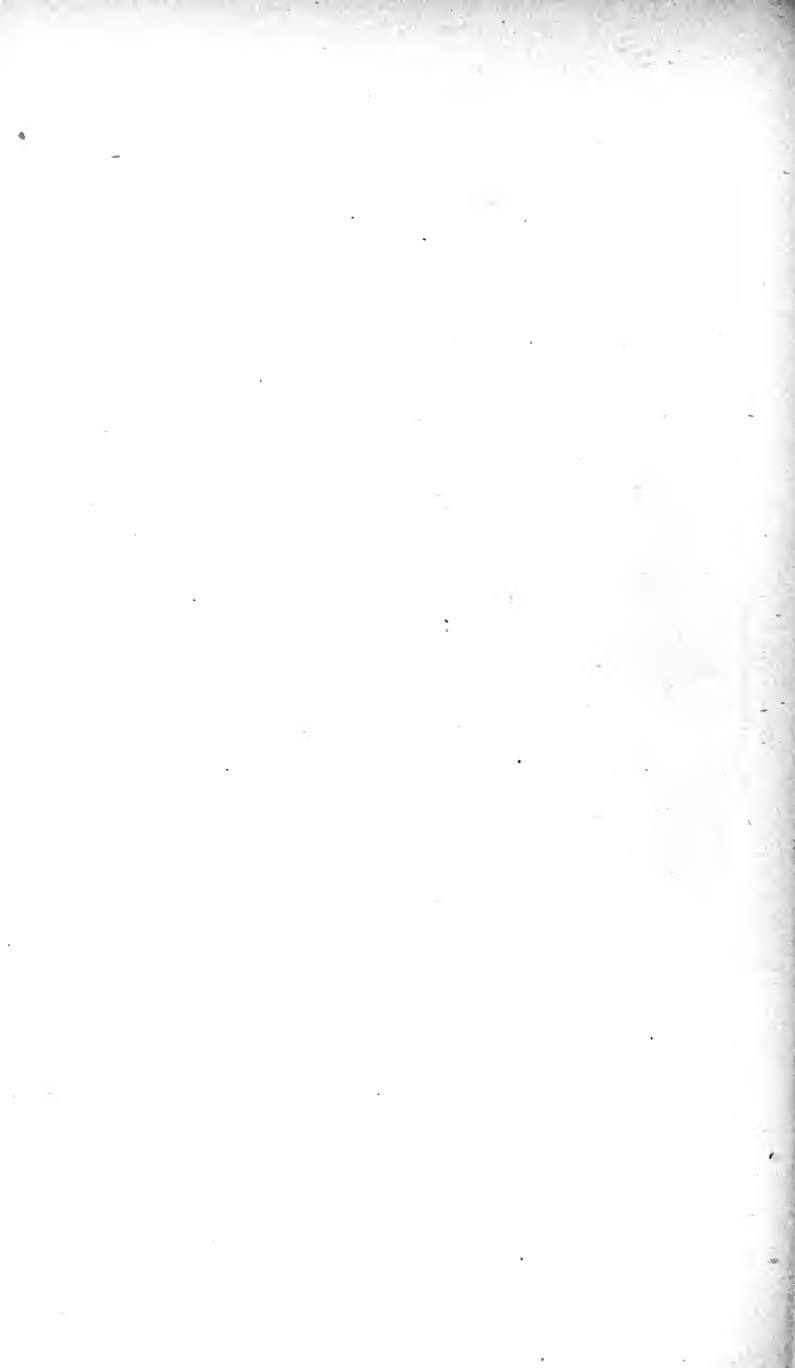


NATIVE HUT AT MATACHIN.

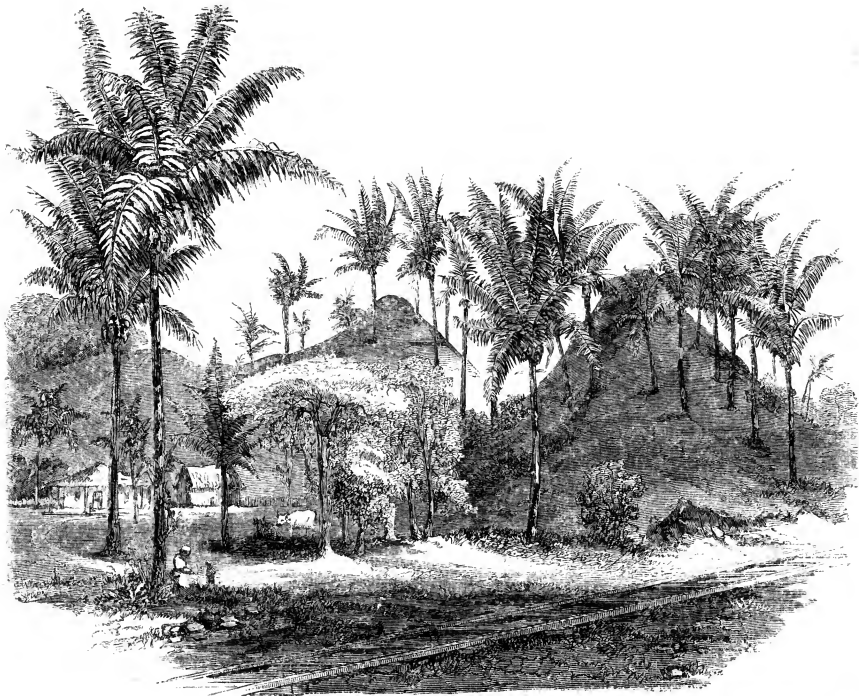
cakes, "dulces," or native candy, and the various fruits of the region. Here the oranges are unusually fine. There is also a saloon, kept by a native, where very good English beer, French claret, crackers and cheese, etc., may be obtained. From Matachin, passing along the base of "*Monument Hill*," the narrow valley of the Rio Obispo is entered, and its waters are crossed by stout iron bridges twice within the distance of a mile; then you pass the Obispo Station, and continue along the course of the Obispo River, over a fine rolling and luxuriant woodland, where the delicious wild mango, the zapote, the nispero, and the guava are fre-



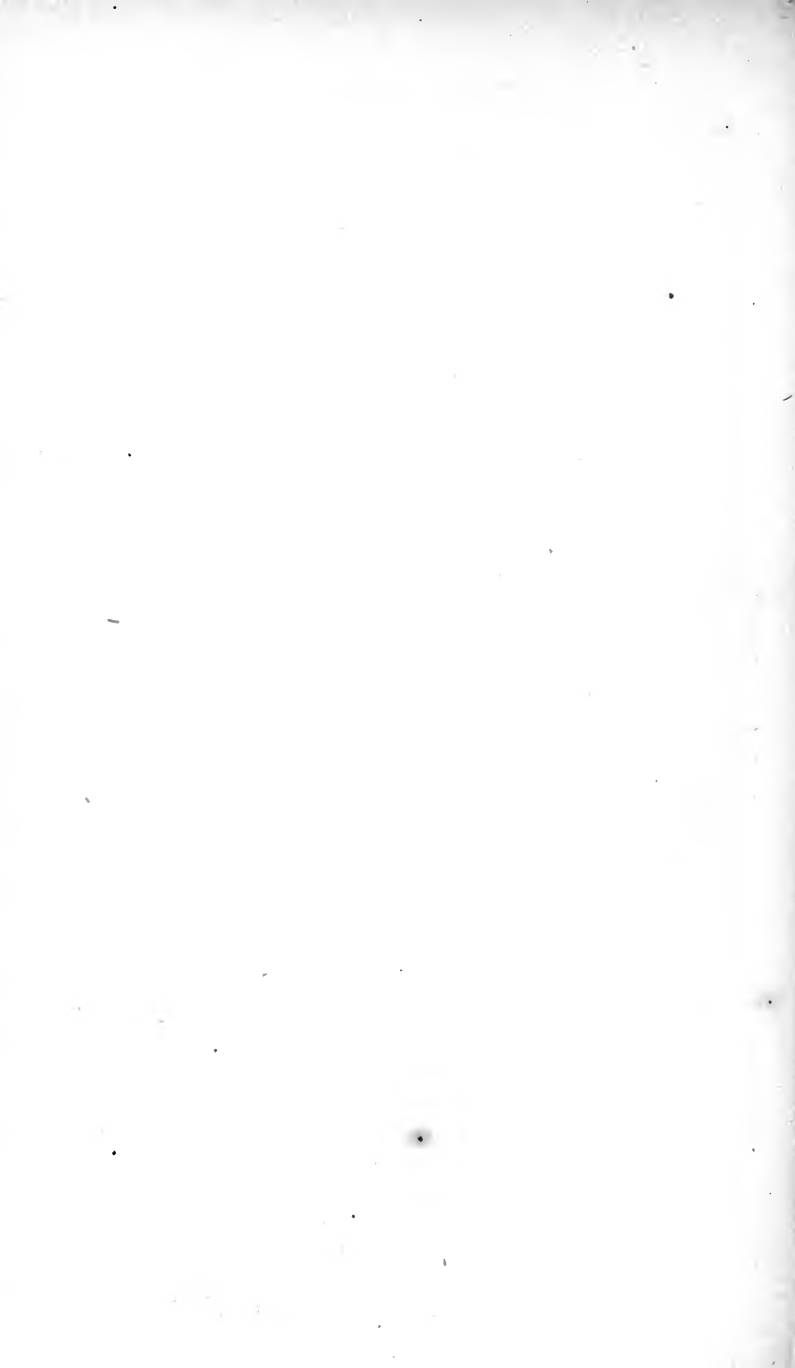
MAMEI STATION.







MONUMENT HILL—MATACHIN.



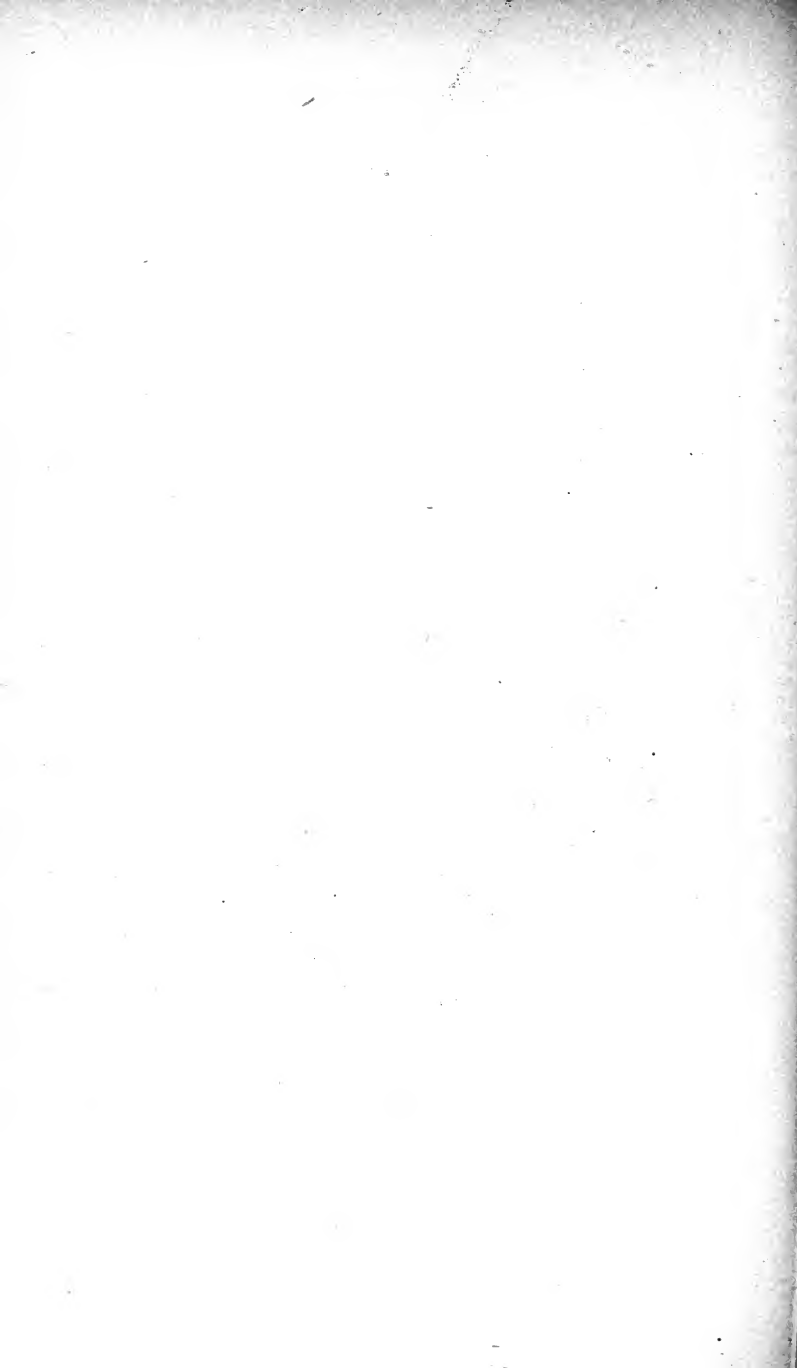
quently seen; also occasional native huts, surrounded by cultivated fields. From the station at Obispo the grade is ascending, with a maximum of sixty feet to the mile. Continuing to rise for about three miles, you pass the "Empire Station," and reach the "Summit," or highest elevation of the railway above the mean level of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Here is a little native settlement called "Culebra" ("the Snake"), noted as having been the terminus of the road in 1854. Then, passengers arriving at this place by the cars from the Atlantic shore were compelled to mount upon mules, and flounder on through heavy sloughs and rapid streams, along the borders of deep ravines and over precipitous mountains, exposed to drenching rains in the wet season, and a broiling sun in the dry, not unfrequently attacked and plundered by banditti, with which the road was then infested, until, after a whole day's labor and peril, they arrived at Panama, only twelve miles distant. "Culebra" at that time was a thrifty place, boasting of two or three hotels, imported ready-made from the United States, into which often more than a thousand men, women, and children were promiscuously stowed for a night. There were also twenty or thirty native huts, about twelve feet square, each of which was considered of ample dimensions to house a dozen wayworn travelers, only too thankful to find a spot of dry ground upon which to spread their blankets; but its glory has departed, and scarce a vestige remains to tell of its former estate. From Culebra the road passes through a deep clay cutting from twenty to forty feet in depth, and nearly a third of a mile in length. At this point commences the Pacific slope of the road, with a descending grade of sixty feet to the mile.

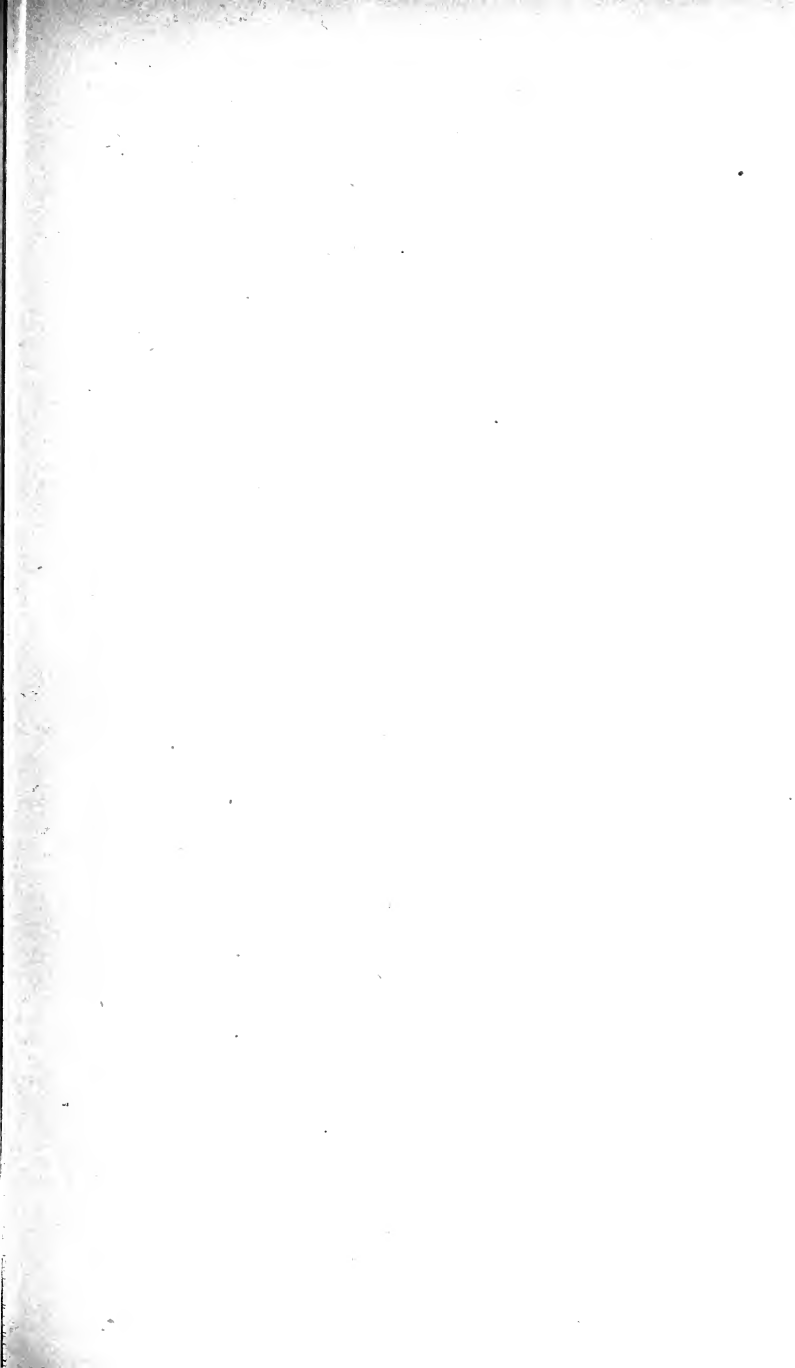
The surrounding scenery now becomes bold and picturesque in the highest degree. Lofty conical mountains rise on every side from among the irregular ridges that form the upper boundaries of the Rio Grande. The course of

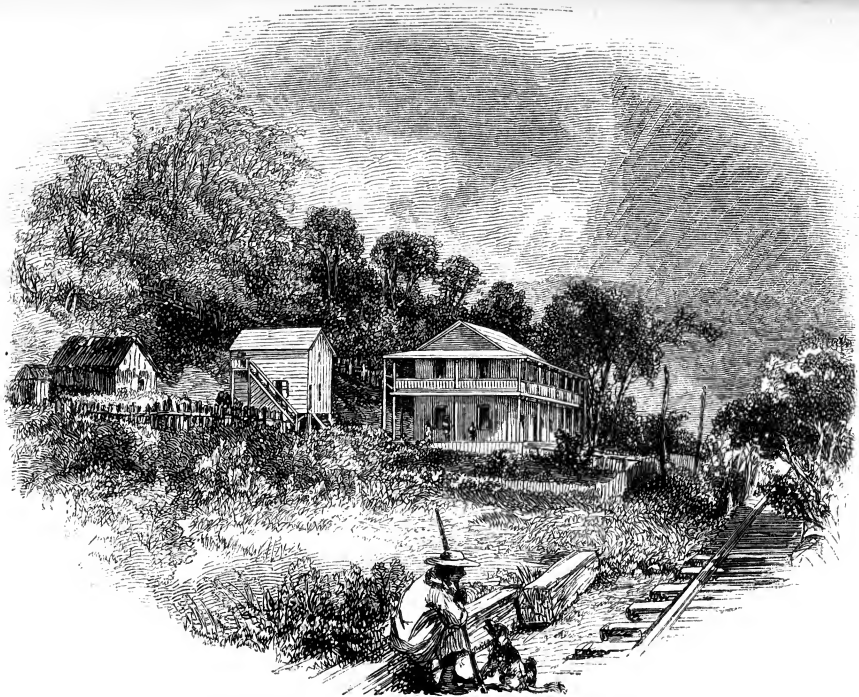
the road now lies across steep rocky spurs and deep ravines between them and along their precipitous sides. High embankments and heavy cuttings are frequent. Here, also, the vegetation is profuse and gorgeous; tall forests cover the whole landscape as far as the eye can reach. At about a mile from the summit the road passes along the side of a huge basaltic cliff, whose great crystals, nearly a foot in diameter, and from eight to twelve feet in length, lie at an angle of about forty degrees. In the earlier days of the road this cliff presented a lofty, broken, and jagged appearance, that seemed almost to overhang and threaten the safety of those passing along the track below. These great crystals of basalt, firm and compact, but easily dislodged, have been so extensively used in the ballasting of the road, etc., along this section, that the once grand and picturesque appearance of the cliff is almost entirely destroyed; enough, however, remains to strike the beholder with admiring wonder, on contemplating this curious formation, at the still visible regularity and beauty of its crystallization, and with awe when he reflects upon the gigantic internal forces that have resulted in its upheaval. It is one of the few known examples in the world where the natural perpendicular which basaltic formations always assume (so beautifully seen in the Fingal's Cave at Staffa, and along the "Palisades" of the Hudson) has been so rent and displaced. But this whole region gives unmistakable evidence that great and comparatively recent volcanic forces have been instrumental in its formation. There is no continuity of the mountain ranges; conical peaks rise up on every side; perfect marine shells and coral are found on their very summits, and the strata of the rocks exposed by the cuttings of the railroad are all volcanic. The Rio Grande at this point is a narrow and noisy torrent, winding along through the dense forests far below the track; the caoba, the cedro, and the malvicino trees rise up like lords of the land over the end-



BASALTIC CLIFF.







PARAISO STATION.



less growths of palm and the innumerable varieties of other tropical woods that interweave below them. After nearly three miles of this, the beautiful undulating valley of "Paraiso," or "Paradise," is reached, surrounded by high conical hills, where Nature, in wild profusion, seems to have expended her choicest wealth. From Paraiso the road continues on over ravines, and curves around the base of frequent conical mountains, gradually descending until the low lands and swamps of the valley of the Rio Grande are passed, when looming up in the distance is seen the high, bald head of Mount Ancon, whose southern foot is washed by the waters of the Pacific Ocean. On the left rises "*Cerro de los Buccaneros*" ("the Hill of the Buccaneers"), from whose summit the pirate Morgan, on his marauding march across the Isthmus in 1670, had his first view of ancient Panama, and where he encamped on the night previous to his attack and pillage of that renowned city. Crossing by bridges of iron the San Pedro Miguel and the Caimitillo (narrow tide-water tributaries of the Rio Grande), the Rio Grande Station is passed. From thence, through alternate swamp and cultivated savanna, the muddy bed of the Rio Cardenas is crossed; when, leaving the Rio Grande to the eastward, a fine stretch of undulating country around the base of Mount Ancon is brought into view, enlivened by native huts and cultivated fields. About a mile farther on may be seen the long metallic roofs of the railroad buildings of the Pacific terminus peeping out from a grove of cocoa-trees, and a little beyond them, and to the right, the Cathedral towers, the high-tiled roofs and dilapidated fortifications of the city of Panama, while through the intervening foliage occasional glimpses of the "ever peaceful ocean" assure the traveler that the transit of the Isthmus is nearly accomplished, and a few minutes more brings him safely into the spacious passenger depôt of the Railroad Company at Panama.

