

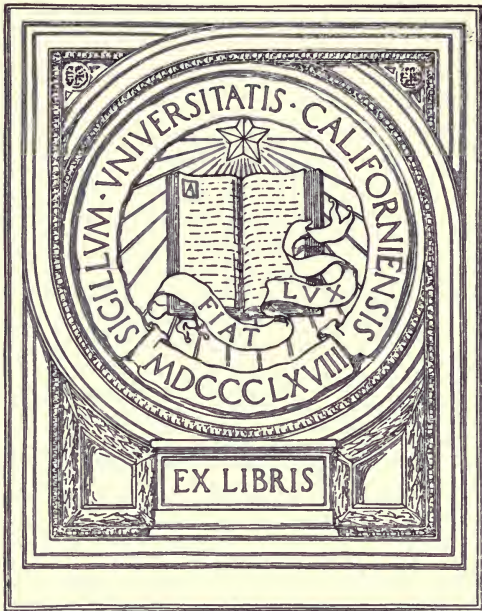
PANAMA PICTURES



MICHAEL DELEVANTE

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Midway view of the Great Culebra Cut.

PANAMA PICTURES

NATURE AND LIFE

in the

Land of the Great Canal

BY

MICHAEL DELEVANTE



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THIS BOOK IS
LOVINGLY DEDICATED
TO
MY WIFE, ALETHIA,
IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF
HER VALUABLE CO-OPERATION.

INTRODUCTION.

For the truth of everything that has been written in this volume, the author vouches.

ACROSS THE PANAMA ISTHMUS is an up-to-date Sketch of the Isthmus, of Isthmian life and manners, of the Canal, and the present improved conditions, so much in contrast with those depicted in the Story of AN UNHEEDED WARNING. Should ACROSS THE PANAMA ISTHMUS succeed in the mission on which I send it out, I shall then have been most amply rewarded in the vindication of the Isthmus of Panama.

A TALE OF THE OLD WASHINGTON HOUSE should not fail to entertain all those who are interested in Isthmian life of the Past; in the sayings and doings of men in the early period written of; and in the history of one of the oldest Panama Rail Road land-marks that graced the Atlantic Terminus. Possibly, there are still a few of the *Old Boys* living yet, whose names, in

disguise, are associated with the incidents portrayed, and whom the Story will reach, eventually, in its wanderings about the World. Should such be the happy circumstance, it is to be hoped that it will take their memories back to the good times and the happy days they spent in the dear *Old Washington House*, of which I, too, have some very pleasant recollections.

AN UNHEEDED WARNING is a Story dealing with the mad influx of people from abroad, almost immediately after the signing of the Canal Treaty between the Republic of Panama and the United States Government, and the unfortunate results which the early rush led up to. The story is a true one, with, of course, the usual little embellishments, here and there, which go towards the adornment of a Tale.

Michael Delevante.

Colon, Republic of Panama, January 1,
1907.

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ACROSS THE PANAMA ISTHMUS



Panama Bay.

Across the Panama-Isthmus.

On one fine morning, in the *Veranito* month of October, 1906, the watchman, whose beat was around the *Washington House* and the neighboring cottages on the Beach, came to my room-door, in accordance with instructions given to him the night before, and, rapping upon it impatiently, sang out to me, in that half-dreamy tone of voice which smacks of a stolen wink or two:

“It’s half past four, *Señor!*”

As further evidence that the fellow had really been sleeping at his post of duty, I heard him yawn, deep-mouthed and long, as I answered back to him:

“All right, *Sereno*—I’ve heard you—*muchisimas gracias!*”

But to make it doubly sure, it seems, that both of us were awake, he rapped again and repeated more coherently:

“It’s half past four, *Señor!*”

This time there was a deeper ring of impatience in his voice, and, pervading it, a tone of evident fear that his reputation as

a watchman was at serious stake, and—yes, perhaps, he thought, his job too.

In order, however, to relieve his anxiety, and to convince him that I was up and about the room, busying myself over the morning's journey, I was compelled to go out to him, just as I was—in my "brief garments"—and thank him once again for having succeeded in calling me on time!

Then I returned to my room, and started to get myself ready for the train which leaves Colon at 5.30 A. M., and by which I had arranged to take a run across the Panama-Isthmus.

After I had got dressed, I hurriedly partook of a cup of coffee, which had been drawn for me from the night before; and then, I went out to the hush and quiet of the streets, wending my way to the railroad station, which was not far off.

It was a wonder-*lovely* morning! There was a strong, fresh breeze blowing from the south, which convulsed the stately coconut trees that strewed their golden blossoms on the pavements.

Belike the Watchman, the Sun was just then half awakened from his slumbers; but I could see, glimmering in the distance, the wondrously-woven heralds of his coming; for the fair *Santa Rita Hills*, across the Bay, were draped with clouds of amethyst and gold, that cast their dream-hued shadows upon the waters, and kissed the silver orient into dawning.

It was exactly 5.30 A. M. when I reached the railroad station. There were still a few clouds of the night before lingering in, and overshadowing, the east; but the electric lights, which were still burning brightly, succeeded in robbing the Morning of her pending darkness.

As I landed on the platform, I was just in time to hear the last ring upon the gong against the wall, and the conductor sing out:

“All aboard!” in a voice that might have been heard around the entire neighborhood. Then the engine bell swung to and fro and sounded the usual warning; after which the whistle tooted shrilly; and just as the train

began to move slowly out of the station, the brass-buttoned gentleman jumped upon the baggage-car with a graceful swing of his accustomed legs.

These preparatory manœuvres, which the dauntless engineer had just gone through, reminded me, at once, of the facetious and gesticulative manner in which, in years gone by, a friend of mine was wont to comment upon them after he had seen the daily trains move out from the station.

On each occasion he would come to me, and, with the positive delight of a child illuming his always-ruddy countenance, would say, in his usual laconic and disconnected style, as he shook the first finger of his right hand at me:

“Engineer’s—job—soft—job—see?—

“Toot—Toot!” and, then, he would turn an imaginary lever around, as he sang out, to the finish:

“PANAMA!”

This was the peculiar and original way which my friend had, always, of classifying



"Palm Avenue," Cristobal, on the Atlantic seaboard.



Pier 4—in the Harbor of Colon.

an engineer's job on the Isthmus—at a time, too, when bullets were buzzing like bees along the line of the railroad, and when an engineer, full many and many a time, as most of us know, was compelled to bring his *Iron Horse* to a sudden halt, or get the contents of two Mauser-rifles emptied, forthwith, into his anatomy!

But then, perhaps, my friend did not appreciate, to the fullest extent, the danger that an engineer incurred running over the road in those trying and troublous days, when, oftentimes, he had, in order to maintain the service, to run the gauntlet through the thick firing line!

No, sir!—when it came to a just comparison of jobs, my friend's, in the balance, was, certainly, the lighter of the two, since his was only to sit down all day long, in a comfortable chair in the office of the G. S. and hammer away at his *Remington* until he got tired, when he'd bluff, for minutes and minutes, upon the right-hand shift-key of his typewriter to make believe that he was working hard.

But, perhaps, the man behind the *Remington* thought that he, too, was a hero in his own way, even if he did face a harmless typewriter and a shorthand book only.



Pier 11 in the harbor of Cristobal.



Interior view of Pier 11 in the harbor of Cristobal.