

## PART II.

When Ruskin said that travelling by rail was like being sent from place to place like so many packages, it is evident that, before making the comparison, he had not "dipped into the future, far as human eyes could see;" nor, to paraphrase Tennyson, did he see then, the vision of Panama, or the glories that, sooner or later, were destined to be hers, by reason of her unique geographical position among the Nations of the World, and that would, eventually, make a railroad ride over a beautiful tropical stretch of forty-seven miles of country, a thing never to be forgotten!

Be this as it may, however, a trip across the Isthmus of Panama has always been a most delightful and interesting experience for me; but on the present occasion, with which this article deals, I must say that I was more deeply impressed than ever before, on account of the marked improvements

which I had noticed all along the line of the railroad, and which, summed up to a grand total, amounted, so to speak, to a veritable resurrection of things, long dead, from the graveyard of 1888, when the French retired, to the living present period of 1906!

The rejuvenation which the various stations had undergone since the advent of the Americans, was patent everywhere—in short, the transformation was simply wonderful; for it seemed scarcely credible that so much good work could have been accomplished in such a comparatively short space of time, in a tropical country, too, where things, as a rule, enjoy the unenviable reputation abroad of moving slowly on, and—*mañana-like* to a close.

But, forgetting our critics for the time, and remembering this, only: "The Truth does not hurt—it thrills," let me, for the benefit of those who are *real lovers* of the Truth, and who are friends of Panama, proceed with this truthful sketch of the Isthmus, and of the railroad ride I had across it a few mornings ago.



Pier 14 in the harbor of Cristobal.



Interior view of Pier 14 in the harbor of Cristobal.



The Beach, Colon; "Enveloped in a veritable labyrinth of Coconut-trees."



The two famous DeLesseps' Palaces at Cristobal.

Comfortably seated in one of the new, palatial passenger-cars, which had lately been put into service, I watched the beautiful fields stretch out in all their pensive quietness—the peaceful flow of the lakes and rivers, as our train dashed madly by—puffing—panting—snorting—eager, it seemed, for the end of its journey.

The scene was simply enchanting: the whole view of the surrounding country lay before me like a beautiful panorama; for the Jungle-wood, all around and about it, was wild-flower dotted, while the air was cool and balmy, and redolent of those strange, soft odors, which are natural to the tropics! On the trees of the green, dense forests, the rains, which had fallen the night before, had left their heavenly benedictions in large, white crystal drops, which scintillated beneath the rays of the early morning sun, until it seemed as though you were being hurried through fields upon fields of myriad and myriad of diamonds!

And yet, despite of all these beauties surrounding us; despite of all that has been ac-

complished, and that still is doing on the great world-work of uniting two oceans, we are "coolly" told by our "friends" abroad, that we live beyond the pale of civilization—that we are making no progress on the Canal whatever—spending money, only, and "sawing wood," as the paradoxical saying goes.

But this, no doubt, is the light in which we are seen by those who have had their proverbial axes to grind, but whose repeated approaches have been repulsed by the honest Grindstones, that have refused to revolve around their independent axles—irresponsive to the touch of wooing blades, whose disappointments have ever been vented through the frenzied passions of venal pens!

And yet, if the sun paints true, as it must always, for God is Truth, perhaps the photographs which accompany this little sketch of mine, when compared with the pictures of the Past, will serve as ample testimony to the glorious achievements of the present day.



## PART IV.

The Isthmus of Panama, which lies east and west on the map, is crossed by a long chain of low-lying mountains, whose extreme altitudes do not exceed a thousand feet at any point along the line of the railroad.

Colon, the Atlantic terminus, once known as Aspinwall, and so named by the first American comers in memory of the father of the Panama Railroad, is a small, flourishing town, about one mile long, and situated on the Island of Manzanillo.

To passengers on the in-coming steamers, the harbor presents a most picturesque appearance, especially so from that part of it generally known as the "Beach," which is crescent-shaped and enveloped in a veritable labyrinth of cocoanut-trees, between whose multiceptered branches nestles the group of buildings occupied, principally, by the offi-

cials and employes of the "Parent Company." Notably among these, is the General Manager's residence, with its lofty cupola overlooking the broad and beautiful Caribbean.

To the eastern end of the town are situated the magnificent hospitals, which were built by the Commission for the care of their sick employes. From the same source, also, the indigent patients of Colon, enjoy the benefits of free medicines and the best of medical attention.

The equipment and personnel of these hospitals, leave nothing to be desired, being fit to rank with any of those of the larger cities in the United States. In the equipment, one finds the most improved and modern appliances in the personnel, the highest standard of talent and ability in doctors and nurses.

But this is not, by any means, the one and only boon which the Americans have conferred upon Colon since their advent on the Isthmus. They have given us paved Streets, an ample Water Supply, with hydrants at



The I. C. C. Hospitals, Colon; view from the shore.



The I. C. C. Hospitals, Colon; view from the sea.

almost every corner, a Cold Storage Plant, which is replenished weekly with meats, fruit, and vegetables from the best markets in the United States; a Steam Laundry and Bakery; an efficient Fire Brigade, capable of coping with any conflagration; Free Public Schools in the Zone; a "Wireless Telegraph" Station; a complete system of Drainage; and, last, though not least, improved Sanitary arrangements—a blessing hitherto unknown in the history of the Isthmus.

When all these things are reviewed in the minds of impartial critics, *acquainted* with the conditions of the town, as I remember them in the years gone by, they should, certainly, leave the impression that our evolution, from a series of mud-flats and salt marshes, has been most wonderful. At home, we see ourselves rising, rapidly, "on stepping stones from our dead selves to higher things," and fast approaching a stage when Colon, metaphorically speaking, will find herself dressed out in the full regalia of a modern city.

The present population of Colon is variously estimated; but I would not think of putting it down for anything less than ten thousand souls, which figure, of course, will keep on increasing as work progresses on the Canal.

Our seasons of the year are two: "The Dry" and "The Rainy" seasons; the one begins in the month of December, and the other in the early part of April. Yet some "kind friend," who tried to be facetious, once said that our two seasons were: "The Wet and the Rainy Seasons!" Colon, of course, is always at her best during the "Dry Season;" for the sun is brightest then, and the northeast trade-winds are blowing a half o' gale! And it is at this period of the year, too, that the sea puts on her robe of deepest sapphire, and the white spumescant surf comes rolling in upon the shore with a mad, glad thunder, whose music is all of its own!

Colon is divided into three distinct sections: first, there is the commercial part of the town, of which Front Street is the chief



Front Street, Colon, in 1885.



Front Street, Colon, in 1907.



thoroughfare; second, there is the "Beach," which has already been described, and, third, there is Cristobal, where the offices of the Isthmian Canal Commission and the residences of its employes are pleasantly situated. This settlement, which was once a "Swampy Eden," minus a Mark Tapley and a young Chuzzlewit, is now a beautiful little spot, laid out with picturesque wooden cottages, which are shaded by long rows of cocoanut trees. The principal thoroughfare in this direction, is "Palm Avenue," at the end of which are the two famous "De Lesseps' Palaces," which are now being used as offices: one by the Engineering and Constructing Department, and the other by Mr. W. G. Tubby, the indefatigable Chief of the Division of Material and Supplies, through whose hands must pass the multiplicity of articles—from a pick to a steam-shovel—necessary for the construction of the great Isthmian Water-way!

Immediately opposite to these two palaces, which have lately undergone extensive repairs and alterations, stands the imposing

bronze statue of Christopher Columbus like a sentinel guarding the Atlantic entrance of the Canal.

Cristobal boasts of its own independent harbor, which, from being situated at the entrance of the Canal, and consequently in the Zone, is essentially American. It has two large docks—Nos. 11 and 14—which are now in operation, and which have afforded considerable relief to the docks in the Port of Colon, proper, which latter have been unable to cope with the increased demands of the shipping lately. The docks are provided with a Cantilever-Crane for the handling of ordinary cargoes, and a Brown-Hoist Coal Plant for the discharge of colliers.

For the past year or so, Cristobal has been making rapid strides in the way of expansion towards the district known as "Fox River," which she is so steadily absorbing that she now shows signs of finally converging into Mount Hope, a village some two miles distant from Colon, and where an ex-



Mr. W. G. Tubby, Chief of the Division of Material and Supplies.



Entrance to Cristobal Harbor.

tensive Rail Road Yard has lately been constructed.

This happy condition of things has been the result of the constant and increasing demand for land-space required for extra Canal and Rail Road facilities, made necessary in consequence of the vast progress in the work of the one, and the notable extensions and betterments, which the other is daily undergoing. And just here I must not forget to mention the new Train Yard which has been built at Fox River, the magnitude of which can be rapidly conceived when my readers are told that it takes in some twelve miles of steel track, and not less than eighty five switches! Then, there are the new and commodious Machine Shops, Round Houses, Turn-Tables, Coal-Chute, all of which are now in satisfactory operation. In addition to these improvements, there is the old French Dry-Dock, at present in the course of reconstruction, and which, when completed, will be capable of accommodating steamers of about three thousand tons register—all of which has been the work of a

