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PART V.

Between Cristobal and Panama, there are, altogether, some twenty-five stations, the most important ones among them being: Mount Hope, Gatun, Bohio, Frijoles, Gorgona, Matachin, Bas Obispo, Empire, and Culebra, all of which are mentioned in the order of distances from Colon.

MOUNT HOPE.

Mount Hope is where the Canal Commission has an immense Warehouse, measuring 488 feet long by 149 feet wide, which is a model of its kind, for the neat and tidy arrangement of the thousand and one different articles which are stored within its walls. It has a Fire Brigade of its own, which is composed of the Clerical Staff, whose alertness is oftentimes unexpectedly surprised by the sound of a false alarm of fire, when every man rushes to his post im-

mediately; some with hose and others with axes, in order to show how ready would be the response in the event of a real emergency. When President Roosevelt paid a visit of inspection to this warehouse, he passed his approval of it in the following manner:

“Well, I see, you’ve got a nice, big place here,” he said, smiling broadly, as he walked away and boarded his palace car, “La France!”

A short distance from this warehouse, is situated the Cemetery for the burial of the dead of Colon and of the neighboring districts. Then, a little way beyond the Passenger Depot, over the Hills, there is the Reservoir which supplies the Atlantic Terminus with water, and which, lately, has been the target for severe and unmerited criticism from abroad.

The population of Mount Hope, formerly called *Monkey Hill*, is a mixed one, but it is principally composed of Jamaica negroes, with a small sprinkling of the Chinese element. In this little settlement of triple-



The new machine-shops at Cristobal.



Exterior view of the I. C. C. Warehouse at Mount Hope.

unique importance, some slight effort has been made, it seems, in the way of agriculture; for yams, plantains, cocoas, lemons, oranges and bananas are cultivated by the dwellers there and sent in to the nearest market for sale at exorbitant prices! Besides these, there is the luscious guava, which grows wild, and abundantly, in the quiet little Cemetery on the brow of the Hill, where the countless dead, of ages past, sleep their last, long sleep 'midst the songs of strange wild birds, and the lullabies of beautiful tropical palm-trees

GATUN.

Gatun is situated on the famous Chagres River, which is one of the difficult problems in the building of the Canal. This river, which has its mad fits and passions, at times to the extent of inundating the Rail Road tracks and interrupting the traffic across the Isthmus occasionally, is something like one hundred miles long, one hundred and fifty feet wide, with a depth, in some places, of twenty feet of water. It be-

gins at Cerro de Pacora, or Tapia, Mountains, courses through Gatun, San Pablo, and Matachin, a distance of some thirty miles from Colon, and ends at historic San Lorenzo, on the Atlantic seaboard. The traffic on this river, which is very considerable, is conducted, chiefly, by means of *Cayucos*, or native dugouts, that carry the various products from the different settlements along the route, to Colon, either for local consumption or for shipment abroad.

Perhaps it is not generally known that Gatun, which is now the scene of great Canal activity, was the first Station of Rail Road operations. This was in November, 1851, when a thousand immigrants were transported there on their way to California and Oregon. It is one of those stations that are still tenacious of their native color and individuality; but the Americans are rapidly rubbing these off the slate of Time with the preparatory work they are doing in connection with the building of the Dam which is to control the mighty waters of the Chagres River, on the other side of which,



Interior view of the I. C. C. Warehouse at Mount Hope.



The Native Village of Gatun.

looking from the Rail Road Station, is the old Native Settlement of Gatun, with its primitive thatched-cabins and its ancient wooden church, the shadow of whose tall, antiquated steeple with its sainted cross, reflects, like a holy benediction, on the surface of the sometimes-peaceful waters of the river. This village is soon to be demolished, because it occupies a portion of the site of the great Dam, which is now in the course of construction. The dwellers of this place are a kind and hospitable people to foreigners that go among them, and to whom, on first acquaintance, they will pledge eternal friendships in a drink of *Chicha*, a native beverage, made of corn, rice, and barley, which is intoxicating only after long fermentation. Gatun is the most important banana district on the the line of the Rail Road. The fruit is loaded into box cars and conveyed to Colon for shipment to the United States. The banana business has been such a profitable one to the local exporters that, from time to time, it has invited the competition of foreign speculators,

who were temporarily lured into the market, until they had lost sufficient money in it to induce them, finally, to leave the field to those who had given the first impetus to the trade. The banana may be said to be the chief product exported from the Isthmus.

BOHIO.

From a Canal standpoint, there is little to be said about this Station at the present writing. From a Rail Road sense, its history dates as far back as the early days of construction, when its, seemingly, exhaustless quarry furnished the necessary rock for the ballasting of the forty-seven miles of road-bed which stretches between Colon and Panama. It was from this same quarry, too, that the stones were hewn for the construction of that beautiful edifice, on the Beach, known as "Christ Church," which was most shamefully desecrated in the Pres-tan Year of 1885, when it was converted into a temporary prison for the incarceration of the offenders of that ever-memorable



The site of the great Dam at Gatun.



Loading Bananas at Gatun.

period! Among the prisoners within the walls of this sacred building at the time, was an old Englishman, who had been a banker for years in Colon, and with whom the poorer classes of the town were accustomed to lodge their hard-earned wages, weekly, and which, on March 30th, 1885, when Colon was almost totally destroyed by fire, assumed the vast proportion of something in the neighborhood of fifty thousand dollars, which the wily Englishman placed in an open boat, ready to abscond with it in a schooner that waited for him a little distance out in the Bay. But the fellow was foiled in the act that would have impoverished so many; for he was made to disgorge the contents of his treasure-laden *Cayuco*, upon the threat of marching him to the gallows to be hung forthwith.

The present status of Bohio, as a Rail Road Station, must be measured by the extent of its importance as a Commercial centre, which I know, from experience, to be equal to that of any of the larger Stations, along the line of the Rail Road.

From a personal and social point of view, however, I have, ever since I paid my first visit to Bohio, looked upon the place as my favorite picnic-ground, associated with pleasant memories of the hospitality of Don Porfirio Melendez, the present popular Governor of Colon, whose residence is situated there.

I shall never forget the first day I spent in this house by special invitation. It was on a Sunday, and the place was crowded with visitors. As I walked in, accompanied by those who had come in on the same train with me, the Governor stepped up to me, took my hand in his, and, shaking it heartily, said in a tone of voice which rang out with a welcome for all:

“*Ola! mi amigo*—You are just in time! *Marcos* is very sick—come inside, and see him before he dies!” But while he told me this with a smile upon his countenance, which I could not very well reconcile with the deep meaning of his speech, I noticed a



"Christ Church," Colon.

puzzled, solemn look upon the faces of those who had just come in with me. I, too, was disturbed; for I saw before me the end of a picnic, not yet begun, and the picture of a funeral, for which none of us had bargained at all. Despite of our embarrassment, however, Don Porfirio still smiled on, as he led the way towards the back of the house, beckoning to us to follow him.

“Come this way,” he said, “*Caballeros*, I want to show you poor Marcos”; and we all followed him, mechanically, until, to our great surprise, we found ourselves in the dining-room, where there was a large table, spread with an immaculate white cloth, upon which there stood a formidable looking Punch-bowl, with enough of the “Rosy” swirling in it as to drown the entire gathering. Our genial host stood at the head of the table, looking down triumphantly on the bowl; finally, he pointed to it, and, with the same persistent smile upon his countenance, said to the guests present:

“*Caballeros!*—there is poor Marcos—he is dead; come on, now, we have to bury

him!" at which a hearty laughter arose, and went the full round of the festive table—the glasses, too, till *Marcos* was, finally, buried, and *resurrected*, perhaps, by not a few that composed the happy gathering of that day!

From that time, and until the present date, I have always remembered the meaning attached to "Marcos" whenever I have been to spend a day in the Governor's hospitable house, situated on the highest point in the district, and from which you look down on the far-stretching hills and valleys that surround the beautiful country of Bohio.

FRIJOLES.

At one time, this Station, save for supplying the passing locomotive with water, was, practically, ignored as a "Stopping Point" for passengers. But since the advent of the Americans, it has grown into importance, and donned the improved habiliments of the times. Only a few mornings ago, when our train stopped there, I could scarcely recognize the place for the great changes which



Bolivar Street, Colon, after the fire of March, 1885.



A Gruesome picture of the fire of March, 1885, in Colon.

had come over it. A new Freight and Passenger Depot had been built to meet the increased demands of the traffic there; and a group of pretty little cottages, erected by the Canal Commission for the accommodation of its employes, formed a picturesque background to this rejuvenated Station.

To-day, the only building which serves as a landmark of the Frijoles of the past, is an old two-story, whitewashed house, which stands up proudly near the Rail Road track, and which, in the year 1881, was used as a laundry, where the "Boys" of Colon sent their clothing to be washed.

Frijoles may be said to be the principal "Water Station" along the line of the Rail Road. As your train passes over the trestlework viaduct there, your attention is drawn, at once, to the swirling sound of water near by; and the first impulse that you feel, at the moment, is to put your head through the window of the car, and gaze around enquiringly, to locate the spot from which the babbling sound arose.

Then, beneath you, into a deep ravine, on

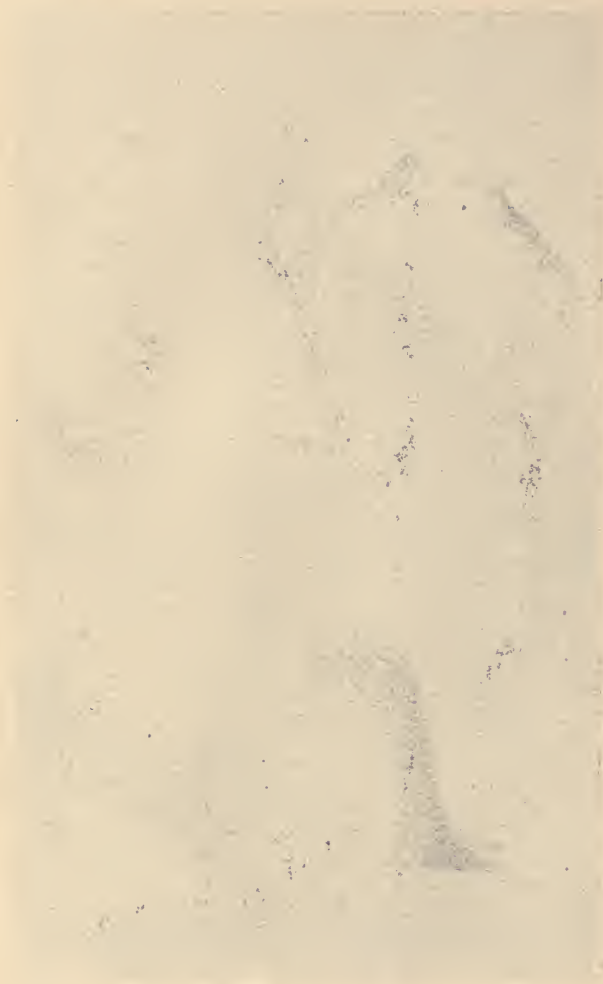
the summit of which your train is passing, you see a clear-white, crystal stream, rushing madly down the incline of a moss-grown cemented terrace, until, with spumescent bubbles, it is caught into the boiling maelstrom of the deeper pool below, and carried away on the bosom of the stronger current. Here, the native women, with their skirts raised high up to their knees, and their scant upper, garments opened wide enough to make them anatomically expressive, wash their clothes, daily, then beat them on big, white rocks with a swish!—swish!—swish! that echoes throughout the jungle.

GORGONA.

There has always been much to say, and much to write, about this delightful spot along the line of the Rail Road; but now there is still more, on account of the better conditions which have prevailed since the Americans went that way and, so to speak, lifted the place from out the Pompeii of the Past, to that of its present status, enjoying



Gorgona Station.



the improvements and conveniences of a modern city, hitherto unknown in the history of this district.

Gorgona is the favorite summer resort of the Panamanians, who go there, every year, to spend the Dry Season, in order to escape the dust of the Metropolis and the trying heat of the *Verano* months.

Topographically, Gorgona stands upon the summit of two slight elevations, intersected by the Rail Road lines, which divide the Station into two distinct and separate sections—the one on the left, going towards Panama, being the original Native Settlement, where there is a road branching off to a steep, narrow pathway, upon each side of which the residences of the employes of the Isthmian Canal Commission are situated.

Beyond this, after descending a tall flight of wooden stairs, you come to a trail, along the Rail Road tracks, which leads you to the immense Warehouses of the Material and Supply Department, and the I. C. C. Machine Shops, Round Houses and Foundry, the equipment of all of which will vie with

anything of their kind in the United States of America.

The Section to the right, going south, is exclusively "Canal." Here the cluster of houses, rising gradually, on the hill, with the Music Stand, at the slope, forming a frontispiece to the whole, presents a charming picture to the eye as you look across that way. These houses, which were built by the Commission, consist mainly of hotels, school-rooms, bachelors' and married quarters, clubs, reading-rooms and hospitals, all of them screened with wire-netting in order to keep out the dreaded mosquitoes, which are now almost exterminated. There is also the Commissariat of the Panama Rail Road Company which supplies its employes, and those of the Commission, with provisions, groceries, and other necessaries of life at cost prices, and a little over to cover the expense of freight and handling.

At Gorgona, there is water installed in every house of the Commission; and an ample supply is obtainable along the streets from the hydrants which have been placed

at almost every corner, and from which the inhabitants, in general, help themselves bountifully.

To-day, Gorgona pulses with the life and activity born of the upper district of Canal operations between Bas Obispo and Culebra; for not less than one hundred and twenty-five "Work Trains" pass there daily, with their loads of rock and dirt, which are taken to Mamei and Tabernilla, two of the Stations lower down, to fill in marsh-lands, and to widen the ways for the double-tracking of the Panama Rail Road, the work of which is now in a fairly advanced condition.

As the various trains dashed by me, I be-thought myself of the object-lesson they afforded to one who was not a builder of the World, and I realized, at once, in this enormous traffic of common dirt and rock, the full text and meaning of the glorious work which the Americans were doing on the Isthmus.

Socially, Gorgona is not, by any means, behind the times in the programme of amusements characteristic of the other Sta-

tions along the line of the Zone to-day: It has its bachelor parties, which are given in return for the entertainments tendered by the married folks of that pleasant district; its Masonic sociables; its Saturday evening dances, and its gossipy teas, the latter intended for the sole benefit and delectation of the fair sex, because of the opportunities they offer for talking among themselves, and to a gilt-edged finish, the private business of their neighbors.

I have used the term "gossipy" advisedly; for teas, as a rule, are bound to be so when they are exclusively composed of ladies, caparisoned in tall-feathered hats, sitting around a table, leisurely sipping their tea the while they criticise the dresses which Mrs. So and So had worn at the club-dance the evening before, until all hands would exclaim, by way of a unanimous verdict:

"Oh!—didn't they look *just* horrible!"

Then, they would switch off, perhaps, to a lengthy discussion upon the subject of an imaginary purchase of some five hundred dollars worth of embroidered skirts and

blouses, which Mrs. So, they "heard," had made of an itinerant East Indian trader, who was passing through Colon; at which piece of hear-say information the barometer of the "tea" would rise to its highest pitch of curiosity and excitement, culminating in everybody asking, with a jealous ring in each voice:

"Oh, how can Mrs. 'So' afford to do such extravagant things on the small salary which her husband is getting?"—a question that would vex and tax the speculative ingenuity of any feminine gathering!

If I were asked to give my opinion of tea-parties, in general, I would not, for a moment, hesitate in saying, that they struck me as being the Parliaments for women to discuss the affairs of other people in, and to expatiate upon them, even to the extent of marring the domestic happiness of others.

But these remarks, which are altogether impersonal, are neither here nor there to the social amenities of Gorgona, that tend, no doubt, to bridge the time between Labor and

Vacation for the Boys whose sweethearts are over the boundless waters.

MATACHIN.

Matachin still retains the same old semblance as it did in the days of the French regime; the only perceptible difference being the presence of "Old Glory," flying above the Zone Police Station, to indicate the memorable transition from November the 3rd, 1903, to the present time of writing.

Matachin is not a very euphonious nomenclature, but the blood-thrilling incident, from which it took its origin, somewhere about the year 1852, the period of Rail Road Construction, would make a weird and gruesome page in the history of the Panama Isthmus, whenever the time shall come for it to be written. The story, according to the telling of the best-informed "Old Timers," runs this way:

It appears that a number of Chinamen, who were employed as track laborers in that section of the country, committed suicide,

daily, by hanging themselves until the entire Chinese colony was, finally, exterminated. It is said that it was a most grotesque sight to see, each morning, seven or eight of these Celestials hanging, by their necks, to the trees of the forest or, perhaps, to some post or other in the neighborhood; their lifeless forms stiffened out to a tension; their tongues protruding from their mouths—their eyes wide open and looking at you with a fixed, glassy stare through which the silver rays of the early morning sun reflected hideously!

The reason given for this self-executed carnage is, that the Chinamen, being far away from the Fatherland, had become homesick; and so, under the mad delirium of nostalgia, resorted to death as the best way out of their miseries—trusting, as they did, no doubt, to their unshaken belief in the beautiful doctrine of Confucius, which had promised them, as they had read it in their childhood days, to be taken up to heaven by means of their plaited queues.

Literally translated, from the Spanish to

English, the word "Matachin" signifies "Kill Chinaman"—hence the name by which the natives christened it in the days of the early history of the Road; the name by which it will ever be known.

Matachin has not yet felt the vigorous touch of Canal activity which characterizes some of the other Stations along the line of the Zone to-day; but the time is now rapidly approaching when she will take her place in the march of the World's great work, which is hers by right of situation, because of her being the genesis of the heaviest excavations which are yet to be done from that point to Pedro Miguel, a distance of some twelve miles.

In former years, Matachin was the meeting Station for all trains of the Panama Rail-Road Company, to the passenger trains of which the natives of the village would go out with their baskets loaded down with bananas, oranges, milk and *boyó* (the last named article being a preparation of corn and rice, wrapped in leaf), which they would offer for sale to the hungry passen-

gers who, in those days were subject to a tiresome five-hour time-table for a short run of forty-seven miles between the two termini.

But, in the mad expectancy of the Natives in the near-future Canal operations in this district, those familiar scenes are relegated to the Past now; for, to-day, you look through the window of the car and listen, in vain, for the cries of "Gineos!"—"Naranjas!"—"Leche!"—"Boyo!" which you were wont to hear in former years, as the train hauled up to the Station. Even the Flower-Girl, in *Pollera*-Costume, is missing also—to say nothing of the absence of dear "Mother" Brown, who used to sharpen the appetites of the Old Rail Road Boys with her delightful cocktails, her *Jamaica* and Scotch and Rye, for the bountiful meals which she would serve them with whenever they had occasion to stop over at Matachin. Yes! all these little incidents and living landmarks, which go to make up history, have disappeared from the scenes, entirely;

but an abiding memory is tenacious of them all.

BAS OBISPO.

The importance of Bas Obispo, on account of the "Cut," which the French called "La Corosita," after the name of a prickly palm-tree, which grew abundantly upon a mountain in that district, is not, by any means, to be underestimated, since it involves a large share of the work in connection with the glorious and gigantic task of uniting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans—It is, so to speak, the Junior-Culebra; and who knows but what it will give as much trouble as its senior-brother, situated some five miles and a half away, reckoning from north to south?

Here, the houses, for the most part, are those which were left by the French Company, but which have since been repaired and painted by the Isthmian Canal Commission, and put into such good shape as to render them all as comfortable as the new buildings lately erected at the other Sta-



Bas Obispo in 1884 in the French days.



Bas Obispo in 1907.