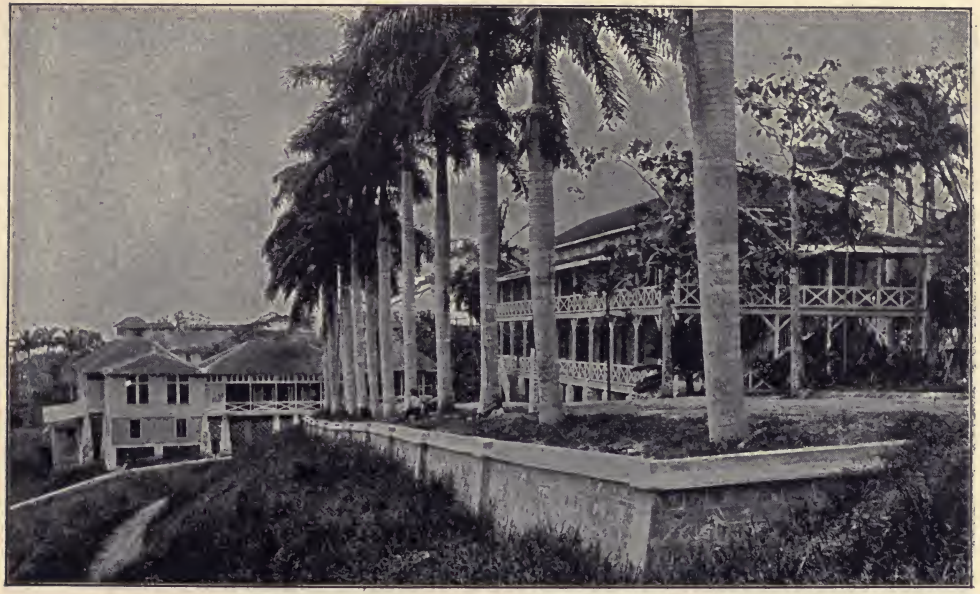
PART VII.

About two miles distant from Panama, is the seaport on the American Zone, known as *La Boca,* which is situated at the mouth of the *Rio Grande,* the Pacific entrance of the Canal.

Besides being a busy Canal centre, *La Boca* is an important Shipping-district, and an enormous Rail Road Yard and Terminus, where all freights, coming from and destined to the ports of the Pacific, pass through on their way to their final destinations.

La Boca is provided with improved and ample shipping facilities. There are two extensive piers there in constant operation; one built in the days of the French, and the other by the present regime for the accommodations of the increased Commercial, Rail Road and Canal traffic across the Panama Isthmus.



The I. C. C. Hospitals at Ancon, Panama.

The I. C. C. Tivoli Hotel at Panama.

Both piers, to-day, are, more or less, temporary compromises for the Canal, on account of the advantage they offer to the steamers, of loading and discharging their cargoes direct from, and to, the cars of the Panama Rail Road Company, instead of having to do so in the stream, by means of lighters, as was the custom formerly, and which necessitated extra shifting and handling that incurred additional mutilation of cargoes.

The first steamer to dock at *La Boca,* was the United States Ship "Ranger," which was ordered there by the Administration at Washington, for the purpose of taking soundings of the Basin and the Channel leading up to the pier, which was built by the French Company; with the result that the "Ranger" was quickly followed by the Pacific Mail Steamer "Costa Rica," which inaugurated the new service that is now in full and successful operation at *La Boca,* one of the busiest harbors on the Pacific Coast.

The day I went there on a visit, the two

piers were full of life and activity, and veritable pandemoniums of Labor; for, in their mad haste and eager endeavor for supremacy in the art of truck-wheeling, good-natured truck-men jostled against each other frequently, while the powerful trolley-transporters swung their heavy sling-loads around with a pendulum-like regularity, and a whir!—whir!—whir! and then deposited their burdens on the piers.

At *La Boca* there are extensive Machine-shops, operated by the Commission, where the repairs for all the Floating Canal Equipment, such as tugs, clappets and dredges, are effected daily. In addition to which there are, of course, the usual buildings for the accommodation of the employes of the Commission and the Panama Rail Road Company; hospitals for the sick, and hotels and mess-rooms for the satisfaction of the inner man.

No one should come to the Isthmus without paying a visit to *La Boca,* the Gateway of the Canal on the Pacific, the betrothed of the Atlantic Ocean.

Steel Pier at La Boca, on the Pacific side, built by the French.

Pier at La Boca, on the Pacific side, built by the I. C. C.

PART VIII.

The work of building the great Water-way across the favored Panama route, has served as a most powerful magnet in the way of attracting all sorts and conditions of people to the Isthmus from almost every quarter of the Globe; for a more cosmopolitan collection of the human races than that we have among us to-day, does not, I believe, exist in any other part of the universe: There are Americans, British, French, Germans, Italians, Spaniards, Greeks, Colombians, Danish, Peruvians, Central Americans, East Indians, and, of course, an abundance of the ever ubiquitous Chinese, who have all tended, largely, to change our local color and the aspect of our surroundings and environments. Many, even, of our old historical land-marks have disappeared from these scenes entirely, in order to make room for Canal operations; and, to judge from the

present outlook of things, the time is not far distant when the few remaining ones shall have completely vanished and have been succeeded by the greatest Work that man has ever yet conceived or attempted.

The labor chiefly employed to work on the Canal is made up of a somewhat motley gathering of Jamaicans, Barbadians, Martiniquenians, St. Lucians, Spaniards, Italians and Cartegenians, with a possibility of an augmentation of these classes by the introduction, later on, of the progressive Japanese. Yet, strange to say, and also wonderful to contemplate, that, notwithstanding this mixed assembly of peoples, all working side by side together, in the name of the one great Cause, there has been so little, if any at all, of crime on the Isthmus of Panama; but this, no doubt, is due, firstly, to the combined Police regulations of the Panama and the United States Governments in the strict maintenance of peace and order, and, secondly, to the law-abiding natures of the aliens. And yet, for my part, I do not believe in such a cosmic gathering; it is dan-

gerous, because it sometimes leads to disturbances between the different races of men, whose respective tastes and languages, characteristics and temperaments, are so widely apart from each other. The French brought the Africans to the Isthmus, and they made no end of trouble for us, even to the last day, when eight hundred of them marched in to Colon, from Culebra, and, with razors and knives, defied the, then, Colombian policemen just at the entrance of Cristobal!

The Spaniards, it has been said, are very good workmen, and I think, myself, they are too; and the Japanese have been mentioned as a probable solution of the labor problem; but it is my forcible and candid opinion, based upon many long years' experience in this country, that the Jamaica Negro is the fellow to dig the Canal: he is accustomed to the climate, and can better adapt himself to the prevailing conditions on the Isthmus than any of the men of the other nationalities I have just mentioned here.

And now for a few words more before

closing this paper. I trust it will not be thought by any of my readers, that I have posed in these pages either as the self-constituted "Trumpeter" of Panama, or as the mouth-piece of the Panamanians. I have simply wished to fulfil the duty, which I have long felt was mine, as an old resident of the Isthmus, of endeavoring, in my own little humble way, to convince the prejudiced minds that, after all, we are not such a "heap, bad lot from away back," as many of our unfriendly and *aided* critics, abroad, have magazined and newspapered us to be.

As a lover of the Truth, I must frankly admit that we have not yet reached that stage of perfection, which is beyond reproach and unfavorable criticism, towards the happy goal to which we are trending daily; for there are still a few flaws that yet need mending. On the other hand, however, it should also be conceded that the Republic of Panama, as an Independent Nation, and as the Ruler of her own destinies, is, so to speak, in the infancy of years: The rough edges found here and there in her Ashler to-

day, will be worn away as Time rolls onward to the Future!

As for our Critics, let me say that, taking them on the whole, they have been a most wonderfully gifted assortment of people in their utter lack of knowledge of the Isthmus, its past and present conditions, its topography and its environment of to-day.

For a stranger to sit in a Rail Road car, whirled away at an average speed of something like twenty-five miles an hour, and think, by just gazing, cursorily, through the window, that, he, or she, could write a faithful report of a country so rapidly traversed, is, to my mind, as ridiculous as it is impossible! Yet much to the chagrin of the Panamanians, and to the disgust of the many friends of the Isthmus, has this marvelous feat been attempted.

The Isthmus of Panama is exactly what we make it, by our mode of living, our conduct, and our habits generally. If men *will* come here and turn night into day, committing indiscretions in over-drink and all other kinds of imprudence, as they have,

oftentimes, done, the result, as it would be in any other part of the world, must be patent and obvious. Yet almost every case of sickness and death that has occurred here from time to time, has, invariably, been chalked down, in great, big letters, against the climate of the Isthmus, whose health conditions, notwithstanding, will compare most favorably with those of any other country in the Tropics, and, perhaps, with those of some places in the North also—a statement that may seem chimerical to some, but all the same the Truth, for which I have, as testimony, the official figures of our limited mortality, the percentage of which is far below that of any of the larger cities in the world.

Whatever may be said to the contrary, the Isthmus, within the past two years or more, has made wonderful progress in the way of general improvements.

Socially, we have had some very valuable acquisitions with the constant influx of people from abroad; and yet, I am compelled to confess, Society on the Isthmus is a verita-

ble Study—not in "Scarlet," but in every color of the rainbow! For the dominant feature is that everybody wants to be "It," and no one will consent to be subject—at least, not those who can boast of birth and lineage, good-breeding and education, but from whom, ofttimes, POSITION, and not the man himself, withholds the keys of the Parlors!

Morally, the Americans have done a great deal towards improving the tone of the lower classes, among whom concubinage, at one time, was woefully rampant. As a result, however, of the enforcement of the law against this mode of living, not less than twenty-five marriages occur daily on the Zone.

Finally, I wish to testify to the truth of all the statements which I have made here—they are the plain truth; nothing but the truth; even if they do "hurt" those who are enemies of the Isthmus, and who are inimical to the building of the great Interoceanic Water-way across the favored Panama route.

A TALE OF THE

OLD WASHINGTON HOUSE

The Old Washington House.

A Tale of the Old Washington House, Colon.

I.

It was in the early Seventies. The *Washington House* that stood then, flanked on both sides by stately cocoanut-trees, was merely a shapeless pile of woodwork that, so to speak, tottered upon the crutches of its senility! For, for almost two decades, the building had been the sport and prey of every wind and weather, beneath the ever recurring stress of which, as the years rolled on, it gradually fell to decay, until, at last, it listed towards the sea-front heavily.

The windows, nearly all of them, were *blind* for the want of glasses; and the laths of the shutters, moist with the rime of the salt-sea air of years and years and years, hung loosely down, like so many dilapidated wooden pendants, with which the breezes toyed and rioted madly.

The rooms were half the size of those of its now more pretentious successor, and the walls were thickly crusted with whitewash coatings, that constantly fell upon the painted floors in large thick scales, white as the snows that drop from heaven! But good old Tom, the Bedroom Steward, was always "on deck," at shoulder-arm with his ubiquitous corn-broom, ready, like little Orphan Annie, to sweep the fallen debris away, and clear from every nook and corner the festoon and embroidery of cobwebs that, Hydra-like, sprang up constantly, despite of good old Tom, who finally proved himself to be no Hercules for them.

Notwithstanding the simplicity of the building, right happy days were those of the *Washington House* of old! There was, in every sense of the word, a true and genuine comradery among the boys—the maddest, merriest lot one ever came across in Christendom—up to all kinds of tricks, the successful perpetration of which, such was the *entente cordiale,* was never known to evoke a serious protest from the chap whose every

stick of furniture, bed and bedstead alike, had been taken from his room while he was out at night, and cast over the balcony on to the wet green lawn in front, to remain there till he returned to lift them up the steps himself, and put them back again in their places; nor yet from the fellow who, by some daring piece of mendacity, had been divested of his property. No! In those days a practical joke met rather with pleasing applause than with any word or act or sign of protest; so much so, that one joke was quickly followed by another, in which the last victim would endeavor to get even with his latest perpetrator. But then, it was not to be wondered at that each man accepted his "dose" with such good grace and humor; for the boys of that time were, so to speak, a brotherhood of one. No tales were "carried out of school" when one had been taken home on the proverbial "shutter;" nor yet when another had been down the night before at Valdez's to spin the magic wheel, or, haply, to dance the *cumbia* with Zoila! All this was kept as sacred as the

secrets that characterize the great Masonic Fraternity.

With the exception of Jimmy Ward, Mackenzie, and Mike Devlanete, P. M. S. S. Co.'s men, the rest of the household was made up of Rail Road boys, who were:

Slim Frankinton, Train Despatcher, Fred Hudsin, Commissary, W. Winchester, Assistant Cashier, A. Sharpe, Secretary to the General Superintendent, and C. Walker, Road Master. There were also the employes of the lesser rank, of course, such as Scotty, Hendersin, Thatcher, Guthrie and George Dranrab, Check Clerks all of them.

Then, there was dear old Billy Thomson, who occupied a room in the building. He was not connected with the Road in the days written of; but he had been once, in almost every position—down from Trackman up to the more exalted position of General Superintendent, from which he resigned to enter the local mercantile arena. Thomson was the soul-embodiment of a gentleman! Through his kind and courteous manners, he had won for himself a tender spot in all

the hearts of the boys, who delighted to respect and honor him. There were no "frills" about Billy Thomson at all; he took as much pleasure sitting down spinning yarns to the boys as he did conversing with the G. S. of the Road; and he was always to be found at the little *seances* held from time to time in the dear old *Washington House.* "When trouble was in the wind," as the saying goes, it was from Billy Thomson always that the boys would seek advice, and it was his "word," too, that "went" with them always.

Among the Rail Road crowd, Scotty, though somewhat brusque in his manners, was the general favorite; for, despite of the sixty years that had crowned his head with silver, he was the life and soul and music of the building, even if he did swear like a trooper! Scotty was a Scotchman every inch of him but one, and that was in his—liquor; for, strange to say, he was never known to touch the firewater of his country. Brandy, instead, was his *poison,* and of this he constantly kept a bottle behind an old leathern trunk of his he had brought from

England with him, and which, a wreck since of its former magnificence, stood within a quiet corner of his bedroom, instead of taking its place in the graveyard of cast-off and unserviceable packages! To this trunk, or, rather, to the narrow little dusty corridor, that ran between it and the wall, Scotty was wont to pay frequent visits daily—he and himself alone! For as for asking any of the boys to accompany him in a *trago,* that was out of the question entirely! In fact, he had grown of late so supremely watchful of his liquor, that he never once failed, as Tom declared, to mark, with his ever wary eyes, the ebb-tide of the bottle each time he picked it up to help himself, which he invariably did most liberally. Finally, he became so orthodox in his principle of inviting no one into his room to have a drink with him, that Slim Frankinton, in a conference held one night with Fred Hudsin, decided, there and then, to get square with Scotty on the very first opportunity that offered, and thus teach him a lesson for the future.

II.

Time, that swings his pendulum incessantly, had brought the New Year's Eve around, and the *Washington House* was decked out in full regalia of Chinese lanterns and multicolored bunting, in celebration of the occasion that marks the passing of one year, and heralds the advent of another!

On the lawn, fronting the seashore, there was deep-mouthed eloquence of fire-works, and the pandemonium was simply deafening! The boys, it appears, had made up their minds to enjoy themselves on that night above all others—which they did, too, to their very hearts' content. Some of them, with crimson-cracker in hand, ensconced themselves behind the cocoanut-trees, and, in a second, dashed out again with their lighted fire-devils, and tossed them at each

other in a game of mimic warfare. A mad, glad, New Year's Eve was that—full of pleasant memories; but of those who figured in the association of that dead time, few are left to tell its until-now-unwritten story.

Scotty was the only one who had not joined the party on the lawn; he had had a day's hard work of it on the Dock, checking a heavy shipment of nails, which had come by the New York steamer, destined for San Francisco; so he sat upon the balcony alone, and watched the proceedings below.

It was not long, however, before he fell into a deep slumber; and, as was his wont, began rehearsing in his sleep the fights he had had with his call-boy, and other little incidents, too, in connection with his day's checking——

"M. C. H. in a diamond, 5 kegs, Sir!" he broke out suddenly. Hang it! why the devil don't you sing out louder? Can't hear a G— d— word you say!—how many was it?"

"Five kegs, Sir, and tally!"——

"You're a liar!" roared Scotty—"Hi, there, Lisha! hold on with your truck,

will you? It's all right; you can go ahead now: five and tally it is."

Then, after a while, he broke loose again into a wild fit of vituperation, which, sandpapered down, and passed through the finest crucible, would reduce itself to language nothing less refined than:

"Hell! I wish the man who shipped these nails had every one of them stuck into his blasted ribs—damn him!"

But here, his dream was interrupted by a great red flash and a sputter and a boom! crack! bang! beneath the chair he sat in, which started him from his sleep with such a sudden bound that he was almost precipitated over the tottering balcony!

White with rage, he rose up to his full height, shook his clenched fists menacingly at the crowd on the lawn, and yelled out vociferously:

"I'd like to know who the h— it was that did that! Show me the fellow and I'll lick the life out of him right now!" With which he turned around quickly apparently with the object of putting his threat into execu-

tion, when, lo! Hendersin, his dearest companion, stood before him just at the entrance of the hallway, immediately behind where he had been sitting. As they confronted each other, Hendersin gave a broad guffaw, and, with some difficulty, raised his hand and rested it on Scotty's shoulder, saying, somewhat incoherently:

"Sh—say,—Sh—Scotty,—old—chap,—hic I—did—it,—see? —and—hic—what—about it? —Want—ter—fight? —sh—better—not, — Sh—Scotty,—i'—sh—New—Year— hic come — and— have—a—drink—with—me! —had—a—beau—sh—ful—time!!" At all of which, Scotty simply exploded with laughter, and asked facetiously:

"Say, Hendersin, what, in the name of heavens, *have* you been eating that has given you such an infernal indigestion?"

"Eating?" responded Hendersin, grinning stupidly, "hic—foo'ish—question—don't—know—hic— sh —what—you're—talking—about! Sh—come—along—Sh—Scotty, old chap, —and—I'll—sh—show—you—what—I've—been—eating—hic." And he made a

bee-line for the steps, leading the way downstairs to the little Reading-room, situated at the southwest end of the building.

As they reached the entrance, Hendersin stumbled and fell into a shapeless bundle on the floor, with such a thud that the glasses and bottles which lay on the old mahogany table clattered and came together in an outburst of apparent applause at the tableau-Hendersin!

For a moment Scotty was taken aback; for he stood stockstill before the doorway and gazed in perfect astonishment at the battery of jugs and bottles that fortified the table, intended only for the occupation of peaceful and instructive literature.

Then, after a while, he stepped into the room and lifted his friend, Hendersin to a chair. In the act of doing this, the entire party that had been "going it" on the lawn, tramped in noisily—each man bearing, gun-wise, a palm-branch over his shoulder, and singing lustily:

"When Johnny comes marching home!"

When the song had ceased, all eyes were

their *tragos* down after pledging each other heartily. Then, Thatcher adjusted his ample mouth to his harmonica, Sharp tickled his violin with bow and finger, while Hendersin, who had recovered somewhat from his late attack of *indigestion,* rose from his chair and stood up in the centre of the room, waiting for the first outburst of the music, with his arms akimbo! The instruments were, at last, awakened to measure: Sharp scraped his violin frantically; Thatcher held his own on his harmonica, while the boys beat a lively tattoo upon their knees by way of accompaniment. Then Hendersin started dancing wildly; but he had not well begun before every man rose up and formed a circle around the table. When everybody had fallen into line, Hudsin stepped forward and called out at the top of his voice:

"Now, boys, wait and take the time from me! One—Two—Three—*Musica!*—Let—'ergo!" and every foot began to sway simultaneously, till the flooring creaked beneath the burden of the dancers!

When the revel had reached its highest,

Wincherster held his hands aloft and sang out amidst the infernal uproar:

"Hoop-la!—Let 'er rip!—Go it, boys! Shake 'em up! All hands 'round!—Balance to your partners lively! Up and down the centre!—Left wheel!—keep it up, boys! Hi! —Hi!—Hi, there!" and a chorus of "Hi's!" went up from every mouth as the dancers' feet came down upon the floor, keeping time with the rhythm of the music! Finally, the dancing ceased, and all hands fell into their chairs, exhausted—panting and puffing heavily. Then there was a brief pause for breathing, after which Jimmy Ward pulled his watch out of his pocket and said:

"Boys, it's just three minutes now to the hour of twelve, so let's fill our glasses once more and drink the New Year in!"

The motion being seconded by Mike, and unanimously carried, the bottles were drained of their last intoxicating drop of liquor; then a moment's silence ensued—a silence, haply, dedicated to thoughts of home and to loved-ones over the boundless waters! Suddenly, however, the clock upon

the mantel-shelf began to toll out mournfully the last hour of the senile year, which woke the boys from their reverie; and just as the stroke of twelve vibrated in an echo, every man clinked glasses and drank; then, hand-in-hand, sang "Auld Lang Syne" together.

When this deathless song had ceased, it was discovered that Scotty and Hendersin were missing from the crowd. No search was made for them, however, because it was deemed best to leave, at least, Hendersin alone to get over the effects of the night's hard dissipation. But the rest of the boys stayed on, bent each one, on keeping the ball a-rolling.

The first man to reopen the proceedings was Slim Frankinton. Drawing his chair close up to the table, he sat down and gazed enquiringly at the regiment of bottles lined off before him. Then he looked upon his empty glass forlornly, and picked the bottles up, one by one, and shook them vigorously to ascertain if there was anything left in them; finding nothing, he laid them back again upon the table, saying:

"Boys, I'm sorry to tell you there isn't a single drop of liquor left; but—'sh—don't give it away," he commanded, shrugging his shoulders and turning around to see if anyone outside was listening. "It's all right," he resumed in a whisper, "no need to worry about a drink," he said, "for I've got the whole thing fixed, and if you chaps will only hold your tongues for a minute, I'll tell you all about it. I've got a scheme on hand that you couldn't beat to save your lives—Nay—Nay—Pauline!" And he turned around again looking for eavesdroppers. Convinced that all was well, he took the crowd in his confidence:

"Boys," he said, "it's just this: Scotty has a couple bottles of brandy hidden away behind that antediluvian trunk of his; he got them to-day from Johnny Ugg; so, if you'll all stand by me, I promise to get one of them before I'm two hours older—if I don't, then my name isn't what it is; furthermore, if I fail, I'll take you down to the *Howard House,* whenever you're ready, and set up the drinks for the whole outfit!"

All hands having promised their hearty co-operation, Frankinton disclosed his plan of campaign on Scotty's brandy, after which everybody proceeded to leave the room. But George Dranrab, fearing that Scotty was not yet well asleep, saw the wisdom of advising a little delay in the adventure.

"Dear boys," he called out in his usual endearing fashion, "I wouldn't risk it now if I were you. Better wait a few minutes more; it will be safer then. In the meanwhile, to pass the time away, let's get Mike to give us a story; so sit down, the whole of you, and make yourselves at home—where you ought to be," he remarked facetiously.

"George, old man!" exclaimed Walker, "it isn't a bad idea at all!" Then everybody called on Mike, who stepped forward demurely, and stood up for a while, fumbling with his watch-chain—his eyes elevated to the ceiling—waiting to catch the very first wave of inspiration. Growing impatient at waiting so long on Mike, Walker called out suddenly:

"Come along now, Mike; give us some-

thing—you can't get out of it—no!—not on your life! Tell us about the night that Hudsin swam across the Lagoon, with all his clothing on, to get away from a policeman who had been chasing him.

But Mike blushed all over and said, "I really couldn't give you that one!" Then Frankinton got up and suggested:

"Well, perhaps, you'll tell us about the night that Walker stoned the *Washington House,* and Hudsin came out on the balcony with his gun and popped away at him—yes, you remember, don't you? how Walker, after the first shot had been fired, ran and hid himself behind a cocoanut-tree, screaming out: 'For God's sake, Hudsin, stop your shooting!—it's I, Walker!' "

No!—No!—No!" interrupted little Wardy, the Englishman, "that ain't what we want, at all! Let's 'ave instead, the bloomin' one 'bout you and Frankinton—don't you know? I mean that shooting affair," he said, addressing himself to Mike.

"Yes!—Yes!—Yes!" shrieked the whole crowd together.

"Wardy, old chap, you've just struck it right!" exclaimed Wincherster—"give it to us, Mike, it's a good one on you!"

"So, after exchanging a few consulting glances with Frankinton, who signalled over, "I don't mind if you do," Mike scraped his throat and began:

"Well, boys, I remember the night full well. I had just come in from work, tired as I could possibly be, and was preparing to go to bed, when Frankinton called out to me from his room, adjoining mine: " 'Mike!—Oh, Mike!—are you there, Mikey?' as he used to call me when he was in a good humor.

" 'Yes!—Yes!—Frankinton,' I replied; what, in the name of heavens, is the difficulty now?—Is George dead, at last?' I enquired.

" 'Dead?' he exclaimed interrogatively, and in a tone of voice that smacked of impossibility. 'Not on your life! Why, look here, Mike,' he answered, 'you couldn't kill him with a crowbar, if you tried to!'

" 'No! it wasn't that; what I wanted to

ing footsteps in the hallway. Immediately, I jumped up and fastened every door and window, and stood in the centre of the room awaiting developments. I did not have to wait for very long, though; for, suddenly, I saw, under the crevice of the doorway, the glimmer of a sharp steel weapon, which the moonlight, streaming through the sashes, revealed to be the blade of a *machete!* This Frankinton swayed from one side of the door to the other in a vain attempt to force an opening. Finding his efforts futile, he called out to me, despairingly:

" 'Mike!—Oh, Mike!—are you coming, Mikey?—*uno nada mas!*' he said, swinging the *machete* lively.

"Terrified, and with the view of appeasing Frankinton, I made answer:

" 'All right, Franky, old boy, go to your room now, and I'll be there in a minute!' With which assurance he went away quietly, leaving me, almost out of breath from fright, standing up and gazing blankly around the room, the while I listened to the

sound of his receding footsteps in the hallway.

"As soon as I knew he had reached his apartment, I got into bed and cuddled up under the counterpane, hoping that Frankinton had forgotten all about the promise I had made him; when lo! he began with his threat again:

" 'Mike!' he shouted, 'you'd better quit your fooling—see? and come at once, for I ain't waiting any longer on you—*sabe!* In fact, I'm going to give you just three more calls, Mike, and if you're not on the way by that time, why then, you can look out for squalls, I tell you; for, by the Holy Moses, I'll shoot for sure!' Then he immediately started to put his threat into execution.

" 'Mike,' he began, are you coming?—*uno!*'

"No answer.

" 'Mike,' for the second time, are you coming?—*dos!*'

"Still no answer.

" 'Mike,' he continued, deliberately and