

Panama Roughneck Ballads

THE CANAL BUILDERS

They have come from every nation,
Every breed in all creation.
Straight and kinky hair;
Swarthy skin and fair.
White and black, and brown and yellow;
Some from fever ever sallow;
Thirty thousand strong;
A hurly-burly throng.
It's a toiling, broiling legion,
Representing every region:
Every land on earth
Is their land of birth.
Every language in creation;
Every grade of social station.
Some rich and some poor:
From palace; from moor.
To the land of green-clad valleys;
Painted Janes and gaudy Sallys,
Where they spend their gold,
And they soon grow old.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

Here they find disease that slays them;
But its coming ne'er dismays them;
They're not built that way,
And they're here to stay.
'Neath the killing sun they swelter,
Dodging danger, helter-skelter,
When the blast's deep roar
Makes the mountain soar.
When they don't see coming danger—
"Good job open for a stranger.
'Jack' got his to-day;
Couldn't get away."
His check gives name and last rating,
And they send a letter stating
All to heirs or friends,
And the matter ends.

The Canal is in the forming,
And there is no time for mourning
For those who are dead,
While there's work ahead.
Screech of whistle; bells' loud clanging;
Roar of furnace; hammers banging,
While the river fills

Panama Roughneck Ballads

With the falling hills.
Spoil-filled trains forever rushing
Here and there and sometimes crushing
Who stands in the way,
Their quick flight to stay.
Rumbles like the roll of thunder
The slide that puts the shovel under
Twenty feet of "dirt."
"Was anyone hurt?
Dig 'em out; they'll work to-morrow
In hell: They don't need your sorrow.
What's that? Only four?
Gee! Thought there was more!"
From coast to coast they sweat and swear:
From Bay to Bay they fill the air
With an awful roar
Like a surf-lashed shore.

From bronze Columbus and the maid
On Colon's shore 'neath palm tree's shade
To Morgan's lair away
In Panama Bay.
The journey's long; the journey's rough,
But go they must, and will; they're tough—

Panama Roughneck Ballads

Tough of heart and thigh:
Go they will—or die.
They're the brawn of every nation!
Nature's best from every station:
The fit here survive,
Where only fit thrive.
Cringing weakling nor spineless shirk
Will e'er be found here; all must work.
For Empire they toil
In an alien soil.
Unto the end their work will stand,
And respect of men will command
In history's pages
Through passing ages.
This rough-and-ready, husky crew,
All stout of heart and strong of thew;
To conquer they came:
They think not of fame.
But down the ages poets' lays
Will tell the tale in words of praise,
How the fight they fought
For them with peril was fraught.
And how they fought, and how they died
In house, on field, on mountainside,

Panama Roughneck Ballads

Unafraid to go
When'er fell the blow.
When stately ships doth safely go
From sea to sea, the land below,
Hallowed by their blood,
Safe will hold the flood
From sea of East, and sea of West,
While on the hills their bones will rest,
Memories of the past;
Memories of the past.
The Mongol in his Eastern home
To Occidental lands will roam;
East and West will meet,
And each other greet
In grim Culebra's rock-bound gorge.
As the ships from sea to sea forge
Past the hills, all green,
And the graves, unseen—
Unseen, but forgotten, never!
Those for whose land they fell ever
Green their graves will keep;
Green their graves will keep.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

THE LIAR

I sigh for the future ;
 I sigh for the past ;
I sigh for the countless
 Dies I have cast.

I sigh for the gambler ;
 I sigh for the thief ;
For those poor weak mortals
 I am sloshing in grief.

The poor and afflicted
 My sympathy win,
And I pray for poor devils
 Who are dying in sin.

The man who has married
 A tongue a foot long
Could swim in my tears
 All the day long.

But my tears will not flow,
Nor my sympathy glow ;

Panama Roughneck Ballads

Nor can I sigh,
Hard as I try
When a human male
Without hair or tail
Is killed for a gossipy lie.

The victims of liars
Are martyrs of Fate,
Destroyed without mercy
By trickery and hate.

Like the tropical fungus
That poisons and slays,
So is the liar
In nature and ways.

He thrives in the "ditch,"
In office and field;
His mask hypocrisy;
Friendship his shield.

God knows we are trying
By muscular might
And mental straight-living
To do what is right.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

"CUT IT OUT"

"He's got abscess of the liver,"

Said the doctor with a sigh.

"He's got abscess of the liver,

And he'll very likely die."

"Abscess of your 'granny';"

Roared the "roughneck" from his bed.

"You've got abscess of the 'cocoa'!

An' you'll croak before I'm dead."

"It's an operation 'pronto,'

Which means right away, me son."

Quoth the Doctor as he eyed him;

"And the odds are ten to one."

"Ten to one you won't pull through it.

The last time you were here

You said you'd 'cut' the whisky,

And stick to good old beer."

"Now you've got it in your liver,

And we've got to cut it out."

Panama Roughneck Ballads

“Cut out then,” roared the “rough-neck,”

“Cut it out! Cut it out! Cut it out!”

When they laid him on the table

He soon began to shout.

His roars were awe-inspiring.

“Cut it out! Cut it out! Cut it out!”

They patched him back to labor;

And now he goes about

Roaring at all boozers,”

“Cut it out! Cut it out! Cut it out!”

Panama Roughneck Ballads

“WHERE’S TH’ DAMAGE?”

“Rain an’ sun; sun an’ rain,
With showers in between.
Rain an’ sun; sun an’ rain,
In a land that’s always green.”

“Th’ water falls in rivers;
Th’ sun shines hot above,
An’ you’re fightin’ with th’ shivers;
Too full of aches to move.”

“First you think you’re freezin’;
Then loudly call for ice;
An’ you’re coughin’ an’ you’re sneezin’,
On th’ way to Paradise.”

“‘You’ve got a touch of fever;
You’ll be O. K. in a week,’
Doc’s a clever old deceiver;
Soothes you when you want to shriek.”

“Your head’s a roarin’ furnace;
You don’t care when you go.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

Th' 'Doc's' there with th' solace,
Keepin' down th' fever's glow."

"When you lay adreamin',
With th' buzzin' in your ears,
An' your hazy brain is schemin'
It's th' smilin' nurse that cheers."

"Rain an' sun; sun an' rain,
An' th' fever now an' then—
Where's th' damage if your pain
Makes you love your fellow men?"

Panama Roughneck Ballads

THE BATTLE

“We’re movin’ mountains;
We’re fillin’ streams,
We’re movin’ hell an’ earth,
It seems.”

“ ‘Th’ “ditch” is growin’,
We often hear.
We can’t see’t grow;
We’re here.”

“Th’ job’s a battle;
We’ve paid our toll.
Th’ blast wipes out all but—
Th’ soul.”

“Who knows how many?
They’ll never tell.
They didn’t stop to say
Farewell.”

“We count th’ yardage,
An’ print it, too.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

There ain't no 'list of killed';
'T'won't do.'

"We're movin' mountains;
We're fillin' streams,
It's rest we need—an' not
Bad dreams."

Panama Roughneck Ballads

“WE’RE DIGGIN’ TH’ ‘DITCH’ TOGETHER”

“ ‘Who’s diggin’ th’ “ditch”?’ asks th’ clerk.

“ ‘Who’s keepin’ th’ wheels turnin’ round?
Who’s doin’ th’ important work?
To whom will th’ credit redound?’ ”

“ ‘I’m diggin’ th’ “ditch”,’ says th’ clerk.

“ ‘ ‘Tis I they all come to see.
Without me they’d stop th’ work.
When they say “There he goes,” that’s me.’ ”

“Mr. Clerk you’re O. K. in your place;
You die of th’ fever like me.
In th’ hospital ward you’re a ‘case,’
Like a fish is a fish in th’ sea.”

“Now tell me, old pal, straight an’ plain;
I’d like to have it made clear.
By th’ power of your clever brain,
How many yards did you dig last year?”

“Now don’t think I’m knockin’; I aint.
Th’ climate’s th’ thing, after all.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

You don't make no complaint;

An' I never knew you to 'crawl.' ”

“ ‘We're diggin' th' “ditch” ’ sounds better.

“ ‘We're makin' th' wheels turn round;

We're doin' th' important work,

An' to US will th' credit redound.' ”

Panama Roughneck Ballads

“SERGEANT SNOOKERS, OF THE Z.
‘P’LEECE’ ”

’Twas Sergeant Snookers of the Z. “P’leece.”

“Wake-up an’ sign yer name!

Yer drunk, ye lout! Ye broke th’ peace!

Ye put th’ force to shame!”

“Ye ain’t respectable; ye insolent man!

It’s an awful example ye set.

Ye always get ‘soused’ whenever ye can.

I’ll tie a ‘can’ to ye yet.”

“These are th’ charges ye’ll have to face:

Blind drunk an’ off your beat.

Don’t answer me back; ye’ve gone th’ pace;

Ye can’t stand on yer feet.”

“Look at me; I’m a self-made man;

When I was only a ‘cop,’

It was my ambition, when I began,

To, somehow, reach th’ top.”

“I pride myself that I know th’ law,

An’ th’ regulations, too.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

My record is clean—without a flaw;

C'n I say th' same of you?"

The "copper" yawned; he was feeling "sore";

"Excuse me, sor," he said,

"Th' tale yez tell I've heard oft' before;

Yez c'n go an' soak yer head!"

"Yez son-av-a-this, and yez son-av-a-that!

'Beat it 'while yez ca-a-n!

Out uv me sight, ye blitherin' gnat,

Or oi'll show yez who's th' ma-a-n!"

'Twas Sergeant Snookers, of the Z. "P'leece,"

A bit of a man, for that.

His rule was iron, and he'd won renown.

He swallowed his rage and spat.

The "buck" was private Terence O'Shay,

Who'd rather fight than eat.

He'd fight his fight or say his say,

As he proudly walked his beat."

"I'll 'can' ye now, ye drunken bum!"

The outraged sergeant cried,

"Yer soaked with rotten beer an' rum!"

O'Shay turned over and sighed.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

The charges went in, and the 'can' came out;
Terence O'Shay was pleased.

"'Twas th' on'y way to bring it about;
At last oi've been released."

Thus spake Terence, the foxy "Mick,"
As he swiftly packed his trunk,
"'Twas, oi know, a low-down thrick
To make him think me dhrunk."

'Twas Sergeant Snookers, of the Z. "P'leece,"
Self-made and hard to beat.
He made himself, but the "bucks" agreed
The job was not complete.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

OLD CHAGRES

High o'er the Andes' towering crest
The Storm King lined his hosts ;
Came from out of East and West ;
Swept from coast to coast
Frowning legions, thunder-borne,
Aflash their charging fore.
O'er the land flashed the storm ;
Old Chagres' sullen roar
Down the valley to the plain
Came rumbling on, rumbling on.
High rose the flood o'er man-made bar ;
The digger left his post,
And sent the warning near and far
That lives might not be lost.
High o'er the works came rushing flood ;
The toiler army swore,
As on the heights it powerless stood,
Mocked by Old Chagres' roar.
An army thirty thousand strong ;
Steam monsters at their beck ;

Panama Roughneck Ballads

A fretful, swearing, helpless throng;
Their mighty force a wreck.

Then ceased the thunder; shone the sun:
Fled onward to the sea
Surly Chagres, the battle won;
It's murmur seemed of glee.

It mocked the toilers on its way,
And tossed their dead ashore;
They found the victims of its play,
And looked, and softly swore.

As swiftly went as swiftly came the flood;
The Army swarmed below;
The toll was paid in gold and blood,
As conquered pay to foe.

Thus Chagres toys with might of man,
Unchained, but soon to feel
It's mighty, all-invading span
Gripped by stone and steel.
Grim the battle, and high the toll,
But man the victory gains.
He bows and gives the brute its dole—
Then binds the beast with chains.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

SAXON DAN

A mighty man of Saxon breed
Was "roughneck" Dan McCree,
Whose thews were fruit of sturdy seed;
A friend in time of need.

A chef was Dan; his daily task
To "feed" a hundred "Turks;"
He gave no favors; none would ask.
He knew every man on the works.

Some hated Dan, but feared his might;
They felt his stunning blows;
But while Dan calmly slept one night
They talked about their woes.

They raged and swore, and swore again,
And made an ugly plan.
They swore they'd terminate the reign
Of husky Saxon Dan.

Castile's proud sons the "ditch" to dig
Had come, they roundly swore;

Panama Roughneck Ballads

They shook their fists—"the Yankee pig!"

Dan answered with a snore.

Next day they came, a surly crew,

To eat their noonday meal.

Dan saw the looks, and then he knew

His wrath they'd have to feel.

They lost no time; they hurled the lie,

And rushed big Dan McCree.

Dan knew he'd have to "do or die";

He roared a roar of glee.

Dan seized a chair and raised it high

And laid two foemen low;

His eyes were red; his lips were dry;

His breath came quick and low.

Again they charged—and met the chair;

The blows fell thick and fast;

"Come on, ye dogs; I'll fight ye fair,"

Roared Dan "until the last!"

The battle raged; the camp rushed nigh;

Dan's bloodstained foes came on.

Again he raised the chair on high;

The fight was nearly won.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

Again they came, now twenty strong,
With clubs, and plates, and knives;
A maddened, bloody, cursing throng,
Now fighting for their lives.

The Saxon giant, like Goth of old
With war-club slew the foe,
By force of might and courage bold,
Laid twenty foemen low.

The last weak charge; the work was done;
They fled with shrieks of fear,
To henceforth like the devil shun
The monster in their rear.

Thus Dan McCree, a Saxon bold,
Away down in the "Zone,"
In battle fair, with leg of chair
Laid twenty foemen prone.

Now they love him, his praise they sing;
Big Saxon Dan McCree.
He won the day; they crowned him King,
Under the Mango tree.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

THE GIRL HE LEFT BEHIND

Her eyes were black as raven's wing,
Her lips as red as wine;
Her form would make a poet sing
Of queenly grace divine.

The "roughnecks" raved and swore they'd win
A smile—Aye, more! A kiss!
Though she a Princess Royal had been,
And not a bashful miss.

Her arms were brown; her cheek was soft,
And soft her voice, and sweet;
She smiled; the "roughnecks" shyly coughed;
Their glance fell to her feet.

Her hose? "au naturel" my lad!
"Au naturel" her hose!
No silk around her form she had,
She did not run to clothes.

Fresh from the hills she glided in;
Fresh from the bush, and pure;

Panama Roughneck Ballads

Her breath was sweet ; she knew no sin,
Nor practised any lure.

Her glance fell on a “roughneck” bold ;
His tools fell from his hands ;
You know the rest. The tale is old.
They did not post the bans.

He left the “ditch” and sailed away,
She waited long and pined.
She prays for his return each day—
The girl he left behind.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

TELL "THE COLONEL"

Have you got a "kick" to make?

Tell "The Colonel."

When the rules you badly break,

See "The Colonel."

Have they "canned" you on the run?

Tell "The Colonel."

Tell the tale of what they've done

To "The Colonel."

Are they working you too hard?

Tell "The Colonel."

Are you falling in the discard?

See "The Colonel."

Do they want to cut your pay?

See "The Colonel."

He will hear all you say,

Will "The Colonel."

Is the menu "out of whack?"

Tell "The Colonel."

Panama Roughneck Ballads

The outrage he'll attack,
Will "The Colonel."

Is the Commissary bad?
Tell "The Colonel."

If you tell him he'll be glad
Will "The Colonel."

Is your leave overdue?
See "The Colonel."

"They'll know better when they're through
With "The Colonel."

When you're loaded down with grief,
See "The Colonel."

He will give you quick relief,
Will "The Colonel."

Pass your sorrows and your woes
To "The Colonel."

He will "understand"; he "knows,"
Does "The Colonel."

He is here to join the seas,
Is "The Colonel"

And he always tries to please,
Does "The Colonel."

Panama Roughneck Ballads

If you always act the man
With "The Colonel,"
He will help you, if he can,
Will "The Colonel."

All the "roughnecks" doff their "lids"
To "The Colonel."
He's their "daddy"; they're the "kids"
Of "The Colonel."

That's the secret of the thing,
Yankee Nation!
Brotherhood! the song I sing,
Yankee Nation.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

TO THE "BIG DITCH"

Take your toll, you hungry devil!

Open wide your brutal maw.

We'll fight you on the level:

We know Compensation's Law.

Into your rockbound "gut" we tumble,

Hurried by a careless hand,

When the blast's death-laden rumble

Smites us where we stand.

You don't ask our name or number

When you take us to your breast,

Where forever we shall slumber;

Where forever we shall rest.

It's the price that we are paying;

It's the toll we gladly pay:

We don't think of Fate's hand staying

Long enough to let us pray.

Prayers for those who think of living

Only for the love of life.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

Death quickly comes to men while giving
Blow for blow in earthly strife.

Take your toll, then, but in taking
You but bend beneath our heel.

You're our servant in the making;
You shall some day bear our keel.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

“WHEN TH’ ‘DITCH’ IS DUG”

“When th’ ‘ditch’ is dug, I’ll tell you what
I think I’ll go and do;
I’ll buy a little farm and build
A little home for two.”

“I’ve lived a life of single bliss;
My wild oats I have sown;
I think th’ time has come for me to
Have my ‘home sweet home.’ ”

“For four years now I’ve held th’ job, and
I’ve put away some green.
There is no game I have not played, nor
A ‘sight’ I have not seen.”

“You get my drift? I hope you do; I
Mean you, Bachelor man!
Get spliced; you’ll find it lots more fun
Than your lonely Eveless plan.”

“I’ve got th’ girl, the coin; th’ time
Will come when she makes th’ sign—
And then a quick shift from th’ ‘ditch’ to
Th’ arms of baby mine.”

Panama Roughneck Ballads

THE PRICE OF EMPIRE

"I'm winged, ye say? You're jokin', pal;
Th' mixup sure was great!
I seen her, hell-bent, comin' on,
An' pulled up hard—too late!"

"Easy, pal; just stand away: "I'll
Walk home; I live right near.
'Taint nothin'; just a few hard raps;
Help me up lads, an' then stand clear."

"Ye can't git up Bill; just lay still."
"Old Jim," the "Con," spoke low.
"Th' hell I can't git up!" roared Bill;
"I'll damn soon let ye know!"

With mighty blows he shook them off—
Half rose, his eyes aflame:
"God! I am winged!" he shrieked: "Oh, Lord!"
Then sank to earth again.

'Twas the toll of the "Ditch" he paid—
The Railroad Man's full share.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

Paid in an alien land and clime,
'Neath tropic sun's full glare.

So paid the toll, white, black and brown,
A mighty goal to gain.
Down through the years the conflict raged.
Nor fought these men in vain.

A mighty Nation, by their deeds,
Stands girthed from sea to sea,
And high o'er their graves proudly waves
The Emblem of the Free.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

“AN’ TH’ LOVE I’LL GIVE WILL BE TRUE”

“I’ve taken my women like drinkin’,
An’, like drinkin’, they’ve taken me.
Some I’ve taken ’thout thinkin’
Of what th’ result might be.”

“Th’ slatterns I’ve fondled an’ petted ;
Th’ beauties I’ve held in my arms.
For both alike I have fretted.
While praisin’ their dubious charms.”

“Th’ love that I gave them was sometimes
Like blasts from th’ hot pits o’ hell ;
An’ when I dropped them th’ hot times
Soon shattered old Love’s magic spell.”

“Their shrieks in my ears are still ringin’ ;
Their curses made my blood run cold ;
Their rage, like a whiplash, was stingin’,
When I stopped a-givin’ ’em gold.”

“There’s a kind of woman, they tell me,
Though I aint met one of ’em yet,

Panama Roughneck Ballads

Whose love is pure, an' whose lives are free
From things that my kind can't forget."

"Maybe, some day, when th' game grows tame,
An' th' good that's in me cuts through,
I'll find one willin' to take my name.
An' th' love I'll give will be true."

Panama Roughneck Ballads

THE SAD FATE OF ANOPHELES LIZ

Anopheles Liz was whetting her lance
On the edge of an Isthmian pool,
Waiting for Fortune to give her a chance
To slay a man with the awful tool.

From a fever-wracked cheek she flew that day;
By a hair's breadth she just saved her life.
She chuckled with glee as she sailed away,
Licking the blood from her keen-edged knife.

The germ of the fever, a billion strong,
Formed in her midst in battle array.
They bred other billions; an awful throng;
Their mission on earth mankind to slay.

The germ-laden blood from the fevered cheek
Nourished Old Liz and her countless brood.
She laid her eggs in a bend of the creek,
Safe from the current in time of flood.

A wandering breeze blew Liz back that way,
And the sight she saw made her giggle.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

In the pool she saw her children at play.

Tickled was she to see them wriggle.

On the edge of the pool she spied a man,

Who swore aloud and inwardly boiled.

He swore aloud, then from an old tin can,

The pool in the bend he quickly oiled.

As each little Wiggler came up for breath,

The pill they swallowed then did the trick.

Liz wept as each one closed its eyes in death;

The sight of the slaughter made her sick.

Bereft of reason; her heart full of dread;

To flee at once was her only wish.

But she slipped from her perch, and downward sped

Into the maw of a watchful fish.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

BILL'S RELAPSE

"Ditch" foreman Shay puckered his brow
As he gazed at his "gang" one day;
For he really did not know how
To tell them what he had to say.

'Twas plain to see Shay was in grief;
He scratched his chin and pulled his hair.
The word had come from the "Big Chief"
That at his "gang" he must not swear.

"Ye sons o' Castile soap!" he roared:
"Ye pack o' burglarious crooks!
Th' whole o' ye aint worth your board.
I'll scratch yer names fr'm me books!"

The sons of Castile yawned and smiled
At "Bill," as they smoked, joked and chaffed.
It drove the wrathful "roughneck" wild
When at his ire the whole "gang" laughed.

"Ye pirates! jailbirds! sons o' swine!"
Inwardly swore the wrathful "Mick."

Panama Roughneck Ballads

Then, with plain castigious design,
His eye sought the haft of a pick.

With the haft through the "gang" he cleft
His furious, head-bruising way;
Smiting lustily right and left,
He scorned to give them time to pray.

Upon the saints to lay "Bill" low
Called as they sped from him who could.
"Bill" roundly swore with every blow
The exercise would do him good.

"Bill" cleared the field, then swore and swore;
The sad jokers gazed from on high.
His might they felt; their heads were sore.
"Bill" walked from the "ditch" with a sigh.

They transferred "Bill" that very day.
He was given ten days "to rest."
" 'Tis hard," he mused, "to lose me pay,
When I know that I've done me best."

Panama Roughneck Ballads

“ON VELVET”

“He pays us good money an’ keeps us in health,
An’ each year gives us six weeks of play.
Since comin’ down here we’re rollin’ in wealth;
I like it so well I think I’ll stay.”

“It’s nice to be coddled, an’ pampered an’ paid
To let Uncle Sam keep you alive.
Yes, I’ll stay for a while, I think I have said:
Carefully nurtured, I know I’ll thrive.”

“Bedded an’ boarded, I wot not of dull care.
To ease my lot Uncle Sam doth strive.
Most carefully doctored; nursed by lassies fair;
Yes; I am certain I’ll quite survive.”

“There’s nothin’ I want I can’t have right away;
Candy, ice cream, roast turkey an’ pie.
I’m stumped how to make th’ Old Uncle say nay.
He’s scared half to death, afraid I’ll die”

“I’ve been kicked by a mule an’ goared by a bull;
Struck by an engine; shot by a blast.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

My legs have been broken ; fractured my skull.

It makes me weep to think of th' past."

"But now I'm 'on velvet' ; th' sad days are o'er ;

'Easy Street,' 'Cinchville,' is my address.

Dull care is a stranger ; I worry no more.

That's about all—an' ee-nough, I guess"

THE END.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW

DEC 7 1914

FEB 6 1928

FEB 21 1928

MAY 01 2005