CHAPTER XXV

THE PANAMA RAILROAD

THE gold rush of '49 re-established the Isthmus as a place of world-interest. It was no longer the forgotten province of a mis-governed federation. The days had passed when the inhabitants could cut each other's throats without attracting attention. The world had need of Panama, once more, as a traffic route.

The building of the Panama railroad was a token of the new times. It was one of the most creditable operations which we of the North have undertaken in the South. It was a new kind of bravery which these Gringos brought to Latin America when, in the year 1850, they waded into the jungle-swamp with their transits and axes. It was five years later, July 27th, 1855, when the first locomotive crossed from ocean to ocean. About eight miles of track a year. Five years of as bitter hardship as that of any Polar expedition.

The history of the Panama railroad really begins before the discovery of gold in California. As early as 1848, W. H. Aspinwall, Henry Chauncey and John L. Stevens had petitioned the government of New Granada for a concession under which they and their associates might construct a railroad across the Isthmus, from some point on the Caribbean to the ancient city of Panama on the Pacific.

But it is extremely doubtful whether they could have raised the necessary capital if the gold rush had not focused public attention on the little strip of land between the oceans.

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Early in 1850, J. L. Stevens went to Bogota, and in April of that year the concession for the Panama railroad was signed.

There was some discussion about where to locate the Atlantic terminus. The first intention seems to have been to start from the commodious harbor which Columbus, when he had visited the coast three hundred and fifty years before, had named Puerto Bello. Mr. Tracy Robinson, in his memoirs of Isthmian life, says that "if tradition may be trusted," this plan was abandoned because a New York speculator had bought up all the land about the harbor and held it at an exorbitant figure. Whatever the reason for the change, it was decidedly to the advantage of the canal builders, who came later, that Navy Bay was chosen instead.

Work began in May, 1850. "The Illustrated History of the Panama Railroad," by Fessenden Nott Otis, describes the start in rather flowery periods:

"Messrs. Troutwine and Baldwin struck the first blow upon this great work. No imposing ceremonies inaugurated the 'breaking ground.' Two American citizens, leaping, axe in hand, from a native canoe upon a wild and desolate island, their retinue consisting of half a dozen Indians, who clear the path with rude knives, strike their glittering axes into the nearest tree; the rapid blows reverberate from shore to shore, and the stately cocoa crashes upon the beach. Thus unostentatiously was announced the commencement of a railway, which, from the interests and difficulties involved, might well be looked upon as one of the grandest and boldest enterprises ever attempted."

A few pages further on, Mr. Otis's style becomes a bit less ornate:

"The island was still uninhabitable (their base of action was Manzanillo island, the site of the present city of Colon, A.E.), and the whole party were forced to live on board the

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brig, which was crowded to its utmost capacity. Here they were by no means exempt from the causes which deterred them from living on shore, for below decks the vessel was alive with mosquitoes and sand flies, which were a source of such annoyance and suffering that almost all preferred to sleep upon the deck, exposed to drenching rains, rather than endure their attacks. In addition to this, most of their number were kept nauseated by the ceaseless motion of the vessel. Labor and malarious influences during the day, exposure and unrest at night, soon told upon their health, and in a short time more than half were attacked with malarious fever. Having neither a physician nor any comfortable place of rest, their sufferings were severe."

On the preliminary survey, it was sometimes necessary for the men to carry their lunches tied to their head and to eat them, standing waist-deep in the water of the swamp.

Mr. Otis's "Illustrated History" was published on behalf of the company and, being in the nature of a prospectus, dismisses the "diseases" these pioneers had to face, as lightly as possible. But there are many contemporaneous records, however, which give more vivid pictures of the Black Death which struck down the men of the railroad. I have chosen the following passages from Tomes' "Panama in 1855," because, as he was a guest of the railroad at the time of the formal opening, he is little likely to have maliciously exaggerated the dangers of the Isthmus.

"The unhealthiness of the climate has been one of the most serious obstacles against which the enterprise has struggled. I need not dwell upon the causes which produce those diseases. The alternation of the wet and dry season, a perpetual summer-heat, and the decomposition of the profuse tropical vegetation, must of course generate an intense miasmatic poison, and I was not surprised when the oldest and most experienced of the physicians employed on

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the railroad, declared to me that no one, of whatever race or country, who becomes a resident of the Isthmus, escapes disease.

"I am indebted to the same gentleman just mentioned for some interesting facts. From him I learned that those who were exposed to the miasmatic poison of the country were generally taken ill in four or five weeks, although sometimes, but rarely, not for four or five months after exposure. That the first attack was generally severe; and took the form of yellow or bilious remittent, or malignant intermittent fever. That although none were exempt, the miasmatic poison affected the various races with different degrees of rapidity. That the African resisted the longest, next the cooly, then the European, and last in order the Chinese, who gave in at once. The rate of mortality, I was informed, was, for the natives of all races, one in fifty; the coolies, one in forty; the negroes (foreign), one in forty; the Europeans, one in thirty; and the Chinese, one in ten. . . . I never met with a wholesome looking person among all those engaged upon the railroad. There was not one whose constitution had not been sapped by disease, and all, without exception, are in the almost daily habit of taking medicine to drive away the ever-recurring fever and ague.

"The railroad company are so far conscious of the debility engendered by a residence on the Isthmus, that they refuse to employ those laborers who, having gone to a healthier climate to recruit, return to seek employment. It is found that such are unprofitable servants, and yield at once to the enervating and sickening climate. The enterprise requires all the vigor of unweakened sinews, and of pure, wholesome blood.

"A terrible fatality attended the efforts of the Railroad Company to avail themselves of the assistance of Chinese

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laborers. A ship arrived, and landed on the Isthmus some eight hundred, after a fair voyage from Hong Kong, where these poor devils of the flowery kingdom had unwittingly sold themselves to the service of the railroad, perfectly ignorant of the country whither they were going, and of the trials which awaited them. The voyage was tolerably prosperous, and the Chinese bore its fatigues and suffering with great patience, cheered by the prospects of reaching the foreign land, whither they had been tempted by the glowing descriptions of those traffickers in human life, who had so liberally promised them wealth and happiness. Sixteen died on the passage, and were thrown into the sea. No sooner had the eight hundred survivors landed, than thirty-two of the number were struck down prostrate by sickness; and in less than a week afterward, eighty more laid by their side. The interpreters who accompanied them attributed this rapid prostration to the want of their habitual opium. The drug was then distributed among them, and with the good effect of so far stimulating their energies that two-thirds of the sick arose again from their beds, and began to labor. A Maine opium law, however, was soon promulgated on the score of the immorality of administering to so pernicious a habit, and without regard, it is hoped, to the expense; which, however, was no inconsiderable item, since the daily quota of each Chinese amounted to fifteen grains, at the cost of at least fifteen cents. Whether it was owing to the deprivation of their habitual stimulus, or to the malignant effects of the climate, or home-sickness, or disappointment, in a few weeks there was hardly one out of the eight hundred Chinese who was not prostrate and unfit to labor. The poor sufferers let the pick and shovel fall from their hands, and yielded themselves up to the agony of despair. They now gladly welcomed death, and impatiently awaited their turn in the ranks which were falling before the pesti-

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lence. The havoc of disease went on, and would have done its work in time, but as it was sometimes merciful, and spared a life, and was deliberate though deadly, the despairing Chinese could wait no longer; he hastily seized the hand of death, and voluntarily sought destruction in its grasp. Hundreds destroyed themselves, and showed, in their various methods of suicide, the characteristic Chinese ingenuity. Some deliberately lighted their pipes, and sat themselves down upon the shore of the sea, and awaited the rising of the tide, grimly resolved to die, and sat and sat, silent and unmoved as a storm-beaten rock, as wave arose above wave, until they sank into the depths of eternity. Some bargained with their companions for death, giving their all to the friendly hand, which, with a kindly touch of the trigger, would scatter their brains and hasten their death. Some hung themselves to the tall trees by their hair, and some twisted their queues about their necks, with a deliberate coil after coil, until their faces blackened, their eye-balls started out, their tongues protruded, and death relieved their agony. Some cut ugly, crutch-shaped sticks, sharpened the ends to a point, and thrust their necks upon them until they were pierced through and through, and thus mangled, yielded up life in a torrent of blood. Some took great stones in their hands, and leaped into the depths of the nearest river, and clung, with resolute hold, to the weight which sunk them, gurgling in the agonies of drowning, to the bottom, until death loosened their grasp, and floated them to the surface, lifeless bodies. Some starved themselves to death—refusing either to eat or drink. Some impaled themselves upon their instruments of labor—and thus, in a few weeks after their arrival, there were but scarce two hundred Chinese left of the whole number. This miserable remnant of poor, heart-sick exiles, prostrate from the effects of the climate, and bent on death, being useless for

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labor, were sent to Jamaica, where they have, ever since, lingered out a miserable beggar's life.

"The Railroad Company was hardly more fortunate with another importation of live freight. A cargo of Irish laborers from Cork reached Aspinwall, and so rapidly did they yield to the malignant effects of the climate, that not a good day's labor was obtained from a single one; and so great was the mortality, that it was found necessary to ship the survivors to New York, where most died from the fever of the Isthmus which was fermenting in their blood."

In another passage, Tomes gives an admirable summary of the material difficulties of the work:

"The Isthmus did not supply a single resource necessary for the undertaking. Not only the capital, skill and enterprise, but the labor, the wood and iron, the daily food, the clothing, the roof to cover and the instruments to work with, came from abroad. The United States supplied the enterprising capitalists, the men of science, the engineers, the practical business managers, the superior workmen, the masons, carpenters and forgers of iron. Distant parts of the world supplied the laborers. From Ireland came crowds of her laborious peasantry. The negroes, stimulated to unusual energy by the prospect of reward, thronged in from Jamaica. The surplus populations of India and China contributed their share. The mixed races of the province of Cartagena, the Indian, Spaniard and African, completed this representation of all nations, in which the Caucasian, Mongolian and African, the Anglo-American, European, Negro, American, Indian and Asiatic, with all their diverse temperaments, habits and religious faiths, mingled together appropriately to join in a work by which the ends of the earth were to be brought together for the common interests of the whole world.

"Most of the material used for the construction of the

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road was brought from vast distances. Although the country abounded in forests, it was found necessary, from the expense of labor and the want of routes of communication, to send the timber, for the most part, from the United States, and not only were the rails, to a considerable extent, laid on American pine, but the bridges, and the houses and workshops of the various settlements, were of the same wood, all fashioned in Maine and Georgia. The metal-work, the rails, the locomotives, and the tools, were brought either from England or the United States. The daily food of the laborers, even, came from a New York market."

But by October, 1851, they had laid the track as far as Gatun—eight miles from the Atlantic terminus. This was the worst of the construction work, for at Gatun they struck solid ground. The first section had been through a mangrove swamp, in which they had been unable to find a bottom. The tracks were practically floated on an immense pontoon. It was not until many years later that the company was able to get in a fairly solid road-bed.

Although they had now reached solid ground, and the most difficult problem of construction had been solved, the work came to a standstill for lack of funds. The cost of labor was almost prohibitive. The various fevers of the Isthmus kept half their men on the sick list. The gold rush was still on, and the fortune-hunters were willing to pay anything to laborers who would help transport their luggage across the divide. Wages had gone up, in consequence. And the investors in the States had become discouraged—it had taken twenty months to build eight miles. Just when things were looking blackest, a lucky hurricane turned the tide in favor of the railroad.

Two steamships, the *Georgia* and the *Philadelphia*, arrived off the mouth of the Chagres, filled with passengers en route for California. In the days before the railroad, travellers

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went up the river in native canoes to Cruces, and from there to Panama, by mule back. The storm forced the two ships to seek shelter in Navy Bay. They dropped anchor close to the railroad company's pier on Manzanillo Island. The passengers were rabid with the gold hunger. The company had no passenger coaches, but the eager prospectors were only too anxious to pile onto work cars and be carried to Gatun, where they could get the native boats up-stream without waiting for the hurricane to blow itself out. The news that the railroad had carried over one thousand passengers restored confidence on Wall Street, credit was re-established, and the work continued.

By January, 1854, the summit ridge had been reached—over thirty miles of track in operation. Work had been begun at the Panama end, and when the Atlantic division reached the summit, some track had already been laid in the eleven miles of the Pacific division. But here again the men encountered swamps, and work went slowly. It was not until midnight of January 27, 1855, that the last track was laid. The next day a train passed from sea to sea.

The short hauls of passengers en route to California, which was begun when the *Georgia* and *Philadelphia* were blown into Colon Harbor, were lengthened as the track was laid. From the beginning until the opening of the road in 1855, the company had taken in for the transportation of people and freight, $2,125,232.31.

The road had cost in the neighborhood of seven millions of dollars, almost one hundred and fifty thousand a mile. But before its completion, it had paid nearly one-third of its cost.

Although through trains were running across the Isthmus, the road was not completed—much of the work had been hurried to meet the insistent demand. Al-

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most a million more was spent in installing permanent ways.

The entire length of the line was 47 miles, 3.02 feet. It crossed one hundred and seventy waterways. Thirty-six of these required bridges over ten feet in length. Barbacoas bridge was a six-span affair, 625 feet in length.

The gross earnings of the road, up to December 31, 1858, when the construction was practically completed, amounted to $8,146,605.

"The running expenses, together with depreciation in iron, buildings, etc., amounted to $2,174,876, leaving a balance of $5,971,729 as the legitimate returns for the money invested in the road in a period of seven years, during the first of which but twelve miles were in operation; the second, twenty-three; the third, thirty-one; only for the last four years was the road in use throughout its entire extent.

"Out of these receipts, the directors of the company, having paid the regular interest on all mortgage and other bonds, a ten per cent. dividend to the stockholders in 1852, one of seven per cent. in each of the years 1853 and 1854, and one of twelve per cent. every succeeding year, showed a balance (December 31st, 1858) of $529,041, besides a sinking fund of $153,395.83, and no floating debt."

Colonel Center, who was general manager when the road was completed, was embarrassed by the fact that he was under-equipped for the immense traffic he foresaw.

Mr. Tracy Robinson gives the original tariffs of the railroad as follows:

FOR PASSENGERS

First class	$25.00 gold
Steerage	10.00 gold

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FOR FREIGHT

Personal baggage	$ .05 per pound
Express	1.80 per cubic foot
Ordinary first class	.50 per cubic foot
Second class	1.50 per 100 pounds
Mails	.22 per pound
Coal	5.00 per ton

And he tells the following amusing anecdote about them:

"These rates," said Colonel Center to me, long afterwards, "were intended to be, to a certain extent, prohibitory, until we could get things in shape. As soon as we were on our feet and ready for business, we could, as I wrote the president, gracefully reduce our charges to within reasonable limits. For it is always pleasing to the public to have prices come down, rather than rise."

However, they were not forced to cut these tariffs for more than twenty years. They soon began to declare dividends of 24% per annum, and the stock went up at one time to 350.

It is very doubtful if many of the men who rushed across the Isthmus to the California gold fields did as well by themselves as if they had stayed at home and invested their passage money in Panama railroad stock.

But the company after a time killed the goose which laid the golden egg. In 1860, less than one-fifteenth of their business was Californian trade. A large commerce had sprung up along the west coast of Central and South America. Most of this business was brought to Panama by the Pacific Steam Navigation Company—an English corporation which had a practical monopoly of west coast transportation. The Panama railroad, instead of entering into a percentage agreement with them which would have been profitable to both, tried to absorb all the profit. They be-

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came so extortionate in 1868 that the P. S. N. C. put on some big boats for a Liverpool service, via Cape Horn. The railroad lost most of its valuable business.

They also fell among thieves in Bogota; the governmental clique refused to renew their franchise except on disastrous conditions. To cap the climax, the directors received news that the last rail had been laid in the Union Pacific railroad. The Panama railroad was no longer the only transcontinental line.

The affairs of the company went from bad to worse. The directorate fell into the hands of Russell Sage and a band of speculators. There came a period of corrupt management. The rolling stock and equipment were allowed to run down until there was little left of the road beyond two streaks of rust.

In 1880 the owners of the railroad reaped their last harvest. By excessive freight-rates—practically blackmail—they forced the French to buy them out. De Lesseps paid $20,000,000 for this neglected road, which twenty-five years before had cost barely eight.

When the United States bought out the French company in 1904, we also acquired the road. And so the old Panama railroad became our first government system.

To-day it is one of the best equipped and most efficient railroads in the world.

The annual report of the railroad for the year ending June 30th, 1910, shows gross earnings of $6,100,788.83. The track was being relocated, and the operating expenses amounted to $4,358,426.92, leaving considerably over one million clear. The net earnings of the steamship line from Colon to New York, which is operated by the railroad, was over one hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

What the future of the road will be, after the opening of the canal, is uncertain. But those who are in charge of it

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think that its business will be even larger. The terminal facilities are being largely increased. The administration of the railroad under national control has been so successful that it is being more and more often cited as an argument by those who advocate government ownership in the States.

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CHAPTER XXVI

OUR PREDECESSORS ON THE JOB

BALBOA had no sooner seen the Pacific from the mountain peak of Darien than he wanted to set sail on it. Within three years he had performed the incredible feat of carrying two ships—in pieces—across the Isthmus and launching them. Washington Irving considers this one of the most remarkable accomplishments of the Spaniards in the New World.

The distance across the land is not great. It was probably less than twenty miles from navigable water to navigable water where Balboa crossed. The difficulty consisted in the appalling density of the jungle. To-day the most frequented passes—outside of our Canal Zone—present the worst trails in the world. With Indian guides and horses it is hard to make ten miles a day on some of the routes marked on the Government maps *camino real*—main roads. To one who has tried them Balboa's expedition is almost unbelievable.

Irving says: "The timber was felled on the Atlantic seaboard; and was then, with the anchors and rigging, transported across the lofty ridge of mountains to the opposite shores of the Isthmus. Several Spaniards, thirty negroes, and a great number of Indians were employed for the purpose. They had no other roads but Indian paths, straggling through almost impervious forests, across torrents, and up rugged defiles broken by rocks and precipices. In this way they toiled like ants up the mountains, with their ponderous

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burdens, under the scorching rays of a tropical sun. Many of the poor Indians sank by the way and perished under this stupendous task."

"We can readily imagine," Irving continues after several pages more of description of appalling obstacles and discouragements, "the exultation of this intrepid adventurer, and how amply he was repaid for all his sufferings, when he first spread a sail on that untraversed ocean, and felt that the range of an unknown world was open to him."

Balboa's ships, once afloat, carried him to the Pearl Islands, where he found rich treasure, and richer tales of Peru, to the south. After this news reached Madrid, the mountains and the jungles of the Isthmus proved an ineffectual barrier indeed. Panama City grew to considerable size as the outfitting post for the conquest of Peru, and, in time, a paved road was constructed from sea to sea. Almost immediately the project of a canal began to be discussed.

The first canal survey was made by Pascual Andagoya in 1534. He reported that the project was impractical. Philip II, crowned in 1555, was more interested in the wealth of the New World than in that of the Far East, and gave no encouragement to the idea. During his reign the Inquisition is reported to have forbidden discussion of a canal, holding that to put asunder two continents which God had joined together would be impious. Paterson, the Presbyterian, seems to have dreamed of joining the oceans, but his enterprise succumbed to "fevers and fluxes."

For nearly two centuries the idea was dead. But in 1735 some French astronomers who had visited Central America revived the subject. In 1780 the English made an attempt to secure the Nicaragua coast, but, like the Scots Colonie, they were defeated by disease. Lord Nelson—who was then only plain Horatio—nearly died of the fever. In 1800 regu-

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lar transit from sea to sea was maintained in only one place —the Mexican Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century new impetus was given to the discussion by the great naturalist Alexander von Humboldt. He wrote that a canal was practicable, and its construction was "calculated to immortalize a government occupied with the true interests of humanity." This account fired the imagination of Goethe. In his conversation with Eckermann and Soret of February 21, 1827, is recorded this remarkable prophecy: "I therefore repeat that it is absolutely indispensable for the United States to effect a passage from the Mexican Gulf to the Pacific Ocean; and I am certain that they will do it. . . . I should like to see another thing—a junction of the Danube and the Rhine; but this undertaking is so gigantic that I have grave doubts of its completion. . . . And, thirdly and lastly, I should wish to see England in possession of a canal through the Isthmus of Suez. Would I could live to see these three great works! It would well be worth the trouble to last some fifty years more for this very purpose!"

In 1814 the Spanish Government again took up the project, but before anything could be accomplished the series of revolutions had begun in South and Central America which drove Spain from the mainland of this continent. The first diplomatic envoy from the liberated Central American states in 1825 took up the matter with Henry Clay, who was then our Secretary of State. In the next year "the Central American and United States Atlantic and Pacific Canal Company" was organized, with DeWitt Clinton—of Erie Canal fame—as one of its directors. Their concession lapsed because of lack of funds.

One scheme followed another, our Government taking little interest in the matter beyond barking like a dog in the manger about the Monroe Doctrine whenever any foreigners

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started anything. However, in 1835 the Senate voted to construct a canal by way of Nicaragua. The expedition sent out as a result of this vote reported that the canal could be opened for twenty-five million dollars! Louis Napoleon, before he became Emperor, was vastly interested in the subject, and wrote a flamboyant pamphlet about how it was the destiny of France to perform this great service to the race.

With the middle of the last century the "scientific spirit," which was rejuvenating all human thought, found its way to the Isthmus. The fantastic stories that the Pacific Ocean was twenty feet higher than the Atlantic, that the lowest pass was 957 feet high (von Humboldt's estimate), that the same pass was only 31 feet high (Moret's statement), and so forth, began to give place to exact information.

The discovery of gold in California in '49 resulted in a great addition to our knowledge of Isthmian routes. Not since the early Spanish days had such a rush of humanity crossed Panama. This sudden burst of traffic was the inspiration of the romantic band of American railway men who built the Panama railroad. It was started in 1850 and completed in 1855. During the first four years of its operation the railroad sold 121,820 tickets.

About the same time, Cornelius Vanderbilt organized "The American Atlantic and Pacific Ship Canal Company," and secured concessions for a transportation monopoly across Nicaragua—sole rights for traffic by rail, water or turnpike. They established a line of steamers up the San Juan River and across Lake Nicaragua to Virgin Bay, and from there a line of stage coaches to the Pacific.

Colonel O. W. Childs, of our army, made for the company the first accurate Isthmian Survey. But before work could be begun on the Canal, a revolution broke out. One of the momentary presidents declared the concession forfeited for "non-accomplishment." This company is still in existence.

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The advantages which would accrue from an Isthmian Canal which had before appealed to the speculative imaginations of such men as Goethe now—because of the growing importance of California—began to impress business men and politicians. President Buchanan laid hold of the idea, and in 1857 despatched two lieutenants—Craven of the navy and Michler of the army—to make surveys. A dozen names could be cited of our military men who did valiant service in tearing the facts out of the heart of the jungle. Rear-Admiral Davis stands pre-eminent among them. Immediately after the Civil War he began to urge the construction of a canal by our Government. And from then on the history of the Canal is a tangle of diplomatic intrigue, Nicaragua and Colombia playing against each other at Washington—the whole thing complicated by our entanglement with England. As the balance of favor in Washington seemed to be swinging towards the Nicaragua route, the Bogota Government, in a pet, gave a concession to a young French lieutenant, Lucien Napoleon Bonaparte Wyse. It is hard to determine whether he was a too optimistic engineer or a more than usually successful swindler. Many of his maps are now in existence. They are beautifully drawn—and inaccurate. In his writings he vastly underestimated the difficulties of the undertaking, and he succeeded in organizing in France a speculative company, which shortly after sold out to the gang of financiers who surrounded de Lesseps.

The extent of de Lesseps' responsibility in "The Panama Crime" is uncertain. Possibly the utter condemnation which followed his failure was as undeserved as the fulsome eulogies which greeted his earlier achievement were unmerited.

Mr. Robinson's amiable estimate of his character—quoted later—would be easier to accept, if it was not for the sorry story of Suez. His success there had ruined his friend, the

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Khedive,—drove him from his throne in bankruptcy. It was stained by atrocious cruelty to the *fellaheen*, who did the work. At Panama he pushed his luck a bit harder, took greater liberties with the Penal Code—and did not get away with it.

Expert opinion then favored the Nicaragua route—for the small ships of those days it was preferable. But American companies held claims there, so de Lesseps turned to Panama.

A "scientific" congress was called in Paris, May, 1879, to lend authority to the speculators. Only 42 of its 135 members were engineers. It had been "packed." The Panama sea-level project was adopted. The only engineer who voted for it had never been on the Isthmus.

"The Universal Interoceanic Canal Company" was at once formed by buying the Wyse concession for $2,000,000. It was worthless without the good will of the Panama Railroad, and it cost a fantastic price to get control of that company.

The Company was launched with many banquets, florid speeches by *le grand Français*, and champagne without end. And all the while those who were on the inside were playing the market from both ends, sending the stock tumbling down the steps of the Bourse on a manufactured report that the United States was again waving the Monroe Doctrine, shooting them up again with a misquotation from the President's message to the effect that we were enthusiastic in favor of the French enterprise. A sorrier exhibition of conscienceless finance has seldom been seen.

Meanwhile the Company was sending out men to the Isthmus, preliminary work was discovering the shortcomings of the Wyse surveys, and the engineers were beginning to get acquainted with yellow fever. Information about all this was skilfully handled by the directors, who denied it in their organ "Le Bulletin," or gave it out in exagger-

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ated form to the press, as they desired the stock to rise or fall.

Late in 1879 de Lesseps, accompanied by his wife and three of his children, sailed from France. They reached Colon on the 30th of December. De Lesseps's arrival is described by Mr. Robinson in his book on Panama:

"As one of a committee of reception I went on board the steamer to welcome the distinguished gentleman and his associates, through whom the fortunes of the Isthmus were to be established upon a basis of pure gold. . . . He was then over seventy years of age, but was still active and vigorous; a small man, French in detail, with winning manners, and what is called a magnetic presence. When he spoke, the hearer would not fail to be convinced that whatever he said was true, or, at all events, that he believed it to be true. Thus, during the reception and the conversations which followed he would answer every inquiry in regard to the Canal in the readiest and most amiable manner, and would invariably conclude with the assertion '*The canal will be made!*' "

There were receptions and speeches in Colon, and the next day the party crossed the Isthmus to Panama, where, on New Year's Day, a formal opening of the Canal—such as is dear to the heart of the French—was performed by the Count and his little daughter. "Le Bulletin" records his speech:

"Under the authority of the United States of Colombia,

"With the blessing of Monseigneur, the Bishop of Panama, . . .

"In the presence of the members of the Technical Commission for the Final Study of the Universal Interoceanic Maritime Canal,

"Mlle. Ferdinande de Lesseps—on this first day of January, 1880—will give the initial blow of a pickax [*coup de*

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pioche] on the point which will mark the entrance of the Canal on the side of the Pacific Ocean.

"All present will then successively strike a blow in sign of the alliance of all the peoples who contribute to the union of the two oceans for the good of humanity."

(Great applause and more champagne.)

In striking contrast to this grandiloquence is the episode related in Otis's "Handbook of the Panama Railroad." Two Americans inaugurated that undertaking by climbing over the side of a boat—up to their waists in water—and doing a day's work cutting down mangrove trees.

The same contrast is afforded by Major-General Davis's report of how he assumed control of the Canal Zone as its first Governor. On the 17th of May, 1904, he arrived on the Isthmus. On the 19th he presented his credentials to the President of Panama, and the same day "announced to the inhabitants of the land ceded . . . that the territory had been occupied by the United States of America, and that the temporary government over the same and its inhabitants had been assumed by the undersigned, acting for and in the name of the President of the United States. . . .

"Very soon after the publication in Panama of the announcement that the United States authorities had assumed control of the Canal Zone the Government of the Republic expressed objection to so summary or precipitate assumption of control."

The Panamanians—accustomed by the French to banquets and eloquence, not to mention champagne—made diplomatic representations to Washington, and Governor Davis was ordered to put on his good clothes and "participate in any ceremonies or formalities that might be proposed by the Panama Government."

De Lesseps stayed only a few days on the Isthmus, and then went to the States to try to smooth out the Monroe

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Doctrine. "Le Bulletin," which was published in Paris by the directors, contains glowing accounts of his enthusiastic reception. The editors and their friends were "long" on the stock at that moment.

But, sinister as was the condition in Paris, things boomed on the Isthmus. There were hundreds of young engineers at work in the jungle who cared little and knew less about the Bourse, but who had reputations to make. The explorations they made, the minute and exact surveys they carried out, the amount of excavation they accomplished with their puny equipment, have been of great use to us. Our men on the job to-day have the highest respect for the men who worked here thirty years ago.

There is an immense pathos in the idea of these men working so sincerely, in the midst of this fever-ridden jungle, for a gang of wildcat promoters in Paris.

For, besides the treachery which threatened them from home, they were in their work face to face with overwhelming odds.

First of all, as it was not a Government undertaking, they had to let out the excavation to contractors. The conditions of the work were so unprecedented that for years they could only guess at the costs, and the terms of the contracts were haphazard. The private contractors took out the soft earth at the stipulated price per cubic yard, and then threw up their hands and went through bankruptcy in the face of the more difficult excavation. The Company was paying exorbitant prices for the easiest work, and not making any progress at all in the more formidable sections of the Canal. It lost money, or was probably intentionally cheated, by almost all the contractors. Two glowing exceptions were the contracts let to an American named Slaven for dredging at the Atlantic entrance, and to the French company organized by M. Bunau-Varilla for dry excavation

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in Culebra Cut. The work accomplished by these two firms was remarkable and has proved of utility to us.

Not the least of the Company's troubles arose from the unsatisfactory nature of the concession from Colombia. Besides the blackmail to which almost every foreign industrial enterprise is subject in Latin-American countries, the French were endlessly worried by the courts. The leading citizens of Colombia for awhile laid aside the profession of political revolutions and took up the law. The frequent bankruptcy of the contractors, the compensation claims of injured workmen, and so forth, gave endless excuse for litigation, and it was often started without excuse. The native courts always decided that the French could pay.

But these complications, serious as they were, were mere fly-specks in comparison to the death roll from yellow and malarial fever.

What the sick rate was among the French, how many of them died, it is to-day impossible to determine. "Le Bulletin" naturally tried to minimize it. When M. Bionne, one of the most gifted prospectus writers and speakers employed by the Company, visited the Isthmus and died of the yellow fever, "Le Bulletin" claimed that it was apoplexy. Almost all the personal memoirs of those days record the crowded condition of the big hospitals at Ancon and Colon and the death of many a friend.

Bunau-Varilla writes: "In September the diseases and death continued their work. The Director of Works, gravely ill himself, had to return to France, and so I was forced to assume the functions of the general administration with a working force decimated by disease and desertions.

"Two talented engineers, MM. Petit and Sordoillet, were sent to me from Paris to take the posts of division chiefs. Their coming had made me hope for a seriously needed reinforcement; but, unhappily, having arrived together, they

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Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History.

ANOPHELINE MOSQUITO.

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were together taken to the cemetery fifteen days later, having fallen victims to the fatal malady which had so terribly torn open the ranks of our forces."

The following statistics have been compiled by our sanitary officers from the very incomplete data left by the French. They are believed to be much below the real mortality. The worst scourge was in the end of 1884:

EMPLOYEES

1884 Month	Officials		Office Force		Laborers		Total White and Negro
	White	Negro	White	Negro	White	Negro	
October.....	531	4	524	284	1,657	16,249	19,243
November..	562	4	583	281	1,600	15,906	18,936
December...	556	3	577	286	1,503	15,802	18,727

MORTALITY

1884 Month	Yellow Fever	Malaria	Total all Diseases	Annual death rate per 1,000 for the month
October.....	21	51	161	100.40
November.....	20	56	162	102.66
December.....	33	35	146	93.55

With the coming of the "dry season" the scourge abated, to break out again the next year. Although there were no other three consecutive months with so terrible a showing as these last months of 1884, September of the next year reached the unprecedented annual death rate per thousand of 176.97.

The visitor to the Isthmus to-day is sure to be told of "*la folie Dingler.*" Dingler was probably the ablest engineer the French ever had in charge of the work. He came out in 1883. He was not afraid of the fever, and he built a mansion on the side of Ancon Hill, where the quarry is now. It would have been difficult for him to have found as beautiful a situation on the Côte d'Azur of his own country. But

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he never occupied the house. His wife and three children had come over from France, and, while the house was building, the fever took them all.

Bunau-Varilla speaks of the fever as the greatest of all the difficulties the French had to face:

"Subtle and fugitive, the mysterious disease seems to defy all observation, to laugh at all remedies. The victim whom it has struck is in the hands of hazard. The most erudite and devoted physicians must content themselves with administering, not remedies which will check the progress of the malady, but simple palliatives, the effects of which are more moral than real. . . .

"Out of each hundred individuals arrived on the Isthmus it is not exaggeration to say that, on an average, not more than twenty were able to keep at their posts in the construction camp. And of this number how few—although preserving that minimum of health which was strictly necessary —had not lost some of their courage!"

Even if all the French money had been honestly and economically expended, it is probable that the de Lesseps Company would have failed. It was not until the beginning of the new century that sanitary science progressed to the point of successfully pulling the teeth of the tropical jungle.

The crash came in 1888. After eight years of as brave a fight as man had ever made against nature, the bubble burst. It is estimated that stock had been issued to the value of two hundred and fifty million dollars. It is doubtful if more than one million and a half ever got near enough to Panama to be expended on actual work. Most of this "paper" was held by French peasants and people of moderate means. They had been led into it by the great name of de Lesseps. You may be sure that none of the original promoters were caught with stock on their hands when the final break came. The scandal was immense. Many Government officials were

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involved. The shame of it drove the old man— *le grand Français*—insane. He died a few years later in an asylum.

I have found nothing—and the books on the subject are without end—which seems to me to characterize the man so favorably as this from the pen of Mr. Robinson, who knew de Lesseps personally, and was on the Isthmus during the whole time of the Company's activity:

"He was committed to the scheme, fully believed in it as a great and good scheme entirely possible of realization, and it is my opinion that from first to last he was perfectly conscientious and honest.

"I am aware that the world at large does not take the same view. The question need not be discussed, nor need anything be added here to the already voluminous literature of this famous industrial failure. That M. de Lesseps was an enthusiast; that he did not possess the administrative abilities required for so great and so difficult a work; that he was too old, too eager, too vain of the glory it would add to his already great reputation, too easily imposed upon by men whose first aim was plunder, too ill a judge of character to fill with success a place of so great responsibility; that he lacked practical knowledge, and was wrongly advised—all these things may be admitted; but, when all is said, he was not sordid, not the impostor his enemies declare him to have been."

Sadder even than the tragedy of this unfortunate old man was the despair of the hundreds of loyal and courageous men engaged in the work. After eight years of struggle, and sometimes of doubt, they had come to feel that the opening of the Canal was assured. Bunau-Varilla writes: "The reasons for this great and fatal failure are numerous, but all of them, with hardly an exception, come from a common cause: the very nature of the problem faced by the art of the engineer made it impossible to state the problem with

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"Are we going to allow the belief to weigh down the coming generation that our country is no longer capable of anything but spasmodic energy, that the proud and powerful force of continued effort is henceforth a stranger to us?"

But the scandal had been too great to allow him or any one to revive the faith of the French nation. A receiver was appointed in the hope of rescuing something from the ruin. In order to keep alive the concession from Colombia a semblance of work was maintained by the reorganization. But nothing serious was accomplished.

The devoted band of engineers scattered about the world on other jobs. Bunau-Varilla was one of the few who kept the faith. The dream of "the Straits of Panama" had bit deep into his imagination. When at last he was forced to give up hope in his own people, he turned to us, and this man, who had been a notable engineer, became a politician. He, more than any one else, kept the "Panama idea" alive. And, when the time came, he was active in the Panama Revolution which gave us the Canal Zone, and was the first diplomatic representative from the infant republic to Washington. And in that capacity he signed the treaty which made the Canal a certainty.

Our engineers have disagreed with him on several important points, his soundness on technical points has been questioned, and his publicity methods are often absurd. But no one denies that he was among the most successful of the French engineers and contractors thirty years ago, and that in his tireless devotion to a grand idea he has typified the spirit of his great and generous people. If there had been more men of his stamp and fewer speculators in the de Lesseps company, the French would have built the Canal.

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CHAPTER XXVII

THE FIFTY-THREE REVOLUTIONS IN FIFTY-SEVEN YEARS

From the early days of the nineteenth century, when the Spanish yoke was thrown off, very little happened on the Isthmus which is of interest to outsiders until the middle of the century.

It was a period of varied, and, to the inhabitants, exciting misrule. The Panamanians very quickly regretted the haste with which they had bound themselves to the South American Federation of New Granada. The mountains which bound the Isthmus at the east cut them off from all land communication with Bogota, where as dizzy a kaleidoscope of constitutions, revolutions, dictators and presidents was going on as this hemisphere has ever seen. "The free and sovereign state of Panama" was popularly spoken of as "the milch cow of Bogota." All the adventurers who came out on top in the revolutions of the federation sent their particular friends to govern this free and sovereign state—and recoup their fortunes.

It is hardly possible to conceive of a history being written of such an epoch. It could only be fittingly treated by a great epic bard, like Homer. The more one digs into the early history of Latin-America, the stronger the analogy grows between it and ancient Greece.

First of all, there is no great political principle at stake. The only issue which is fundamentally dear to the hearts of all Spanish-Americans is home rule. Our neighbors to the south have fought as gallantly, as desperately, as persis-

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tently and as devotedly for this ideal as have any people for any ideal; but that was won in their wars of independence. They claim also to be Republicans, but to one with the Anglo-Saxon tradition of democracy, that must seem lip-service. North of the equator—I have not been south of it—I have never found any trace of a vital democratic movement of the masses. They mean no more by "the Republic" than did the slave-owners of Athens or the merchant princes of Venice. It is only a small minority of the people who take any interest in politics.

One cannot read Homer without feeling that the Rape of Helen was only a pretext for the Trojan war. The Grecian army undoubtedly marched in the hope of glory and booty. If the author of the Iliad had been a modern journalist instead of a blind poet, he would probably have seen more of the latter. And it looks to me as if these Latin-American wars had been inspired by the same spirit, a desire for pesos rather than patriotism.

But one who is fond of stories of personal bravery can find no better reading than the records of the early days of Spanish-American independence. The comic opera side of these turmoils has been too often played up to us of the North, for these bare-footed, dark-skinned soldiers really know how to fight. It is a common occurrence for these revolutions to cost more lives than did our Spanish war.

The dare-devil strain of bravery, which led Pizarro's little band to capture the Inca in the midst of the Peruvian army, has persisted in the race. There have been battles of Thermopylæ a plenty, and men have passed down to the "shadowy kingdom" as gallantly as did Leonides of old.

The record, it is true, has been blotted and smirched by cowardly treachery and dishonesty—perhaps this strain also has peristed from the old days when Pizarro violated the laws of hospitality to win an empire.

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It is well, in reading such sorry pages, to remember that there are renegades among all people. Within the memory of many still living, a victorious revolutionist in one of these Latin-American countries celebrated his triumph by executing the former president. The dead man's wife sought refuge at the American consulate, with her children and jewels. The representative of our government charged her four hundred dollars a week board, and when it was time for her to leave, he could not remember where he had put her diamonds.

A close reading of Homer will convince one that all this is in accordance with the best Greek traditions.

Such was the life of the Isthmus after the expulsion of the Spaniards. The great cause, home rule, had been won. The two-century-old traditions of wars and intrigues, of adventurous warriors who were gamblers with fate, persisted. There was only one way of acquiring wealth which was looked down upon—that of humdrum industry.

Things took a change on the Isthmus with the Californian gold rush of '49. The narrow neck of land was overrun with a new breed of men, as Homeric as the great ancestors of the natives.

The trip across the American desert was an immensely expensive and hazardous undertaking. Many gold hunters crossed Central America by the way of Nicaragua, but the Darien route, as it was called, was the most popular.

From '49 on, the history of the Isthmus has been principally made by foreigners. It is true that the natives did not at once, in fact, have not yet entirely broken themselves of the old habits of revolutionary turmoil, but when the Isthmus came again into world prominence as a great traffic route, it was no longer possible for these disturbances to be allowed to run their course unchecked. The gold rush was the impetus which started the building of the Panama rail-

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road. A treaty between the United States and the Federation of New Granada, by which we guaranteed to keep the Isthmus open for transit, was signed in 1846. It made us a directly interested party in every Panamanian uprising.

However, our best efforts to keep the lid safely in place were not entirely successful. The following quotation from President Roosevelt's message of December 7, 1903, gives a summary of the political life of the Isthmus since the signing of that treaty. Writing about the Panama Revolution of 1903 and our part in it, he said:

"When these events happened, fifty-seven years had elapsed since the United States had entered into this treaty with New Granada. During that time the governments of New Granada and of its successor, Colombia, had been in a constant state of flux. The following is a partial list of the disturbances on the Isthmus of Panama during the period in question as reported to us by our consuls. It is not possible to give a complete list, and some of the reports that speak of 'revolutions' must mean unsuccessful revolutions:

"May 22, 1850.—Outbreak—Two Americans killed; war vessel demanded to quell outbreak.

"October, 1850.—Revolutionary plot to bring about independence of the Isthmus.

"July 22, 1851.—Revolution in four southern provinces.

"November 14, 1851.—Outbreak at Chagres. Man-of-war requested for Chagres.

"June 27, 1853.—Insurrection at Bogota, and consequent disturbance on Isthmus. War vessel demanded.

"May 23, 1854.—Political disturbances; war vessel requested.

"June 28, 1854.—Attempted revolution.

"October 24, 1854.—Independence of the Isthmus declared by provincial legislature.

"April, 1856.—Riot, and massacre of Americans.

"May 4, 1856.—Riot.

"May 18, 1856.—Riot.

"October 2, 1856.—Conflict between two native parties. United States forces landed.

"December 18, 1858.—Attempted secession of Panama.

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"April, 1859.—Riots.

"September, 1860.—Outbreak.

"October 4, 1860.—Landing of United States forces in consequence.

"May 23, 1861.—Intervention of the United States forces required by Intendente.

"October 2, 1861.—Insurrection and civil war.

"April 4, 1862.—Measures to prevent rebels crossing Isthmus.

"June 13, 1862.—Mosquera's troops refused admittance to Panama.

"March, 1865.—Revolution and United States troops landed.

"August, 1865.—Riots; unsuccessful attempt to invade Panama.

"March, 1866.—Unsuccessful revolution.

"April, 1867.—Attempt to overthrow the government.

"August, 1867.—Attempt at revolution.

"July 5, 1868.—Revolution; provisional government inaugurated.

"August 29, 1868.—Revolution; provisional government overthrown.

"April, 1871.—Revolution; followed apparently by counter-revolution.

"April, 1873.—Revolution and civil war which lasted to October, 1875.

"August, 1876.—Civil war which lasted until April, 1877.

"July, 1878.—Rebellion.

"December, 1878.—Revolt.

"April, 1879.—Revolution.

"June, 1879.—Revolution.

"March, 1883.—Riot.

"May, 1883.—Riot.

"June, 1884.—Revolutionary attempt.

"December, 1884.—Revolutionary attempt.

"January, 1885.—Revolutionary disturbances.

"March, 1885.—Revolution.

"April, 1887.—Disturbances on Panama Railroad.

"November, 1887.—Disturbance on line of canal.

"January, 1889.—Riot.

"January, 1895.—Revolution which lasted until April.

"March, 1895.—Incendiary attempt.

"October, 1899.—Revolution.

"February, 1900, to July, 1900.—Revolution.

"January, 1901.—Revolution.

"July, 1901.—Revolutionary disturbances.

"September, 1901.—City of Colon taken by rebels.

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"March, 1902.—Revolutionary disturbances.
"July, 1902.—Revolution.

"The above is only a partial list of the revolutions, rebellions, insurrections, riots, and other outbreaks that have occurred during the period in question; yet they number fifty-three for the last fifty-seven years. It will be noted that one of them lasted nearly three years before it was quelled; another for nearly a year. In short, the experience of over half a century has shown Colombia to be utterly incapable of keeping order on the Isthmus. Only the active interference of the United States has enabled her to preserve so much as a semblance of sovereignty. Had it not been for the exercise by the United States of the police power in her interest, her connection with the Isthmus would have been sundered long ago. In 1856, in 1860, in 1873, in 1885, in 1901, and again in 1902, sailors and marines from United States warships were forced to land in order to patrol the Isthmus, to protect life and property and to see that the transit across the Isthmus was kept open. In 1861, in 1862, in 1885, and in 1900, the Colombian government asked that the United States Government would land troops to protect its interests and maintain order on the Isthmus."

Most of these revolutionary outbreaks were conducted under the name of either the Liberal or Conservative party.

These parties had had their rise before the death of Bolivar. The Liberal party was descended from the extreme democrats who had from the first opposed the aristocratic tendency of the Liberator. Their program called for universal suffrage, the separation of the church and state, secular education, full autonomy of the provinces, and such an arrangement of finances that the largest proportion of the revenues would go to the provinces.

In general, the Conservative party stood for the centralized theory of government for which Bolivar had always fought, and in other details took the opposite position from the Liberals. They were, above all things, the party of the Church.

But these differences in principle were more often used as tools of some personal ambition, than as real motives of

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church property, secularized the schools, made suffrage universal and abolished the death penalty. Again the name was changed to "The United States of Colombia." It was organized into a loose league of nine states. Only fifty per cent. of the revenues was to go to the central government. The spirit of the document is summed up in this clause:

"When one sovereign state of the union shall be at war with another, or the citizens of any state shall be at war among themselves, the national government is obligated to preserve the strictest neutrality."

This remarkable constitution was in force for nearly a quarter of a century. In 1886, the Conservatives again got into the saddle, changed the name to the Republic of Colombia, and in a new constitution expressly denied the sovereignty of the individual states.

This political ferment has been costly beyond computation. The wars of independence left the country $35,000,000 in debt. Colombia is one of the richest countries, both in mineral and agricultural resources, of the New World. But far from paying off this debt, they have very rarely attempted to pay the interest. Industry has of course been ruined.

It is practically impossible for a foreigner to get any definite and reliable information about these numerous outbreaks. The spirit of partisanism is so sharp that no native can give an objective and disinterested account of even his own activities. There is an immense amount of literature, especially in Spanish, dealing with one or another of these revolutions. The most comprehensive history is in French, by a student named Peirera. Out of the mass, I have selected this account from Bidwell's "The Isthmus of Panama." He was an English gentleman who resided for many years in Panama, and personally witnessed the insurrection of 1862:

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"But to keep to Panama. The last political change took place in this wise. The legitimate governor, who had been duly elected in the manner before described, and who had held his office almost peaceably for nearly two years, found himself one fine day visited by about 150 soldiers from Cartagena, the capital of a friendly state in the hands of the Liberal party; for it must be remembered that New Granada's last revolution, which in its little way was as devastating as that of Mexico, was a struggle between two factions calling themselves 'Liberals' and 'Conservatives.' The governor then had been the Conservative candidate, when the Conservatives were in power throughout the country. The Liberals had, however, been latterly gaining ground, and had gained some of the states, and the soldiers were apparently sent by the 'Liberal' party to *assist* the governor in carrying out certain decrees of that faction which he had resisted, and which, as the supreme authority in his own state, he had unquestionably the right to resist. On the arrival of the soldiers at Colon, the governor protested both against the obnoxious decrees, and against the coming of the soldiers, as contrary to a treaty which he had made with an agent of the 'Liberal' party, and by which treaty he had hoped to keep Panama out of the revolution; but it was all in vain. The soldiers declared they would come whether or not; and as the governor had no force to resist them, he here judged prudence to be the better part of valor, and so gave his sanction for their crossing from Colon by railway; and on they came, pretending then, as they had at first pretended, to be *entirely under* the *governor's authority!* Matters went on thus quietly for a few weeks. The poor governor, however, soon found that he had become simply a tool in the hands of Captain Sword, so, in accordance with the law which had been previously made for an emergency, he removed the capital, himself,

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and his secretary to Santiago de Veraguas, a town some three days distant in the interior of the state, leaving his unwelcome troops behind him to do battle with the prefect. Then about eighty individuals, all of whom with but one exception were of the black population, assembled in the town hall, deposed the absent governor, and elected in his stead one of their own party, under the title of provisional governor. The two for a short time then reigned together, and shied decrees at each other, the one at Santiago, the other at Panama; but the provisional governor, having the soldiers to back him, soon found himself strong enough to arm and send a force into the interior to annihilate the legitimists, and here their chief, the first poor governor, paid the penalty of office and was cruelly shot in a mock field of battle, in which battle it appeared that he and one or two other persons were the only victims. The whole affair would have been a farce but for this tragical ending. But he whose life was so unnecessarily sacrificed was an intelligent, well-meaning, though perhaps weak young man, who had unfortunately had politics forced upon him. He was of one of the best and most respected families on the Isthmus, and he left a young widow and three small children to deplore his loss. He had during his reign steadily endeavoured to develop the resources, agricultural and commercial, of his country. With his death died his political party in the State; the blacks reigned supreme; the obnoxious decrees were put in force; the poor old nuns were turned out of their convent, and afterwards their bishop left, or was banished. Forced loans were exacted from the 'Conservatives,' and poor Panama, in consequence of it all, goes down the political ladder some steps lower. This short relation of the facts, undisguised by the grandiloquent language of the despatches of the time, may give some idea of how 'conservative' Panama became 'liberal' in the year 1862."

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W. F. Johnson, in his "Four Centuries of the Panama Canal," gives the following brief account of the last outbreak of importance:

"The year 1902 marked, moreover, the culmination of the latest of Colombia's many revolutionary movements. This widespread insurrection of the Liberal party against the oppressive Conservative and Clerical government had been maintained with varying success for several years, and early in 1902 it began to gather chiefly on and about the Isthmus. A new Governor of Panama, F. Mutis Duran, was appointed by the Bogota Government in February. A few weeks later the danger of obstruction of commerce and travel over the Isthmus became so marked that the American Government deemed it essential to send a naval force thither to protect the rights and interests of this country, according to the provisions of the Treaty of 1846. On March 8, an American vessel reached Colon and thereafter commanded the city with its guns, thus exercising a most salutary influence over the belligerents. Six months later the situation grew more serious at the southern side of the Isthmus, and accordingly on September 12 another American vessel entered the harbour of Panama, and on September 19, American marines were landed. This action was taken under an order of the Secretary of the Navy, Mr. Moody, which ran in part as follows:

'The United States guarantees perfect neutrality of the Isthmus, and that a free transit from sea to sea be not interrupted or embarrassed. . . . Any transportation of troops which might contravene provisions of treaty should not be sanctioned by you; nor should use of road be permitted which might convert the line of transit into a theatre of hostility.'

"This order, sent on September 12, was reasonable and logical, and intended simply to maintain our fixed policy

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and to fulfil our treaty rights and obligations. Against it the Governor of Panama protested, but without effect. The American authorities persisted in their intervention, in which they were clearly within their rights under the treaty. Indeed they were doing no more than they had done several times before with Colombian approval.

"Nor was the American intervention confined to a mere show of force. Actual force was exercised to prevent either of the belligerents from interfering with traffic over the railway, or from using the railway as an engine of war. Colombian troops were disarmed on September 22, and three days later insurgent troops were prevented from using the railroad and were actually compelled to leave a train which they had seized and entered. There was, of course, no interference by Americans excepting to keep the railroad neutral and in peaceful operation. The principle was enunciated and maintained that no combatants under arms should be transported on the railroad, no matter to which party they belonged. That was because to permit such transportation would be to make the railroad an adjunct to that side in the war, and to subject it to attack by the other party. If the Colombian troops used the road, the insurgents would attack it, and the United States would either have to permit such attack, which might suspend the traffic on the road which this country was bound under the treaty to keep free and open, or to prevent it with force, which would make this country the ally of Colombia against the insurgents. If the insurgents were permitted to use it, the case would be, *mutatis mutandis*, precisely the same. The only logical and safe course was, then, that which was taken, to forbid the military use of the road by either party. This vigorous American policy had the desired effect. The road was kept open and undisturbed, and the belligerents, disappointed and discouraged in their efforts to involve the road, finally

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retired from that region, so that by November 19 it was deemed prudent to withdraw the United States forces."

This revolution, of which Mr. Johnson describes a part, was the most disastrous of the civil wars which have kept Colombia an open sore. In 1899, the Liberals took up arms against the Conservative administration of Sanclemente, who had been elected in 1898. The fighting continued with a rigor unprecedented in modern times. Over two hundred battles were fought, and thirty thousand Colombians were killed. Four times between October, 1899, and September, 1901, the Isthmus rose in revolt. Each one was mercilessly stamped out. But in 1902, the Liberals were able to muster again. At first they were successful. In the battle of Agua Dulce, west of Panama City, the insurgents won a decisive victory, capturing in the neighborhood of two thousand government troops. The Isthmus would probably have conquered its independence at this time if it had not been for our intervention, as described in the quotation from Mr. Johnson.

I have found it very hard to realize the devastation of these wars. We have been so accustomed to thinking of them as mere opera bouffe. It is a tradition among us that these South American armies consist of ten major-generals to one private; that they are armed with blunderbusses handed down from their conquistador ancestors, and that all they do is talk. In the province of Cocle, I have ridden into deserted villages, seen the charred ruins of many a hacienda, and more neglected farms than cultivated ones. When you ask about them, the people shrug their shoulders and say: "The revolution." It is a country of widows and orphans. No one can be neutral in a civil war. There have been seven years of uninterrupted peace since the secession, but the country is still understocked with farm animals. The people have not yet gotten free from the habit of thought

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which told them that their live stock would be stolen every few years by one army or the other.

In one little inland town, a German trader told me how in 1901 the civil war had broken out there suddenly. There were few guns in the place, so the men took their machetes and went to Plaza and fought it out, brother against brother, hand to hand. By morning there were no more Conservatives in the town. The Liberals, crazed by the long fight and the blood, crucified the priest in front of the smouldering ruins of the church. Almost every woman in the town had to wear mourning for a near relative.

At home, I am an anti-imperialist. I had not approved of the high-handed way in which we had acquired practical sovereignty over the Isthmus. But the sight of so many ruined buildings, so many broken homes, the heritage of a century of civil war, makes one feel that peace at any price is not a bad bargain. Strong men may resent a *Pax Romæ*, but it must be welcomed by the women folk and children.

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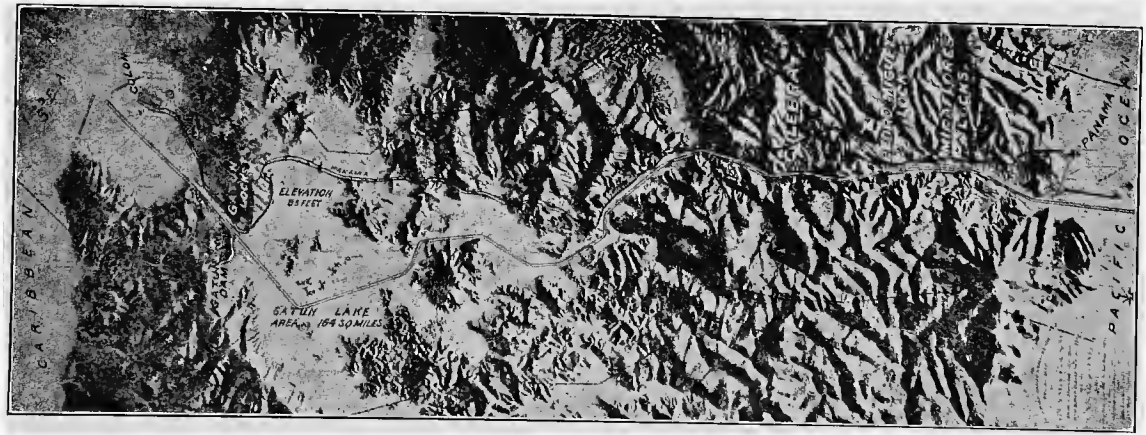

ISTHMUS WITH COMPLETED CANAL.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SECESSION FROM COLOMBIA

THE difficulty which one finds in unravelling the history of the earlier revolutions is even greater when it comes to the study of that of 1903, which resulted in the independence of the Isthmus.

During the Spanish-American War a newspaper man went to the War Department in Washington and asked for information about our plans of campaign. Of course such matters were secret, and it was explained to him that nothing could be given out for publication.

"Well, I've got to have something," he said, "or I'll lose my job. I don't care whether it is true or not."

"Son," the Secretary said, "you're in the wrong place. Go over to the State Department and consult a diplomat. We are paid to fight, not to lie."

Most of the documents in regard to the Panama revolution are of a diplomatic character.

One of the most detailed accounts of this matter is contained in "Four Centuries of the Panama Canal," by Willis Fletcher Johnson. The volume is dedicated to the then Secretary of War, William H. Taft, and is marked throughout with the stamp of official sanction. If one reads Mr. Johnson's book, understanding that everything he wrote was pleasing to the Administration, and discounting it from this point of view, one gets a fair idea of the facts.

It is necessary to go back a considerable distance into the history of our diplomatic relations with Colombia, or as it

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was formerly called, New Granada, to understand this crisis.

The Mexican War had given us a long Pacific seaboard, the value of which very few realized before the discovery of gold. England was following a very aggressive policy in Honduras and the feeling that we could enforce the Monroe Doctrine was by no means universal. Almost everyone expected more efforts on the part of European Powers to gain a foothold on the continent. The more far-sighted of our statesmen foresaw something of the future development of our West and realized the necessity of having an assured means of communication.

In 1846 we entered into a treaty with the Federation of New Granada, by which "the government of New Granada guarantees to the government of the United States that the right of way or transit across the Isthmus of Panama, upon any modes of communication that now exist or that may be hereafter constructed, shall be open and free to the government and citizens of the United States. . . And in order to secure to themselves the tranquil and constant enjoyment of these advantages, and as an especial compensation for the said advantages, and for the favors they have acquired by the fourth, fifth, and sixth articles of this treaty, the United States guarantee positively and efficaciously to New Granada, by the present stipulation, the perfect neutrality of the before-mentioned Isthmus, with the view that the free transit from the one to the other sea may not be interrupted or embarrassed in any future time while this treaty exists; and, in consequence, the United States also guarantee, in the same manner, the rights of sovereignty and property which New Granada has and possesses over the said territory."

Our government interpreted this treaty as imposing upon it a duty to keep transportation uninterrupted across the

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Isthmus, even if it was necessary to intervene with force. As Mr. Roosevelt points out in his message quoted in the preceding chapter, the United States of Colombia interpreted the treaty in the same sense, and on several occasions requested our government to land forces on the Isthmus to preserve order.

Our government had for a great many years considered the advisability of building a canal between the two oceans. At first, the route via Nicaragua was the more popular. Several companies had been formed, with the encouragement of the government, and extensive diplomatic intercourse had been carried on on this subject. For one reason or another, the various private companies came to grief, and when the French company received a concession from the United States of Colombia to attempt the Panama route, our government ceased its activities in the matter.

However, after the failure of the French company, many Americans took up the subject and tried to enlist the activity of the government. A fresh impetus was given to the canal scheme by the Spanish-American War, and especially by the long cruise of the *Oregon* from the Californian coast to the Atlantic; and Congress finally authorized the building of a canal, giving discretionary power to the president to decide whether it should be the Nicaraguan or the Panama route. There was, at first, a sincere difference of opinion among engineers as to which route was the more feasible, but gradually the consensus of opinion favored Panama. The existence of the Panama railroad along the route of the proposed canal was a great advantage; also the work which had been accomplished by the French company could be utilized effectively. The Walker Commission made a careful study of both routes, and reported that if our government was able to acquire the rights and property of the new French company for not more than forty million dollars,

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the Panama route would be the more desirable, but as the new French company valued their property at a very much higher figure, this Commission recommended the Nicaraguan route.

A great deal of discussion has been stirred up by this valuation made by the Walker Commission. The work done by the French had cost them infinitely more than forty millions of dollars, and they claimed that this sum was dishonestly low. On the other hand, it has often been asserted by enemies of Mr. Roosevelt's administration that forty millions was an excessively high figure. During the month of June, 1911, a committee which has been investigating the matter on the spot has reported that we could not have duplicated the part of the French work which we have used, including surveys and buildings as well as actual excavation, for less than forty-two millions.

After the failure of de Lesseps, the French Government appointed a receiver, who organized the "New French Canal Company." They had done enough work to keep the concession alive. Their only hope of realizing anything on their stock was that some other corporation or some country, financially stronger, might undertake the completion of their work and buy them out. If, in this crisis, the United States should decide to build a canal by the Nicaraguan route, there would be no possibility of saving the interests of those who held the paper of the French Panama Company.

The stock of the company fluctuated wildly during those days as the intention of our government turned now to Nicaragua, now to Panama. As soon as the Walker Report was published, the directors of "The New French Company" saw that their only chance of realizing anything was to accept the forty million dollar valuation of their property, although they felt that it was an unjustly low estimate. If they refused to accept it, the American canal would be built

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via Nicaragua and their stock would not be worth forty cents.

Their offer to sell out at this figure forced the Administration, on the basis of the Walker report, to consider the Panama route the more advantageous. Negotiations were at once started with the Colombian government to acquire Panama rights.

In December, 1902, the Colombian government sent Dr. Thomas Herran to Washington as chargé d'affaires. Dr. Herran was known to be favorable to the project of an American canal at Panama, and he at once began work with Secretary Hay towards drafting the necessary treaty.

On January 22, 1903, the convention known as the Hay-Herran treaty was signed. It was agreed that Colombia was to allow the new Panama Canal Company to sell all its rights and privileges and properties, including the Panama railroad, to the United States Government. We were to have perpetual administrative control of a strip of land thirty miles wide extending across the Isthmus. However, the sovereignty of the Zone was to remain with Colombia. There was to be a complicated system of justice, one set of Colombian courts with jurisdiction over disputes between Colombians, an American court, with jurisdiction in cases involving two Americans, and a third court, composed of American and Colombian jurists, to settle litigation between Americans and Colombians. In return for these privileges, we were to pay Colombia ten millions of cash, and a hundred thousand a year rental, to begin nine years after the ratification of the treaty.

On March 17, 1903, the treaty was ratified by the United States Senate. But it came to grief at Bogota. The political pirates of that capital, headed by the de facto president, Dr. Marroquin, seemed to feel that we were committed to the Panama route, and would be willing to stand for any

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amount of blackmail rather than to change back to Nicaragua. The diplomatic negotiations that followed are cloudy in the extreme. Those papers which have been published by the government of Bogota are a rather weak effort to show that that government was only trying to protect the interests of its people. The papers published by our government furnished decidedly strong evidence of a deliberate hold-up game.

Things drifted along several months, with repeated requests from Colombia that we should increase our offer. Eventually, Secretary Hay communicated to the Colombian foreign minister the following dispatch:

"The Colombian government apparently does not appreciate the gravity of the situation. The canal negotiations were initiated by Colombia, and were energetically pressed upon this government for several years. The propositions presented by Colombia, with slight modifications, were finally accepted by us. In virtue of this agreement, our Congress reversed its previous judgment and decided upon the Panama route. If Colombia should now reject the treaty or unduly delay its ratification, the friendly understanding between the two countries would be so seriously compromised that action might be taken by Congress next winter which every friend of Colombia would regret."

This little hint, however, fell upon deaf ears in Bogota. The Congress which should have ratified the treaty met on June 20, 1903. On August 12th, the Colombian Senate rejected the treaty. Mr. Johnson says that:

"On September 8, 1903, the Colombian government 'confidentially' informed the Washington State Department that despite its rejection of the proposal for further negotiations, it intended to propose a reopening of negotiations, upon bases which it judged would be acceptable 'to the Congress of next July.' That is to say, the Hay-Herran treaty was

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to be killed, and then Colombia would ask for the negotiation of a new treaty which would be acceptable to a new Congress the next year! This characteristic bit of jugglery did not meet with favor at Washington."

During these diplomatic delays, there was wild anxiety among the shareholders of the French Canal Company in Paris. If our government could not negotiate a satisfactory treaty with Colombia, it would be forced to dig the canal by way of Nicaragua, and the shares of the French company would not be worth the paper they were written on.

Another important element in the situation was the attitude of the merchants and business men of the Isthmus. During the years of the French company's activity, they had reaped a rich harvest. The large force of imported labor necessary to build the canal had meant a great revival of business activity. They also were immensely worried at the prospect of the Bogota government driving us in desperation to the Nicaraguan route.

Our own government was also in an embarrassing situation. As long as there was competition between the two governments, Nicaragua and Colombia, as to which route we would choose, the government of Nicaragua was offering us very favorable privileges. If, however, the Bogota government rejected the treaty, and we were forced to turn to Nicaragua, there was no guarantee that Zelaya, the dictator of Nicaragua, might not hold us up as blithely as the Colombian crowd.

At this stage of the game, the Panama revolution "happened." Just how it happened will probably never be known.

It must be borne in mind that, as Mr. Roosevelt pointed out, there had been fifty-three revolutions in fifty-seven years. The history of Latin-America also shows that a great number of such insurrectional movements had been financed and inspired by foreign capitalists. The merchants of Panama,

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the holders of the stock in the French company, had a direct financial interest in bringing about a revolution which would insure the digging of the Panama Canal. The people of Panama had no love for the Colombian government, and would have revolted many times before if our government had not stepped in to suppress their rebellions.

All this time the talk of a revolution was widespread. As far as the Panamanians were concerned there was little secret conspiring. When the treaty first came up in the Colombian Senate, threats were received at Bogota that if the treaty was thrown out the Isthmus would revolt. M. Bunau-Varilla, for a long time associated with the French company, and Mr. William Nelson Cromwell, its legal advisor, were pulling the necessary wires. And it is certain that if the French company was trying to foment an insurrection—it was now their only hope—they found the natives of the Isthmus more than ready to listen to sedition.

First of all there were the native merchants; the coming of Americans and American money to the Isthmus meant wealth for them. If the canal was dug in Nicaragua even the Panama railroad would stagnate. Panama would no longer be printed in commercial guides. Another revolutionary element was the group of local politicians. Any one familiar with the politics of Latin-America will at once see their point of view. Ten million dollars! If the United States was willing to pay that sum for a Canal Zone, why should not they have the spending of it, instead of the gang at Bogota, or Zelaya.

Only one thing stood in the way of a revolution—the same thing which a dozen times before had prevented it. There was the clause in the treaty between the United States and Colombia in which for certain specified "values received," "the United States also guarantee, in the same manner, the

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rights of sovereignty and property which New Granada has and possesses over the said territory."

In 1846 our State Department had guaranteed to defend Colombia's property rights in the Isthmus; several times we had actually intervened by force to do so. Would we do so again? Or had the recent developments changed the heart of our government in the matter? This was the crux of the whole affair.

Those who have claimed that Mr. Roosevelt's administration provoked and instigated a revolution in Panama are aside from the point. At least for our administration to have done so would have been foolish in the extreme. There was no provoking nor instigating necessary. Our government has officially denied this charge, and I find no reason to doubt their truth in doing so.

The real question is in regard to the violation of the treaty with Colombia. Had Colombia's blackmailing effort justified our sudden change in front in the matter, our sudden neglect of a treaty obligation we had previously acknowledged? The answer is a matter of opinion. I am inclined to think we were justified. But most of us would feel better about it, I think, if our government would accept the invitation of Colombia to submit the matter to The Hague Tribunal.

The Panamanians were uncertain about how we would act in the matter, and the revolutionary Junta—which was composed of the most prominent citizens of Panama and Colon—sent Dr. Amador to New York to find out. On arrival he went first to the office of Mr. Cromwell, the counsel for the French company. On leaving, he cabled to his friends the word "*Desanimado,*" which, if it was not a code-word, would mean "discouraged." Later he visited other friends and eventually met Bunau-Varilla, who had "providentially" arrived from France that very day. He then cabled the word "*Esperanzas,*" "hopes."

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Shortly afterwards he went to Washington and was closeted with the then Secretary of State, Hay. Again I will quote from Johnson, whose sources of information seem to have been august:

"The replies given by Mr. Hay were diplomatically discreet and guarded. He told Dr. Amador that, however much the United States might sympathize with Panaman aspirations for liberty and independence, and however much it might regret or even resent Colombia's rejection of the canal treaty, it would be manifestly impossible for this Government to give any aid to a revolutionary enterprise, or to commit itself with any promises in advance. It would scrupulously fulfil its duties as a neutral, and would inflexibly maintain its rights and privileges under the Treaty of 1846 with New Granada. Those rights and privileges included the protection of free neutral transit across the Isthmus, and the guarantee of the sovereignty of land *against alien aggression, though, of course, it did not guarantee Colombian possession of the Isthmus against local and domestic revolution.* But the United States could give no promises to, and make no treaties with, a government which was not yet in existence."

I have underlined the portion of this account of Mr. Johnson which has the most significance. If Secretary Hay is correctly quoted, he here laid down an entirely new interpretation of the treaty. That the United States, a nation founded by a revolution, should have entered into a treaty with Colombia which bound it to suppress revolutions on the Isthmus, was a disgrace. But it had done so back in 1846, and for more than half a century had recognized this treaty obligation and had from time to time actually landed troops and suppressed revolutions.

Dr. Amador left the State Department with a light heart. And the revolution "happened."

It was accomplished without bloodshed. American war-

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ships appeared to see that the first part of the treaty was enforced—the maintenance of free transit. The *Dixie*, *Nashville*, *Atlanta*, *Maine*, and *Mayflower* were at Colon. The *Boston*, *Marblehead*, *Concord*, and *Wyoming* were at Panama.

On November 2d the following dispatch was sent from the Navy Department to the *Nashville* and *Dixie:*

"Maintain free and uninterrupted transit. If interruption is threatened by armed force, occupy line of railroad. Prevent landing of any armed force with hostile intent, either government or insurgent, either at Colon, Porto Bello, or other points."

As the insurgents had no navy by means of which it was possible for them to land an armed force anywhere it was hardly necessary to mention them in the dispatch.

An army of four hundred odd Colombian soldiers had been sent out at the last moment and arrived at Colon on the 3d of November. As the revolution had not yet broken out, the commander of the *Nashville* could not intervene, and they were allowed to land. The generals very foolishly went over to Panama ahead of their army. The officials of the Panama railroad refused to transport the troops. So the Colombian generals were easily disarmed, the republic proclaimed on November 4th. Three days later our government recognized the new republic.

Of course the "statesmen" of Bogota had expected us to live up to our treaty and were vastly dismayed when they found we had recognized Panama. They had surely killed the goose which they had counted on for many a golden egg.

A dispatch was received at Washington which practically promised that if we would put down the Isthmian revolution, the next Colombian Congress would ratify the Hay-Herran Treaty. Mr. Roosevelt refers to this in his message of December 7, 1903. The "eminent Colombian" whose name

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Mr. Roosevelt discreetly conceals is generally supposed to have been very close to the acting president, Dr. Marroquin.

"Knowing that revolution has already commenced in Panama (an eminent Colombian) says that if the government of the United States will land troops to preserve Colombian sovereignty, and the transit, if requested by Colombian chargé d'affaires, this government will declare martial law; and, by virtue of vested constitutional authority, when public order is disturbed, will approve by decree the ratification of the canal treaty as signed; or, if the government of the United States prefers, will call extra session of the Congress —with new and friendly members—next May to approve the treaty. (An eminent Colombian) has the perfect confidence of Vice-President, he says, and if it become necessary will go to the Isthmus or send representative there to adjust matters along above lines to the satisfaction of the people there."

"This despatch is noteworthy from two standpoints. Its offer of immediately guaranteeing the treaty to us is in sharp contrast with the positive and contemptuous refusal of the Congress which had just closed its sessions to consider favorably such a treaty; it shows that the government which made the treaty really had absolute control over the situation, but did not choose to exercise this control. The despatch further calls on us to restore order and secure Colombian supremacy in the Isthmus, from which the Colombian government has just by its action decided to bar us by preventing the construction of the canal."

The question at issue in this whole matter is not of having fomented a revolution, but of having permitted it. That we suddenly changed our interpretation of a long-standing treaty seems evident.

Once more I will quote from President Roosevelt's message

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of December 7, 1903. It sums up concisely and eloquently the reasons which impelled his administration to do as it did.

"First: That the United States has for over half a century patiently and in good faith carried out its obligations under the Treaty of 1846.

"Second: That when for the first time it became possible for Colombia to do anything in requital of the services thus repeatedly rendered to it for fifty-seven years by the United States, the Colombian Government peremptorily and offensively refused to do its part, even though to do so would have been to its advantage and immeasurably to the advantage of the State of Panama, at that time under its jurisdiction.

"Third: That throughout this period revolutions, riots, and factional disturbances of every kind have occurred one after the other in almost uninterrupted succession, some of them lasting for months and even for years, while the central government was unable to put them down or to make peace with the rebels.

"Fourth: That these disturbances, instead of showing any sign of abating, have tended to grow more numerous and more serious in the immediate past.

"Fifth: That the control of Colombia over the Isthmus of Panama could not be maintained without the armed intervention and assistance of the United States.

"In other words, the government of Colombia, though wholly unable to maintain order on the Isthmus, has nevertheless declined to ratify a treaty the conclusion of which opened the only chance to secure its own stability and to guarantee permanent peace on and the construction of a canal across the Isthmus.

"Under such circumstances the Government of the United States would have been guilty of folly and weakness amounting in their sum to a crime against the nation had it acted otherwise than it did when the revolution of November 3

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last took place in Panama. This great enterprise of building the interoceanic canal cannot be held up to gratify the whims, or out of respect to the government impotence, or to the even more sinister and evil political peculiarities, of people who, though they dwell afar off, yet, against the wish of the actual dwellers on the Isthmus, assert an unreal supremacy over the territory. The possession of a territory fraught with such peculiar capacities as the Isthmus in question carries with it obligations to mankind. The course of events has shown that this canal cannot be built by private enterprise, or by any other nation than our own, therefore it must be built by the United States.

"Every effort has been made by the Government of the United States to persuade Colombia to follow a course which was essentially not only to our interests and to the interests of the world, but to the interests of Colombia itself. These efforts have failed, and Colombia, by her persistence in repulsing the advances that have been made, has forced us, for the sake of our own honor, and of the interest and well-being, not merely of our own people, but of the people of the Isthmus of Panama and the people of the civilized countries of the world, to take decisive steps to bring to an end a condition of affairs which had become intolerable. The new republic of Panama immediately offered to negotiate a treaty with us. By it our interests are better safeguarded than in the treaty with Colombia, which was ratified by the Senate at its last session. It is better in its terms than the treaties offered to us by the republics of Nicaragua and Costa Rica. At last the right to begin this great undertaking is made available. Panama has done her part. All that remains is for the American Congress to do its part, and forthwith this republic will enter upon the execution of a project colossal in its size and of well-nigh incalculable possibilities for the good of this country and the nations of mankind."

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CHAPTER XXIX

BEGINNING WORK

M. Bunau-Varilla was appointed the first Minister to the United States by the new Republic of Panama. November 18, 1903, fifteen days after the revolution, he signed with Secretary Hay the "Panama Canal Convention." Three months later it was ratified by our Senate—the Panama Provisional Government had accepted it immediately—and on February 26th, 1904, it was officially proclaimed.

By this Hay–Bunau-Varilla Treaty we guaranteed to "maintain the independence of the Republic of Panama" and to pay into its treasury $10,000,000, and, beginning nine years after that date, to pay an annual rental of $250,000. In return for this we got all we wanted—a Zone ten miles wide over which we have "the rights, power and authority . . . which the United States would possess and exercise if it were the sovereign of the territory . . . to the entire exclusion of the exercise by the Republic of Panama of any such sovereign rights, power or authority."

Article II, after defining the Canal Zone, gives us this blanket provision: "The Republic of Panama further grants to the United States in perpetuity the use, occupation and control of any other lands and waters outside of the Zone above described which may be necessary and convenient for the construction, maintenance, operation, sanitation and protection of said Canal." Whenever it becomes *convenient* we may absorb the whole Isthmus.

A great deal of criticism has been directed against this treaty. As a matter of fact the provisional government of

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the "Republic" was the same group of men who had earlier called themselves the Revolutionary Junta. Their position was too precarious to allow them to oppose any request our government made. Much of this criticism, which is of course regrettable, would have been avoided if we had shown a little more deliberation and had allowed the regularly instituted National Constitutional Convention which convened in Panama in January, 1904, to discuss the treaty, instead of having accepted the ratification of the provisional government.

The National Assembly, when it came together for the first time, found that the republic it was elected to govern had already been handed over as a protectorate to another nation much too strong to be resisted—and this without any sort of a democratic sanction.

There is no doubt that the National Assembly would have ratified the Hay–Bunau-Varilla treaty. It is decidedly to the advantage of the toy republic to be a protectorate. But there would be less of the almost universal hatred towards the Gringos if the people of Panama had been allowed to sell their own country rather than waking up suddenly to find themselves already sold.

Six days after the Treaty had been proclaimed, President Roosevelt, under the authority of the Spooner Bill, appointed an Isthmian Canal Commission of seven men, who were confirmed by the Senate on March 3d. This first Commission consisted of George W. Davis, a retired Major-General; William B. Parsons, who had just completed the New York subway; William H. Burr, a professor of civil engineering in Colombia; Benjamin M. Harrod, a well-known civil engineer of New Orleans; Carl E. Grunsky, and Frank T. Hecker, also civil engineers, from San Francisco and Detroit, respectively. Rear-Admiral John G. Walker, retired, who had been a member of previous commissions to

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investigate the canal project, was appointed chairman of the Commission.

General Davis was appointed Civil Governor of the Canal Zone; he reached the Isthmus on the 17th of May. Two days later he posted a proclamation that the United States had assumed control of the Canal Zone. His manners, which had the proverbial military brusqueness, proved offensive to the Panamanians. They had arranged quite an elaborate ceremonial for the occasion. The simple pasting up of a formal poster did not seem to them sufficiently grandiose. They protested to Washington through diplomatic channels, and Governor Davis was instructed to attend the banquets they had planned. With the exception of Colonel Gorgas, almost all of our official representatives on the Isthmus have shown a positive genius for offending the delicate sensibilities of the natives.

Four engineering parties were at once organized, one to survey the Colon terminus, and the other three to investigate the various dam-sites. It must be remembered that an immense amount of work had already been done by the French. The new company, which had been organized after the de Lesseps failure, had kept up enough activity to preserve their franchise and somewhat more than five hundred men were actually engaged in excavation at Culebra —they had already cut down to within 150 feet of sea-level when we took possession. Major Black, of the Army Engineers, was put in charge of this work, as it was desirable to keep together this nucleus of a labor force.

On June 1st, Mr. John Findley Wallace was appointed chief engineer. He was fifty-two years old and undoubtedly one of the most eminent civil engineers in the country. Although a New Englander by birth, he had grown up in the West. For several years he had been general manager of the Illinois Central Railroad.

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As soon as he arrived on the Isthmus he commenced the great work of organization. It is generally admitted that the first steps are the most difficult; this was doubly true of such an enterprise. To one who visits the Isthmus now, it is hard to realize what it was when these pioneers arrived. A narrow cañon not fifteen feet wide stretched through the Jungle from Colon to Panama—the right of way of the railroad. On either side the dense vegetation crowded forward and was kept back only by constant machete work. Invisible—back in the jungle—our men knew that there were houses built by the French, great stores of machinery, rails and locomotives. But how far the houses were rotted, the iron and steel had rusted, nobody knew. There was a stagnant, narrow ditch—the old French Canal—running in from Colon to the Gatun Hills. How deep it had been at first, how much it had filled up, nobody knew. Panama and Colon were pest holes. To be sure we had cleaned up Havana and Manila, but how long it would take to eradicate yellow fever from the Zone nobody knew. Here was a great mass of French maps, soundings, records of rainfall, etc. But the French had failed; nobody knew how far their documents could be trusted.

Into this mass of uncertainties Mr. Wallace was sent. Within six months he had begun to bring some order out of the chaos. As yet we had not decided upon the type or exact route of the canal. But in any event much work would have to be done at Culebra. Wallace brought the force by January 1, 1905, up to twelve hundred. He had two of the old French excavators and two American steam shovels at work in the Cut, and was getting valuable information about the unit costs of excavation in the tropics. He had also placed orders for a dozen more steam shovels.

From the very first Mr. Wallace tried to satisfy the "impatient and undue anxiety of the American people to see

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'dirt fly' "—this expression I have quoted from an article by him in the *Engineering Magazine*. But while concentrating the labor force in Culebra Cut—by July 1, 1905, he had 10,000 men at work there—he did as much as he could to accomplish the more necessary preliminary work.

A careful investigation was made as to the amount and condition of equipment and supplies left by the French. Elaborate—and very necessary—surveys were made, to check up the French plans and much original work was done in gathering information on which to base a decision on the much discussed question of sea-level or locks.

Of even more importance, as Mr. Wallace clearly recognized, was the work of sanitation. Colonel Gorgas, who had been health officer of Havana, came to the Isthmus at the same time as did Wallace. They gave careful study to the problem and began at once the work of cleaning up Colon and Panama.

In all his undertakings Mr. Wallace was immensely hampered by red-tape and official delay. The first Commission seems to have been principally actuated by a determination that no money should be wasted. They seemed more anxious to avoid the financial scandal which had ruined the de Lesseps company than to build a canal. Almost every requisition was held up.

A typical, but by no means extreme, example is furnished by the delay of the water supply for Panama. Yellow fever mosquitoes find an ideal breeding place in the great earthen jars in which the Latin-Americans are wont to store drinking water. These "artificial containers" have to be eliminated if yellow fever is to be extirpated. Colonel Gorgas had made plans for furnishing running water to Panama. The plans for the Rio Grande reservoir were submitted by Mr. Wallace to the Commission on August 9, 1904, and approved. The chief engineer, realizing the immense importance of this,

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pushed the work of construction with great energy, only to be held up nine months because the iron water mains did not arrive. It was not until July, 1905, that water was turned on in Panama. The actual construction work could have been accomplished in three months; it had taken almost a year! And of course this also delayed the laying of sewers and the paving of the streets. And when, exasperated by this delay, Wallace telegraphed to the Commission, he was warned not to waste money cabling!

The following quotation from Johnson's "Four Centuries of the Panama Canal" is a fair picture of the thing our first canal diggers had to face:

"The members of the Commission spent little time at Panama. Their office was at Washington, and there they transacted their business. Requisitions for supplies, even for things urgently needed in the hospitals and by the sanitary squad, in cases where every hour was precious, had to be sent to Washington, deliberated upon by the Commissioners, approved or rejected with little or no knowledge of the circumstances, and then, if approved, advertised, awarded, and finally filled weeks or months after date. In such fashion it took several months to get an X-ray apparatus for the Ancon hospital. It took many weeks to get mosquito-netting for the windows of the canal office building, and then not enough was supplied; and in the meantime some of the most valuable men of the staff were prostrated by the bites of malarial mosquitoes. The chief sanitary officer wanted netting for all the official buildings in the Canal Zone. This request was refused as extravagant and unnecessary. Then he asked for at least enough to inclose the verandas of the hospitals. This, too, was refused, and he was told that there was no need of inclosing more than half the verandas, and that even then a part of the space should be solidly boarded up instead of screened!"

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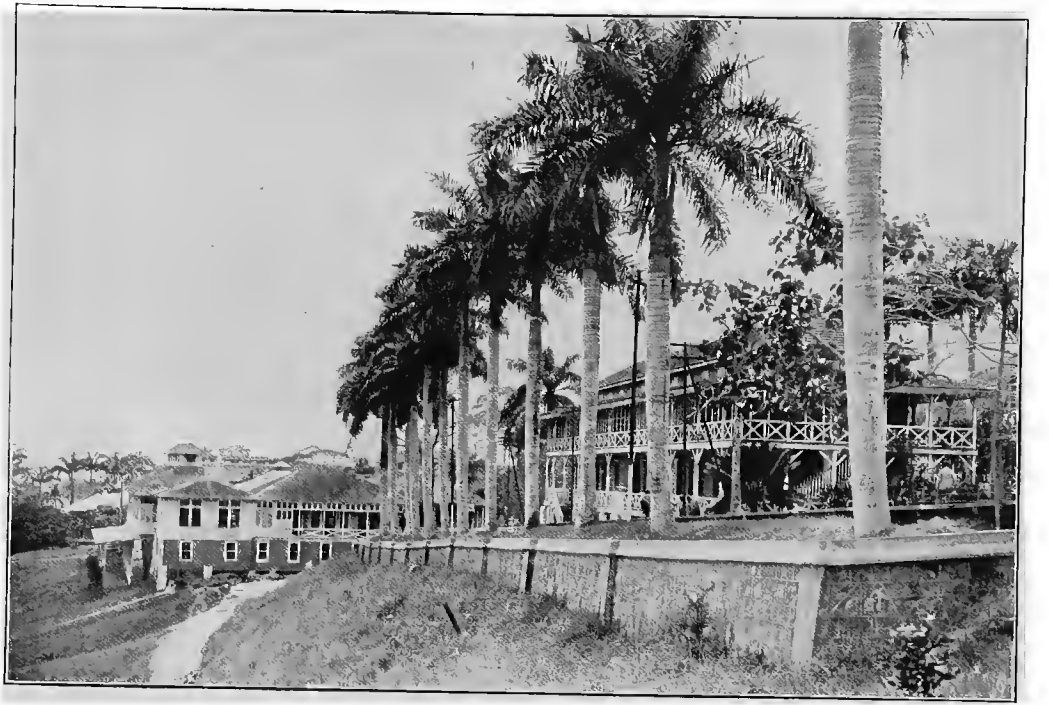

ANCON HOSPITAL.

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Mr. Roosevelt was not slow to recognize how unsatisfactorily the Commission was working. In his message of January 13, 1905, he asked Congress for authority to form a Commission of three members. The House passed a bill such as the President desired, but the Senate refused to act. Mr. Roosevelt, as was ever his wont, decided that if he could not get what he wanted in one way, to try another. He forced the Commission to resign, and on April 1st appointed a new one. This second Commission consisted of Theodore P. Shonts, chairman; John F. Wallace, chief engineer; and Charles E. Magoon, civil governor of the Zone, and four others. The others were Rear-Admiral Endicott, Brigadier-General Hains, Colonel Ernst, and Harrold, who had been a member of the first Commission. These four were all able engineers, but under the rules drawn up for the Commission by the President, everything had been put in the hands of the executive committee, composed of Shonts, Wallace, and Magoon. The same set of rules required two of the executive committee to reside in the Isthmus—a great improvement—and also authorized it to make purchases of less than a thousand dollars without advertising for bids. It was as satisfactory an arrangement as could be made without the new legislation which the Senate had refused to grant. Various bills, legalizing this distortion of the existing law, have been continually before Congress and none of them have been passed. The canal is being built by administrative evasion. It could not be done otherwise. Which is a rather distressing commentary on the brains of our law-makers.

In much the same way the President solved the difficult question of whether or not the Commission should be compelled to buy its equipment in the home markets. Congress refused to legislate, and an executive order authorized the purchase of material without any such restriction. This

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seems to be a violation in principle of our tariff laws, and has proved so eminently wise in the canal work that we can not but wish that Mr. Roosevelt had made his order broad enough to include the home land as well. In the same vein the Administration decreed that our immigration laws did not cover the Zone, and foreign contract labor was admitted.

At about the same time Mr. Roosevelt called a council of eminent engineers to discuss and if possible settle the question of whether the canal should be dug to sea-level or the lock system adopted.

At this juncture everything was thrown into confusion by the unexpected resignation of Mr. Wallace.

Very few recent events have caused such passionate discussion as this action, and hardly any are more shrouded in mystery. Certainly Mr. Wallace had had no end of trouble with the first Commission. But the reorganization had been made practically on his dictation and he had expressed his satisfaction not only with the other members of the new Commission, but also of his position on it. His salary was $25,000 a year, and the administration at Washington thought that he was entirely contented. Certainly his resignation came at a most unfortunate time, before the second Commission had become organized and just on the eve of the meeting of the Board of Consulting Engineers.

What caused Mr. Wallace to ask for his release is uncertain. Some say the offer of a better salary. Some say he —or his family on his behalf—was afraid of the yellow fever. There is also a story of a personal quarrel with Shonts. The attitude of the administration is shown in these excerpts from a letter written by the Secretary of War, Mr. Taft:

"I am inexpressibly disappointed, not only because you have taken this step, but because you seem so utterly insensible of the significance of your conduct. You come with the bald announcement that you quit your task at a critical

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moment, on the eve of important work and in the midst of reorganization plans under which you accepted your position, with your department unperfected in organization. . . . You were consulted in the frankest manner about every feature of the reorganization and were encouraged freely to express your opinions. Indeed, your voluntary suggestions from the Isthmus embraced the proposal that you yourself be made a member of the Commission and chief engineer on the Isthmus. The substance of the plan of reorganization, as afterward embodied in the President's executive order of April 1, was cabled to you by me, and you cabled me your fullest approval of it and your thanks; for it included the appointment of yourself as a Commissioner, as you had solicited, and a member of the executive committee. . . .

"Now, within twelve days after your arrival upon the Isthmus, you send me a cable which, read in the light of what you say to-day, signifies your practical acceptance of an offer of another position inconsistent with the performance of your duties on the Isthmus. I am astonished that you should be so disregardful of the splendid opportunities of the position which would have made you famous the world over by the honorable performance of your duties of chief engineer. For mere lucre you change your position over night, without thought of the embarrassing position in which you place your Government by this action, when the engineering forces on the Isthmus are left without a real head and your department is not perfected in organization, when the advisory board of engineers is to assemble under call of the President within two months, and when I am departing for the Philippines on public duty. I consider that by every principle of honor and duty you were bound to treat the subject differently. You have permitted the President and all of us to proceed in full confidence that you would perform the functions of chief engineer, and now in an hour you drop

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your great duties and throw them back upon us as if it were a matter of no consequence, and all this for your personal advantage solely. . . .

"Under the circumstances, Mr. Wallace, and with great personal pain and disappointment, I am bound to say that I consider the public interests require that you tender your resignation at this moment and turn over the records of your office to the chairman of the Commission."

A few days later, Mr. Wallace gave a statement to the press which, while not satisfactorily explaining his attitude, denied that "mere lucre" had been the sole cause of his resignation.

"The primary causes," he said, "which led me to tender my resignation as chief engineer of the Isthmian Canal Commission were underlying and fundamental, and I must emphatically resent the charge that my motive in leaving the work was a financial one. A careful consideration of the entire subject had brought me to the decision that I should disconnect myself with the work at the earliest possible date that it could be done without embarrassment to the administration or injury to the work. . . . My final decision was arrived at as the result of the six days' uninterrupted thought which I was able to give the subject in all its bearings during my voyage from New York to Colon, in May. Furthermore, I had pledged myself to my family to give the matter of my resignation as chief engineer, or of any position which would require my continuous residence on the Isthmus, serious consideration.

"It was at this psychological moment that I received a cable message from New York offering me a business opportunity which I was bound to consider. I, therefore, immediately cabled the Secretary of War requesting a conference, and arrived in New York for that purpose on Thursday, June 22. . . .

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"On arriving at the Manhattan on Sunday, I was met by Mr. Cromwell, who ushered me into the Secretary's private apartment, accompanied by my son. Assuming that arrangements had been made for a strictly private interview, my son withdrew, expecting Mr. Cromwell to do the same. However, the Secretary, in a rather peremptory manner, directed Mr. Cromwell to remain. This action, of course, caused irritation and apprehension on my part that the interview would be unpleasant and unsatisfactory, and the irritation under which the Secretary was evidently laboring had a tendency to prevent that calm and dignified consideration of the question in all its bearings which should have been given it.

"If the Secretary understood me to say that I had accepted a position in New York, he labored under a misapprehension. I did state to him that I desired to accept one, but under such circumstances and conditions and at such time as would cause the least embarrassment to the administration and the least injury to the work, and that I was even willing to go to the extent of remaining for an indefinite time on the Commission, should he desire my counsel and advice in arranging for the change, assisting in preparing plans for submission to the advisory board of engineers in September, or in the further consideration of the question by the administration or Congress during its next session.

"Much to my surprise he indignantly spurned my suggestion and took the position that I was compelled under what he called my contract to remain in charge of the Isthmian canal, regardless of circumstances or conditions, until the completion of the work, and spoke in such a manner as to outrage my feeling to such an extent that further discussion of the reasons for my action was out of the question.

"I did not seek the position of chief engineer of the Isthmian Canal Commission, and, considering my salary as

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general manager of the Illinois Central Railroad Company and my other sources of earnings, my financial condition was not improved by my acceptance of the position, and it was with the greatest reluctance that I did so.

"While it was my own expectation that I should continue my connection with the work, it did not occur to me that I was not free to withdraw if justice to myself and my family and to my reputation as an engineer required me to do so. It was not only my right, but my duty, to give the matter most careful consideration in all its bearings, considering not only the general situation as it affected the work, but my family, personal and business relations, and all the various factors entering into the problem, and I could not concede the right to the Secretary of War or any one to dictate my decision. The only debatable questions were the details as to putting my decision into effect, and, while I stated to the Secretary what my desires were, I told him that I was perfectly willing to conform to his wishes as far as possible as to the time and manner of my withdrawal.

"I have made no criticism of personnel or individuals, but do believe that the obstacles due to the government methods required by existing laws are so serious that they will have to be eliminated if the American people are to see the Panama Canal constructed in a reasonable time and at a moderate cost."

In the course of the next year Mr. Wallace was called as a witness before a congressional investigation committee and, in reply to a question as to the cause of his resignation, said:

"My reason was, that I was made jointly responsible with Mr. Shonts and Mr. Magoon for work on the canal, while Mr. Shonts had a verbal agreement with the President that he should have a free rein in the management of all matters. I felt Mr. Shonts was not as well qualified as I was either as a business man or an administrator, and he was not an

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engineer. . . . I thought it better to sacrifice my ambitions regarding this work, which was to be the crowning event of my life, than remain to be humiliated, forced to disobey orders, or create friction."

That there was something more back of this incident than either Mr. Wallace or the administration ever explained is generally believed.

John F. Stevens was appointed chief engineer in his place.

But before leaving Mr. Wallace's administration it is worth while to notice that he had never had a free rein. First of all he had been seriously hampered by the red-tape of the first Commission, and secondly he had been forced by public opinion to "make the dirt fly." Both of these limitations had interfered with the organization of the labor force, the securing of equipment and the development of sanitary work. Stevens began under much more favorable circumstances. The preliminary work of exploring the job had been finished; the engineering problems had also been cleared of the jungle of uncertainty. The data was all in. Also the new Commission, with all power in the hands of the executive committee, was a very much more workable proposition than the old one.

Stevens was one of the best "construction" men this country has ever produced. He knew railroading intimately and above all he had a genius for organizing an *esprit de corps*. Wallace seems to have been more lacking in this than in anything else. The force, especially the higher salaried white men, were in a very unsatisfactory psychological condition. Men had been changed from one job to another, elevated or degraded without any visible reason.

Stevens had that peculiar ability to create confidence. He was the sort of boss the men on the job adore. In overalls and high boots he was somewhere on "the line" all the time. He could get work out of his men. One story they tell is

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typical of his dealings with his subordinates. He had sent an order to a carpenter to build some shops near Gorgona. The man sent back a letter to headquarters saying that there was a pile of old French equipment on the proposed site and asking how he should dispose of it. Stevens wrote on the bottom of the letter:

"Wait till I have a free Sunday and I'll come down and move it for you."

He was patient with the man who made a blunder, but exceedingly caustic to the man who did nothing. The men began to stop wondering if the canal could be built.

In Jackson Smith, who was afterwards made a member of the Commission, Stevens found a very able assistant in the work of recruiting a labor force and organizing the Subsistence Department.

Stevens gave his especial attention—and this was his greatest contribution—to the problem of transportation. He stopped the experimental excavation and concentrated all efforts in laying the foundations for the work. Under his administration shops and docks were built, housing arranged and sanitation put on a basis of high efficiency. But above all he took hold of the railroad. The old P. R. R. was practically scrapped, heavy rails and new rolling stock which Mr. Wallace had ordered were installed, and the organization made a model of "efficiency."

While Stevens was chief engineer, the board of consulting engineers met. Five of the members were appointed by European governments at the request of President Roosevelt; Eugen Tincauzer, chief engineer of Kiel Canal, German; Eduoard Quellennec, of the Suez Canal, French; J. W. Welcker, director of the State Waterways of Holland; Adolph Guérard, of the French "Ponts et Chaussées" and Henry W. Hunter, chief engineer of the Manchester Ship Canal, English. To this board, Mr. Roosevelt also ap-

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pointed eight eminent American engineers, making in all thirteen.

The question they were to study and report upon was the relative advantages of a sea-level or lock canal. The result of their deliberations was to prove conclusively that a great deal could be said on each side. They brought in two reports; a majority of eight, including all the foreigners, believed a sea-level canal to be preferable, while five American engineers reported in favor of a lock canal with a summit level of eighty-five feet above the sea. The two groups agreed that to dig to sea-level would take about twice as long and cost almost twice as much as the construction of a lock canal. But the majority felt that the advantages of the former plan were great enough to offset the outlay in time and money. To these reports were added one by the chief engineer, Mr. Stevens, which was strongly in favor of locks.

"The sum of my conclusions is," he wrote, "that, all things considered, the lock or high-level canal is preferable to the sea-level type, so called, for the following reasons:

"It will provide as safe and a quicker passage for ships, and, therefore, will be of greater capacity.

"It will provide, beyond question, the best solution of the vital problem of how safely to care for the flood waters of the Chagres and other streams.

"Provision is made for enlarging its capacity to almost any extent at very much less expense of time and money than can be provided for by any sea-level plan.

"Its cost of operation, maintenance, and fixed charges will be very much less than any sea-level canal.

"The time and cost of its construction will be not one-half that of a canal of the sea-level type.

"The element of time might become, in case of war, actual or threatened, one of such importance that, measured, not

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by years, but by months, or even days, the entire cost of the canal would seem trivial in comparison.

"Finally, even at the same cost in time and money for each type, I would favor the adoption of the high-level lock-canal plan in preference to that of the proposed sea-level canal."

These three documents were submitted to the regular Isthmian Canal Commission. And all but one of that body endorsed the lock project; Rear-Admiral Endicott alone stood out for the sea-level canal advocated by the majority of the consulting engineers.

All these reports then went to the administration; Mr. Taft, the Secretary of War, and Mr. Roosevelt both took sides with those in favor of the lock proposition, and the matter was referred to Congress with the following message by the President on February 19, 1906:

"It must be borne in mind that there is no question of building what has been picturesquely termed 'the Straits of Panama'; that is, a waterway through which the largest vessels could go with safety at uninterrupted high speed. Both the sea-level canal and the proposed lock-canal would be too narrow and shallow to be called with any truthfulness a strait, or to have any of the properties of a wide, deep water strip. Both of them would be canals, pure and simple. Each type has certain disadvantages and certain advantages. But, in my judgment, the disadvantages are fewer and the advantages very much greater in the case of a lock canal substantially as proposed in the papers forwarded herewith; and a careful study of the reports seems to establish a strong probability that the following are the facts: The sea-level canal would be slightly less exposed to damage in the event of war; the running expenses, apart from the heavy cost of interest on the amount employed to build it, would be less; and for small ships the time of transit would prob-

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ably be less. On the other hand, the lock canal, at a level of eighty feet or thereabouts, would not cost much more than half as much to build, and could be built in about half the time, while there would be very much less risk connected with building it, and for large ships the transit would be quicker; while, taking into account the interest on the amount saved in building, the actual cost of maintenance would be less. After being built, it would be easier to enlarge the lock canal than the sea-level canal.

"The law now on our statute books seems to contemplate a lock canal. In my judgment a lock canal, as herein recommended, is advisable. If the Congress directs that a sea-level canal be constructed, its direction will, of course, be carried out. Otherwise, the canal will be built on substantially the plan for a lock canal outlined in the accompanying papers, such changes being made, of course, as may be found actually necessary."

In June Congress voted for locks and the much-discussed question was settled.

As very often happens in this haphazard world of ours, our vision is greatly cleared after the heat of controversy has died down; after the time when clear vision is needed our eyes are opened. So many new considerations have come up since this matter was under discussion that it is probable that if the same board were to meet again they would be almost unanimously in favor of the plans actually adopted.

It was decided later to increase the size of the canal, to accommodate larger ships. To make excavations for these new dimensions down to sea-level would increase the cost and time, not twice, but four or five times. Actual experience has shown that the estimates of "costs" by the board of consulting engineers were inaccurate. Some of the work we are doing cheaper than they thought possible. Some is

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costing more. It is not worth while for a layman to express an opinion on so technical a problem. But the fact is striking that, while in 1906 expert opinion seemed to be pretty evenly divided on the subject, to-day one hears very few reputable engineers talking of a sea-level canal. In a time when the disagreement of the doctors made it impossible to reach a rational assurance of which solution was the better, we seem to have stumbled into the wiser course.

In giving his original instructions to the first Commission in 1904, Mr. Roosevelt called especial attention to the need of effective sanitation. "You will," he said, "take measures to secure the best medical experts for this purpose whom you can obtain." In choosing Colonel Gorgas as chief sanitary officer, the Commission observed the letter of these instructions. But unfortunately they did not give him either the authority or the means to carry out his work.

On January 1, 1904, there were no cases of yellow fever, smallpox or the plague on the Isthmus. Two cases of yellow fever developed on the 15th, and other scattering cases followed. On July 1, 1904, the American sanitary officers arrived on the Zone. From that date until December 20th ten persons were stricken with yellow fever, of whom only two died. In other words, there was no serious epidemic for six months after assuming control. Our doctors knew just what ought to be done. They had had a successful—a marvellously successful—experience in cleaning up Havana. I have already noticed how their requisitions were held up by the Commission. They were not given the chance to do their work. And week by week the number of yellow fever cases increased—and with it demoralization.

No one who has not been through an epidemic can realize the difficulty of keeping up courage. It is so illogical, so insidious and uncertain. And the veil of mystery which surrounds the reasons for which it picks its victims is so

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deep. In the first week of an epidemic everyone has a theory of who is marked out. Once in a plague-ridden town I met a confident, smiling man, who laughed at the danger. It was only heavy drinkers, he said, who had any reason to be afraid. The next day I found him white-faced and haggard trying to bribe an official to let him leave the place. A friend whom he knew to be a total abstainer had died. It is the uncertainty of it that is fearful.

Many of the Americans resigned and went home. Others tried to laugh it off. Some fools made a point of sneering at the mosquito theory, and even tore holes in the few wire screens the Commission had allowed the sanitary corps to put up.

It was at this juncture that Mr. Roosevelt forced the first Commission to resign and appointed their successors. Magoon, the new Governor of the Canal Zone, arrived in May, 1905. He realized at once how desperate the situation threatened to become. He saw that the sanitary work was more important than anything else. And he gave Colonel Gorgas the much needed, much delayed support which was imperative. He cabled at once to Washington for the necessary supplies. And, so much had the organization of the Commission been improved, within forty-eight hours after he had sent his dispatches, the materials were on their way. The sanitary department was allowed to organize adequate inspection squads. Work was pushed on the sewerage work and water supply. A wholesale fumigation was made of Panama and Colon.

When Magoon arrived in May, 1905, there were thirty-eight yellow fever cases in the hospital, "and more were expected in June." The evil effects of the earlier neglect of sanitation could not be avoided. In June there were sixty-two cases. But Magoon and Gorgas had by their activity restored confidence and the number of desertions

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fell off. In July, the yellow fever dropped to forty-two. In August there were only twenty-seven sick. In September the epidemic ended with only six cases, the last of which occurred on the 29th. This was the end of yellow fever in the Canal Zone. I believe one case has developed in the six years which have passed since that date. Possibly there have been two or three more. But one is probably in less danger from this old scourge in Panama and Colon than in any tropical city which has not been subjected to as rigorous sanitation.

The annual death rate from all diseases had been reduced to less than 25 per 1,000. Cairo and Madras have a death rate as high as 38 per 1,000. Bombay is the highest, some years reaching 55. Of the northern cities, Moscow in 1904 had 27.6 deaths per 1,000, Trieste 25.8, St. Petersburg 23.7, Breslau 23.5, Dublin 23.3, Liverpool and New York 22.6, Venice 22.2, New Orleans 21.5. As these are all industrial cities, it is evident that the sanitary officers had made of the Canal Zone a place where work could go on uninterrupted by disease.

The point had now been reached where the completion of the canal was assured. The engineers under the leadership of Mr. Stevens had not been behind the doctors in successfully solving their problems. However, there was to be one more change in the administration.

The reasons which led to Mr. Stevens's resignation are as obscure as was the case when Mr. Wallace withdrew.

The story which is generally believed on the Isthmus is to this effect. While the worst of the evils of red-tapism had been done away with, still Mr. Stevens, who had been trained in private railroading, found himself considerably constrained by the constant necessity of considering the political exigencies of the situation. A great many people considered that they had a right to investigate his actions.

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Of course they did have such a right as it was a public undertaking; but Mr. Stevens was not used to the ordeal. In order to get the necessary appropriations from Congress a certain amount of political tact was necessary. Mr. Stevens lacked it. A hundred and one petty limitations and restrictions irritated him. Every time he saw Mr. Roosevelt he let off steam, fussing and fuming till he felt better—and then went back to the job with redoubled vigor.

At one time he did not have such an opportunity for several months, and the steam pressure grew pretty tense. Some particularly annoying piece of officialism made him suddenly mad, and he called his stenographer and dictated a five- or six-page letter to Mr. Roosevelt in which he expressed his strong feelings in a much more informal style than is generally used in official correspondence.

Jackson Smith, one of the Commissioners, who was on very friendly terms with Stevens, came into his office shortly afterwards and found him in the best of spirits. When the business in hand was completed he said jovially:

"Read this. I've just been easing my mind to T. R. It's a hot one—isn't it?" And he handed over the carbon copy of his letter. His visitor read it with great seriousness.

"Mr. Stevens," he said, "that is the same as a resignation."

And Stevens laughed.

"Why, I've said that kind of thing to the Colonel a dozen times. He knows I don't mean to quit this job."

But about three hours after the letter reached Washington Mr. Stevens received a cablegram: "Your resignation accepted."

Mr. Stevens has stated in a personal letter that this story is incorrect. He did not, however, give an alternate explanation, beyond saying that he resigned voluntarily.

Jackson Smith, who started the story I have given, is now

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dead. But there are many men still on the Isthmus who claim to have heard it direct from him. It has doubtless been somewhat distorted in the telling and retelling before it reached me. I give it with all reservations. It is of interest because the men on the job who knew Stevens believe that he never meant to resign, and that this story is substantially correct.

The administration version is that Mr. Stevens could not work with it harmoniously, that he made demands, impossible to be granted, under threat of resignation, and that he forced them to seek elsewhere for a man to complete the work.

There are a great many people on the canal work to-day who regret that Stevens left. He certainly was a great engineer and a genius in inspiring his men to full effort. However, the work which he accomplished stands there as his monument. Colonel Goethals, his successor, is the first to give him credit.

The work was on a "going basis." What was needed at this time was above all things stability in its executive head. Mr. Roosevelt was able to get this, combined with a very high ability, in the engineering corps of the army. And —this was the greatest consideration—the army officers would not resign.

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