

CHAPTER XVII

THE WEST INDIES AND THE CANAL

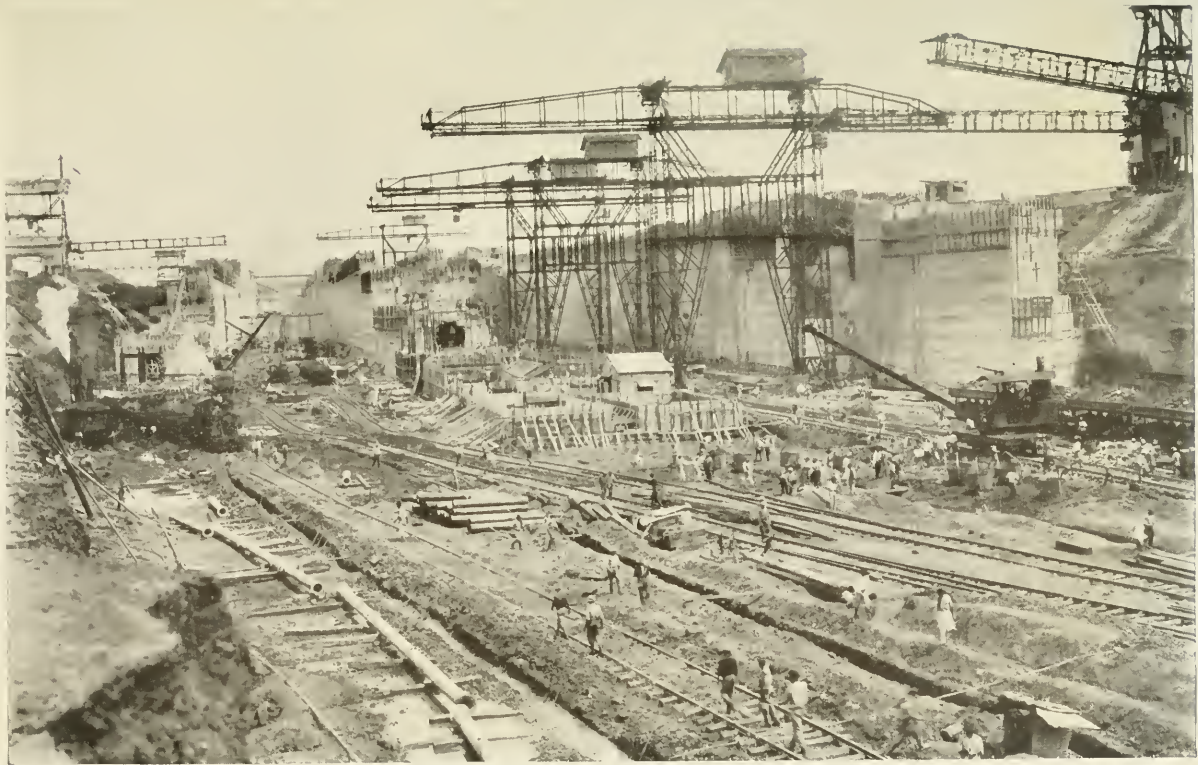
THE islands of the West Indies, the most important of them British, form a kind of screen in Atlantic waters to the approach of Panama.

The importance of these islands in regard to British interests, territorial and commercial, have to be weighed. The Government of Jamaica have purchased a site abutting on Kingston Harbour in order that it may be placed in a better position to deal with any demand for coaling, docking, or repairing facilities in consequence of the opening of the Canal. A Canadian syndicate is negotiating with the island Government with a view to the provision of such facilities. Harbour improvement schemes for Port of Spain, Trinidad, and St. George's (Grenada) are under consideration, and proposals have been made for the establishment of oil bunkering stations in Barbados and St. Lucia.

The United States frequently casts an interested eye towards the British possessions in the West Indies. It is not an envious eye, though there is a half-expressed belief that if there was a fresh jostling

up of territories belonging to the nations these islands could be better looked after by the United States than by a country on the other side of the Atlantic. Yet Americans, who have knowledge of good administration, are frank in admiration of the manner in which the British West Indies are governed. Their prosperity is undoubted. Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, and the lesser islands are fruitful in sugar, tobacco, cotton, rubber and bananas. The latest official returns show that the imports were valued at £8,878,491, and the exports at £8,331,474. In shipping the total tonnage of the vessels annually visiting the British islands is 18,110,527, of which it is interesting to note that the ships flying the British flag represent 11,626,666.

This fact is gratifying to British people. But it must not be forgotten that many of these so-called British ships have nothing British about them except their registration and the flag which flies at their mast-head. By existing United States law (to be shortly altered) only ships which are built in the United States are permitted to fly the Stars and Stripes. As Britain has so large a share in the ship-building of the world, American companies have their vessels built with us, and so, technically, they are British vessels. Take, for instance, the fine fleet belonging to the United Fruit Company. This company does an enormous business in the banana



MIRAFLORES LOWER LOCKS, AUGUST 16, 1912.

trade; indeed, it is real master of the fruit industry of the whole of Central America. Last year (1912) the company imported into the United States no fewer than 26,500,000 bunches of bananas, and of these some 6,500,000 bunches came from the West Indies. The United Fruit Company is rapidly buying up banana properties in Central America, and also securing lands available for banana planting. The company owns 820,122 acres and leases 32,438, making a total of 852,560, of which 89,047 acres are in British territory. The fleet of this company is excellent. It is developing a passenger and tourist service, and although the British flag flies, it is completely owned and controlled by the United States. Therefore, if we deduct such ships from the British tonnage, only British in name, the total is much less than the 11,000,000 odd tons for which we are inclined to take credit.

Whatever the opening of the new waterway offers to commercial and colonising enterprise, the interests, present and prospective, of Great Britain must be measured. Our West Indian possessions form, as I have said, a screen before the short route from the Atlantic to the Pacific, while on the mainland itself she has interests, direct and indirect, vitally concerned with changes which are certain to take place. Hitherto these interests have been treated as incidentals in the world of commerce. In

future they will come within the whirl of trade and traffic which the Panama Canal will inaugurate. Are we to hold and develop the commerce in the West Indies, or is America to have it?

There is already a quickening of the pulse in every counting-house drawing cheques on the production, distribution, and exchange of merchandise from enterprises established in the Indies. Where trade formerly had a spiritless existence, it is now being vitalised with the stimulating influence which fresh competition and fresh developments always bring. By this I do not mean to convey the idea that one may anticipate a new version of the "rush to Canada" boom. Neither British possessions nor those of any other country within the orbit of the Panama ring are conducive to that form of colonisation which has attended the advance of Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. The awakening will be more in the nature of expanding existing claims and in creating new activities for the purpose of this expansion.

Jamaica, Trinidad, and British Guiana, for instance, must see to it that the best realisation of their natural resources is not hampered or restrained through lack of proper auxiliaries. Harbours, railways, wharves, good roads, and all the necessary paraphernalia of modern trade are matters of immediate concern to their future position in the

international market. Up to the present only a small percentage of the national possibilities of these colonies have been given a fair test. For years administrative and racial problems have prevented the islands worth anything in the West Indian group from demonstrating what they are really capable of doing. And where efforts have been made to harvest the bountiful yield of nature they have not always been complemented with the aid lent by modern science. In Jamaica, the largest of our West Indian possessions, the negro problem is still in the process of solution. Since the slave emancipation of seventy years ago, the country has never been free from troubles directly connected with the government, education, and civilisation of the coloured population. The fact that the negro can now qualify for, and participate in, the privileges of the franchise is only one evidence of the remarkable progress that has been made. But there is still much to be done. Meanwhile, the existence of Jamaica as a commercial country depends upon a contented native community. Negroes, it has been proved, need the influence and the assistance of white people in developing their own possibilities. The fate of Great Britain's interests in the West Indies will therefore largely depend upon how the tree of good government and wise encouragement of the negro is nurtured during the next few years.

Great Britain still sends a fair quantity of goods to these islands, and it is upon her to see that she receives a full share of the increased trade, both import and export, that is expected in many quarters to flow as an outcome of the Panama Canal. In recent years America has been a big customer in the sale and barter of sugar, coffee, cocoa, tobacco and fruit. In the trade expansion of the immediate future she will prove a formidable rival to Great Britain.

British people and British goods are said to be more favoured in the West Indies. At the outset, therefore, the Mother Country stands on a good footing, despite the fact that, compared with America, she is more isolated, both in distance and in telegraphic communication. Calls by wireless, and a less broken line of British ships at sea, ought to give all parties an equal opportunity for keeping touch with the chain of islands from Jamaica to Trinidad.

Sugar is an important part of the commercial and industrial scheme of the Indies. Under wise ordination there is ample scope for a much larger increase in the number of cane plantations, and for obtaining a fuller and more profitable yield from those now managed by native owners. Upon the abolition of slavery the sugar industry was one of the first to suffer by the change. In many respects it has not yet reaped the fruition of the new labour conditions necessitated by the revolution. British

Guiana alone had, less than a century ago, 230 sugar estates and 174 plantations of coffee and cotton. Twenty years later the number of sugar plantations had fallen to 180, while the coffee and cotton estates had practically fallen into desuetude.

The truth is that the natural resources of all the West Indian islands have never been in anything approaching a condition of full development. Only a few years ago it was authoritatively reported that nearly 2,500,000 acres of land suitable for cultivation were lying idle. Where canes have been cultivated by native settlers it has invariably been under somewhat primitive conditions, and without any of the modern implements and machinery for deriving full benefit from the crop. It has been suggested by many observers that the native small-holder is afraid to work his land to its full value on account of an apprehension that it would then be taken from him. However near to or far from the truth this may be, it is certainly the case that the negro, as a rule, has a very slight knowledge of agriculture, and that unless he is encouraged and assisted by the more skilled and better educated white settler he is inclined to abandon his holding as soon as he has obtained all he can from it. A singular trait in the character of the native is that, although he may have seen how things ought to be done, he is rarely able to apply the ideas whenever he leaves the

service of a white master to try planting on his own account.

The refining factories established in Trinidad have, as a rule, had to depend largely upon the neighbouring plantations of the owners, and have not been adequately employed by outside farmers. It is true that floods and other accidents have often prevented outlying growers from bringing their canes to the central factories; but this is evidence that the real measure of the sugar-growing resources of the West Indies has never been fully ascertained. A Royal Commission on the West Indies once reported that Antigua, St. Kitts, and Barbados were particularly suited to the cultivation of sugar, and that under favourable conditions no other industry would be more profitable, both in a commercial and in a sociological sense. The fact that sugar-growing employs more native labour than many other forms of enterprise was in itself an item of considerable importance in the recommendations of the Commission. Indeed, the whole commercial prospect of these islands, as well as their effective government, are matters inter-related with the best employment of the huge native population.

The negro's sympathy and loyalty follows the line of his material interests. If, in the future, these interests are supplied by the foreign enterprisers now casting their eyes over Panama and its ap-

proaches, the consequences may have a political significance serious and far reaching.

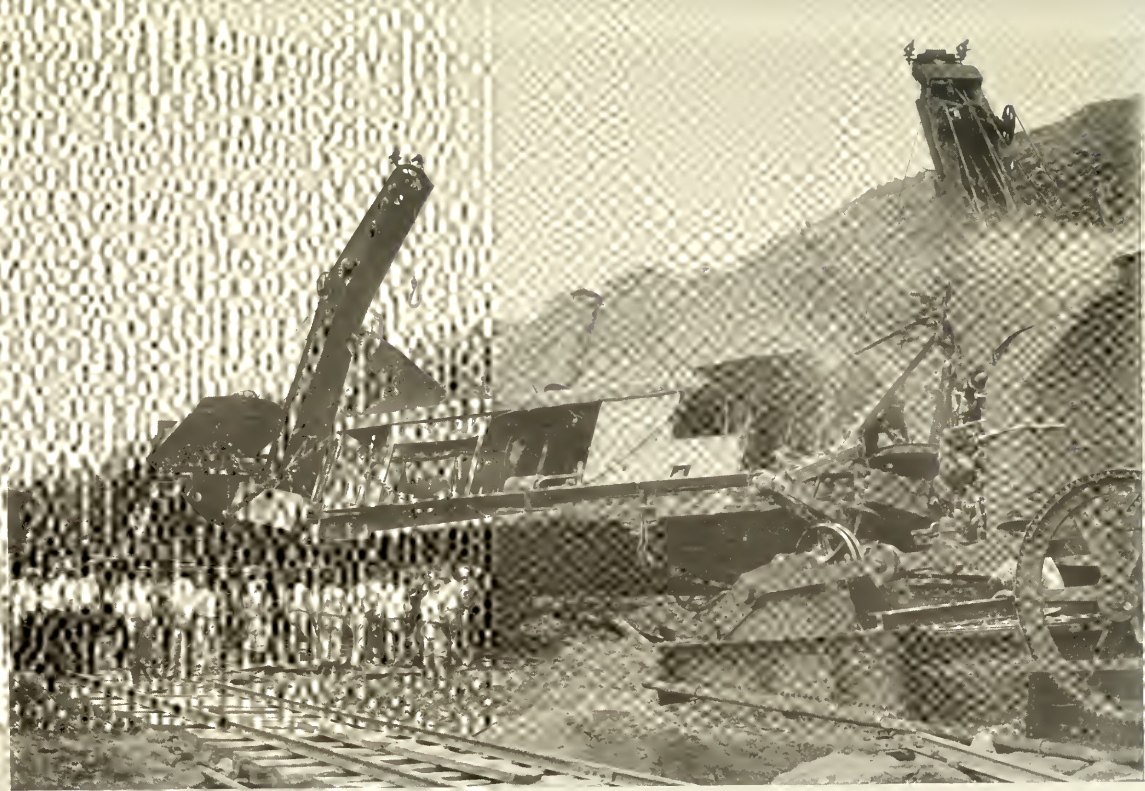
Jamaica, the Bahamas, the Leeward and Windward Islands, Barbados, and British Guiana are all concerned in any developments, and ought to benefit by the new track of shipping to China, Japan, and the Far East generally. Great Britain at present finds the islands a useful customer for over £3,000,000 worth of her goods in a year. On the barter side of the account she brings back a miscellaneous supply of native products worth in a year about £2,000,000.

Jamaica itself, which has the largest need of any of the British West Indies, has a climate fairly healthy, and not unsuited to Europeans. Under the best agricultural conditions the island might easily become the orchard of the United Kingdom. Few countries have been more favoured by nature for the rearing and cultivation of a variety of products. Between the sea level and the highest mountains the land lies at varying altitudes, so that it is possible to cultivate fruits and vegetables of the temperate zone, as well as the ordinary products of the tropics. Such a country must appeal to the enterprising investor in search of a share of the new trade anticipated from the Canal.

One half of the fruitful land is 1,000 feet above the sea-level. At Mandeville, which is 2,000 feet above the ocean, there are a good many prosperous

Europeans, and in this district coffee and oranges are grown with some success. The Crown lands, comprising nearly 100,000 acres, are situated at varying altitudes, and can be acquired by settlers under favourable terms. Here, again, the sugar industry, small as it is in comparison with the rest of the trade, has been the gauge of the island's rise and fall in commercial prosperity. Six years ago only one and a quarter per cent. of the cultivated area was used for sugar purposes, and at that time the process of abandonment was continuing. Carried on under proper conditions, and in accordance with all the modern developments of agriculture, it is manifestly certain that Great Britain would find in Jamaica a useful market for the purchase of the finest cane sugar. The industry has many features that make it one of the exclusive possessions of the tropics. For one thing, the sugar cane is less sensitive to storms and drought than most of the other crops. With a wise application of the central factory system, and with suitable communication by road or rail between the mills and the outlying plantations, the industry might be developed on the small holdings basis in a manner that would be extremely profitable, both to grower, dealer, and the Government.

A new situation will arise when Kingston is more frequently called upon by ships of all nations. Great



WRECK CRANES FREEING A STEAM SHOVEL BURIED BY A "SLIDE" IN THE
CULEBRA CUT, AUGUST 25, 1912.

Britain's policy must be less opportunist and passive than it has been, or the spoils may go to other exchanges than those of the Empire. In the development of policy the negro must be reckoned as the real asset of the island. He is now a superior being to his forefathers who were shipped from Africa. In future Great Britain's responsibility to the negro population in all her West Indian possessions must be something more than the ordinary obligation of the State to protect the weak within its territory over the seas. Just as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa have demanded from the Mother Country all the rights and freedom of the grown-up offspring, so does Jamaica and her neighbours seek to be regarded more as members of the Imperial Family than as mere servants. I know the problem and the difficulty of its solution; but there is the issue. In Jamaica a point has been reached where the native only requires the guiding hand and the stimulus of intelligent and proficient administration to make him one of the finest Imperial subjects throughout the overseas dominions. The fortunes of his country are his fortunes; its history is his history; its future his future. He does not shout for self-government, or quarrel over the basis of the franchise, but he is asking that he be trusted according to the measure of his talents—the talents he has acquired under the British flag—and that

he should be given the facilities of the ordinary subject, to work out his own economic and social salvation. We must not allow ourselves to forget his material interests are his only concern.

British Guiana, which has been a British colony for close upon a century, must also be given a watchful eye in the future. Rice, bananas, and yams are here more extensively grown than sugar; but the cultivation has been somewhat haphazard, and in accordance with no definite plan. Large areas of land near the coast, which might be brought under cultivation with proper drainage, are at present idle. Some time ago these lands could be obtained at the rate of $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. an acre. To encourage development, the Government has given facilities to would-be purchasers of small allotments. In the interior there is abundant valuable timber, which might form in itself a profitable industry. Indeed, one authority has declared that the Guiana forests are the most valuable in the West Indian colonies; but their value has never been fully appreciated. Roads and railways are two important items in pioneer enterprise. It is a land of considerable mineral wealth, and there is reason to believe that railways would be a good investment even if they had only to serve mineral lands. With railways and roads other developments would follow. Coffee and cocoa, for instance, are commodities well worth cultivation;

while in the high table-lands there is plenty of scope for cattle raising. The natives have evidently been alive to the prospects, for ground to the value of £100,000 has been bought by negroes. In this connection, and supplementary to what I have said about the native problem, it is worth while mentioning that in Trinidad alone there are about 18,000 negroes in the possession of cocoa growing holdings.

St. Lucia, St. Kitts, and St. Vincent have each their particular place in the review of interests and possibilities of the West Indies, now that more merchantmen are about to pay them a call. Of the first mentioned, not above one-fourth of the area is under profitable cultivation, despite the advantage the commerce of the island derives from the presence of troops and the use of its capital as a coaling station. St. Kitts—christened by Columbus after himself, St. Christopher—has the richest soil of any of the West Indian islands, and is a country of exceptional resources. Arrowroot, at one time the principal industry of St. Vincent, is not now in sufficient demand to justify its cultivation in preference to sugar. I have mentioned that the Royal Commissioners cited St. Kitts and Barbados as particularly suited to the cultivation of sugar, and that it showed greater promise in these places than any other forms of cultivation. Tobacco of excellent

quality is said to be another of the possibilities of St. Kitts; while in Nevis, where Nelson met and married Mrs. Nesbit, cocoa is recommended by one of the experts of the Imperial Department of Agriculture as a product for which it is particularly suited. Trinidad, Grenada, and Dominica are other places where cocoa forms a big item in the present-day list of exports. In the past much enterprise has been wasted for want of adequate capital and through a lack of organised effort.

One of the things to be borne in mind by the man who decides to invest his money and his labour in West Indian agriculture is that many of the crops do not yield a return for a long time, and that he must have sufficient capital to carry him to the period when results begin to flow. In coffee-growing, for instance, it requires at least three years before the first returns of the investment can be drawn; while a new cocoa allotment may have to be worked for five or six years before the profits commence to arrive. But there is always fruit-growing—particularly bananas—by which the young planter can keep the pot boiling until the slow crops attain perfection. With an increased service of ships, the banana merchant should be able to do a big business in this particular class of produce. Dominica, with its extremely fruitful soil, is just beginning to recover from one of those defects which has had much to

do with the disappointments of the other islands—lack of roads. Formerly a big trade was done here in coffee, and had this plant been maintained and developed there would have been less disaster among the people. Defective government, too, was to some extent responsible for the deterioration that the island experienced. This, however, is being remedied, and, along with the provision of roads, will do much to make Dominica worth attention in the reawakening that awaits the Indies.

Just as the opening of the Suez Canal was the forerunner of unforeseen and unexpected developments in the Imperial commercial and financial life of Great Britain, so may the establishment of an alternative waterway to the Far East possibly lead to considerations which the world of commerce and diplomacy cannot as yet anticipate, though, as I will show, these are not to be exaggerated. Look at the map for a moment; note the peculiar position of the West Indies and our other possessions within the range of the Panama ring. You will easily realise how this part of the Empire is affected by whatever new movement takes place, and by the new considerations of diplomacy which Panama will raise. The United States is nearer to the West Indies than is England; the productive manufacturing centres of the States are nearer; in aiming for the new markets that will be opened on the Pacific Coast

and Australasia and Oceania, the West Indies will be in the line of traffic. British people often talk about commerce following the flag. But the significance of the British flag will be affected in the West Indies if America pushes her keen business enterprise in these islands, and Great Britain does not face and deal with the new commercial situation which is going to arise.

CHAPTER XVIII

RESOURCES AND TRADE OF THE ISTHMUS

It is the confident belief of the Panamanian that not only is his country destined to play a great part in the diplomatic world, but that when its resources are developed it will be found to be one of the richest tracts on the earth's surface.

In considering future prospects it has to be borne in mind that the United States has possession of a strip of country ten miles wide and running forty miles from sea to sea, and that it is the declared policy of the American Government to allow no settlements within their area, but that the country should remain in a condition of jungle. Therefore, judging the future from the past, it is not at all likely that the Isthmus, whatever its resources may be, will be developed by the Spanish population.

The talk about the Canal has naturally directed the eyes of the world to the possibilities of Panama, and questions are being asked what the country has to offer to the speculator, investor, and the colonist.

The climate being tropical, and for considerable parts of the year subject to heavy rainfalls, it is

natural that it should be productive of enormous quantities of tropical plants and fruits. There is considerable variety in its soils, and, being so rich in vegetation, it is a little surprising that its natural resources have remained practically undeveloped. With the United States having a suzerainty over the Isthmus, and therefore a check being put on the periodic revolutions which have hitherto prevented progress, it is likely, with a stable government established, that foreigners may be induced to take a direct interest in the region either by exploiting its mineral wealth, by cultivating the land, or by the growing of fruit or raising of cattle.

Most of the territory consists of rough jungle, through which it is difficult to travel. But in those open spaces where the natives farm the reward shows that, under proper management, great stretches of the country can be made prosperous. Very little is being done in the growing of wheat, and yet experiments have shown that three crops a year can be raised. Though the breeding of cattle has been within small limitations, it has been sufficient to demonstrate that the uplands are suitable for this purpose. Not only can cattle graze the whole year round, but the guinea grass which grows on the hill-sides is capable of producing from 20 to 30 tons of hay to the acre.

Though I recognise that much of the land within



DUMPING CONCRETE FOR THE WALLS OF THE PEDRO MIGUEL
LOCKS, NOVEMBER, 1910.

the Republic is barren and unprofitable, there is no question that it is capable of maintaining a population of at least three millions. I am particularly referring to the part of the country to the north of the Zone, right up to the Costa Rica border. Though in the region of the coast the climate leaves much to be desired, the highlands in the district to which I refer have by no means a humid atmosphere, and the heat is never excessive. A settler could get a quick return with sugar-cane and tobacco, and the possibilities of orange growing have impressed everyone who has made a study of the land. With increased railway facilities, and vessels constantly journeying between New York and Colon, there is plenty of indication that Panama could develop a great trade providing the most populous centres of the United States with fruit during the winter months.

The country, though not mountainous, is broken with constant and irregular ranges of hills, and in the valleys is plenty of rich timber. The world is constantly wondering where fresh timber is to be obtained, so rapidly are great areas of forest being cut down. Now it is calculated that quite two-thirds of the area of Panama is forested with trees of valuable wood. There are hundreds of small rivers; indeed, there are about two hundred which gurgle their way towards the Pacific, whilst the Atlantic attracts at least a hundred and fifty streams.

The jungle on the Atlantic side is rich with hardwood. The jungle itself, however, is so dense, providing such a wilderness of undergrowth, that nothing whatever has been done to get possession of these fine trees for commercial purposes. Enormous capital would be required to clear the land. My opinion is that there is a good opening for the lumber industry. Thus on the Atlantic side there are the rich forests ; whilst on the Pacific side there are immense districts suitable for fruit culture, wheat growing, and cattle raising.

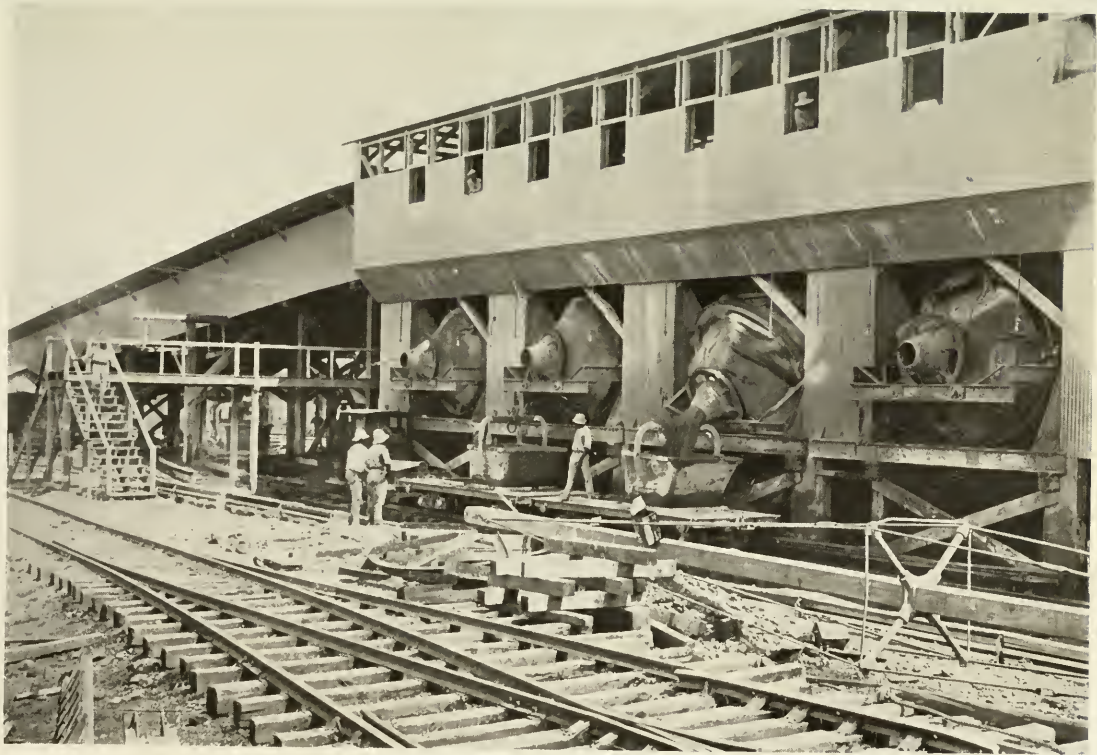
Though the present population is sparse, the hamlets far apart, the roads and tracks indifferent, and the people with little of that energy necessary to get the best out of the country, there is no question about the richness and fertility of Panama. Part of the province of Chiriqui is splendid farming country, for the grasses grown are both luxuriant and nutritious. One feels regret at the haphazard way in which the existing population, instead of properly cultivating the land, neither plough it nor prune it ; the soil is simply scratched with the machete, the seed dropped, and the crop allowed to take care of itself. In some places sugar-cane yields 18 lb. to the stick ; corn is grown in some places where for twenty years nothing has been done to sow it ; excellent potatoes are yielded by ground which has had no attention, except to scrape the

potatoes out, for over a dozen years. Tobacco plants are uncared for and development is checked with weeds, yet the growth is profitable. Probably it is the very luxuriance of Panama, giving crops with little work, which has ministered to the sloth of the natives and prevented them from turning their little farms to more profitable use. There are places suitable for bananas; others that seem to be specially adapted for coco-nut plantations; whilst in other places there is all that is necessary for coffee production.

I am not going to join those who are constantly saying that the whole of Panama is capable of sustaining a white Anglo-Saxon population. Only harm would be done by giving encouragement to that idea. The present health of the white workers in the Zone is no criterion. They, in the first place, are specially selected healthy people, and they are looked after by the authorities in a way in which no other white population in the world is cared for. Very different conditions would prevail in the farming districts. That there are plenty of men who would thrive in the climate I doubt not; but it is not a part of the world suitable for rearing a white population. There is no use blinking the fact that white people in tropical, enervating districts are seriously inclined to deteriorate in the second and third generations. Therefore, whilst I believe that the time is not far

distant when the country will be calling for the capital of the United States and of Great Britain to develop it, and that there will be plenty of positions for men of the Anglo-Saxon race as overseers, I am sure that Italy and Spain will have to be looked to to provide the settled population. I have seen the excellent work being done in Algeria and Tunisia by Italian and Spanish settlers. These are the people who would be more easily acclimatised to conditions in Panama than those who belong to northern races. Besides these, considerable use might be made of the San Blas Indians, who already, in their crude way, raise some of the finest coffee in the world. A few Englishmen and Americans have taken coffee growing in hand, and are producing a bean which sells for $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. per lb. in Panama.

Further, there are the beginnings of a useful rubber industry. So far as I can gather, there are only some three hundred acres planted with rubber trees in the Republic, and those who have investigated the matter tell me there are hundreds of square miles most suitable for rubber trees. These can be planted one hundred to the acre at a cost of about £6, and within a few years each tree gives on an average 6 lb. of rubber a year, and this in the market is worth about 4s. a pound. There is an English syndicate operating a rubber tract in Darien; whilst not far away a United States company has obtained a con-



CONCRETE MIXING PLANT.

cession of some forty square miles, which it is intended to plant completely with rubber trees. Wild rubber trees are found all over the country, and this in itself proves the suitability of the land for rubber growing.

I heard of an American company which has secured 70,000 acres, yielding plenty of good timber. Big sawmills are being erected. These things show that the commercial world has already fixed its eye upon Panama, and indicate that before long there will be something of a rush of capital into the Republic.

The real prosperity of the country will depend, I am convinced, upon the development of its agricultural, and particularly its fruit growing resources. Appreciating what the country is capable of in this direction, it is certainly regrettable that at the present time oranges, mangoes, pineapples, have to be imported chiefly from Jamaica.

Having taken a glance at what Panama can do, let us look at the trade of the Republic at the present time. It is necessary to exclude from consideration the food supplies to the workers within the Canal Zone, because these are dealt with independently by the United States Government. The foreign trade of the Republic since it has been in existence is really at a standstill. Of course, the Canal workers make purchases outside the Zone, and there is a constant and increasing stream of travellers and merchandise,

so that whilst the exports remain stationary there is a continuous improvement in imports. With the exception of fresh meat, fruit, and vegetables, practically everything to be purchased in Panama comes from elsewhere. The import trade is in the hands of a comparatively few firms who have purchasing agents in Europe and in the United States. Both British and American manufacturers do fairly well in the Isthmus, but, whilst the British have the advantage in the matter of shipping, the American dealers frequently get ahead of their British rivals by following up an order by sending a representative to interview the wholesale purchaser, and, of course, pressing the benefits of the article which the American produces over that which comes from across the Atlantic.

The Panamanians are rather slow as business people, and, as a rule, do not place large orders. The British Consul-General has, in a recent report, given some sound advice to British traders. He says, "Commercial travellers who visit the Isthmus appear satisfied with their visits, but individual orders are necessarily small owing to the number of firms dealing in the same lines and the impossibility of carrying a large stock on account of the excessively damp climate, and the high rate of interest for money. There is probably no one line, except possibly dry goods, which is worth the visit of a manufacturer's

traveller unless passing through. What is most desirable is that merchants' agents handling several classes of goods in demand on the Isthmus, with large stocks of supplies, should visit Panama. It should not be a hard matter for such agents to convince some of the local merchants that many of the goods they order through their agents, or from exporters in the United States and the Continent, could be bought of better quality and at lower prices in the United Kingdom."

There is a fairly important trade in British jams, sauces, biscuits, and other specialities, and the Consul-General believes that the consumption might be increased by advertising. Every general store stocks glass and chinaware of the cheapest, gaudiest, and ugliest description, for which there is a large demand amongst the coloured population. Some glassware comes from the United States and a little better-class crockery and toiletware from the United Kingdom; but otherwise the trade is entirely in German goods. There does not appear to be much opportunity of developing British trade in these wares, as there seems no indication of any improvement in taste of the bulk of the population, and the classes who can afford it prefer Chinese ware, which is imported and sold in quantities by the numerous Chinese stores.

Colon, the Consul-General says, derives its chief

importance from its shipping and transit trade and its position on the cross-roads of the New World. Local trade is largely carried on by a number of firms which import wholesale and sell to retail dealers without the intervention of middlemen. Their operations do not, as a rule, extend outside the town and immediate neighbourhood. The population being composed chiefly of poor and uneducated persons, the general demand is for cheap goods. Light German and American beers are preferred to the British variety, which, as a rule, is too heavy, though some British pale ale is consumed. Stout is almost entirely of British origin. Cheap German liqueurs and Chinese rum are in great demand at some bars frequented by the poorest class of natives and West Indians. Other liquors of British make are ginger ale, kola, lemonade, Old Tom gin, dry gin, and sloe gin. Fruit and vegetables come from Jamaica (which also does a large trade in cigars and cigarettes), yams, sweet potatoes, and a small quantity of sugar from Barbados. Large consignments of flour are regularly received from New York, while grain—and particularly heavy oats—and corn come from Canada.

A railway is being constructed from Panama to David, and this will be an important factor in the development of the country, as it passes through the regions richest in natural resources and most

suitable for extensive cattle raising. Colon possesses one cigar factory. The cigars are for the most part filled with Jamaica tobacco, whilst the outside wrappers are made from tobacco grown in Java. A cheaper class of cigar is also made and filled with the native leaf, which is of rather poor quality, though, as I have indicated, there is every reason for believing that, with proper management, a high grade of tobacco can be raised in Chiriqui.

Altogether, the Isthmus is well worth the consideration of those men who, with large capital, are always on the look out for some part of the world which remains to be harvested.