PART II

GRAVE OF THE SPANIARDS
CHAPTER IV

THE PIRATES

“Cheaply bought, dear in the end,” is an old Spanish proverb. The hidden treasure of America, opened as if by magic, and the sudden rise of Spain to power, let loose the harsh and evil traits of character that were in the end to corrupt all classes. In the New World, where murder, theft, and slavery were the rule, men came to despise honest labor. This same spirit soon showed itself in the mother country. Enterprise and industry declined. Pride and tyranny in America bred bad government at home. The rulers seemed mad with a desire to crush out all liberty in their wide empire. “It was an ill fortune,” says one writer, “that led the Spaniards to those parts of America in which the precious metals were found, for the ruin of their own country was hastened by the cruel plundering of Peru.”

Spain conquered Portugal in 1580 and so came to control with iron hand nearly all the commerce on all the oceans. This drove both the Dutch and the English to make war. For more than two hundred years the Spanish were obliged to fight almost constantly to hold what they had won. Their soldiers and sailors were brave enough, as we
know, but corruption and mismanagement at home meant defeat for Spain abroad.

Her possessions in America were most open to attack and were now more and more poorly defended by half-paid and half-starved troops. French, English, and Dutch pirates began to infest the West Indies and to lie in wait for the rich merchant vessels and treasure ships that sailed between Spain and Panama. So bold were these pirates and so numerous their ships and men, that Spain was helpless, and her commerce was ruined. Captain Sharp, Lewis Scott, Davies, and Dampier were pirates at the very mention of whose names Spaniards trembled.

But the prince of pirates or buccaneers, as they are sometimes called, was Henry Morgan. The account of his exploits at Panama makes the tales of pirates in the storybooks seem tame indeed. Born in Wales, he ran away to sea when still a mere boy, was sold as a slave, joined the pirates, became a leader, and took part in many wild adventures.

At length he determined to attack Porto Bello and assembled nine ships and four hundred and sixty men,—a motley band of cut-throats. The town was so large and so well protected by two strong forts at the mouth of the harbor, that Morgan scarcely dared at first to tell his men to what place he proposed to take them. But so skillfully and secretly did they approach the harbor that they were able to surprise, seize, and blow up one of the forts. The
sound of the explosion caused wild panic in the town. The garrison of the other fort fought with great courage, though unable long to resist the furious attacks of Morgan's men. No quarter was given, the town was set on fire, and

those of the inhabitants who were not able to escape to the forests, perished in the streets or burning buildings. For fifteen days the pirates gave themselves up to every manner of debauchery in the enjoyment of their plunder. About all that was left of the flourishing town of Porto Bello was the ruined fort with its guns and watchtowers. Today they can still be seen much overgrown by the tropical jungle.
SAN LORENZO WAS CAPTURED

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INTERIOR OF FORT SAN LORENZO.

"Cloud-crested San Lorenzo guards
The Chagres' entrance still,
Tho' o'er each stone dense moss hath grown,
And earth his moat doth fill."
MARCH ACROSS THE Isthmus

Before he left Morgan sent an insulting message to the governor of Panama, to the effect that he would soon return and do to Panama what he had done to Porto Bello. True to his word, he returned in 1671. News of the great booty captured at Porto Bello, and of the still greater expedition now planned, had attracted pirates from far and near. Thirty-seven ships and two thousand men were soon under Morgan’s command.

“On the Spaniards’ beach they landed,
   Dead to pity, void of fear,—
   Round their blood-red flag embanded,
   Led by Morgan the Buccaneer.”

This time it was at the mouth of the Chagres river and the powerful fort, San Lorenzo, was captured. Chagrestown was destroyed and the pirates continued up the river as far as they could go. Then came such a nine days’ march overland as only hardy pirates could have endured. Morgan had failed to bring any food for his men and the Spaniards had not only made the road nearly impassable but had also carefully burned everything that could be eaten. At last, from a high point of land the buccaneers looked down upon the lovely harbor and beautiful city of Panama. “In a valley below the eminence upon which they stood, herds of cattle peacefully grazed. The pirates rushed among the animals and, slaughtering them, devoured their flesh raw. After this savage feast they pushed on and
soon the plain of Panama lay before them with the city on the further side."

Old Panama was not a walled city. Therefore the governor had collected his four regiments of soldiers and two

hundred cavalry on the open plain outside the town. Here he had collected also a herd of two thousand wild bulls, with Indians to drive them headlong against the ranks of the pirates. In the fight that now began these bulls caused the greatest confusion. The pirates succeeded in turning them back upon the Spaniards, but the latter held their ground for two full hours of furious battle. When the cavalry
had been routed and at least a thousand men lay dead on the field, the ranks of the defenders at last broke, muskets were thrown away, and a wild rush for the town began.

Not even the great guns of the Spaniards could check the invaders. In three hours more they were in possession of the city. Immediately the dwellings and public buildings were set on fire, and flames and smoke added to the horrors of robbery and massacre. Few of the inhabitants escaped death or capture. Then, amid the ruins, for a full month, the captors indulged in such acts of torture and debauchery as only the imagination can picture.
AN ANCIENT LANDMARK

Massive Tower of Saint Augustin.
Finally the return march began. One hundred and seventy-five mules and six hundred prisoners helped to carry the plunder back across the Isthmus to the ships, where the final division was to be made. But with the base and cunning treachery of a true pirate, Morgan and a few friends, while their comrades slept at Chagrestown, loaded a vessel to the water's edge with the most valuable part of the spoil and sailed away to the English island of Jamaica. Strange to say, the outrageous acts of this brutal man were readily forgiven him by King Charles II of England, and he lived to be honored and knighted as Sir Henry Morgan.
The massive tower of the cathedral church of Saint Augustin, whose bells “rang out their clear chimes one hundred years before the Pilgrim Fathers landed on Plymouth Rock,” alone struggles, amid rank vegetation, to mark the sight of the once golden city of Panama.

The fall of the city of Panama marked the beginning of the end of Spain’s power in the New World. Though the Spaniards soon built a new town, the present city of Panama, five miles west of the old site and spent, it is said, more than eleven million dollars to protect it by huge walls of masonry, the trade and wealth and glories of the older days never returned. The province of Panama, from which so much of Spain’s great possessions had once been ruled, was soon to be one of nine departments of the province of Colombia, and to be ruled from the capital at Bogotá.

A century of slumber and decay followed. As Spain’s power in Europe declined, her rule in America became more than ever oppressive. When our great-grandfathers, led by George Washington, fought for freedom from England, the spirit of liberty was spreading in South America. While Washington was President of the United States, the famous patriot Simon Bolivar was born in Venezuela. Colombia declared herself free from Spain in 1811. By 1824 Bolivar had put an end forever to Spanish rule in South America. The Isthmus remained a part of Colombia.
until 1903, when it became the independent Republic of Panama.

From Columbus on for more than three hundred years, Spain had held the Isthmus. Its possession had been, indeed, "dear in the end,"—a real "Grave of the Spaniards."
PART III

MODERN PANAMA
CHAPTER V

LAND OF THE COCOANUT TREE

“Away down south in the Torrid Zone,
    North latitude nearly nine,
Where the eight months’ pour once past and o’er,
    The sun four months doth shine;
Where ’tis eighty-six the year around,
    And people rarely agree;
Where the plantain grows and the hot wind blows,
    Lies the Land of the Cocoanut Tree.”

The history of Panama thus far has brought us on through stories of the brave old days of romance and adventure, of treasure ships and daring pirates, of Spanish rule and ruin, to modern Panama. There are stories of romance and daring, in no way less thrilling, yet to be told; but we shall understand them better, if we first make a visit to the Isthmus to see for ourselves what this interesting strip of land is like. This will not be a difficult journey, for comfortable ships from New Orleans or New York will take us to Colon, its northern port, in less than a week. And Panama is a small country, too, only four hundred and twenty-five miles long, two-thirds the size of
Pennsylvania, and not quite so large as the state of Indiana (Map IV).

Our ideas of its geography will, no doubt, need some correction. We usually think of South America as somewhere directly south of the central part of the United States, and of the Isthmus, as running north and south between the two continents. It is surprising to find that nearly all of Panama is further east than Florida—(Map I, p. 2), and that the City of Panama is no further west than Pittsburg. The Isthmus, too, is shaped like a flat letter S and really runs about east and west—(Map III, p. 14). At Colon, on the Atlantic side, the sun rises over the land and sets over the ocean,—just the opposite of our expectation. Someone has said very truly that there always seems to be "something crooked about the Isthmus."

Panama is only nine degrees north of the equator, and so has in all respects a tropical climate. The average temperature for the entire year in the principal cities of the United States is about 55° (Fahrenheit) above zero. In New Orleans it is 67°; in Boston, 50°. In Panama we must be prepared for many days in which the temperature reaches nearly 100°, and for nights that seldom are below 74°. The average for the year is considerably above 80°,—or 30° hotter than Chicago.

In the United States we are accustomed to four seasons during the year, with extremes of heat in summer and of cold in winter. There are two seasons at Panama, but sum-
MAP IV.—THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA.
Summer temperature continues the whole year through. The two seasons depend not upon the heat but upon the rainfall. For eight months, from May to December, great masses of rain clouds are blown across the Isthmus from ocean to ocean, and terrific downpours of rain occur almost daily. The whole land is drenched for long periods. The inside of the driest houses becomes damp and musty. Books mold on the shelves, linen loses its stiffness, iron rusts, and the air is everywhere heavy with moisture. Then, beginning about the first of January, comes the dry season of four months. Yet the name "dry season" is deceptive,
for even during that period showers are frequent. The fact is, Panama is one of the wettest places in the world and is thoroughly damp the year round.

On the Pacific side six feet of water fall in a year, and on the Atlantic side, fully twelve feet. This is three times as much as falls in a year's time in Boston and fourteen times as much as in El Paso, Texas. Someone has said that if the rain that falls at Colon in a year came all at

once, a very tall man, standing on the shoulders of another equally tall, could scarcely raise the top of his head to the surface.
If it be the dry season, the approach to the Isthmus by steamer is not without beauty. Great masses of white clouds drift lazily over the low green hills that rise one above another from the sea-coast. Here and there bold headlands and deep bays can be seen, and many small islands seem almost to float like ships upon the blue waters of the Caribbean. Off in the distance is the mouth of the Chagres river, and straight ahead, the harbor and town of Colon, with Manzanillo lighthouse rising above them. In the harbor and at the docks are scores of ships; for even now more than one hundred thousand travelers...
and a million tons of merchandise cross the Isthmus each year.

Colon is the Spanish form of the word Columbus and is the name given to the town by the government of Colombia in honor of the Discoverer. On his last journey to America Columbus entered Colon harbor in November of 1502 and called it Bahia de los Navios.

In the town of Colon itself, we shall be greatly disappointed. It would be hard to imagine a less interesting and attractive place. How low and small and dirty it is! The land on which it is built is but two or three feet
above sea-level and behind it for miles are dreary and unhealthful swamps. Certainly it was a great mistake to build a town on such a spot. A tremendous amount of filling in with rock and soil has been done in order to make it in any sense a decent place to live in. Low frame houses; narrow, ill-smelling streets; a population of a few thousand people of many nationalities; and little or nothing of interest to be seen, make Colon an unpleasant introduction to a visit on the Isthmus.

Leaving Colon behind we shall pass on into the interior of the country and finally across to the larger and more attractive City of Panama on the Pacific coast. These two towns and the country lying between them are about all of the Isthmus that is seen by the usual traveler. Much of the remaining country is almost impossible to visit. There are few roads and many hundred square miles even now are unexplored and uninhabited. The whole population of Panama is about 350,000. Outside of Colon and the City of Panama the inhabitants are scattered about the Isthmus in many small villages, mostly on the sea-coast.

We may find it confusing at first that both the country and its chief city are called Panama. To avoid difficulty we shall always speak of the latter as the City of Panama.

A low backbone of hills, called the Cordillera de Bando, extends throughout the length of the Isthmus. Only at a few points do these hills become real mountains. The
Chagres River at Gatun—Showing Native Village and Banana Trees before Canal was Built.
greater part is low and rolling. In the flat, winding valleys between the hills are many small rivers. The principal ones are the Rio Tuyra, Rio Grande, Rio Chepo, and the Rio Chagres. The latter flows into the Atlantic and is next to the longest and largest. (Rio means river in Spanish.) In the dry season the rivers are little more than small streams, pushing sluggishly through their swampy channels toward the sea. The Chagres is then about two hundred feet wide and three or four feet deep. But in the rainy season the rivers become raging torrents, flooding miles of land. The Chagres has been known to rise thirty feet in one night, and for days at a time it sweeps away all in its path.

In the interior of the country, away from Colon, there is much to see of great interest, especially to those of us who have never been in the tropics. With a hot climate, rich soil, and much moisture, almost the whole of Panama, up to the very hill-tops, is covered with a tangled jungle, in which nearly every form of tropical vegetation flourishes in rank luxuriance.

Everywhere we see flowers of most brilliant coloring. And ferns, shrubs, and vines make a thick undergrowth. There are many strange trees, too, unknown to more northern lands. Here is a bunch of bamboo trees,—and there, a tree called the coco-bolo. The wood of the latter is very hard and beautiful. Considerable quantities of it are shipped annually to the United States. Per-
"The Natives Climb for Them."
haps, if we should ask someone who knows, we should find that the handles on our knives are often made of coco-bolo. Fine cedar and mahogany trees also furnish valuable timber, and a certain kind of palm nuts, called ivory nuts, are shipped away to be made into buttons.

In the United States elms, maples, pines, and oaks are the most common and beautiful trees. On the Isthmus their places are taken by the palm trees. Along the roads and in the parks and gardens we shall see the royal palm lifting its graceful branches on a slender trunk high into the air. This palm bears no fruit and is useful only for ornament or shade. But the cocoanut palm is both ornamental and useful, for its nuts are collected by the natives to be sold or used as food. Several million cocoanuts are sent to our markets at home each year. No doubt we have many times eaten Panama cocoanuts. Here we shall see how they grow. All over the Isthmus are cocoanut palms, both wild and cultivated, in great abundance. They seem much like the royal palms in
“Heavy Bunch of Fruit.”
A HANDSOME PLANT

shape but are not usually so tall. Up there, underneath the fronds or branches and close to the trunk, we can see a bunch of half a dozen or more large, oval-shaped objects. They look like great, dark-colored eggs. Each is a cocoanut wrapped in a thick green covering or husk, much as chestnuts are wrapped in the burs. When partially ripened the cocoanut shell and husk are soft pulp and the interior is full of a rich, sweet milk. It is then that the natives climb for them. The picture shows three cocoanuts in husks on the shoulder of one negro, while the other negro is cutting away the husk and soft shell in order to get at the delicious milk. When the cocoanuts are fully ripe, they drop from the trees. The husk is then dry and can be easily torn off and the cocoanut at last appears as we are accustomed to see it in our fruit stores.

There is also a tree-like plant that is sure to give us a surprise. It grows to the height of fifteen or twenty feet, with a soft trunk marked with purple stripes, and with immense broad leaves often six feet long. There is nothing in our northern climate that seems at all like it. But if we look closely, a heavy bunch of fruit, on a thick stem, hanging near the trunk, easily marks it as the banana plant. Curiously enough the bunch of bananas seems to be upside down, and the stem continues beyond the fruit like a long snake and ends in a sort of blossom much like a large water-lily. We soon realize that this is the natural way in which the banana grows, and that it is not on
READY FOR FOREIGN MARKETS

LOADING BANANAS ON STEAMER.
the trees but in our stores at home that the bunches are hung upside down. When the fruit is ripe enough, the natives chop off the stem near the fruit, the long, snaky end is cut away, and the fruit is ready for market. In Panama

![Field of Pineapples on Taboga Island Near City of Panama.](image)

a bunch is sold to the fruit dealers for about thirty cents. Nearly four hundred thousand bunches have been shipped north from Colon in one season, and thousands more are used on the Isthmus for food. Of late years, however, bananas are shipped from Bocas del Toro instead of from Colon.

In Panama, too, grow delicious oranges, papayas (a fruit
similar to melons but grown on trees), pineapples, limes, bread-fruit, mangoes, and scores of other tropical fruits with which we are less familiar. Nature has been very generous here with her fruits, —so much so, in fact, that the natives can live on them with little or no effort. But the cocoanuts and bananas are the most abundant and most characteristic of the Isthmus.

A Panama poet has written an interesting little poem which describes the land in which he lived. The first stanza of the poem is at the beginning of this chapter. It would be easy to learn and might help us to remember some of the more important things that we shall notice on a visit to Panama.