CHAPTER VII

CITY OF PANAMA

And so we have made our way across the Isthmus, through the forest jungle and the native villages, until the Pacific and the City of Panama come into view.

Before entering the town, let us get a general idea of its location and surroundings from the slopes of Ancon Hill, which rises directly behind it. How superb is the view here spread out before us! Below is the little city, scattered over a rocky point of land,—and there, the broad and beautiful Gulf of Panama framed in green hills. Away off in the distance the Pearl Islands can just be seen, while near at hand Taboga and its neighboring islands rise abruptly from the blue waters of the bay. And over all are bright skies and brilliant sunlight. We shall travel far before finding a city more attractively situated.

Even from a distance the town has a foreign appearance, and a closer view adds to this impression. How strangely narrow its streets are! And see,—how the curious old Spanish balconies project over the sidewalks and protect the passer-by from the sunlight! At least the lower parts of the houses are very heavily built, with few windows and these strongly barred,
View of New Panama and the Pacific from Ancon Hill.
as if to stand a siege. No lawns separate them from the streets. It is but a step to the sidewalk. Doors are open everywhere. The interiors of the houses of the poorer people are in full view from the streets. We shall find, however, that the homes of the better class are in the second story of their houses and more removed from the noise and dirt.

Let us pass directly into the town to Independence Plaza. Here stands the old Cathedral of Panama,—with its twin spires, Spanish architecture, and clanging bells. In front of it is the open park or Plaza. This is the center about which the town is built. The chief hotel, the Bishop’s palace, the City Hall, and the principal clubs, are all on this Plaza. Here, on Sunday evenings, rich and poor alike gather to listen to
the band concerts or to promenade beneath the lights and palm trees. For more than two hundred years this Plaza has witnessed some of the most important events in the history of Panama. If the City of Panama is the capital of the Republic, this small square is its very heart. There are other old churches and other parks in the city, but none quite so interesting as these.

Not all the town, however, is as attractive as Independence Plaza. Much filth, many vile quarters, evil-smelling and unhealthful streets, reveal the usual conditions that are all too common in tropical cities. Yet our general feeling, as we examine the town, will not be wholly unpleasant.

From the Cathedral Plaza it is only a short walk to the harbor. A stroll out on the old sea-wall is full of novelty and interest. This is the very same wall which the Spaniards
Panama Cathedral and Corner of Independence Plaza.

Two towers the old Cathedral lifts
Above the sea-walled town.

In either turret, staves in hand,
All day the mongrel ringers stand
And sound, far over bay and land,
The Bells of Panama.

built to protect the town in the old pirate days. They must surely have expected Henry Morgan to return with his blood-thirsty pirates, so thick and high did they build it. In fact, so much money was spent upon it that the angry Spanish king is said to have asked if it were not built entirely of silver. Only portions of the old walls now remain.
At Colon the tide rises and falls less than two feet,—that is, the surface of the ocean always remains at about the same level.

At Panama, on the other hand, the tide rises and falls nearly twenty feet. During one part of the day we may see the city wall at high tide and with numbers of small fruit and fishing boats anchored near it. The same spot at low tide would scarcely be recognized. The vessels are lying on dry bottom and their cargoes are being unloaded. From up and down the coast all manner of fruits are brought in these boats, and when the tide is out, the "beach market" makes an odd sight.
At home we most often hear the name of Panama connected with the soft, beautifully-woven hats, so common in summer weather. Some of us may have been looking curiously into the native huts or into the city houses, in the hope of seeing the people at work on these hats. They can be seen in most of the curious little stores, but where are they made, we ask. Not at all in Panama, is the reply, but away off on the west coast of South America, in Ecuador. The Panama merchants buy them from that distant country, and then they, in turn, sell them to our hatters in the United States. They might
more truly be called Ecuador hats. The name “Panama hat,” then, refers not so much to the place where they are made as to the particular kind of material and weave of
TWO BUSY PLACES

Beach Fruit Market.

Office of the Panama Lottery.
ways mean much church-going. And some of us may be shocked to find cock-fighting and an occasional bull-fight on Sunday. In Panama, also, the government permits a National Lottery. This is forbidden by law in our country. Lottery advertisements and tickets cannot be carried by the United States mails. Our government has decided that lotteries, in general, do more harm than good.

On the Cathedral Plaza is the office of the Loteria de Panama. We are told that there is one lottery, or drawing, each week. Perhaps ten thousand tickets may be sold at $1.25 each. So the Lottery receives $12,500 for that week. Each ticket has a number on it which differs from the number on any other ticket. There are a large number of prizes in money offered,—some few amount to more than $1,250,—others to only a few dol-
lars. When all are added together, they do not nearly equal the whole amount of money taken in by the lottery for that week; so that even after the prizes are given, a large profit remains.

Then, on Sunday, comes the drawing. Great excitement prevails. The street and Plaza in front of the Lot-

tery office are crowded. If we push our way inside, we shall see how the drawing is done. Various ways are employed at different times, but all are apparently honest enough. Every care is taken to prevent cheating. A common way is to have some little black balls in a box or
basket. Each ball has a number inside it. The basket is shaken and a fixed number of balls drawn out. When they are opened and the numbers inside are put together in their order of drawing, we have the number of the lottery ticket that is to receive the largest prize. The lucky holder of that ticket hurries forward and is paid his prize in cash. He has paid in only $1.25, but has won, perhaps, several thousand dollars. The other prizes are awarded in the same way. The whole Lottery is, of course, a plan to encourage gambling. But in Panama there seems to be no objection to it.

As we pass about the streets, it may be our good fortune to catch sight of Señor José Domingo de Obaldía, now president (1910) of Panama. We have already learned that in December, 1903, Panama became an independent nation, free from Colombia, of which country she had so long been a part. Now the little Republic, made up of seven provinces, has a constitution and form of government similar in most respects to our own. It has its own stamps, coins, flag, government buildings, etc., and has the peculiar advantage of the special protection of the United States.
PART IV

KEY TO THE PACIFIC
CHAPTER VIII
ROADWAYS ACROSS CENTRAL AMERICA

If we made a visit to Panama merely to see a tropical country in many ways so very different from our own, and to look upon the ruins of the glorious old days of Spanish rule, we should certainly be well rewarded. But, as everyone knows, there is something else to be seen at Panama. It has been said that the eyes of the whole world are now turned with tremendous interest to this little country. During the remainder of our stay in Panama we shall try to learn why this is so.

We begin with the story of a most remarkable little railroad. While at Panama we shall be obliged to travel considerably on this road, and a knowledge of its history will add much to our interest.

There was a time, as late as the year 1889, when tickets for a forty-eight mile railroad journey at Panama cost $25 in gold,—or more than fifty cents per mile. If we paid the same rate at home, it would cost more than $200 to go from New York City to Buffalo or from Chicago to Minneapolis. Few persons could afford to take many such trips. The rates at Panama are still very high.

We shall notice that all the telegraph poles along the road
MAP V.—Routes Across Central America.
are of iron instead of wood, and if we get out, when the train stops, and look carefully at the cross-ties beneath the rails, we shall find that they are all of lignum vitae, almost the hardest wood in the world. It is next to impossible to drive a spike into these cross-ties. Holes for them must be bored out. And this is, of course, a long and expensive task. It is odd to think that all this trouble was made necessary by harmless-looking ants. We have heard of beavers cutting down young trees with their sharp teeth, in order to eat the tender twigs and leaves or to use the branches in building their mud houses. But that ants will eat dry, hard telegraph
poles and railroad cross-ties seems like a fairy story. We may smile at the idea, but it is true nevertheless. In the forests of Panama there are great colonies of wood-eating ants that will eat into and destroy any but the very hardest wood. Iron and lignum vitæ, however, have proved too much for them.

The story of the building of the Panama railroad takes us back again, for a moment, to the early Spanish times. When all that long stretch of land between North and South America which we call Central America (Map V) was discovered and conquered by Spain, and the rich west coast of America fell into her hands, the Spaniards naturally began to look for the best places for roadways across from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

We remember that Balboa, in 1514, cut a rude road across the Isthmus through the jungle and carried his ships over it. It is marked as No. 2, Map V. This was the first roadway built by white men between the two oceans. It was also, by chance, the shortest,—about thirty miles. But no towns grew up at either end and it soon disappeared.

When Governor Pedrarias built the City of Panama and the towns of Nombre de Dios and Porto Bello, he began a good, paved road between them (No. 3, Map V). This road was fifty miles long and was wide enough to allow two carts to be driven abreast along it. No expense was spared to make it a good way for travel and commerce.
In 1525 Cortes, the Spanish ruler of Mexico, found that from the Gulf of Mexico across to Tehuantepec Bay (Tā-wān-tā-pek’) was but one hundred and twenty miles and that the passes through the mountains were but nine hundred feet above the sea. So he built a highway at this point (No. 5, Map V), known as the Tehuantepec Road. From that day to this an extensive trade has been carried over that route.

During all the long years that Spain held it, and for many years after, the Tehuantepec and the Panama roads were the only important routes across Central America. There are men still living who crossed by these roads, when no others existed.

There came a time, however, when a better road was greatly needed. We have all heard of the war between the United States and Mexico in 1846 and 1847, which gave to the United States New Mexico, Arizona, and California, and much other land besides. At that time there were less than nine thousand miles of railroad in all the United States, and it was impossible to go from New York even as far west as Chicago by rail. Many hundreds of miles of unexplored prairies and Rocky Mountains lay between Chicago and California. The trails for horses and wagons were very dangerous, the journey required several months, and hostile Indians were everywhere. For government service, for soldiers, and for the mails an easier route was necessary.
We have all heard, too, of the wonderful discovery of gold in California in 1848, and of the crowds of excited men who rushed to the new gold fields. Long caravans of horses and wagons conveyed thousands west from St. Louis. But there were thousands more of the Forty-niners, as they were called, who chose to go by ship to the mouth of the Chagres river, then to cross the Isthmus to the City of Panama, and thence by ship again up the Pacific coast to San Francisco. There were quite as many dangers by this route as by the long trails across the western prairies. There were many shipwrecks on the rough Caribbean sea,
and hundreds fell sick and died in the hot climate of the Isthmus. In the single year of 1852 five hundred gold-seekers died of cholera at Panama.

At that time there was no regular line of steamers from Panama City to San Francisco. When a ship once reached California, the crew was likely to be seized with the gold fever and to run off to the mines, leaving the captain with no one to help him take his ship back to Panama. Had we searched carefully, as we took a promenade on the old sea-wall of the City of Panama, we might have found many names and initials of the Forty-niners cut in the moss-covered stones. These letters tell a pathetic story of the anxious men who once, from these very walls, looked eagerly out to sea in search of a returning ship. The long days of waiting, the empty purses, the dreaded fever made Panama the grave of hundreds, who were never to reach the gold mines. A large trade sprang up on the Isthmus, and great quantities of goods were shipped over this route to California.

So it came about that a company of men in New York city determined to build a railroad from Colon to the City of Panama. William Henry Aspinwall, John L. Stevens, and Henry Chauncey were the leaders in this enterprise. The right to build it was secured from the government of Colombia, the route was surveyed not far from the old Spanish roadway, and work was begun in 1849.
Since the road was to be but forty-eight miles long and there were no mountains to be crossed, it would not seem, at first thought, like a great task; but in the end it proved to be one of the most disastrous attempts at road building in which American energy and bravery have ever been engaged.

There were many obstacles at the outset. Panama was a long distance from railroad supplies. Materials were hard to get. Then there were the jungles to be conquered. It will be almost impossible for us to realize the difficulties that they present to an engineering party. We
are told that a party of engineers once passed twice within twenty feet of a high hill without knowing it, so dense was the tropical growth.

To begin the engineering work, Colonel G. M. Totten, James L. Baldwin, and a few others, with a small number of native laborers, landed on Manzanillo Island, where now is the town of Colon. "There was not the least sign of human life, civilized or savage, on the island; nor was there a space of dry land upon which to set foot, except the narrow ridge of sand that had been washed up by the surf along the reef. In front, the sea; behind, the malarial swamp. But they set to work to clear away a space for the purpose of erecting a building to shelter themselves, their followers, and their supplies from the sun and rain.

"They had a schooner of two hundred tons, upon which they had arrived, and on which they lived for the first few months. Even after the first house was completed it was found that it was impossible to occupy it, on account of the swarms of mosquitoes, sand flies, and other noxious insects that invaded it; while on board the vessel the men were tormented with myriads of cockroaches, which rendered life a burden. Sickness was seldom absent from the camp, while death was a too frequent visitor. No one escaped the calentura, as the jungle fever is called. In a little time the white members of the party were the pale hue of ghosts; and even the dusky
natives grew many shades lighter than their natural bronze.

"Under these untoward circumstances, at the beginning of the long rainy season, of which no one of the company, except the natives, had any practical knowledge, was commenced the battle with tropical nature that was to end in triumph five weary years later."

James Baldwin was selected to survey the line of the road. "He organized a small party, and made the bold plunge. For a long distance they were obliged to wade in water waist deep, and to hew their way through the dense
jungle. It is said that Baldwin carried his noonday luncheon in his hat, during the progress of that part of the survey, and ate it standing amid envious alligators and water snakes. Be that as it may, it is doubtful if a more daring feat of engineering has been performed. Think of it! Day after scorching day, shut in by impenetrable growth of jungle, each weary foot of which must be cut down before any advance could be made, breathing air laden with poison, and tormented by millions of insects! The wonder is that any man could have had such courage and endurance.”

Not far from Colon was the great Black Swamp. Across this it was necessary to build the line. Some of us may know what that means. For miles no hard bottom could be found beneath the soft mud. Tons on tons of rock were dumped upon it and in a few hours sank out of sight. This swamp was obstacle enough to force less determined men to quit the work.

The next obstacle was the Chagres river. The route of the line crossed it at several points and there the terrific floods made railroad building next to impossible. The water often rose ten feet or more above the tracks and swept away the results of months of labor.

Another obstacle was the difficulty of securing good laborers. The Panama native has a way of working one day and then of loafing for the next week. When he works, he does not accomplish much. So laborers had to be imported
from abroad. The Company, as an experiment, brought over a shipload of eight hundred Chinamen. "They immediately began to fall sick. In less than two months after their arrival there was hardly one of the original number fit to wield a pick or shovel. They gave themselves up to despair and sought death by whatever means came nearest to hand. Some sat on the shore and awaited the rising tide, nor did they stir until the sea swallowed them. Some hanged or strangled themselves by their cues. The remnant, fewer than two hundred, sick and useless, were shipped to Jamaica."
Irish laborers were tried with no better results. Finally a gang of several thousand negroes from Jamaica, and a few whites from various sources finished the work.

We may already suspect the greatest enemy with which the railroad had to fight. More serious than all other obstacles to any great work in Panama is the tropical climate with its tropical diseases. Not only does the steaming hot weather suck the strength out of men who are accustomed to cooler lands, but it leaves them too weak to throw off the diseases that lurk in the filth of the cities and the deadly air of the swamps. Consumption, typhoid, malaria, plague, and yellow fever, cut down the railroad's workmen until the wonder is that the road was ever completed.

"Beyond the Chagres river
Are the paths that lead to death—
To the fever's deadly breezes,
To malaria's poisonous breath!"

It has been said that one life was sacrificed for every cross-tie on the railroad track. This is, no doubt, untrue. The total loss of life was about 2,500. It was a fight of American daring against terrible odds. But such engineers as Colonel George Totten and James Baldwin were superior to all the evil powers of the jungle, and the road was built.

Eight million dollars,—five years of exhausting labor,—
over two thousand lives,—that was the price paid for forty-eight miles of railroad away off in Panama.

On the 27th of January, 1855, a strange sight was seen in the City of Panama,—the first locomotive that ever crossed

the American continent from ocean to ocean,—and this, too, fourteen years before it was possible to cross the United States by rail from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Here at last was a railroad across the Isthmus. Shiploads of goods headed for the Pacific need no longer be sent on the long journey around South America. Commerce came to Panama at once. Even

"Here at Last Was a Railroad Across the Isthmus."
before it was completed, the road had taken in more than two million dollars. It soon made fortunes for its builders, and has paid handsomely ever since. In the first forty-seven years this little railroad earned nearly $38,000,000 of clear profit for its owners.

Surely a railroad can have a story as romantic as the bloody career of a gang of pirates, even though led by Henry Morgan.
CHAPTER IX

WATERWAYS ACROSS CENTRAL AMERICA

In the first part of our story of Panama we learned that the greatest disappointment of Columbus’s life was the fact that he could find no waterway through Central America to Asia. It will not be worth our while to study very carefully all the efforts made since his time by Spain, Scotland, England, and France to find or to build such a waterway. We are naturally more interested in what the United States has done at Panama. But we shall be more proud of our own country, if we see first what others have done and why they failed.

That Columbus failed to find a waterway did not entirely discourage the Spaniards. The more they learned of Central America, the more desirous were they to find or to build a way for ships through it. Columbus had been dead only fourteen years, when the Spanish king, Charles the Fifth, gave orders to all his governors in America to make a most careful survey for this purpose. His orders were obeyed and many explorers were sent out. Of course, no waterway was found. There wasn’t any. And we need to follow the work of but one explorer. This was Gonzales.

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He crossed the Isthmus at Panama in 1521 and sailed up the west coast to Nicaragua. Here a landing was made with one hundred men. Gonzales had gone inland a few miles when, to his surprise, he came to the shore of a great fresh-water lake.

This was Lake Nicaragua. It is marked as No. 4 on Map V, p. 94 and it is very desirable that we should see exactly where it lies. The lake is one hundred and seventeen miles long, or about half as long as our Lake Erie, and covers three thousand square miles. Gonzales sailed up the lake to its outlet, the San Juan river, and then down this stream to the Atlantic. Here, surely, was an easy way from the Atlantic to the Pacific,—only one hundred and seventy miles and largely by water. It seemed as if a canal might be built at Nicaragua.

Spanish surveyors also declared, at this time, that a canal could be built across Panama. So, for a time, the Spaniards had high hopes of building a canal.

It was not long after this, however, that Spain came to feel that if easy ways across Central America could be found or built, other nations might steal away from her the rich possessions in the New World. So the Spanish king forbade any further surveys. And for two hundred and fifty years Spain did all in her power to prevent other nations from becoming interested in a canal at Nicaragua or at Panama.

But no one feared the anger of Spain, as we know from the stories of English pirates. Only a few years after Henry
Morgan destroyed Panama, a famous Scotchman named William Paterson planned to get possession of Panama by planting a large Scotch colony on the Gulf of Darien (Map V). He thought, too, that if the colony was a success, Scotland might dig a canal across the Isthmus at that point (No. 2, Map V).

What a pitiful failure it was! In 1698 twelve hundred Scotchmen set out in five ships and planted a colony at Darien. Others followed and everything looked promising. But they had not counted on the climate. Fever came, as it had done so many times before. Soon more than two thousand were dead and vast sums of money had been spent. Suddenly a hostile Spanish fleet appeared. The few survivors ran away in defeat to Scotland. There was to be no Scotch canal.

For more than one hundred years the failure of Paterson's plan discouraged any more such efforts. But interest was still alive in the idea of a canal and many people yet hoped to see it built.

Some of us have seen, or may sometime see, a certain splendid monument in one of the squares in the city of London. Four massive lions guard a beautiful column which rises high in air. On its top stands the statue of the greatest admiral that ever walked the deck of an English battleship. All England delights to honor the memory of her great sea-captain, who died in his country's service.

Few persons know, perhaps, that twenty-five years before
"Four Massive Lions Guard a Beautiful Column."
his wonderful battle with the French fleet at Trafalgar, he nearly lost his life in Nicaragua. He was only young Captain Nelson then, and had been sent with some English ships and men to drive the Spanish out of Nicaragua and seize the lake. England had determined to get control of what was then thought to be the best route for a canal.

Nelson succeeded in whipping the Spanish ships that were sent against him. But the tropical fever again fought in behalf of Spain, and that he could not whip. The crew of his ship, the *Hinchinbrook*, was suddenly taken sick, and in a few days only ten were left alive out of two hundred. The captain’s own health, also, was injured for the remainder of his life.

England did not despair. For many years she continued to make surveys at Nicaragua. Until very recently she still had plans for a canal.
CHAPTER X

THE FRENCH AT PANAMA

On a certain day in 1882, up among the hills eleven miles back of the city of Panama, an unusual sight could have been seen. All about, the jungle had been cut away, the land cleared, and tracks, cars, engines, and machinery for digging had been set up. Some of them were actually in operation. Engines were puffing, men were shouting, gangs of workmen were hurrying here and there. Smoke, too, could be seen at points down the valley, and there were signs of activity everywhere.

Amid all this commotion a company of a few hundred persons was gathered. No such company had ever met before on the Isthmus. There was the Bishop from the Cathedral of Panama, and with him a number of the leading citizens of that town. There were some Americans also, and Europeans of different nationalities, especially Frenchmen. These all had the appearance of spectators much interested in something unusual that was about to happen.

The center of the group was a little white-haired man, laughing and joking, and full of remarkable energy and good humor. Except for his white hair he appeared to be
not over fifty years old. Certainly no one would have guessed that he had passed his seventy-sixth birthday. We are told that he would often "ride a fiery horse all day over rough country,—then dance all night like a boy, and the next day be as 'fresh as a daisy.'" He seemed now to be the chief in command of all the work.

This man was none other than Count Ferdinand de Lesseps, and the work actually going on was the digging of a French canal across Panama.

The company was assembled to witness the formal opening of the great work. The Bishop was to give it his blessing, and a tremendous charge of dynamite was to be exploded, to show how easy was to be the task of cutting through the rock. An eye-witness has described the scene for us. "The blessing had been pronounced, the champagne, duly iced, was waiting to cool the swelter of that tropic sun, as soon as the explosion "went off." There the crowd stood, breathless, ears stopped, eyes blinking, half
Map VI.—De Lesseps and the Isthmus of Suez.
in terror lest this artificial earthquake might involve general destruction. But there was no explosion! It wouldn’t go! Then a humorous sense of relief stole upon the crowd. With one accord everybody exclaimed “Good gracious!” and hurried away, lest after all the dynamite should see fit to explode.”

So, after much merriment and feasting, the company broke up and departed. As we look back upon that day’s doings, which marked the beginning of the French enterprise, there seems something unlucky about that charge of dynamite that refused to explode.

But who was Ferdinand de Lesseps? And how did the French come to be building a canal at Panama? De Lesseps was a Frenchman who had lived for many years in Egypt. There he was but a few miles from that other great isthmus of the world,—at Suez,—where a strip of low land, less than one hundred miles wide, connects the two continents of Asia and Africa. As Panama blocked the most important route of commerce in the New World, so did the Isthmus of Suez in the Old World.

For ages there had been a demand for a canal between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, and many wise men had studied the problem. To be of any value the canal must be what is called a “ship canal,” that is, large enough for ocean vessels. But a ship canal one hundred miles long! No such had ever been built. The difficulties seemed too great.
Though De Lesseps was not an engineer of much experience, he was very ambitious and anxious to connect his name with some great undertaking. He could see that the task of building a canal at Suez was really simple. It would require much money and patience, but the digging would be mostly through sand. There was little rock, and there were almost no hills. De Lesseps determined that he would be the man to build that ship canal. It was a daring scheme, indeed, but he went to work at once.

In 1858 a company was formed. Men had confidence in
De Lesseps and money was secured. In 1859 work was begun and progressed steadily and successfully for the next ten years. Before the world fully realized it, Africa was no longer connected with Asia by land. The canal was completed. The waters of the Mediterranean could flow into the Red Sea and a new route was secured from Europe to Asia.

The Suez Canal is ninety-nine miles long, thirty-one feet deep, one hundred and eighty feet wide at the bottom, and four hundred and twenty feet at the water's surface. Great electric lights were placed along the banks and ships can pass through it by night as well as by day. The time of transit is from fourteen to eighteen hours.

The cost was $100,000,000 or about $1,000,000 for each mile. But those who had dared to put their money into this rash enterprise were richly rewarded, for enormous profits were made. Nearly four thousand ships now pass through the canal each year, and the Company receives an income from tolls of about $25,000,000.

One of the two great isthmuses of the world was conquered. De Lesseps was now at the height of his fame. All Europe rang with his praises. No task seemed too difficult for this successful man.

It is not strange, then, that he looked longingly across the Atlantic toward that other great isthmus at Panama. Nor are we surprised to find him laying plans in 1877 to do
in the New World what he had done in the Old. It need be only a forty mile canal at Panama. To be sure, others had tried and failed, but was he not the very man to win? When he declared that "the Panama Canal will be more easily begun, finished, and maintained than the Suez Canal," rich and poor alike were eager to furnish money.

So in 1879 the French Panama Canal Company was formed. The Atlantic and Pacific were to be directly connected by a canal twenty-eight feet deep. It was to be built at a cost of $214,000,000, and to be finished in eight years. A great force of workmen was secured, machinery purchased, and everything made ready. The Bishop blessed the work, as we have seen, and the canal was begun.

A whole book might be filled with the story of the French Canal. For us three words will explain what happened.

*Disease.*—It seems as if De Lesseps and his associates should have known enough about Panama to have reckoned with the old enemy,—Yellow Fever. They did build expensive hospitals,—one at Panama City cost nearly $6,000,000,—another at Colon, $1,400,000; but they were badly managed and the sick were poorly cared for. We have, no doubt, already seen the yellow fever ward of the hospital at Panama City. In this one ward twelve hundred patients died. Worse still, while they tried to cure the sick, the French did little to prevent sickness. The towns were
left as filthy as ever, the water supply remained poor, and the laborers continued to fall ill. Out of a total of 86,800 workmen, 52,000 were treated for sickness. The total deaths during the twenty-three years of French work were 6,283.

*Fever Ward—French Hospital, Panama City.*

_Waste._—The French had failed to make a careful study of the difficulties before they began the work. The Panama Canal was far harder to build than the Suez Canal. Money was poured out like water. But poor plans and poor engineers made the canal grow very slowly. Waste and extravagance were seen on all sides. Yet glowing stories of great progress were sent home to France. Newspapers were
bribed to make false reports. For several years the French people were deceived. The canal was soon to be completed, they were told, and they continued to furnish huge sums of money for the work.

Theft.—De Lesseps was not, perhaps, an intentionally dishonest man. But he was an old man and unfit to guide so tremendous a work. Many men who worked with him were dishonest and by them he was deceived. Not only in France but also in Panama large sums of money went into the pockets of those in power. It is said that fully one third of all the money raised was practically stolen from the treasury. This spirit of corruption made its way down from the higher officials through all classes even to the lowest. Every form of vice flourished on the Isthmus.

Disease, waste, and theft went on for seven years. Of
course, much good digging was done, but at the end of that time not over two fifths of the whole work was completed. Nearly four hundred million dollars had been raised. A large part of it was secured from French farmers and day-laborers, who believed in the great De Lesseps and turned over to him their little savings. About one third of this enormous sum was wasted, one third stolen, and one third actually spent on the canal. What a dreadful story of mis-management! Had all the $400,000,000 been properly spent, the canal might have been finished.

At last the whole world came to know what had hap-
pened. It was clear that De Lesseps and the French Panama Canal Company had failed. Rage and excitement spread over France. Thousands of persons had sunk all their money in the great scheme, and now found themselves ruined. The end had come, no canal was built, the money was gone.

Then a long trial was held to find out who was to blame. Many leading men in France were accused of sharing in the robbery. Several committed suicide rather than face the angry French people. During the trial a number of members of the Company were sentenced to pay heavy fines or
ABANDONED FRENCH MACHINERY IN CULEBRA CUT.
to spend years in prison. The aged De Lesseps, now broken in health and reputation, was unable to stand the strain. When he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment, he fell into an unconscious state, his mind gave way, and within a few months he died in a mad-house.

In our visit to Panama we shall go out to see the wreck of the French work. Had we stayed long at Colon, when we

first landed, we might have seen the expensive dwelling built for De Lesseps and his associates. It is known as the De Lesseps Palace, and shows how French money was needlessly wasted.
All along the route between Colon and Panama City are bits of the canal partially completed. For years, in the great ditches, the steam excavators stood silent, just as they were left when the French work stopped. In the rivers the dredges rotted at their wharves or sank to the bottom. Here, for instance, in the Rio Grande are two dredges with their tops just sticking out of the water. Each cost many thousands of dollars. They are now worthless. Ten thousand cars, six thousand wagons, two hundred miles of track, with hundreds of locomotives, derricks, excavators, and dredges were left idle.
How sad a sight the long lines of locomotives present. Black and rusty, they are fast going to ruin within sight of the very spot on which De Lesseps and his friends so gaily opened work on the canal. The jungle has crept in upon them. Nature is trying to hide the pitiful signs of French failure.

The world has long ago decided that De Lesseps himself was only partially responsible for the wreck at Panama. He attempted more than he was able to do. We can well afford to forget his failure there and to remember him only as the man who planned and completed the canal at Suez,—the longest ship canal in the world. At the mouth of that canal his statue stands looking out over the waters of the Mediterranean. His right hand is outstretched, as if inviting the ships of the world to enter his great waterway.