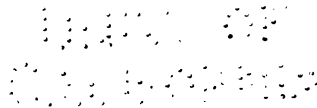


PROWLING ABOUT PANAMA

BY
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DEDICATED
TO THE
YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE EPWORTH LEAGUES
OF THE
CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE

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FOREWORD

THE fine art of prowling may be achieved, but is more often a gift of those to the manner born. Professional globe-trotters are not prowlers. They are often the victims of their own sense of superiority. Personally conducted tours are little help to real prowling, and professional guides reduce the sight-seer to a machine for receiving "canned" information with gaping mouth, while with his free hand he extracts tips from his reluctant pocket.

Prowling is an instinct, a sixth sense of locations and values. The prowler must have intuition and imagination and perseverance and historical perspective, but with these he must have something else—that inner vision that finds values in everything human. The expert explorer will find something interesting in Sahara, but almost any prowler will have a rare time in Panama.

Probably no spot in the New World has served as the location of so many kinds of events and interests as this narrow neck of land between two continents. Brief histories of it have been well written, and the visitor should by all means read at least one of them. It remains for some seer yet to tell worthily the story of the four centuries

that link the last discovery of the world's greatest explorer with the final achievement of the world's most skillful builders.

Panama furnishes an epitome of history. Nearly everything that has ever happened anywhere in the world has had some counterpart or parallel in Panama, and of the coming results of the new forces now released on the Isthmus time alone can be the measure.

This book makes no claims to consistency. Where contradictory characteristics abound and motives are much mixed, both sides may be faithfully set forth, but to reconcile them is a difficult matter. There will be no unified and consistent life on the Isthmus until the advancing civilization now there outgrows some of its present traits.

Can one tell the truth about Panama and return to the Isthmus? That remains to be proven. Much depends on the spirit of the prowler. As well ask whether one can tell the truth about Chicago and be welcome to that metropolis. Probably Chicago would pay no attention to the comment, but Panama might take enough interest to notice.

This is not a guidebook. Heaven forbid! It is merely a few notes of a prowler who found Panama interesting.

CHAPTER I

WHERE THE PROWLING IS GOOD

PANAMA is the great American curiosity shop. The first city founded by explorers in the New World, the oldest town in America inhabited by white men, the most conglomerate mixture of humanity on earth are in Panama. The bloodiest tale of modern history, the most romantic story of American exploration, the greatest engineering achievement of man all center in Panama.

If there be any interest in congested and sweltering humanity, any concern for the problems of social uplift and personal reaction, Panama is the laboratory for study. The cleanest and healthiest towns on earth are on the Canal Zone, and the last word in shiftlessness and inefficiency is also here. Superstition and science, rascality and rhapsody, efficiency and squalor, graft and honor, all mixed and mingled—this is Panama. Jungle and plain, valley and coast, tropic heat and mountain paradise, fever-swamps and ideal sanitation, engineering success and life in the primitive open—these too are in Panama.

Strange and mysterious traces are still found of the days when the gold of Peru was carried across the Isthmus on pack trains. Later the

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gold-seekers of California fought their way along the route of the present Canal and found ships on the west coast for the mines of Eldorado. If any survivors still live, they can tell stirring tales



THE FAITHFUL MULE IS THE SHIP OF THE JUNGLE

of the days when it was well worth a life to carry gold to Aspinwall.

It all began with Columbus himself when he sailed into Almirante Bay and thought that he had found in Chiriqui Lagoon the long-sought passage to India. What he really found, what was to follow his discovery, he could not have dreamed, adventurer that he was! Almirante

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(Admiral), Cristobal (Christopher), and Colon (Columbus) remain to-day to remind us of the illustrious explorer who first set foot on Panama. But Columbus gave us Panama, and never knew!

It was Balboa who first saw the waters of the wide Pacific from the summits of the Isthmian hills. It was Pizarro who packed across the fifty miles of jungle the timbers of the ships which he put together on the beach of the Pacific and with which he discovered Peru, after indescribable hardships and repeated attempts to find the "hill of gold."

On the Pacific side of the Isthmus was founded Old Panama, the first city of the New World, where to-day majestic ruins stand, a fitting shrine for the reverent pilgrim. And between Old Panama and Porto Bello stretches the famous Paved Trail of Las Cruces.

Along this trail lurked the trouble-hunters and makers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For two hundred years the tinkle of the bells of the gold-laden pack mules was never



THE HOMEWARD WAY AT NIGHTFALL

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silent. On this jungle path, when stolen gold was carried by the sackful, trouble was certain to follow. The big trail was a pathway of blood, robbery, and intrigue. All the worst passions and performances of depraved men turned loose and ran riot for a century and a half. These were the days when life was raw and rough at Panama.

To-day the old trail is covered with palms and decorated with orchids. Occasional stones trace the outline of the ancient highway. Where the drunken and ribald song of the muleteer rose about the camp-fire at night, canaries and parakeets now chatter and sing. The soft caress of the jungle breeze whispers no tales of the days when the trail could be traced by the bleaching bones that lined the right-of-way. The jungle is nature's great blotter for the sins, sorrows, and sufferings of an age now forgotten—but it all happened in Panama.

Panama is not all jungle. To the westward stretch great savannas, between the mountains and the sea; miles and miles of smooth and level country open, fair and well watered, only waiting for the tickle of American cultivation to laugh a crop. It makes a real estate man's fingers itch; but that is another story. Where a little cultivation has been inadvertently perpetrated on the land, tall sugar cane, luscious fruits, and toothsome vegetables attest the quality of the soil and the climate.

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Frequent rivers, numerous inlets on the coast line, occasional interesting native towns, old churches, impossible "roads," meandering trails, scattered herds of fat cattle, a few sugar mills, numerous trapiches (cane grinders), fenced *patreros* (pastures), and everywhere the mixed-blood natives—this is Panama in the western provinces.

Panama westward is not all a flat country, however. Eleven thousand feet into the sky rises the Chiriqui volcano, and a little farther west in the same range stands Pico Blanco (White Top), at about the same height. Thrown across the slopes of these lofty summits and half way up lies a great and beautiful country, with a climate such as might have been coveted for the site of Eden. Cool, comfortable, and salubrious is this garden of the gods. In all the so-called temperate zone no land yet discovered offers three hundred and fifty days per year of comfort and health. To be sure, vacation pilgrims from the warmer coast country sometimes make mention of cold feet upon first reaching this Mecca in the mountains, but nobody finds fault on that account. Most of them like it.

Chiriqui is a garden spot. Wide ranges of fertile soil, gentle slopes rolling back against the mountain ranges, good harbors along the coast, and occasional plantations with American improvements, mark the country as the coming

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granary of the Republic. Rolling slopes and blossoming fields, with a background of the never-failing come-and-go of the lights and shades on the face of the mountains, form a picture not to be forgotten. Always the summits and the clouds seem to be playing leapfrog in the sky, and the whole upper world, looking down on the puny traveler, seems ever trying to say something and never quite uttering its meaning. And he who looks and listens finds himself trying to say it for them, and never can he find the word. Perhaps some poetic soul will yet look upon these heights and tell us what it is they are muttering.

The coast line of western Panama is a fascinating shore. Like enchanted islands rise bits of forest out of the sea and any of them might be the castle site of the lord of the main.

In and out between their wooded shores the steamer winds its way till it dodges in through some narrow "boca" to find a tortuous channel leading to a landing place, that must always be approached at the whim of the tide. Whether there be a thousand islands or not, no one knows; but I have stood on the steamer deck and counted fifty in sight at a time, while other fifties rose up to meet us as those nearby dropped astern. Here and there some lonely light blinks its vigil through the night, and the swells of the Pacific break in fantastic sea-ghosts against the rocky cliffs.

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Navigation of these waters is not a science, it is an art. The captains of these coast craft know every tree and rock and river mouth for four hundred miles, and make their way through tortuous channels by markings that no landsman can see. There is one grizzled navigator, said to be unable to read or write, who knows every marking on the coast for six hundred miles, and



AN EMPIRE IN THE MAKING

in the long years of service has never made a mistake or met with an accident. Possibly his success might be due to the fact that what he does not know does not confuse him. His mental horizon may not be very distant, but at least he escapes a lot of worry about things that he (and you and I) cannot control. When the tides have a rise and fall of eighteen feet, and all harbors are but shallow river mouths, the negotiation of the coast

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ports becomes a matter requiring much accuracy of judgment.

The old trail across the Isthmus is the Mecca of many pilgrims who by some searching find its scattered stones amid the riotous jungle. The later trail was opened after the city of Panama was moved to its present site. It began at Colon, followed the Chagres River to the present site of Gamboa, and then wound its ways over the low summit of the hills down to the new Panama and terminated at the "Nun's Beach," where now stand a Protestant church and school. Here the pack trains were unloaded and the high tides carried the rafts and lighters out to the ships waiting in the little harbor.

The dark days of Panama were the days after the gold trade failed. Even the gold of Peru was not inexhaustible, and the trade across the Isthmus could not stand continued centuries of robbery and murder. It had to end some time, and end it did; and when the end came all the Isthmus lapsed into a slough of despond and lethargy of inertia. For a century and a half Panama was as forgotten as the Catacombs.

But Panama went her way, whether anybody cared or not. The people left on the Isthmus were the racial remnants of the mixture of mankind that had found its way back and forth for two centuries, and they were fairly able to take care of themselves. The rich forests and fertile

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soil would bear fruit and food enough to sustain life whether anyone worked or not, and the result was not the development of a virile race of men. How could it be? Probably few spots on earth have had less incentive to develop hardy and enterprising character than the Isthmus of Panama.

The prowler about Panama will find a wide



A FEW GOOD ROADS ON THE ZONE

variety of interests and inspirations. Whatever his peculiar, personal fad he can find it somewhere. Then he can prowl to his heart's content.

If he prefers the sea, there are fifteen hundred miles of coast line to explore with something new to every mile. Or he can launch out a bit, and in a day's time make his way to the famous Pearl Islands, where are life and industry so distinct that weeks may be spent in studying the develop-

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ment of a civilization, insular and unique. The coast of Darien has boundless possibilities for the explorer; and the San Blas Islands would keep the ethnologist busy for months. For an enchanted inland sea the Chiriqui Lagoon is unsurpassed.

If historical romance is desired, the prowling is certainly abundant; and if the prowler is a lover of nature, wild and luxuriant, rioting in marvelous and indescribable forms of overflowing life, he has but to equip himself for jungle travel, and he will find wonders by the mile, and fantastic nature piled mountains high and chasms deep. If it is mountains, they are here in scenic beauty unsurpassed. If the explorer is a student of human nature and cares to attempt the unscrambling of this blend of blood that flows in swarthy faces, he will be busy here for a lifetime. And if none of these will do, and the curious landsman will have nothing short of the exploring of vast unchristened wildernesses where no human foot has ever trod, and where strange and dangerous forms of unclassified life wander at will through the overgrown forests, he will find it—and doubtless he will find much more of it than he wants before he gets back to civilization.

If it is promotion schemes and development projects, then here at least is a commodious place to put them. Here, in agricultural and coloniz-

ing schemes, somebody will yet get rich—and other somebodies poor.

If the prowler's interest is primarily social, and he would browse about one of the most interesting cities in America, let him come to Panama. Ancient Spanish streets, scrupulously clean—can these be found anywhere else? Side by side, over and under, the sixteenth and twentieth centuries run together.

And what makes Panama to-day the crossroad of the world? For him who in the love of engineering skill holds communion with high human achievement, and prefers to prowl around the locks and docks, and study the marvelous successes and adaptations and devices of the latest and greatest feat of brain and hand, this is the very center of the earth. No man with a soul for the poetry of mechanics can stand in a control house of one of the locks and see the enormous gates swing back at the movement of a finger without feeling that man, with all his limitations, has yet in his being some image of the Creator. To see an ocean giant rise up slowly in the teeth of gravitation and slip through the gates on to the higher level, is to wonder whether the portals that look so gloomy to us may not, after all, be not exits but entrances to a new and higher level of life. What a text! The ship does not rise by straining but by resting in a narrow place. And no ship ever yet got through the locks without a

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pilot. The whole process is as silent as the forces of eternity. There is a lot more, and it bears no copyright. Help yourself.

And for the prowler in the region of philosophy, what a place! What changes in the geography and commerce and industry and policies and politics of mankind must follow this last



CHURCH AT NATA, OLDEST INHABITED TOWN IN THE NEW WORLD, FOUNDED 1520

achievement on the historical Isthmus of Panama, "quien sabe?" ("who knows?") None but the Omniscient. Trade routes and bank exchanges, commercial dealings and national programs will all be affected by this three-hundred-foot wide highway of water. If but some power the gift would give us to come back a century hence and see what will be doing then!

What social and moral transformations will be

wrought in the coming years by the release of spiritual forces through the new religious life and free faith brought to Panama with the coming of the Canal? Out of the soul-bondage of a system of superstition and ignorance will come a new human consciousness of the worthiness of life and the high privilege of living. Whether it is to prowl or prophesy, the material is abundant, and the pilgrim will find rare material a-plenty all about him. Panama is perplexing and peculiar, but he who finds the key to the riddle will be kept busy.

Perhaps the amateur explorer has a penchant for old churches. Here they are. Seven of them, with a couple of first-class ruins thrown in. The rich monasteries of Peru and Mexico are missing, but for that there is a reason. Every bit of treasure was stolen as fast as accumulated. Yes, if unmolested in the past, Panama would be a mine for the antiquarian to-day. But any active imagination, even on half-time shift, can find here material for romances, warranted to interest every member of the family, at reduced prices, if paid for in advance. From the Flat-Arch Church to the ruins of Old Panama it is good prowling all the way.

CHAPTER II

THE TRAIL OF THE PIRATES

THE present conglomerate of humanity living on the Isthmus of Panama is the racial remainder of some very much mixed social history. Here were enacted some of the most stirring stories and tempestuous times in American history. In 1453 the Eastern Roman Empire fell before the assaults of the Turks and closed the land routes to India. Nearly forty years later Columbus set sail in his great effort to find a westward passage for the commerce of Europe. In this he failed, but on his fourth and final voyage discovered the Isthmus of Panama and landed on the shores of the Chiriqui Lagoon, supposing that the beautiful inland sea must be the long-sought passage westward. Here the town of Almirante still bears his name. At Porto Bello and Saint Christopher Bay he made brief stops and returned to Spain having no idea of the character of the isthmus that he had discovered.

On November 3, 1903, exactly four hundred years from the day that Columbus set foot on the soil of Panama, the Republic of Panama declared its sovereign independence and began its national life as one of the family of American nations.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Caribbean main was overrun by as unscrupulous and bloodthirsty a set of pirates as ever sailed any sea. Even without these rascals there would have been trouble enough, and with them the story is sufficiently lurid for the most melodramatic taste.

One name stands out above his fellows. The intrepid navigator who first saw the waters of the Pacific set forth at the age of twenty-three as an adventurer, and after various experiences embarked as a stowaway for his second voyage. By personal persuasion he became the partner of his master, and after founding a colony in Darien sent Señor Endico back to Spain in irons for his pains.

This left Balboa supreme, with the whole



THE JUNGLE IS THE PLACE FOR
PICNICS

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Castilla de Oro (Castle of Gold) country before him for exploration. He at once sent Pizarro to examine the interior and gathered the scattered fugitives from former expeditions. The combined forces took the field against the Indians. When they reached the domain of Comagre, the most powerful chief of the country, peace was made. This chief was a real aristocrat with mummied ancestors clothed in gold and pearls, and he gave to Balboa four thousand ounces of gold, sixty wives, and offered to show him the way to a country beyond the dim mountains where a powerful people lived in magnificence and sailed ships of solid gold. He also entertained his distinguished visitor with tales of a temple of gold called Dabaibe, forty leagues farther than Darien, and said that the mother of the sun, moon, and stars lived there.

Balboa's imagination was stirred by these stories and he prepared an expedition of discovery. No temple of gold was found, but internal dissensions and Indian attacks disturbed the peace of the colony. Reenforcements arrived, and with them the title of captain-general.

Balboa now set out on what was to be the most famous event of his life. He had been promised the sight of a great ocean to the south, after he had climbed certain mountains. Various Indian oppositions developed, but on the 26th of September, 1513, at about ten o'clock in the morning,

Balboa and his men, from the top of a high mountain, saw for the first time the waters of the vast Pacific. The priest of the expedition, named Andreas de Vara, chanted a *Te Deum*, with the entire company on their knees. A cross was raised, and the names of the Spanish rulers carved on the surrounding trees.

After meeting several Indian tribes the descent was made to the shore, and Balboa waded knee deep into the surf and, waving the banner of Spain, proclaimed that the new-found ocean and all land bordering thereon should be the property of his sovereign.

For a long time this new ocean was known as the South Sea, and Balboa at once set about exploring the vicinity. The Pearl Islands were located, taken possession of, and named. A later expedition by a less difficult route crossed the Isthmus of Panama and conquered the Indians on the Pearl Islands, bringing back plentiful tribute of fine pearls from the subdued chief.

The year following, in 1514, arrived the black villain of the story in the person of Pedrarias, sent out from Spain as governor of Darien. This disturber brought with him two thousand men. Balboa built a fleet of ships on the Atlantic side, took them to pieces, carried them on the backs of Indians across the Isthmus, put them together again, launched them in the waters of the Pacific, and proceeded to explore the coast eastward from

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Panama. On his return from this trip Balboa was arrested by Pedrarias on a trumped-up charge of treason, and in the forty-second year of his life was beheaded, while declaring his entire innocency of all treachery. Balboa was a product of his age, and of faults he possessed a-plenty, but as one of the great explorers of history his end was a sad reward for the distinguished services that he rendered to the world.

In 1515 an expedition crossed the Isthmus and



EVEN FARM CABINS ARE PICTURESQUE IN COSTA RICA

camped near the hut of a poor fisherman at a point called by the natives Panama. For this name several explanations are given, one of them being that there were many shellfish at this place. The meaning of the name is now lost, but in 1519 the city of Panama was founded at this point by Pedrarias. Two years later, by order of the Spanish crown, the bishopric, government, and colonists of the Isthmus were transferred from the Atlantic side at Darien to Old Panama.

History now began in earnest by the Pacific. In 1525 a priest celebrated in the cathedral at Old Panama solemn mass with two other men, Pizarro and Almagro, the rite being a solemn vow to conquer all countries lying to the south. For this purpose an expedition was soon organized and sailed away along the west coast of South America. This expedition met with varying fortunes, but in time discovered the long-sought Peru with its splendid temples and golden treasures.

The first regular trail across the Isthmus led from Nombre de Dios to Old Panama, crossing the Chagres River at Cruces. Later small boats sailed from Nombre de Dios to the mouth of the Chagres and made their way up to Cruces, where their cargoes were transferred to the backs of horses for the rest of the journey to Panama. Later Nombre de Dios was abandoned for Porto Bello, because of the very good harbor at the latter place. The old trail was "paved" with stones for a part of the way, and the relics of this old road may still be found in a few places amid the tangled growths of the jungle.

With the conquest of Peru and the discovery of gold in Darien, Old Panama came rapidly to its own and soon became a city of great importance, being for the time the richest city in New Spain. All the gold of Peru and the rich west coast was brought to Panama to be sorted

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and packed across the Isthmus, thence to be sent to Spain. Porto Bello became a rich town and maintained great annual fairs up to the time of its destruction by Morgan's pirates.

The century and a half between the establishment of Old Panama as the chief city of the Isthmus and its destruction in 1671 supplied one of the tempestuous periods of history. It was on the Isthmus of Panama that the American slave trade began and was continued for three hundred years. The native Indians were so destroyed by the brutality and greed of the Spanish conquerors that the expedient of importing black men from Africa was devised in order to secure a labor supply for the country. Here arises the historical precedent for the use of West Indian labor in the digging of the American Canal.

The best account of the sacking and destruction of Old Panama is that written by John Esquemeling and published seven years after the event, of which he was an eyewitness, being a member of the pirates' band. The detailed account of this event, with the general pillaging of the Isthmus by the English buccaneers, has been narrated with much exactness and great interest.

Stories of the great wealth of Old Panama in the day of its glory are not hard to find. With the complete destruction of all this magnificence, the present city was founded with due ceremonies in 1673 and much stone was transported from the

old city and built into the new. The cathedral was soon built and stands to-day as solid as when first erected. The queen of Spain sent detailed instructions for the building of the city, and among other things directed that a safe wall for defense should be provided. This was so well done that some of it still stands, an interesting relic of the vigor and thoroughness of the civilization that produced it. Many years passed in building these walls, and they were said to have cost ten millions of dollars, most of which came from the treasure of the pirates. It is told of a

BUINS OF OLD PANAMA. THE MOST ROMANTIC SPOT IN
THE NEW WORLD

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those costly walls of Panama; they should be visible even from here." A little knowledge of the business methods of those days may throw some light on the whys and wherefores of the high cost of the old walls.

Twenty-six years after the founding of the present city of Panama an effort was made to establish an English colony in Darien, but fever and discouragement aided the Spanish in ending the venture.

The eighteenth century is a monotonous one in Panama annals, marked mainly by frequent encounters between the Spaniards and the Indians. Several piratical expeditions ended in the scattering and murdering of the pirates and restoration of Spanish sovereignty.

When the great movement in South America for political independence swept as far north as Colombia, and the decisive battle of Boyaca was fought in 1819, Panama was very strongly held by Spain as a place of maintenance for her armies, and the city was at all times in a good state of defense. In this same year, however, the first junta was formed for the purpose of bringing about independence from Spain, and sentiment in favor of the revolution grew very rapidly. Early in 1821 General Murgeon arrived with the promise of high reward if he could compose the difficulties in Panama and save the Isthmus to Spain. This he saw to be impossible, and after

having appointed José de Fabrega as coloner, he left for Quito. Fabrega, being Isthmian born, cast his lot with the revolutionists and on November 28th, 1821, a large and enthusiastic crowd assembled with representatives from all military and ecclesiastical organizations, and Panama was declared to be forever free from Spanish dominion. A few loyal troops, seeing their helpless position, laid down their arms, and the change of government was effected without the shedding of a drop of blood—something new in Panamanian affairs. Simon Bolivar sent over help for the independents, but found the work done before his men arrived.

After this political upheaval Panama slept on, and would still be dormant to-day but for the discovery of gold in California in 1849. With a six months' overland journey between the gold-hungry men of the Eastern States and the gold-filled mountains of the West, the Isthmus suddenly came into prominence as an easier way of reaching California. For seven or eight years after the finding of gold not less than forty millions of dollars of gold, twelve millions in silver, and twenty-five thousand passengers were transported across the Isthmus annually. In 1853 the high-water mark was reached, when sixty-six millions of dollars of gold were carried across to the Atlantic side and shipped to New York.

This sudden development of the pack train

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business brought to the Isthmus a horde of Chil-



INDIAN WOMAN AT THE FOUNTAIN

eans, Peruvians, Indians, and mixed breeds, among whom were the inevitable plunderers and spoilers. The trail was again marked by blood and treachery. Many an unhappy pilgrim lost his riches, and not a few lost their lives on the way. At last the authorities were aroused to the necessity of making safe this highway suddenly become so important to the world.

The year of the first gold rush saw the organization of the Panama Railroad Company. In 1846 three American business men organized under the present name and secured a concession from New Granada for

forty-nine years with such conditions that no ship canal could be constructed across the Isthmus without the consent of the railroad company. When the name of New Granada was changed to that of Colombia, the time was extended to ninety-nine years. This concession in time came to be very valuable, and the French Canal Company found it necessary to buy out the Panama Railroad in order to secure control of the exclusive right of way across the Isthmus. Later, when the United States acquired the control of the French possessions in Panama, the Panama Railroad became one of the most valuable assets on the list. By conditions of the concession, this road was bound to pay to Colombia the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars per year. After various transfers and deals this still holds in the form of the obligation of the Panama Canal to pay this sum annually to the Republic of Panama.

The story of the early construction days of the Panama Railroad are as exciting as those of the Morgan Pirates, with a far better outcome. Labor troubles were many and bitter, and it became necessary to hold men in jail until they were willing to work. The attractions of the California gold fields were too much for the cupidity of men who saw daily pack trains loaded with gold from the Eldorado of the Northwest passing their wretched hovels and taunting them with

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visions of easy riches. But the work proceeded, and after interminable troubles with the black swamp between Aspinwall (Colon) and Gatun, the road was finished as far as Gatun in the year 1850. In 1855 the line was finished to Panama and the romantic career of the most prosperous short railroad in the world was well under way.

Charges for freight and passenger travel were enormous in the early days of the road. The fare was fifty cents per mile, with all baggage extra. Freight was carried across the Isthmus for twenty-five cents per pound, but so terrible were the old pack-train conditions that the travelers of that day were more than willing to pay such prices for the luxury of crossing the Isthmus by the railroad.

At last the Colombian government took up the matter and the passenger rate was reduced. Ten cents per pound continued to be the freight charge for years. The road made vast profits, and by a combination of rates with the steamship companies maintained a monopoly of travel. A few years after the completion of the railroad the pack-train men and outlaws, deprived of their plunder by the road, became very active as brigands, and on one occasion perpetrated a riot that cost sixteen Americans their lives and brought the United States and Colombia to the verge of open rupture.

As far back as 1515 a German named Schoner

drew a map of the American continents with a clear line for a canal through the Isthmus. In 1581 an actual survey was made for a canal, but nothing was done about it. In 1620 Diego de Mercado submitted a long report to Philip II, but the monarch turned it down, saying that since God had joined the continents together, it would be impious to try to separate them, and a death penalty was decreed for anyone so rash as to try to undo the works of God in this way. In 1827 an engineer was sent by Simon Bolivar, president of the New Granada federation, and a report was made commending the project of a combined rail and water route. In 1838 a French company aroused so much enthusiasm in the canal project that an expert was sent by the French government to look the ground over. He reported that a sea-level canal could be dug without going deeper than thirty-seven feet, but the idea was again abandoned. Two American investigations were made in 1866 and 1875, and about this time much interest was aroused in the then new Nicaragua project.

The popularity of the Suez Canal, successfully completed in 1869, led directly to the DeLesseps organization of the Panama Canal Company. Agitation began in 1875 and in the year following a right of way was secured, but with the Panama Railroad concession standing in the way.

The story of the work of the French Company,

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the New Canal Company, and the final completion of the work by the United States government, is told elsewhere.

Now that the trail of the sixteenth-century pirates has become the most famous inland waterway of the world, we can read with complacency the story of the wretched times during which the Isthmus was the scene of constant strife. Verily, Panama was not a very good place for sightseeing in those days. The prowlers of the infested jungles and blood-stained trails were not such as we would select as traveling companions to-day. If any modern prowler becomes despondent and is tempted to complain that the former days were better than these, let him read the story of Old Panama, and then consider conditions as they are on the Isthmus and the Zone to-day, and he will find food for reflection.

CHAPTER III

PICTURESQUE PANAMA

A PANAMANIAN cart loaded with English tea biscuit, drawn by an old American army mule, driven by a Hindoo wearing a turban, drove up in front of a Chinese shop. The Jamaican clerk, aided by the San Blas errand boy, came out to supervise the unloading. The mule wriggled about out of position, a Spanish policeman came along and everybody got out and "cussed" the mule.

That is Panama, every day. Across the street is an Italian lace shop run by a Jew. Next door is a printery, operated by a Costa Rican. Just beyond is a French laundry conducted by a man from Switzerland, and on the next corner is a beautiful Chinese store where they sell everything from Japan. Cloisonné and lacquer and curious carvings, silks, embroideries, scientific instruments—they are all here. You can buy Canton linen, Hongkong brass, Nikko carvings, Hindoo embroidery, German cutlery, French microscopes, Canadian flour, New York apples, and California grapes all within a block. And the products of Central and South America are all about.

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The street in front of the shops is full of Panamanians, Peruvians, Ecuadorians, Chileans, Colombians, and San Blas Indians, besides some representatives of every country of North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. Canal Zone Americans walk past Yankee business men, and native police crowd the mestizos off the sidewalk.

Panama is a jitney town, and the honk of the never-silent horn punctuates the clang and dash of the trolleys and automobiles down a fifteen-foot street in a mad race to see which can get through first. Overhanging roofs nearly touch above blooming orchids and talking birds that scream across the narrow streets. Gloomy interiors and stumbling stairways lead up to spacious apartments and breezy balconies. Above are occasional roof-gardens. All the rooms have high ceilings, all the streets are paved, and all the kids wear clothes—sometimes.

There is no possible human shade or tint that is absent here. The Anglo-Saxons are white, more or less. The Jamaicans are black, mostly. The Panamanian is most often a soft and pleasing brown, done in a number of wholly unmatchable tints. And the natives from these many sunny countries round about are of every known color-tone, from chrome yellow to Paris green. This is the human kaleidoscope of the earth: shake it up and you will get a different result every time.

You may not like it, but you can never truthfully say that Panama is not interesting—all the time.

The streets are clean. Daily sweepers and nightly garbage men take care of that. The sidewalks are narrow, of course. Perhaps these two-foot sidewalks account in part for the innate courtesy of the Latin mind. One must be either polite or profane when he makes his way along these little ledges, often two or three feet above the street. A portable stepladder would help some.



BATHS—WHOLESALE AND RETAIL

Some of these houses are old, very old. A few are new; most of them have stood here one or two hundred years. There are many three stories high, a few boast of four stories, but the most of them have but two. Third stories are popular because of the breezes that blow and make life comfortable.

Plazas are small, but parked and well kept, and they are used as only Latin-Americans know how to use a plaza. The little ones are garden-spot oases in the deserts of bare walls and wide

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eaves. Santa Ana Plaza is the heart of the city, and there is no hour of the day or night that there are not people there. If you really wish to see the world go by, sit on the stone bench at Santa Ana Plaza and look about you. If you stay long enough, you may see anybody, from the latest naked brown baby to the last chosen president of any country you may name.

Sitting in the plaza is a business by itself in this country. The North American uses a park as a short cut, cross-corners, to get somewhere. But with the tropic citizen, the plaza is an end in itself. He is not going anywhere, he is just sitting in the plaza. He may not even be called a bench-warmer—the bench is already warm. He is sitting in the plaza—that is all.

The band-night parade in Santa Ana Plaza is an institution. Around the central garden they saunter, to the swing of the very good music from the central pavilion. The outer walk is wide, and so is the parade. Clockwise walks the inner circle, three abreast, all young men. In the opposite direction saunter the young women, also in threes. 'Round and 'round they go, talking, laughing, listening, looking, lingering, while the band plays on. It is a good band too. And not the least of the exhibit is the clothes the women wear. In matter of graceful and apparently comfortable costumes the Panamanian girls need apologize to none of their northern sisters. Who is to blame

the boys if they keep on walking around for the sake of seeing the seeable, especially when she may be quite worth watching? Every added turn means one look more. It is all very dignified and proper, but human nature is the same old composition in every land, and the blood in the heart runs red, no matter what the tint or tan without. In a land where the customs of chaperonage are exceeding strict, and no young woman is supposed to be left alone with any young man for the briefest moment, it is easy to see why the band nights in the plaza are popular. Ostensibly the young women, after the manner of their kind, have no interest in the young men, but just the same, their soft brown eyes have the same old way of wandering at the right moment; it is the same old trick and it works in the same old way.

The cathedral plaza is rather a different matter. Here gather the elite, in numbers on concert nights, and more or less on other fair evenings. The grown-ups sit about on the benches and the children run and play, care-free and comfortable. Well-dressed and content, these are the best of the old native stock that used to live "inside" the walls of Panama that the Spanish king thought he should be able to see. There are usually a few Americans with the crowd, and it is a peaceful and restful family scene. Were it not for the incessant clatter of

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the trolleys and jitneys the place would be a good rest-cure. But as matters now stand, there is too much pandemonium for any permanent peace.

Out at the point of the seawall, near Chiriqui Prison, stands an old stone sentry box. It appears to belong to the prison now, but there was a time when the outlook from that point on the bay of Panama was the viewpoint of Panamanian life as it faced the Pacific and marked the place of departure for shores unknown. It is prosaic enough now to stand beside the little old stone tower and watch a big liner leave the canal and throw back its smoke-plume as it steams out to



CONVENT DOOR

sea, having left the Atlantic Ocean seven hours before. Gone with the days of the explorers and pirates are the mystery and menace of it all. The sentry box meant something then. Its lone occupant scanned anxiously the horizon for the sail that might mean fresh

plunders, news from the world beyond, bountiful booty or stolen treasure, or perchance a fight to the finish with other pirates as unscrupulous as the villains on shore. Now the children gather there at sunset to play, care-free on the high wall overlooking the Gulf of Panama.

Old Spanish houses are built with the yard inside. It is delightfully intimate and cozy, but not very democratic. Green and clean and cool are these little parked "interiors" of the better houses. Some of the common patios are dirty and disheveled, and the worst of them are better left alone, but the American Health Department looks after the sanitation of them all.

Chino (Chinese) shops sell everything, but, aside from the fine stores on Central Avenue, are mostly devoted to native trade. Out in the interior the Chinese storekeepers transact practically all the business of the country. Wherever there are two or three families gathered together, there the Chinese storekeeper is sure to appear, ready to harvest any small or large coins that may be in circulation.

There were at one time about five hundred saloons of all sorts in Panama. This number has been greatly reduced with hope of complete extinction, owing to the exigencies of the near-by American soldiers on the Canal Zone. The monthly payroll of the Zone is a stream of gold, and it is a case of losing that gold or cleaning up

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Panama. Military orders and voluntary boycotts made Panama a lonesome town for the latter part of 1918.

There is the official lottery, suspiciously located. To be sure, the bishop does not person-



OFFICIAL LOTTERY IN BISHOP'S HOUSE, PANAMA

ally supervise the drawings, and perhaps he does not get anything out of it, but no one who knows Panama claims such to be the case. When did the hierarchy ever oppose a gambling game that promised profit for the cause? Gaunt, hungry-looking cripples and pobres hang about the corners selling lottery tickets. Evidently, none of the profits come to these unfortunates.

Panama City has its neighborhoods like any other Old-World town. "Inside" the old wall includes the original fortified town on the little peninsula jutting into the bay. Here live officials, professional and business men. Beyond this lies the town that overflowed the wall and now reaches down to the park in front of the Tivoli Hotel. This is the barrio of Santa Ana. Caledonia and Guachapali and San Miguel lie across the railway and serve to fill in the space between the Spanish town and the Exposition grounds. A mile and a half beyond the palaces of the exposition lies Bella Vista, beautiful for situation and rivaling Southern California for its real estate enterprise. Over toward the Canal is Chorilla between the Cemetery and Ancon Hill. At the end of the five-cent car fare on the line to the savanas is the famous—or infamous—bull ring. Who said that bullfights had been abandoned? Not much. Between bullfights and prize fights the season is not allowed to drag, and it must be admitted that the number of American patrons of these brutalizing contests is not to the credit of the kind.

The open market where the fishermen come ashore is one of the show places of Panama. Pangas and chingas and craft of every sort, except the modern kind, bring in on high tide cargoes of bananas, coconuts, charcoal, camotes, rice, sugar, syrup, rum, papayas, mangoes, lonzones,

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chיות, poultry, pigs, ivory nuts and a score of fruits and vegetables unnamable by the uninitiated. When the tide recedes the boats lie high, if not very dry, and the unloading proceeds apace. It is an interesting and lively scene, and the bicker and barter go on by the hour.

Hard by is the big native market, resort of housekeepers and servants in search of commissary bargains. This one is fairly clean and is the morning recreation of thousands of shoppers.

Panama has its theaters, of the sort to be expected. One of the movie houses compares well with the best anywhere, and most of the others are in good condition. The national theater is a credit to the country and forms a section of the national palace. On the Canal Zone the clubhouses, sometimes called Y. M. C. A.'s, put on several picture shows a week in commendable effort to supply recreation to their patrons.

The architecture of the old churches is a bit disappointing to travelers who have seen the splendid buildings of other Latin lands. The Cathedral has two modern towers, a clock in one of them, and the twelve apostles in life size on the façade. The Jesuit Church by the Malecon is very old and rather interesting. Recently a new concrete tower has been added, of striking appearance, but not closely in conformity with the architecture of the church. This church contains a famous old painting of purgatory and heaven,

and down below, the flames of the lost. It is notable that in the place of purgatory are bishops, priests, and kings. There are ten people in heaven, and ten in purgatory, and of each ten three are women. Query—Where did the painter think that the women belong? It is an interesting question, especially for the women.

The big Merced Church on Central Avenue has a curious and interesting little street chapel on the corner of the sidewalk, and here are arranged curious exhibitions at Christmas and Easter. I saw here the ancient village of Bethlehem, with the inn and manger and oxen; but there were also a miniature lake with a steamboat, and a grocery wagon delivering goods to the ancient Bethlehemites. The stores bore advertisements of patent breakfast foods.

No place can be truly romantic until it possesses some good ruins, and Panama claims distinction in the old Flat-Arch Church near the palace. The interior is now used as a garage, and no one but the tourist seems to think the place of any interest. Two blocks away stands the façade of the fine old stone church that has been a ruin now for years. The interior is now a stable, and the old walls of the college have been used for the construction of a modern cheap tenement house. The stone front of the old wall stands as a fine example of the architecture and building of 1751, when the church was finished.

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The San Filipi Neri Church, at the corner of Avenida B and Fourth Streets, is made from stone carried in from Old Panama. This church is said to have the most beautiful interior in the city, but, as it is very rarely opened to the street, the visitor will have to accept the statement without opportunity to judge for himself.

The savanas lie northeast of Panama and be-



RUIN OF FAMOUS FLAT-ARCH CHURCH

yond the ruins of Old Panama. The rolling slopes of green and the growing number of villas will make this strip of country valuable and famous before long.

Of Panama's hotels not much need to be said, except that they are good of their kind. Latin hotel standards are different from those of North America, but good judges of hotel life have pronounced those of Panama to be quite enduring.

There are always two or three daily papers in Panama and an indefinite number of weeklies. An immemorial custom exists by which when any citizen has anything on his mind that he feels he should unload to the profit or otherwise of the public, a printed pronunciamiento is issued and circulated about the streets by boys, handed out freely to everybody in sight. This really effective method is sometimes used for important matters of state.

The educational system is modeled upon the best Latin-American standards, with primary schools of four grades throughout the Republic. Provincial centers have schools with two, and in a few cases four years more. The National Institute, at the foot of Ancon Hill, maintains a normal school for men and a liceo which grants the degree of Bachelor of Arts upon the completion of about the equivalent of the American college freshman



EIGHTH-GRADE ROOM, PANAMA

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year. The young women are given a normal course in the Women's Normal School at the Exposition grounds. There is no coeducation above the primary grades. The Agricultural Experimental Farm and School, abandoned as an experiment station, is used as a reform school.

Taboga Island lies off shore and furnishes a point of much interest. It is the week-end Mecca of the Zone people and also of many of the Panamanians. There are a good American hotel, several fair native hotels, good fishing, tramping, an interesting native village, a healthful climate, and a fine view—and all within ten miles of Panama.

If the prowler is looking for real adventure, he can seek for it on Gocos Island, three hundred miles south of Panama. Here are said to lie hidden somewhere ten millions of dollars' worth of treasure, stolen from Callao and other points between 1820 and 1830. Harvey Montmorency wrote it up in a book entitled *On the Track of the Treasure*, and so well did he tell the story that four large expeditions have been organized and sent to find it. One man is said to have found a little gold for his pains, but the others went home poorer than they came. And if these are too easy destinations, there lie the Galapagos Islands off the coast of Peru, said to contain many possibilities, of many kinds. Peru is supposed to have the islands on the market, and anybody with the money can purchase one, all his own.

CHAPTER IV

A CITY OF GHOSTS

No one has ever satisfactorily explained the existence of ghosts in an enlightened world, but I have a theory that they survive because they render a real service. They lend interest to life and at least keep us from forgetting the super (or sub) natural.

Likewise ruins have high value as a link with the past, and with neither ruins nor ghosts life would become a very flat affair. And if ever a spot, by history, tradition, situation, and present condition, was marked for rendezvous purposes by all the tribe that gibber and squeak and wander at night in the dark of the moon, that place is Old Panama.

The history of Old Panama has been told, and well told, by other writers. Read it there, and read it before you see the place. Many pilgrims go out there, poke about among the ruins for a quarter of an hour, and exclaim, "Is this all?" Without the story the most appreciative pilgrim will miss the flavor of the place, but without a little romantic appreciation both the story and the ruins will fall short of revealing all that the place has to give.

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The old town site was a hopeless jungle until the National Institute, under the leadership of Dr. Dexter, cleared away the brush and laid bare the traces of streets and buildings. To-day the place is in good condition and one may wander about at will and dream to his heart's content. It



CONVENT GARDEN

is no place for joy rides, and the roadhouse is a blot on the place, but there are people still who see nothing but a refreshment counter and worthless stone heaps.

One of the favorite amusements of tourists and other people used to be that of digging for treasure at Old Panama. No one ever found anything of value, but it made a fine story to tell upon return to the States. "When I was digging for treasure in Old Panama"—just say it and see what a flavor it has.

It is most probable that if the ruins were located in a cooler climate, there would have been a great deal more digging. Under a tropic sun, however, it takes considerable bait to induce anyone to indulge in such vigorous exercise,

The treasure idea is easy to locate. Peruvian gold was all brought up to Panama and stored in warehouses until it could be packed across to Porto Bello. There were endless fighting and plots and schemes and robberies and murders connected with the gold trade. Many a man lost his gold, and many a man his life. And, in consequence, some of the gold was also lost in the mêlée. What more natural, then, than to look about for this lost treasure in the place where most of it was stored?

Now, there may be millions of dollars' worth of old gold somewhere about Old Panama. The only difficulty is that no one ever yet has been able to find any of it. The probability is that no gold was ever left there long enough to be very much lost, and the men who did the fighting also took care of the gold. But that does not prevent any one from "digging for treasure in Old Panama" if he wants to do so.

Nevertheless, there is treasure in Old Panama, and it is to be had for the digging. But the digging will be, not amid the rocks, but into the history of the place. And the digger will find rare nuggets for his pains. Balboa, Pizarro, Pedrarias laid out this town, and set the pace for the wild and unprincipled years that followed. And Henry Morgan, adventurer, pirate, and general rascal, ended the story as it was begun—in crime and blood,

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Accounts of the construction and character of the old city represent it to have been built with much magnificence. All the woods used in build-



ROMANTIC OLD CONVENTS SURVIVE

ing were of the fine native mahoganies, and there were hangings, tapestries, and paintings in the sumptuous houses of the men who became enormously rich from the traffic of the times. Returning ships from Europe brought luxuries as well as necessities, and the gold trade people maintained regular fleets of ships and put Panama in close touch with the life of the age.

There are described two large churches, a cathedral, a "hospital," over two thousand large houses, and several very large establishments for the care of the great number of pack animals used on the trail. Large quantities

of gold, silver, pearls, and gems of various sorts were in evidence. In the day of its glory Panama was a veritable Arabian Nights city, with some two hundred warehouses for the storing of stolen treasure.

The story of the destruction of the old city is one of shocking cruelty and lust, and merely furnishes the last chapter of the same tale of crime that marks the history of the Isthmus from the finding of the Peruvian gold to the days when the murderous pillages of rival pirates finally destroyed the commerce of the Isthmus and left Panama little more than a memory of former glories. The burning of Old Panama marks the turning point in Isthmian history and closes forever the days of conquest. About this time the vast supply of Peruvian gold became exhausted, and between the failure of loot and the destruction of trade by brigandage the Isthmus fell into neglect and was nearly lost sight of by the world for two hundred years.

Anyone who knows the story of the place will find the ruins fascinating because they show a construction of the days when men built strong walls because nothing else would stand the strain of the lives they lived. Some of the walls stand as firm and strong to-day as they did three and a half centuries ago, and unless removed by the hand of man they will stand here a thousand years hence. And when a wall stands for cen-

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turies in this tropic climate of disintegration it is a wall to remember.



RUINED TOWER AT OLD PANAMA

Most conspicuous stands the old church tower, splendid and defiant amid the wreckage about its feet. Straight and strong it lifts its lofty head above the treetops, and, viewed from any angle, is a majestic figure. There is no construction in modern Panama to-day that may be compared to the grand dignity of that sentinel tower. Like some old prophet, amid the ruins of a wayward people, the tower raises its head and stands in mute but noble witness to the reality of the things that endure. For the tower was honestly built, and therefore stands. Against its solid walls, builded from their rock foundation straight upward, the ravages of time have made but little impress.

The tower was part of the cathedral, and the cathedral was one of three or four great churches.

Of at least two others well-preserved ruins still remain, and are well worth careful study. The reddish-brown coloring of the old walls and the vine-covered stone help furnish endless temptations for the artist, but no one has yet given adequate expression to the splendid possibilities of these ruins.

Still more interesting vistas open to the mind's eye of the student with a constructive imagination. There were churches many and large and beautiful in Old Panama. And there were pirates wild and wicked and hated in Old Panama. Who "ran the town"? The pirates or the priests? What relations existed between the two? And if there were churches of such great beauty and strength, why were there also the terrible pirates? What were the churches doing that they did not bring about a better city?

These are hard questions, but to anyone who knows conditions to-day, and who knows that conditions to-day are better than they were in Old Panama, the answer is not far to seek. The hungry and helpless peons did not give the money to build those costly churches, though they doubtless did the hard work of construction. And if the pirates were good givers—and they doubtless were, under promise and threat—then they also influenced the general scheme of things in Old Panama. In short, the churches of Old Panama did not make a very good town of it.

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What a story Jack London could have written here! It is too bad that he did not find Old



COSTA RICA TRAPICHE,
OR SUGAR MILL

Panama before it was too late. Not only the ruins, but the vista of royal palms along the beach, with the little red-white-and-blue crabs scurrying about at high tide, unite to raise a sense of romance that starts the wheels of fancy revolving in one's brain. All one needs is a "long, low, rakish black craft in the offing,"—there it is now, the very thing, a big chinga, fifty feet long with four sails and twenty-five men on board, luffing and tacking about into the little bay just around the point. Pirates or fishermen—don't inquire too closely; either will do, and both are useful in romance.

In one of the churches are some old graves, where some natives have been buried, partly for convenience and perhaps partly from sentiment. Fine old walls stand earthquake-cracked, but still strong. Of roofs there are, of

course, none. And back of the church are still intact the foundations of a house said to have been the house of the governor, and the vaulted arches of the old cellar storehouse are still intact. A native lives in a shanty near by, and he greets the visitor, not with the information that might make him useful and get him a tip, but with the vacant optimism of those who feel that somehow something is coming to them whether they earn it or not.

As for the natives, none of them know anything about the place. The few that live there are of the sort that would camp under the nose of the sphinx and never look up into his face. But the reader of this can well spend a half day amid the most fruitful prowling anywhere in Panama. He may gaze at the splendid tower till the broken walls about it rise again, and the old tiled roof once more covers the worshipping congregations within, and the drone of mass and the fragrance of incense again ascend before the high altar. And down the old street, with its one-story houses, once more wind the pack trains and muleteers and men and women and children. There is excitement everywhere, and commotion and cursing, and everybody runs down to the beach. And if you will turn about and gaze out to sea, you will see there a curious craft with freakish sails, and when it drops anchor and the boat pulls ashore, you will see old Almagro himself step out

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on the sands sword in hand, and with rough and profane commands, take charge of the unloading of his golden cargo. There will be wild times in Old Panama to-night, for the pack trains have returned from Porto Bello with a cargo of rum, and the sailors from Peru have been long at sea, detained by unfavorable winds, and, like sailors of other times and climes, they are thirsty. Out from the church door comes the tonsured priest; he shakes his head, shrugs his shoulders, and makes his way down to where the great Almagro stands, a commanding figure amid the confusion. For the commander has the gold, and, like all explorers of his time, he will be in need of a proper blessing by the priest; and the padre, being human, can use a little of the gold.

But while you gaze and dream, "dear reader," the vision fades and "the tumult and the shouting dies," and there stand the ruins, and there swings the sweep of the tropic sea, and you are again in the twentieth century, a little richer in mental imagery for your short excursion back into the sixteenth.

Which is to say that dreaming is easy at Old Panama. Try it yourself.

CHAPTER V

THE SPELL OF THE JUNGLE

WHAT the desert is to Arizona and the ice to Alaska the jungle is to tropical America. He who has never traveled through a tropical jungle on a trusty mule has missed something out of his life. He should go back and begin over again.

The jungle is much maligned and often misinterpreted. The jungle has a place in the agricultural life of the tropics, but it has also a place in the æsthetic and moral life of mankind. Here at last there is room, and the starved and stunted life may relax its struggle and strain and expand under the luxuriance and exuberance of a world where all the forces of life overflow and run riot in a thousand fantastic forms of energy and growth. Like the uncharted vastness of the polar sea and the unbounded, shimmering mirage of the wide desert, here at last there is plenty and to spare. When a man has stinted and economized all his life on a New England hillside amid stones and stumps, the jungle takes the load off his soul and sets him free in a universe of new and untested dimensions.

The jungle is misunderstood. There are jungles unworthy of the name, but these vast Pan-

amanian hothouses are a different matter. They are not the bottomless morasses of deadly snakes and poisonous vapors. Since men have learned how to live in the tropics these terrors have large-



PAPAYA TREES

ly retreated to the highly colored accounts of tropical travelers who took one look and fled—to write a book of timely warning to the uninitiated. These jungles are not the haunts of hidden horrors and poisoned arrows. Ferocious tree-dwellers may inhabit the unknown recesses of the upper Amazon, but they do not live in the jungles of Central America and Panama.

It takes just three conditions to make a good jungle, and these three are all present in this fascinating country. Moisture, temperature, and soil; mix them in the right proportions and you can produce a jungle at the North Pole, but nowhere can the mixture be located except in the tropics. When one remembers the painstaking toil expended on the rocky fields of northern New

York and then turns to a land where the problem is not to encourage but to prevent growth, one wonders how it happened that our ancestors blundered into an environment reeking with difficulties when they might have had all this overflow of abundance for the taking.

There are several brands of jungle, to be sure, and distinct differences of kind may be located easily. The jungle of the overflowed level river land is a very different formation from that which climbs over the rolling hills and up the mountain slopes. But everywhere there is the same reckless riot of power and life. Fantastic growths are here just because there is so much growing to do and so much energy back of the roots that there are not conventional forms of life enough to go around and life boils over in every conceivable absurdity of form and habit. This is no place for a niggard. But it is a splendid antidote for smallness of soul and for that dried-up-ness that settles down like a pall upon the spirits of men who never in their lives have had enough of anything or breathed an atmosphere of abundance.

It must be a petrified soul that can resist this wanton abandon of vegetable life. How a man can spend three days in this full-blown exhibition of vital energy at work in the vegetable world and ever be small again is more than can be readily understood.

Here is a world where no one ever need cry for

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more; there is too much already. After a few days of it one longs to get out in the open, to see a barren spot somewhere just to rest the surfeited soul a bit. It's all for the asking; in fact, there



BANANAS AND SUGAR CANE

is no chance to ask; it is poured out of the horn of nature's plenty, and all the color and charm and fantasy and music and laughter and glory of it are piled in wild profusion a hundred feet

high, and you cannot get away if you will. Nature at least has a chance to show what she can really do, and it is yours for the looking.

What makes up a jungle? Well, that's hard to say. There are mighty trees of cedar and mahogany and a hundred lesser breeds, lifting their heads into the tropic sky. There are palms and giant ferns

of course. There are wonderful purple and magenta and crimson-topped trees, whose glaring flat colors fairly shriek at you like the bedlam of a paint box let loose on the sky. Sturdy *lignum vitæ* trees stand conscious of their high value and

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rare qualities. Ferns in profusion, vast, variegated and immense, line the banks of streams and hide in the shadows of the great trees. Orchids, of course, winding streams strewn with the flowers and foliage of the dense mass overhead, entrancing water streets and winding Venetian tunnels through forests so thick that the sun never penetrates the shadowed fastnesses below. There are paraquets, parrots, singing canaries, alligators, bananas, bamboos, singing winds, warbling bluebirds, blackbirds that can render a tune, purples and blues and crimsons and browns, all poured out and mixed together without stint. It is fascinating for a few hours, but after a time you get overloaded and are ready to cry "Enough." It's great, but a little stupefying till one gets used to it.

The jungle of the mountains is essentially different from and more interesting than that of the level swamps. Both are largely uninhabited, for men naturally like to have a little outlook both for their lives and about their habitations.

But the growth is about equally dense, provided the soil and moisture are right for the production of real jungle. From Puerto Limon to Almirante is about one hundred and twenty miles overland, and there was a time when practically every mile of this distance was untouched jungle. The United Fruit Company has conquered most of it, until there is now but a day's journey on

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horseback through the connecting link between the two railroad terminal points at Estrella and the Talamanca Valley. The one hundred miles of rails run almost entirely through the endless fields of bananas. But once this was all primitive wilderness; that is, we think it was, but some of



CACAO PODS

the superintendents of this clearing and planting work say that they have discovered numerous evidences that there was a time in ages past when practically all of this vast area was under some sort of cultivation.

There would be a railroad now across the gap of twenty miles but for the fact that this gap includes a mountain range with rushing rivers and steps, gorges and almost impenetrable forests. Occasional travelers cross this range by the aid of sturdy mules, but there is yet nothing that could by any strain of language be called a trail. There is simply a "blaze" through the forest and occasional marks where some floundering traveler has preceded the venturesome explorer through the depths of some yawning mudhole.

I crossed this range on a day when the sun was

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shining overhead, but only two or three times did its rays fall upon the "trail." The overhead growth was so thick that there was nothing but dense shadow below. A hundred and fifty feet these immense trees rose into the air, carrying upward with them festoons of hanging vines, swinging rattan, and clinging orchids. Curious enough are some of these trees, with their winding external buttresses and thin flanges thrown out to brace against the winds. Banyan trees reach out their long arms and drop their fingers down into the soil and take root and continue until the tree literally "stalks" its way across the mountain side. There are rubber trees and cedar trees and mahogany trees and prickly poisoned trees that are the terror of the natives, and trees bearing all manner of jungle fruits and flowers and swarming with chattering birds and creeping things. Rattan "ropes" an inch in diameter and two hundred feet long trip the unwary traveler, and it is useless to try to break them. They are like steel cables. Wild birds are plentiful, occasional baboons bark and bray, and the mountain streams splash and plunge their way through the ferns and flowers. The Estrella River forms the highway for several miles, and its rocky torrent must be forded a score of times.

He who has never tried to travel this "road" has a new experience in store. There are hill-

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sides that are all but perpendicular, which would not be so bad, but they are a mixture of clay and soapstone and moisture, and it is practically impossible to stand erect without holding on to nearby saplings. How a laden mule can navigate such a causeway of destruction is a mystery to be explained only by people who understand mules. And I rode a mule whose mastery of the art of trail-navigation left nothing to be learned. In the ignorance of my novice I alighted before the first precipitous descent to which we came. The mule, with the conservatism born of experience, took his time to make the descent, and I essayed to go before and show him how to do it. He watched me with intense interest, while I gingerly approached the edge of the slippery declivity and started down. As a descent it was a complete success. At the second step I slipped on the wet clay and went rolling and coasting to the bottom, whither I arrived in record time, plastered from head to foot with the raw material of which pottery is made. I struggled to my feet and looked up at the mule. He still regarded me intently, and I think that he winked, at least his ear did. Then he deliberately put his front feet over the edge, gathered in his hind feet, and with all fours together, sat down and gracefully slid to the bottom of the hill. He arrived right side up at the bottom, munching a mouthful of grass, which he seized in passing on

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the way down, and turned to look at me with an expression that needed no interpreter. And I took the hint and stayed on his back most of the day.

After a solid day of this dense growth where we could not see more than a stone's throw at any time it was with a distinct sense of relief that we caught sight of daylight at last through an opening ahead and came upon the fringes of the Talamanca plantation.

The Talamanca Valley is something quite worth while in itself. Years ago it was inhabited by Spanish refugees who fled back from the bloody attacks of the ravenous Caribbean pirates of the sixteenth century. Their little plantations were not large and the land was not cleared very thoroughly, but they shifted their planting places until much of the present area was covered sooner or later with platanos. The view of this valley from the hillside is surpassingly beautiful. Thirty miles long, ten miles



PROPOSED LOCATION FOR
REST CURE

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wide, and surrounded by mountains and forests, the whole floor of the valley is one vast, waving, level field of bananas, and there are few things better to look upon than a valley level full of banana tops. From twenty to forty feet high they stand, and their long, shady corridors are like the aisles of some great series of cathedral chapels, waiting for worshippers within. Through the middle of the valley runs the stream of the upper Sexola River with its three tributaries and their bluffs. The Changuanola Railway, which is the name under which the United Fruit Company moved its bananas and its men in this great plantation, runs the length of the valley, and the line of rails is punctuated by the white cabins of the black employees and the houses and offices of the plantation superintendents and foremen.

Dominating the whole valley stands old Pico Blanco, or White Top. There is no snow at the summit, but there is nearly always a white cloud cap there, hence the name. This noble mountain is the interest and admiration of all dwellers in the valley. Its top lists eleven thousand feet above the sea. It is not as high as Pike's Peak nor Shasta, but it towers well up toward the level of Fujiyama, and beside it Mount Washington looks like a pigmy and the Adirondacks are mere foothills. Back in the cañons and forests of the mountain range live the curious Talamanca Indians, whose tribal customs indicate a close affin-

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ity between their ancestors and those of the famous Indians of Quirigua.

The difference between the jungle and the dividend-paying plantation is one of organization, capital, administration, and toil. Add these to the jungle and you have the plantation. Take them away from the plantation and in a very short time the jungle is again supreme. Crowding around the corners, peeping over the edges, and creeping ever onward, the jungle pushes its jealous way behind the footprints of the men who essay to conquer its wild ways. But once defeated, the jungle becomes a slave bearing costly burdens for its master—man.

CHAPTER VI

LIFE AT THE BOTTOM

“FORTY years ago I took a bath, and the next day I felt chilly, and then—”

“Never mind forty years ago. What is the matter this morning, and why have you come to me for medicine?” chants the seasoned employer of plantation labor.

“That is what I was telling you, señor. Forty years ago I took a bath, and the next day I felt chilly, and then I thought that I had made a mistake, and so I went—”

“Now, see here. I have no interest nor curiosity about forty years ago. What is the matter with you now?”

“Be patient, señor. This is important, and I will tell you all. Forty years ago—” and after devious dodgings the tale terminates in a case of fever or indigestion, or mayhap only plain drunk.

It is ever thus with the tropic tao, or peon, or ignorante, or whatever may be called the people who have grown up with the soil and have risen not any above it. The petty official who hears complaints in any tropic land listens to marvelous reminiscences through deep jungles of imaginative memory before reaching present facts.

"Twenty-five years ago I had the toothache, and then the next week I had a bad dream, and after that I had no suerte [luck] at all, until one saint's day I drank rum and ate rice, and the rice make me sick—" is merely the opening chapter.

Every employer of tropic labor must be judge and jury for a docket of petty cases that have to be adjusted if the wheels of industry are not to be paralyzed in their work. Newcomers at this business of sitting in the seat of judgment hear marvelous stories of oppression and outrage, in which the accuser is always innocent—and always alone, if possible. But experience breeds disillusionment and skepticism deep and wide, and soon the amateur Solomon learns to distrust every story, most of all the first one told. For, after the plaintiff has sworn that he is telling the truth, or may all the saints strike him dead, and has unrolled his woes in orderly sequence, he stands with critical eye, watching to see what impression his art has made upon the puzzled personage of power.

And when the adjuster of affairs scorns the tale and says, "Get out with you. I don't believe a word of that stuff," the beggar bows and smiles a deprecating smile and begins all over again with a revised version of the case, which bears very little resemblance to the first story, and again stands back to observe what better success

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he may hope for this time. And there appears to be no end to the ready versions and variations of the woes of the downtrodden exponent of virtue whose humble bearing seems to exude virtue from every protruding bare spot through his rags.



PICTURESQUE JUNGLE
TOWNS

“Last Wednesday morning, I got up, and—would you believe it?—there was nothing in the house. There was no yucca [counting off on his fingers], no plantanas, no huevos, no carne, no mais, no azucar, no arroz—absolutamente nada. Yes, it was last Wednesday—no, no, señor, I am a liar—it was last Tuesday morning. And, señor, my children were hungry, and I remembered that there was nothing—” and so on the story goes to its climax in the claim that a certain party, not present, owes the complainer fifty cents for

real or imaginary value bestowed, and will the owner please collect the fifty cents for the starving children?

And if this tale is unsatisfactory, comes im-

mediately a fresh version to the effect that it is another man who owes a dollar because he tramped across some young corn and spoiled the crop.

It is this fertility of imagination that makes up for any sort of accurate information. To the American the amazing thing about these people is that they know so little about their own very interesting country. The American must know in order to boom his town, but the tropic native has no idea of booming his town. There is no fun in booming, there is nothing to boom, and a boomed town would be always stirring about or starting something, and would be a nuisance anyway.

I stood in a village, quaint and curious, and wondered how old it might be. The bells hanging to a cross beam in front of the old church bore figures on their rims—1722, they said; and they looked it, every inch—or year.

Came the young curate of the parish, a good-looking and intelligent native, who talked a little with us pleasantly, and lured us into the old church, where he immediately improved the occasion by getting the collection basket and holding it under our noses. "It is a special saint's day," he explained.

"How many people live here?"

He could not tell.

"How old is the church?" we wanted to

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know, thinking to get a morsel of information for our crumb of contribution.

He did not know. The question was entirely new to him. He had been born in the town, and later showed us with pride the house in which himself, his mother, and his grandmother had been born, but as to the number of inhabitants or the age of the church it had never occurred to him to inquire.

But presently inspiration came to his aid. There was an ancient woman still living at more than a hundred years; surely she would know the answer to some of these curious questions.



TORTILLAS ARE STAPLE

We called on the old woman. She was nothing but bones and parchment, sitting with her chin on her knees on a small platform of slats which she had not left for over two years. She claimed one hundred and two years, which was undoubtedly correct, as baptismal records are usually accurately kept. She certainly looked the part. The stu-

diante sat down on the "bed," placed his hand kindly on the old woman's shoulder, and told her that though she was blind there were three strangers who had come to see her and congratulate her on her great age. She was pleased and said so, but her mind was as feeble as her body, and there was little that she could say. When asked as to the date of the "blessing" of the church, she said, "O yes, certainly I can name it—it was on Saint John's day."

"That's fine," enthused the curate. "Now, what year was it, grandma?"

"Ah, that is another matter. I can't tell you now, but if you will come to-morrow, I may be able to remember it then."

We left the next morning, of course, without the date of the dedication day, but what information was lacking on this point was amply made up in information concerning the population. We asked seven people the question and received seven different answers, ranging from three hundred to five thousand. We counted a hundred odd houses, indicating six or seven hundred people,



JUNGLE FOLK

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but no one there had any idea or any interest in the matter. What difference did it make anyway?

The town of Nata, eighty miles west of Panama, was founded in 1520, one year after the founding of Old Panama, and one hundred years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. Old Panama has been a ruin for two and one half centuries, leaving Nata as the oldest inhabited town in the New World—no small distinction.



"THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT"

I asked the leading official if he knew how old the town was, and he said that he understood that it was "very old." When I suggested that it was the oldest town in America he nodded politely and talked of something else. I called on the priest, an intelligent and friendly man, who also understood that the town "was very old," but its priority of claim to the oldest living municipal inhabitant of the

Americas had little interest for him. He talked on, complaining bitterly of the bad morals of the people and the small financial proceeds which the parish yielded its spiritual leader.

It is easy to disparage any people, especially if they speak a different language from your own. Most of the things said against the illiterate natives of any country are true, but the trouble is that they are only a small fraction of the truth.

A large employer of native labor, who took pride in treating his men well and paying them promptly, complained to me that he never could keep steady labor on his place for the reason that the men earned enough in one week to keep them drunk for the next fortnight, and hence worked only one week out of three, leaving their families to starve or shift for themselves as best they might. And he told the truth.

But he did not tell it all. This same employer distilled the rum on his own place and regarded it as a paying business. When other employers raised the price for labor and produce he refused to do so on the ground that the more they had the worse off they were. On the surface it might seem to be true.

But these same laborers, even saving all possible margin of wages, could not have lived in anything like comfort on sixty-five cents per day. Most of them never see a newspaper, and

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could scarcely read, and not at all understand it if they did see it. There is not an item of news, a trace of historical knowledge or perspective, a gleam of scientific understanding, a moving picture show, or a lecture on any subject, or a musical program, nor any one of the thousand things that add interest and widen the horizon of life—none of these things ever enter the remotest areas of his consciousness. He lives in the flat, narrow confines of a life so small, so cramped, so possessed by superstition and terror and ill will that he is not many removes from the cattle with which he works. When this man would celebrate his saint's day he gets drunk, organizes a bull fight, and gives vent to every low impulse of his nature.

Is it any wonder? The only tingle of interest that touches his soul comes from adventures in the realm of unfaithfulness and drunkenness. How many of the rest of us would do any better if born and bred in the mire of his social inheritance?

There is such a thing as moral hookworm. Saint Paul called it by another term, but its symptoms are unchanged. The unshod soul, shuffling through the mire of degradation, acquires from the lower stratum of his environment the infection of a spiritual destitution that lowers moral vitality to the minimum.

How comes this benumbed conscience and depraved practice? What is the matter that the

average of legitimacy for all Central America is thirty per cent of the total population, while the seventy per cent are born of unmarried parents?

It is not for lack of churches. Every town has its church, and the church is invariably the best building in the town. It stands on the plaza, commanding, central, and usually more or less beautiful. One can scarcely get out of sight of a church tower in any thickly settled, level country. And the churches are large enough to contain almost the whole population of the town, at least by taking them in several installments at mass hours.

It is not for want of priests. There are priests in every town, and most of them carry out pretty faithfully the routine of ecclesiastical observances that make up the day's program. Black gowns, tonsured heads, and beads and rosaries are seen everywhere, and the padre is usually the most influential man in the town.



CHURCH BELLS OF ARRAI-
JAN, CAST 1722

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It is not for want of religion. Every house of any pretensions has its holy pictures, often its crucifix, and usually its rosary. Women in numbers attend mass and go to confession.

It is not for want of opportunity on the part of priests or church. It is not because of "church competition." Here we have a unity complete and final.

For three hundred and ninety-eight years the priests and their church have had sole, exclusive, and continuous occupation of Nata, the oldest town in America. I was probably the first Protestant missionary who ever walked the streets of the place. Here in the oldest town, with the longest occupation and the undisturbed opportunity, should be found a fair chance with these people.

And what has it done? The open-minded and friendly priest complained bitterly of the fact that in his parish only five per cent of his people were born of married parents. Ninety-five per cent were registered on his books as "Naturales." The year before he had administered over three hundred baptisms and had celebrated only three marriages. "I can't get them to marry," he groaned. "Practically speaking, almost no one is married."

Is Nata worse than other towns? Possibly so, but it must be remembered that the "church" has had a longer chance there than in any other city

in all America, and perhaps when the other towns have been exposed for the same length of time to the system, they will show equally advanced results!

There is this thing to be said about the characteristic attitude of the average priest toward his people: he always despises them. In many lands I have found this to be true. Discouraged by the failure of his system to produce spiritual life, or even good morals, he complains bitterly that the people are indifferent, careless, negligent, immoral, unfaithful, and, not least of vices, they are poor pay. If they are these things, no one knows it better than the man who hears their secret confessions. And that this man should come to a chronic attitude of distrust toward the products of his own spiritual husbandry is one of the severest indictments against the system that produces indifference on the part of the people and cynicism in the heart of the priest.

What was the church doing to remedy this situation with its deadly monotony, its superstition, ignorance, and unmorality?

The church was maintaining its round of formulas, saints' days, masses, confessions, baptisms, funerals for-what-the-traffic-would-bear. Showy processions and occasional celebrations were the circus and movie for the people. And on the confession of the troubled priest himself, there was no moral result. Out of the dead past stood a

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mummied memory of the once living church, and its mumbled incantations had no power to make the dry bones live.

The only power that seems able to stir new life in the old mausoleum is the advent of a vigorous Protestant work. In rage and bitterness the powers bestir themselves and begin to defame and persecute their disturbers, and in the end, they inevitably give some attention to reviving their own decaying program.

How can a man be well when he is one hundred dollars away from a doctor? With four doctors located among two hundred thousand people scattered over a radius of forty by a hundred miles, and all fees exorbitantly high, what is a poor man to do when illness overtakes his household? What is he to do? Why, nothing at all, except await the end, either of his illness or of both infirmity and himself. What the missionary needs is no less Bibles than castor oil and quinine and iodine. I think that I would begin with a moving-picture program and a clinic, and when a little physical health appeared, and some sort of interest began to loosen the rusty hinges before what occupies the mental space, I would begin to talk of something to make life worth living. It was the way of the Master to heal and teach and arouse, and the whole program of missionary work might be founded on "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more

abundantly." That is the key to the process. These people are not bad; they are crippled. They are not vicious; they are lifeless. They are not rebels: they are very much untaught, backward children.

The system of public schools is growing apace,



FIRST-GRADE ROOM, PANAMA

but it has a tremendous task, small support from the parents, and often open opposition from the priests. In one town a citizen remarked that on examination day at the close of the term not a single pupil came to school, but that it made no difference, as they were all promoted and would live just as long whether they were promoted or not. (How I would have enjoyed that, as a

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boy!) In another town the supervisor had criticized unfavorably the people for certain careless habits, whereupon the teachers took offense, all resigned and closed the schools. The secretary of education siding with the supervisor, all schools remained closed, and the children were happy.

There is one safety valve left for people in such lives, and that is the world-old prerogative of talk. In the long evenings, by the roadsides, on the street corners, over the balconies flows an endless stream of talk. Prattle and chatter and gossip and slander flow on and make up the only scenarios the people know. Most of it is harmless. Some of it is aimless, and all of it is fruitless of anything except to save the mind from utter blankness.

They were chattering away in the evening, three or four women seeming unconscious of me, a traveler stopping for the night. One subject held undivided attention for much time—What shall we cook for breakfast? And from that it was but a step to that eternal solace of feminine conversation—the shortcomings of men in general and husbands in particular. One of the animated declaimers arose, struck a dramatic attitude, and said, "To expect that any man should be of any use about the house is impossible," and the eloquent shrug of her shoulders underscored the remark. In vain I broke in and protested that in the United States it often happened that

the men were successfully commandeered and detailed to the work of kitchen police, but the only reply was an arched eyebrow and another shrug. "Tell that to the marines," was what she meant.

There are two measures of quantity. Either it is "No hay suficiente" ("There are not enough") or "Hay bastante, bastante" ("Plenty, plenty"). The population of the next town is one or the other of these measures. The distance to the river, the crops, the number of children in the family, the tale of the years that is told—it is all one thing or the other. And the standard, in contrast with the artificial measures of a high civilization, is at least true to life. Either there is enough or there is not enough—that is about as close a distinction as the day's experience affords. For that matter, all the rest of us are on one side or the other of the same cleaving line of necessity.

That everybody should blame everybody else for whatever may happen to be the matter is the most natural thing in the world. Whom shall we blame if not some one else?

It is the fault of the officials that the country is poor. It is the fault of the large landowner that there is no development. It is the fault of the municipalities that the towns are not better kept, it is because of the officials that justice is not better administered. It is the fault of the Canal Zone that the good days are gone forever,

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and it is the fault of the American government that there are certain restrictions on native tendencies to move forward by the backward jerks of revolution. A Costa Rican once said to me, "This war in Europe amounts to nothing; but if we could get up a good old-fashioned revolution, I would be on the job to-morrow."

The virtues of these people are a surprising list, considering their scant opportunities. They are kindly in dealing with foreigners who show themselves friendly. They do not as a rule abuse their children, which the West Indian is apt to do if he is of the baser sort. The native is hospitable and courteous and always willing to oblige, provided he knows what to say or do. To be sure, the inventory of his information is disappointing, even concerning such subjects as the distance to the next town and the market value of rice, but he will tell all he knows and share what rice he has. Traveling through the country alone, I have been shown every kindness and entertained with the best that was to be had, and often sent on my way without being allowed to pay for what I had received. "Do you think I would take money from a guest?" protested a hospitable host with whom I had spent the night and who had fed my horses, the guide, and myself, and had entertained us all evening with discussion of many matters.

CHAPTER VII

THE INTERIOR

WE had reached the town of Anton the day before, and I had sent the guide back with the horses and purposed to make my way alone. The morning was fresh and balmy, as befitted the dry season, even if a night spent on an antiquated cot in a room next to that occupied by a man with a racking cough and a rooster with a clarion voice, were not a perfect repose. The *rapport* between the fowl and the afflicted was complete: when one of them broke the silence, the other immediately took up the refrain. At breakfast I suggested to the good wife of the host that I had heard that if a board were placed above a rooster's head so that he could not stretch upward, he would not crow. She was all solicitude at once at the suggestion that the noisy cock had disturbed my slumbers, and I had to protest my indifference to such serenades.

Down the street I found a little store where the owner had a horse or two to hire upon occasion. Thirty minutes of bicker and I was astride a wiry little native pony to which a bridle was unknown, and out through the stately palms and luxurious bananas I made my way to the open

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country eastward. The river was thronged with horses led to water, and women busy with their domestic laundry. It was quaint and picturesque. In some such manner might the ancient Egyptians have gone about their morning tasks. I have seen exactly the same procedure in the Philippines and by the rivers of southern China.

A mile or two from the town the trail mounted a rolling hillock and I pinched myself to remember that I was not in New Mexico. Straight ahead rolled the almost level llanos for miles until they were lost in the hills by Chame, and the purples and pinks of the six-thousand-foot summits were like a frame for a picture whose southern limits were in the glint of the blue summer sea. It was a picture and a promise. For two hours the nervous little pony followed the trail across the smooth plains and frequent streams. If ever a land was spread out as a challenge to the plow and seeder, here it was.

I sought a colonization site, where I had heard of a dozen plucky Americans who were undertaking a plantation on cooperative lines. At last I found it in the midst of as fine a tract of land as lies beneath the tropic skies. An old-fashioned farm dinner made life worth living after native "chow" for days. Modern tractors, plows, a ton of cotton seed, and other signs of enterprise did much to make the place seem like somewhere in the great Southwest. But the enterprising

Americans were harboring no delusions regarding the nature of their undertaking. They meant business and had counted the cost.

An American on the Canal Zone invested his savings in land in the interior, and during the vacation built a good wire fence. On his second visit the fence was totally destroyed by ax, fire, and wire-cutters. The owner appealed to the



THE BEAUTIFUL SAVANAS OF COSTA RICA

local alcalde, a brother of the provincial governor. He demanded redress for his wrongs. The judge heard his story, and then, striking a dramatic attitude, smote his breast, and exclaimed, "If these my friends had not done this thing, I should have done it myself." Which was to say, no foreigners need apply in those parts. It is probable that this outrage could not occur under present conditions.

"The Panama politician thinks that all the republic begins in Las Bovedas and ends in Las Semanas," remarked a plantation owner of the interior country.

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Whether this is true or not, few people realize or know anything of the splendid country that lies back of the Canal Zone and out of reach of the fitting traveler. To the average Canal Zone employee all Panama begins at dock seven and ends in the Administration Building. And for the tourist who comes to do the Canal in a day, of course, everything begins with the Washington Hotel and ends with the Tivoli.

But Panama is something vastly more significant than a couple of slow-service, high-priced hotels. The Isthmian Republic is an empire in possibilities, entirely apart from the Canal Zone, though the development of the latent riches of the country is most vitally related to the Canal enterprise. And the rich belt of land that binds together two continents is something very much larger than the interesting little city that bears the name of Panama.

Back of the ten-mile strip controlled by the United States stretches a land abounding in natural resources which make it potentially a factor of agricultural and economic importance. To the uninformed citizen of the United States and other countries the Republic of Panama is a mere shoestring tying together the two continents, lest the pair become separated and one of them lost. We look at the Isthmus in contrast with the two vast continents that lie to the northwest and southeast, and the connecting

link appears small. Panama suffers from comparison with its big neighbors.

Compared with well-known and important insular holdings in the Caribbean group, Panama assumes entirely different proportions. Panama is two thirds as large as Cuba and has one third of Cuba's population. Panama is about the size of Portugal, is four times as large as Salvador, seven and one half times as large as Jamaica, and nine times the size of Porto Rico. Panama is as large as all New England except Maine, and nearly equals the combined area of New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and West Virginia.

There are interior areas of well-watered, rich soil that equal whole States in size and yet are entirely unknown to many residents of the Canal Zone. The Chiriqui Province has a coast line of one hundred and thirty-three miles and contains as much land as Delaware, Rhode Island, and Long Island combined. The rich agricultural region in the provinces of Coclé, Veraguas, Los Santos, and Herrera is as large as the State of Connecticut. The region east of Panama City reaching out to Chepo is as large as Rhode Island, and in the Darien country is an area almost unknown, but abounding in rich resources which would cover the map of New Jersey with a good margin.

It is supposed that no one lives in this large territory except the Americans on the Canal

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Zone and inhabitants of the two cities of Panama and Colon. This is also indicative of ignorance. The Republic of Panama has two thirds as many people as Paraguay or Jamaica, and, as previously stated, one third as many as Cuba, as many as Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho combined, or is about equal to Utah, Nevada, and Arizona put together.

On the basis of resources and soil and climate and accessibility to market, Panama can support a population many times her present numbers. Her capacity for supporting population from her own products is larger than that of most of the States of the Union, acre for acre. Panama's resources are as good as those of Jamaica or Porto Rico or Cuba. On the basis of Jamaican population there should be six and one half million people in Panama, and if the number of people per square mile were equal to that of precipitous Porto Rico, we would have a population in Panama of ten and one half million, which is more than live west of a north and south line drawn through Denver, Colorado.

That no such population lives to-day in Panama is due to political causes more than any other factor. The population of Porto Rico has nearly doubled since American occupation exchanged the old regime for the new. The barren deserts of the great Southwest are becoming fertile and populous regions because the people

who are possessing the land have a fair chance, and know that they will be assured a market for their produce and security for their lives and property. Given political security, monetary stability, market accessibility, and assurance of economic cooperation on the part of the government, there are no immediate limits to the population that Panama may support in comfort.



SHIPPING COSTA RICA VEGETABLES TO PANAMA

Political stability for the government of Panama is assured by the relations which exist between the United States and the Isthmian Republic, a condition which exists in no other Spanish-American republic. The proximity of the Canal assures a world market. The climate and soil and water supply nature has provided with lavish hand. Sanitation and hygiene have become exact sciences, and the matter of retaining

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good health in the tropics is no longer a problem. There is still good land to be had on favorable terms, but the supply will soon be controlled by monopolists who are seizing the present opportunity to load up their future bank accounts, while war conditions produce a general depression of the world's development forces.

The present interior population includes three distinct classes of people. The original Indian stock still exists, pure and often wild, in the high mountains and remote regions of the country. These Indians are beginning to emerge from their fastnesses and get acquainted with their neighbors, now that they are sure of police protection when they come out. But their number is small and they are a negligible factor in the totals.

The West Indians are an importation, and while they are easily adapted to the climate and form the staple of labor supply for the Canal, they are not the Panamanians and never will be except as they mix with the native stock and shade off the colors that exist in such confusion. The Negroes and Panamanians are much more distinct in the interior than about the Zone with its terminal cities, where the remnants of humanity have been stirred together for four hundred years. West Indian populations exist in predominance only on the plantations of the United Fruit Company, where they supply the

labor for the operation of these vast enterprises.

The Panamanian is the predominant man in the interior country. He is not black, nor is he entirely white, but he has straight hair and features that indicate that he is a descendant of the original Indian stock, mixed with the Spanish conquerors who overran the country in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Probably the Panamanian has had less opportunity for advancement than the people of any other country in America. He has had no chance for national life or political self-expression. He has been the victim of the most vigorous and long-continued era of piracy and plunder that the New World has experienced. He has suffered from bad leadership when he has had any leadership at all. He has been exploited by everybody who came to the Isthmus. From the days of Morgan down to the formation of the present Republic, under American protection and guarantee of peace within and without, this native has been the outcast of the world and the national goat of the American flock of nations. He has been kept in ignorance and superstition by the exclusive control of a system of religious oppression and subjection, and if by chance he happened to acquire anything worth getting, somebody was always ready to take it away from him.

This native supplies the labor for such enter-

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prises as have been launched in the fertile western regions of Panama. With anything like good treatment he gives a return for his wages, and if he has a chance to acquire sound health, an intelligent outlook on life, and a share in the results of his labors, he can be made over into a good citizen. He is not a bad citizen now, but he is very much undeveloped.

The products of this great interior region are many and their proceeds in the world's markets are profitable. Present prices make large opportunities for investment, and a reorganization of marketing facilities will mark the beginning of an era of prosperity for Panama. The list of products now being raised in and exported from Panama is a surprisingly long one, and the total of returns from these commodities would give a western real estate promoter material for many prospectuses and promises.

The chief products of the country at present are bananas, lumber, rice, sugar, cacao, meat, citrus fruits, corn, coffee, and coconuts. But there are a hundred other products, many of which indicate large returns if produced and marketed on a commercial scale. Rubber, ivory, nuts, hides, beans, pineapples, potatoes, yams, yucca, cotton, tobacco, plantain, a long list of fruits and vegetables of high value, and a number of minerals are but a few of the useful commodities now being supplied to the markets of the

Canal Zone and the world from the interior country of Panama. Nearly every vegetable that grows in the temperate climate does well in Panama. Some of the native fruits, such as papayas, mangoes, and alligator pears, are of delicious flavor and high value. The waters of Panama abound in vast quantities of fish, and there is supply for a number of fish canneries. Live stock thrives and is produced in considerable numbers in the provinces of Coclé and Chiriqui. The Canal Zone is now being used as a farming enterprise and stock grazing range by the administration of the Zone with the intention of making the Zone area self-supporting in meat and fruit and vegetables.

With an average import trade of ten millions and an export of more than half that amount, Panama is even today a factor in the world's markets. It must be said that the largest item on the import list is that of goods shipped to the Zone, and that the chief export is bananas shipped from Almirante, but these items indicate large possibilities in further developments of territories as yet untouched.



GOOD PINEAPPLES
GROW HERE

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The interior of Panama includes three general types of country, very different in climate and produce. The high mountains are a large area of country, much of which is fertile soil clear to the peaks, and all of which on the northern slopes is covered with jungle and forest. These wooded slopes are wet with abundant rainfall, and luxuriant foliage of tropical forms bewilders the traveler with illusions of fantastic creations of nature run mad over the earth. These mountainous parts are for the most part uninhabited, except by the more or less wild Indians, who live apart much as they were living four hundred years ago. No white men have tried to maintain themselves in these regions, and in some districts it is said that a white man's life is unsafe overnight. Tropical beasts and reptiles and birds abound among the weird forms of vegetation that seem to be perpetrating grotesque jokes on the bewildered visitor to the regions beyond the realm of civilized habitations. There are as yet no efforts made to establish towns or plantations in this country. Yet if cleared and cultivated, these regions are capable of supporting a population as dense as that of Porto Rico, where the steep hills and rocky peaks are covered with a population of over three hundred per square mile.

The jungle lands of Panama are elsewhere described, and where there is a jungle there are always rich land and abundant water, sometimes

too much water and need of drainage. The Canal Zone is mainly jungle land, and where it has been cleared for cultivation excellent results are attained. The cost of clearing this jungle is not so great as would appear from the fact that for bananas and many other forms of crop the trees and brush are cut down and after a time burned, and no further effort is made to clear the land except about four cleanings per year with a machette. Anything like plowing is unthought of for bananas and some other leading crops. Even sugar is often planted and left to shift for itself, under native methods, which are subject, of course, to improvement.



DEAD TIMBER IN GATUN LAKE NOW COVERED WITH ORCHIDS

The third class of land in Panama is the level or rolling prairie land known as savanas or llanos. These lands lie for the most part in the valleys back of Bocas del Toro and along the southern, or Pacific, coast of the country. From Chame to Cape Mala a belt of level country sweeps around

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the Parita Bay. From ten to forty miles back of the coast rise the high mountains, and this fertile strip of country averages about thirty miles in width and is over a hundred miles long. Rolling country extends on west of this plain, but the plain itself contains enough good farming land to feed several millions of people. It is watered and drained by frequent rivers which cut across from the mountains to the sea every three or four miles and furnish every facility for cultivation. Most of this level country is first-grade soil and is adapted to the growing of almost any of the products of this tropical land. The general appearance of this open country suggests New Mexico or Southern California much more than any land below the tropic of Cancer. Its numerous towns and occasional good roads suggest a newly opened territory in the west, where there are abundant opportunities for growing up with the country. The newcomer is apt to be deceived into thinking that all things are now ready and all he has to do is to move in.

In the extreme western part of Panama lies the great Chiriqui Province with its best-developed region in the entire Republic. Here are great cattle ranches, sugar fields, rice plantings, cotton farms, cornfields, and here are American companies working to develop modern civilized conditions. Here is the Chiriqui Railroad between Pedrogal and Boquette, with a branch run-

ning westward. More interest has centered in this region than in any other part of Panama, and if the proposed railroad from Panama to David is ever built, the whole southern slope of western Panama will suddenly appear on the map of the world's granaries.

Road-building presents no unusual difficulties in this region such as confronted the Americans in the Philippines when they built the Benguet road up from Dagupan. Rainfall is high, but the country is comparatively level and well drained, and in many of these western provinces a graded dirt road has kept in good condition for ten years without repairs. During the dry season it is now possible to travel by coche over much of this country.

The climate of this interior country is dryer and cooler than that of Panama, which lies in the jungle area. In the dry season, which is also the windy season, and lasts in western Panama from mid-December to late in April, health conditions are excellent, and with proper precautions they are good all the year around. Needless to remark, the natives take no precautions whatever.

Good drinking water can be secured by sinking properly located wells, and this water shows freedom from minerals of a deleterious nature. There are seaports for coast vessels at almost every river mouth, and roads lead back from these to the interior towns.

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There is a fascination about travel through these interiors, But the trip must be made during the dry season. We left a large town one morning, paused on a hilltop to take a picture, which included a troop of cavalry out on a practice march. It was late, and the three of us departed at good speed, soon outdistancing the soldiers. Two days later a chance traveler informed us that the military men were anxious to interview travelers who had broken the rules with a camera and then vanished from sight. We passed the encampment on our way back, hung about town two hours, and proceeded. That night a solitary mounted soldier paused by our camp and remarked, "I'll bet you are the fellows they are hunting." We suggested that we were waiting to be found. Two weeks later, a secret service man called and inquired as to our business on that trip. Which is to say that Panama's interior is a roomy place in which a man might easily lose himself or find an empire. A good government, an infusion of energy, and a supply of capital will make a rich land of nature's great virgin farm.

CHAPTER VIII

ECONOMIC WASTE

IF it is true that South America is the victim of a bad start, it may also be said that Panama is the net result of a continuous and consistent follow-up campaign of wholesale demoralization through a long period of years.

Beginnings are apt to be determinative, and when reenforced by continuous applications of similar influences, are sure to set a stamp on a long period of civilization. Three centuries of rule or misrule make a considerable impression on any people. There is something more than climate to be taken into account in the search for causes of the present conditions in Panama.

The entire colonial program of Spain differed radically from that of the English in Canada or the United States in Hawaii or the Philippines. The leading motive of the conquistadores was the love of gold. Plunder, rapine, and devastation followed in the trail of the adventurers who fought their way across Panama and conquered Peru. Missionary zeal there was, but so mixed were the motives of these early heralds of the cross that the occasional man of pure and peaceful methods was often supplanted by the monk

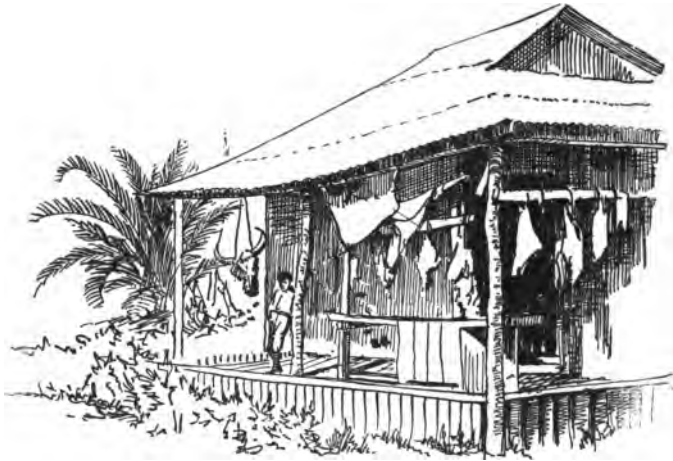
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who used all means that he might make "Christians" of men who had no alternative but to be baptized or destroyed outright. "Better be dead than be damned," thought the energetic priests. Never was a dastardly deed wrought by the conqueror but there was a priest at hand with heaven's blessing on the crime. If this is doubted, read the unchallenged Prescott's Conquest of Peru.

Spanish colonial policies had small regard for the rights or development of the conquered. It was one of the viceroys of Mexico who said, "Let the people of these dominions learn, once for all, that they were born to be silent and obey, and not to discuss nor have opinions in political affairs."

The native village of the far interior country, away from the main roads and untouched by uplifting influences, exhibits the situation at its worst; but even so, these same villages exhibit a better condition than do the wretched Indian huts of the high Andes farther south. The population of these distant barrios on the Isthmus can hardly be classified on distinct lines; every symptom is accounted for and every unfavorable trait explained by historical factors and social forces that have combined to make remote Panama what it is to-day. There can be no radical change in these conditions until some new program of social uplift, educational progress, and spiritual life is introduced to cause a fresh reaction and begin a new life.

The ignorant native bears an intolerable burden of superstition. His contact with the form of church life that exists in these towns is mainly expressed in the celebration of occasional fiestas and the payment of fees for services rendered, and supposed in some way to benefit the contrib-



INTERIOR MEAT MARKET

utor or his dead relatives. If “the test of a religion is its results upon a people,” then the impartial observer must draw his own conclusions.

That these interior towns are intensely conservative is to be expected. How could it be otherwise than that the methods of the fathers should be good enough for the sons? If human progress is not the result of dominant inner forces resident in human nature, but comes from the application of external stimuli, then the Pana-

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manian may have some excuse for his situation, in a social history that has afforded little incentive for exercise of enterprise or industry.

If the far interior of Panama is to be judged by present industrial efficiency, the case is lost before the trial begins. General absence of everything that marks a high grade of living emphasizes the failure of the status quo. Incompetence, bad management, childishness cry aloud from rotting buildings, rusting machinery, neglected plantings, i m p a s s a b l e "roads," and impossible officials. Streets knee-deep in mire, mud-floored houses, through which pigs wander at will, shiftlessness, dirt, insanitation are the register of the wet season in interior Panama. The outstanding church building is often itself



THE FLAVOR OF OLD SPAIN

dirty and disheveled. Sidewalks exist only as balconies for individual houses, and vary in height at the caprice of the builder, making the middle of the street the only convenient highway for the passers-by.

The bulk of this out-of-the-way business is handled by the ever-present Chino with his little tienda. If there is no Chinese store in the town, it is because the town is too poor to support one. Business involves effort and industry, both distasteful to the native, but breath-of-life to the Chinese.

Inspection of some native towns creates the impression that everybody just sits around all day. Along the streets the people lounge the idle hours away. Hundreds of young men lie about, rocking in chairs, lying in hammocks, hanging about corners. Women slowly move about their household duties, but the men are experts at the rest cure, and scarcely move at all. Once a young man gets a pair of shoes and a necktie, his industrial career abruptly terminates, and thenceforth he toils not, neither does he spin. He has arrived and is content.

Lack of energy brings inevitable localization of all interest and action. Most of the people have never been any distance from home and have no desire to travel. Travel means exertion of



TAKING THE REST CURE

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some kind. I asked a guide to go one day further than the first-day trip for which I had hired him, and he returned an embarrassed and deprecating smile, as if I had asked him to go to the French front. It was too far from home.

It is impossible to get information worth anything about the country. "How many people live in this town?" brings one of two answers. Either it is, "I do not know," or it is "Bastante" ("Plenty"). "How far is it to Los Santos?" brings something like, "Señor, when the sun is there [pointing] you set out on your journey, and when it is over there, you will arrive."

We crossed a well-traveled road.

"Where does this road lead?"

"To the port, señor."

"And where does the other end of it go?"

"To San Pedro, señor."

"How far is it to the port?"

"The same distance as to San Pedro."

"And how far is that?"

"Bastante lejo, señor" ("Plenty far, sir").

Cultivation of crops is unknown. When the brush and trees are cleared the stumps are left about two feet high; it is easier to do the chopping at that point than lower down. After the fallen growth has sufficiently dried out it is burned off and the stumpy field usually planted to corn. This corn is allowed to shift for itself until ripe, and after the stalks have rotted awhile

the land may have an application of grass seed and be used for pasture, in hope that the stock will wear down the stumps until it becomes at last possible to perform an athletic feat, called for want of a more accurate term, "plowing." I saw four oxen all pulling in different directions, while



THE OXEN STAGE OF AGRICULTURE

a plow occasionally disturbed the weedy surface of the ground and turned up irregular lumps of hard soil. The proprietor looked on with pride and asked if I had ever plowed. I had. Did I plow like that? I did not. When this plowing has been acted out, and some sort of clod-breaking has taken place, sugar cane is planted, and the work of cultivation is ended. For a dozen years the cane will produce annual crops of more or less value without any attention whatever other than the cutting of the cane when ready for the mill.

An interior road is an experience. A road is a route of travel along which various persons make their way as best they are able, under such conditions of weather and impassability as happen to exist. In the dry season some of these

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tracks wear down to a condition in which a cart can be coaxed over the right-of-way. In wet weather nearly all the native thoroughfares are wholly impassable except for sturdy oxen, which plow their way through the mud and sinkholes with deliberation born of long practice.

The man at the bottom of the scale is not to blame for his situation. He is the victim of a system that has made it exceedingly unwise for him to do anything other than what he does.

Poverty is the only protection of the people. For nearly two centuries pillage, plunder, piracy, and murder were the record of the Isthmus. Every buccaneer who sailed the Spanish main seems to have made a business of taking a chance at the Isthmus. It was open season for every kind of crook work that the minds of men could invent. Most of this activity was confined to the trade route in the middle of the Isthmus, but the influence and terror of this bloody age extended both ways as far as the country was inhabited. The common people were exploited, plundered, murdered, enslaved, and beaten at every turn.

Only a fool would work when to work meant that his head was marked for immediate oppression. If he forgot himself and got hold of anything of value, some one was ready to take it away from him without delay; and if he objected, he lost both his property and his head.

The social dregs that strayed to Panama or

stayed in Panama in those lurid days were men without character, conscience, or capacity for industry, other than in their favorite occupation of despoiling some one else.

These pirates and plunderers are gone, but they have left their tracks and traces in the civilization of the Isthmus. The common people today are mild and submissive; no other type could survive. It is possible to exist in dire poverty and pass the time without land or property, and that is the only kind of existence that holds any promise of peace to the man at the bottom.

There have been efforts on the part of the leaders of Isthmian life to inaugurate a new era and bring about improvements.

These efforts have been spasmodic and usually complicated by political considerations. Large appropriations have been made for roads, public buildings, machinery, schools, and mills, but while the money has been expended, it has gone like water in a sandy desert, and graft and inefficiency have swallowed up the funds with little or no results.

It has been supposed that appropriations for bridges, public markets, or good roads would in



WAYSIDE SELLERS OF FRUIT

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some way take the place of industry and thrift and bring good times. Half-finished markets rear their ghastly skeletons in town centers. Rusting road-rollers stand idle, decaying machines lie neglected, and half-finished public

works are covered with cobwebs. Nobody notices, no one cares, and nothing is done.



THE HOUSE BESIDE THE ROAD

A railroad was built with the evident idea that it would bring prosperity to a section of naturally rich country, but a railroad without crops is useless, and crops without labor are impossible, and labor without adequate returns is worth still less than it costs. The economic structure rests on

the man at the bottom, and when this human foundation is the prey and target of every one above him the result can be nothing other than general distress and inefficiency.

In some sections of the interior, as in the provinces of Coclé and Chitré, meat cattle of good quality are raised. Shipping facilities to the

Panama market are very good. There is no regular inspection, but the cattle are uniformly healthy and in good condition. The cattle-raising end of the trade is all right, but the market is a different matter. The cattle buyers in Panama are organized into what is known as the meat trust, and these buyers hold the sellers in subjection. Prices are kept down to the lowest possible basis, and monopolistic methods so well known in North America are in full swing.

Individual holders of interior ranchos have made earnest efforts to produce foodstuffs and introduce definite reforms into the methods of farming, but such persons have usually served as fearful examples to their neighbors. In an industrial system in which the one method of the man at the top is to keep his eyes open and whenever he finds anyone who has by chance or industry accumulated something, take it away from him—this does not stimulate long hours and speeding-up on the part of the men who do the work.

When the United States took over the Canal Zone and paid the purchase price to the new Republic of Panama, a good appropriation was made to the interior provinces for the building of a system of highways as the first step in a general improvement of the country. Most of the provinces have little to show for this expenditure of money. In one province reports were received

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that the money was being handed out in petty grafting operations and for political purposes and that no road was being built to speak of. An American engineer was sent to investigate. He reported the facts and was later put in charge of the "work." He reorganized the entire construction force, and at the expense of less than twenty thousand dollars built a road which has stood without repairs for a dozen years, and is in good condition to-day under heavy usage. But the reorganization pulled down on the engineer's head the wrath of the entire officialism of the province, and finally the men higher up in authority denounced the American for upsetting the smooth-working system at their expense. He had committed the unpardonable error of using the money to get results and build the road for which it was appropriated.

This is interior Panama at its worst. There are Americans who have invested their money and their personal supervision in the development enterprises in Chiriqui, and they are hopeful of better things. There are officials who are genuinely anxious to see a better age begin. And the day will come when this fair land will make men rich by the abundance of its products and the certainty of large returns upon development work done under favorable conditions. But the conditions do not yet exist in any stable form.

All of this is Panama at its worst, and forms

but the background of contrast for the picture of the fine possibilities that lie in the soil, and in the unreleased resources of a human stock that has never had a fair chance. Once separated from hookworm and superstition, given an industrial education, and assured competent leadership and certain returns for toil, and the lot of the Panamanian is no more incurable than that of any other victims of a bad system.

CHAPTER IX

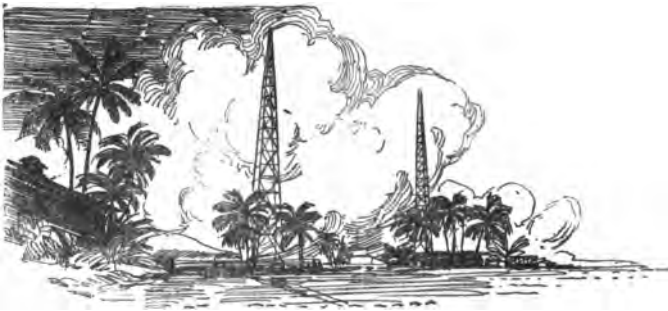
PANAMA AND PROGRESS

THE coat of arms of the Republic of Panama bears the inscription, "The repudiation of war and homage to the arts which flourish in peace and labor." Under the existing treaty with the United States the first part of this excellent motto is guaranteed. Panama is a providential Republic and presents some of the finest possibilities of the American tropics. The educated Panamanians have not been slow to proclaim these rich resources, but no large advance has been realized yet. The government of Panama has been friendly to promotion plans and development projects, and has undertaken some ambitious enterprises on its own initiative, but the results have been on the whole disappointing.

American business men who have lived in Panama feel that no permanent success can be assured to such undertakings without the backing of the United States government. The officials of Panama naturally do not look with enthusiasm upon this idea and prefer to keep development enterprises within their own jurisdiction. And serious effort has certainly been made by the Panamanian government to support some of the

enterprises projected by native and foreign capitalists.

The causes of economic backwardness and social conservatism are not difficult to locate and describe. From the cruel savagery of Pizarro and Balboa to the model communities of the Canal Zone is a far step. In the past seventy-five years the city of Panama has passed through a thou-



WIRELESS AT DARIEN

sand years of social evolution, and in five years after Panama became an independent and sovereign nation the city was transformed, the government reorganized, and something like twentieth-century conditions replaced the filth and disease and squalor of the old days.

The prowler in social history will find plenty of material here. By all the precedents of progress Panama should have been prosperous centuries ago. While other cities of coming metropolitan centers were yet barren wastes and sleep-

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ing wildernesses Panama was on the highway of the world. When New York and San Francisco and Chicago were inhabited by birds and squirrels Panama was known everywhere. Panama had a century the start of all North America and was the pawn of kings and the gateway of empire before the Pilgrims landed in New England. If there be any advantage in an early start, Panama should have led us all in the race for a commanding position in the New World.

There is much in location. A single foot on Broadway is worth more than a farm in the desert. Great cities have great positions on the map, and Panama began with a situation to which the world simply had to come. A dozen different solutions of the transportation problem presented by the Isthmian power and navigation were proposed, but it always came back to Panama. Here is the narrowest part of the connecting link of the continents, and here is the lowest point in the continental backbone. Without lifting her hand or voice, Panama had but to dream and wait till the world should come and pour into her lap the commerce and progress of the modern age. To-day Panama is on the direct line of travel between almost any two great cities at opposite ends of the earth. Melbourne and London, New York and Buenos Ayres, Port au Spain and Honolulu—draw the lines, and they all pass through Panama.

It is an accepted axiom of unthinking people

that gold and prosperity are synonymous. If this were true, Panama should be the most prosperous and progressive of all cities of the earth to-day. More gold has been carried through her streets, and stored in her warehouses, and handled by her people, than in any other city of the Americas. The Peru of the Conquest was lined and lacquered with gold. The palaces of the Incas and the Temples of the Sun were plastered and burnished with gold; and for a century this gold was loaded into European ships, taken to Panama and packed across the Isthmus and then reshipped to Europe to fill the coffers of profligate kings and bolster up the fortunes of fallen states. All of it came through Panama; and if much of it did not remain there, it was not due to conscientious scruples on the part of the Panamanians. If a stream of gold could bring progress, Panama should have led the world for three hundred years.

Probably the modern Republic of Panama is one of the very few endowed governments in the world. The purchase price of the Canal Zone, invested in New York real estate, yields an annual revenue which forms a part of the government budget. The annual payment of \$250,000 by the Canal Zone also helps. Since the beginning of the French Canal enterprise a considerable part of the monthly payrolls of the Canal builders has found its way into the till of the

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merchants in Colon and Panama, and these terminal cities have largely lived on the Canal Zone trade. Certainly, Panama has even to-day some peculiar financial advantages—and if these could bring prosperity, Panama should be prosperous.



FARM GRIST MILL, COSTA RICA

When the California gold rush began in 1848 Panama awoke from her century and a half of slumber and trouble began afresh. Again there was gold on the Isthmus, and again there was crime. Hundreds of ships discharged their cargoes and passengers on one side of the Isthmus, and the trip across was one not to be forgotten.

Now that the world has once more had to fight out the old battle of free institutions, it is worth while to remember that the oldest independent nation of the modern world is Panama; and that the first of the Spanish colonies to achieve freedom from the misgovernment of the old country was this same little nation on the Isthmus. Tired of the kind of

supervision which she had been undergoing from Europe, in 1826 Panama revolted, set up political housekeeping for herself, until she was later merged with the free New Granada—the modern Colombia.

If political independence has anything to do with advancement, then Panama should be very advanced indeed, for she led all her neighbors in achieving national separateness. The independence movement that swept over the western world a century ago affected Panama profoundly, and the microbe of political freedom soon produced a well-developed case of revolution—and the revolution was a success. Four score years afterward Panama again established her independence without the shedding of a drop of blood. If a spirit of independence can make a people prosperous, then Panama and prosperity should mean the same thing.

Panama has some peculiar political advantages to-day. Where other nations maintain their political sovereignty and internal peace at the cost of huge sums of money and by means of armies and battleships, Panama is spared this enormous drain upon her resources and men and money, and finds her political independence guaranteed against all the nations of the earth. Likewise she is sure of internal peace and is the only really war-tight, revolution-proof country in Latin-America. By the treaty entered into be-

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tween Panama and the United States, in return for the Canal Zone and other concessions, the United States guarantees the independence of Panama and agrees to step in at any time when it may be necessary and maintain order throughout the Isthmus. The Panamanians are not enthusiastic over this situation, and some of the politicians inwardly resent very bitterly an arrangement which makes impossible their chosen profession of agitators and revolutionary leaders.

There are people who tell us that the basis of national progress is economic and commercial. Given a land with all large resources, we shall perforce have a progressive people. Measured by this standard, Panama should lead all the rest. Her thirteen hundred miles of coast bound a narrow empire, but an empire of wonderful possibilities. Her inexhaustible soil, her frequent rivers, her rich jungles, her broad savanas, her high mountains and dense forests, her mines and climate and rainfall, and a world market right at her doors—all that nature could do to lay the foundations of material wealth seems to have been done here.

If so-called modern science and engineering skill can bring prosperity, then the Isthmus of Panama includes the site of the world's last achievement in engineering, sanitation, and organized efficiency. Health conditions on the Canal Zone are better than in many cities of the

United States. General Gorgas said that there were three causes for which the Americans left Panama in the old days: yellow fever, malaria, and cold feet, and that of the three the last caused more desertions than the other two combined. It is worth noting that the first two mentioned have now vanished entirely, and it but remains to find a preventive for frigid pedal extremities to make the tropics a white man's land.

Panama and Colon to-day are clean and healthful. Even the tropical buzzard that hovers over every town and crossroad in this mid-America world has disappeared from these cities—starved to death. The American Board of Health looks after the garbage cans and backyards and drains, and woe be unto the unhappy mosquito that inadvertently wanders into this forbidden territory. The entire country is now free from yellow fever, and while there is some malaria in the lowlands



HAPPY KINDERGARTNERS,
PANAMA

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during the wet season, health conditions are far better than might be supposed.

The question of climate raises visions of burning days and sleepless nights. To people who have never lived in the tropics any lurid tale is plausible. But these tales of torment do not come from dwellers in the tropics, but from overheated imaginations of writers of fiction who find the tropics a rich field, because most of their readers know nothing of the subject. There are more comfortable days in Panama, per year, than in New York. There is rarely a night when one cannot sleep in comfort. If there were nothing the matter but the climate, there would be no reason for shunning Panama.

By all the rules of the great game of getting rich, Panama ought to be both prosperous and progressive. Seemingly every chance has come her way.

Yet the visitor does not find Panama as a whole either rich or energetic. The terminal cities, Panama and Colon, have lived pretty well off the proceeds of the Canal Zone, but the great interior country is sparsely inhabited by people who are neither prosperous nor progressive. Poverty, indolence, and dirt abound throughout the provinces. Education is attempted, and the present system, when perfected, will afford fairly good rudimentary training, but as now conducted it is a promise as well as a performance. With a

high illiteracy the people of Panama cannot be said to live on a lofty intellectual plane. Not one man in a thousand makes the slightest attempt to improve the country, or takes the least interest in what the world is doing.

In the capital city are educated and refined men, both prosperous and progressive. Their activities are divided among business enterprises, professional callings, and political activity. Very few of these men are interested in development projects to any extent. Agriculture as a basis of national wealth has little place in their thinking, unless somebody else can be induced to attend to the agriculture while they themselves take care of the wealth. Working on a farm is all right for ignorantes and peons, but has no interest for a gentleman. The develop-

ment of natural resources is not interesting unless it affords a percentage of some sort, to be earned without effort. The unfortunate fact is that such modern conditions as exist in Panama to-day have largely been brought to her ready-made,



YOUNG COSTA RICA IS
ENTERPRISING

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which may be why she does not take more interest in them.

The question of morals and marriage laws is one which had better be let alone unless the prowler is prepared to find some very unpleasant things. All children are baptized, and, as before explained, the baptisms are registered and classified either as "Legítimo" or "Natural"—the latter, of course, being illegitimate. Only thirty per cent of the births of the Republic as a whole, are born of married parents. The reasons for this are not so simple as may at first appear. Panama has to-day a civil marriage law, but unless a man has abundant leisure, endless patience, and can afford to hire a lawyer or two, he had better be married somewhere else. Evidently, influences were brought to bear upon the framers of the civil marriage law which induced them to overload it with requirements that make it exceedingly unpopular. No voice of protest is raised against this scandalous moral situation on the part of the priests of the established church, who merely shrug their shoulders and shake their heads and say, "What can you do about it?" Certainly, they themselves do nothing at all except to ignore the situation.

There have been physical factors that have militated against the progress of Panama. While the climate is comfortable, most of the time it lacks stimulus. There is no "kick" in it.

Without occasional respites in a higher altitude and cooler atmosphere, the man from the north loses his driving power and his wife sometimes gets a case of nerves. Four hundred years of it will take the energy out of any man; and many of the present inhabitants of interior Panama appear to have lived here for about that length of time. For the development of high human effi-



WOODEN SUGAR MILL AND ITS MAKER

ciency it is required in a climate that it be something more than comfortable. It should at times be uncomfortable, and occasionally exasperating.

The workers of the Rockefeller Foundation have found eighty per cent of the people of the provinces afflicted with hookworm. Highly commendable is the work done by these representatives of the Institute, but so long as the common people know nothing of sanitation, clean and

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pure food, present conditions will continue. And physical "hookworm" is accompanied by a similar mental condition. There is a moral hookworm throughout the country, and life slumps down to a hand-to-mouth drag from one day to the next. Both physical and mental conditions are better in the cities, of course, but there is still room for a moral prophylactic.

There are social forces which have largely accounted for this result. Possibly no place in the world shows more mixed blood than Panama. Shades and colors and tints and tones there are, and blends indescribable and also impossible to analyze or trace. The artists tell us that the combination of the primary colors with white results in a tint, while blending a primary color with black gives a shade. Well, most of these tones are shades, for the same scientific reason as that mentioned by the artist. From the Caribbean world has come its contribution of the West Indian Negroes, with consequent shady result.

The social results of this mixture are various and distressing, but well understood by anyone who has lived in the interior of Panama. Even the cities are affected in the same way. Social standing, political availability, and personal influence are largely determined by the degree of whiteness—or darkness—that prevails in the skin. And the general desire of the ignorant and unmoral native of the interior to "lighten up the

breed" has led to a moral situation that bodes no good for the away-from-home white man who may be living for a longer or shorter time in the up-country provinces.

Any aggressive North American, especially if he be from the West, looks upon the splendid areas of land, the fine rivers, the dense forests, and the other untouched resources of this rich country with amazement, and begins to plan development projects and dream of organizing syndicates, but the native loses no sleep over such vain imaginings. If he dreams at all, it is of his food if he be poor, and of politics if he be rich. Development in the North American sense is a disgrace, and no job for a gentleman. The smooth savanas may lie there untouched till kingdom come, for all he cares. The only interest in life is political manipulation. Law and politics are the two occupations most esteemed, and Panama is not different from other countries in the frequent association of these two professions.

Whence comes this emphasis on political activity, to the neglect of commerce and agriculture? It comes from Europe with the early inheritance of the first settlements and rulers of this Latin world. For them any form of physical work was dire disgrace. "These two hands have never done an hour's work" was a boast and badge of quality. The climate of the tropics made this philosophy of life easy to accept and follow, and what

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the leaders lived the followers did faithfully keep and perform. Of course somebody had to do a little work and raise a few vegetables and cattle, but the game was to find the unfortunate worker and then take away from him the product of his toil. Thus the getter lived without work and taught the loser the uselessness of further exercise.

By way of clearness these conditions are here described in their worst and final form. Bad as they are, they are not the whole truth. It takes more than mixed blood and hookworm and snob-bishness to account for the present social conditions of Central America.

If moral conditions in Panama to-day are not ideal, it is not due to any absence of church or lack of religion. With the explorers and conquerors of the sixteenth century came the missionaries and priests. Crosses were set up, bells were hung, masses were said, and everywhere the elaborate ritual of the Spanish church was maintained. Whole villages were "converted," baptized, and labeled as good Catholics in a day's time. Massive and beautiful churches were soon built in centers of population, and every village has its church, often representing nearly as much value as half of the houses of the town combined.

From the beginning until the coming of the North American to finish the Canal the Roman Church has had exclusive and uninterrupted oc-

cupation of this entire territory. There has been no competition, and there have been no interferences with her moral and spiritual leadership.

But in spite of this situation, or perhaps because of it, moral conditions are what they are in Panama to-day. Out of the closed Bible and the bound consciences of this system have come social incapacity and intellectual helplessness in all the fields of human activity. Most of Latin-America



PUBLIC MARKET, DAVID

has not yet learned that the intellect, like the nation, cannot exist half slave and half free. Only free consciences can guide free citizens to the founding of free political institutions and social activities. A successful democracy can never be reared upon a foundation of superstition and spiritual despotism. More than all other factors this moral blight and spiritual dry-rot is what is the matter with Panama. The moral and spiritual climate of a people has more to do with the growth or destruction of a spirit of progress

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than do thermometers and telephones and declarations of independence. Until the spirit of a Panamanian becomes a free spirit and he is permitted to think and worship after the dictates of a free conscience, Panama can never become a progressive nation.

Highly favored among the nations of the earth, this little country affords a strategic opportunity for the setting up of a national experiment in development and progress. If this undertaking is to succeed, there must be added to the large economic, social, and strategic resources of the country the element of a free spirit and an enlightened conscience. Out of these will come a sense of the dignity of labor, the worth-whileness of education, and the development of the now dormant resources of this beautiful land.

The problem of progress in Panama is inevitably linked with that of Protestantism. Work was begun by the Methodist Episcopal Church in Colon under Bishop William Taylor, and a strong West Indian congregation was gathered. This was later turned over to the Wesleyan Methodists, who maintain considerable work among the West Indians of the Caribbean Islands. With the purchase of the Canal Zone by the United States, the Methodists began to plan for work in Panama and eventually established a Spanish church and school at the head of Central Avenue, opposite the national palace.

But no serious effort was made by this denomination to meet and master the problems that arose from exclusive Protestant occupation of the Spanish-speaking section of the field until the time of the noted Panama Congress in February, 1916. Here met representatives of the Protestant movement in all Latin-America, and general principles of comity and cooperation were established and adopted. Under this working agreement, the Spanish work in the Republic of Panama was assigned to the Methodists as a unit of responsibility. To this area Costa Rica was later added. West Indian work was not included in this survey, and it is to be hoped that some similar representative and authoritative body may yet undertake to bring order and comity out of the unorganized, though friendly, confusion of West Indian denominational programs now existent.

The Pan-Denominational Congress of 1916 made definite the responsibility for Spanish work in Panama, and the denomination now in charge of this field is working on a program somewhat adequate to the strategic importance of the very conspicuous location beside the Canal Zone. When fully realized and in operation, this program of work will wield a wide influence in the Spanish-American world. A large factor in this new program has been the interest and enthusiasm of the young people of the California Conference Epworth League, who have done much

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to make possible an enlargement of the work undertaken.

Too much praise cannot be given to the earnest and efficient missionaries who founded and have maintained this mission. The Seawall Church has already sent out its influences to the ends of the earth. The standards and results attained in Panama College, so far as that institution has been developed, have exerted a strong influence on the educational and moral life of the city and of the republic. The work in 1919 included a Spanish base at the Seawall location, with its church and school, and American congregation, a West Indian school and church in Guachapali, a Spanish mission Sunday school and evangelistic service in the school building kindly loaned by the Wesleyans, a Spanish mission school and preaching service in Guachapali, a West Indian Sunday school and service at Red Tank, and a Chinese mission near the market. Present plans for future expansion include, in addition to the work now under way at David, an adequate program of interior education and evangelization, an industrial and agricultural school, a strong institution church in Panama, an institution of higher education, and adequate work in Colon.

This mission shares with the Northern Baptist Convention and the Northern Presbyterian Church denominational responsibility for most of Central America. The Baptists have work in

Honduras, Salvador, and the Presbyterians in Guatemala and in Colombia, further south. The Methodists complete the chain by the occupation of Panama and Costa Rica, in which latter republic work was begun in the latter months of 1917. Costa Rica presents an attractive field with its good climate, fertile country, Spanish-speaking population of intelligence, and large capacity for progress. The new mission met with success from the start and promises rapid growth.

The three denominations named are working together in complete harmony and have developed a unified program of Christian education for Central America, as the beginnings of further coordination of effort. There is no overlapping, no competition, and, above all, no overcrowding, in this promising but sparsely occupied field. The Protestant denominational front on this field is well unified.

There are several independent missions working in this field, some of which do not find it in their purposes to unite in any general movement, and none of which place emphasis on education. Chief among these is the Central America Mission which maintains workers in all the republics of Central America who confine themselves largely to evangelistic effort.

All of the Central republics have constitutional religious liberty, and the work of Protestantism is officially welcome everywhere. Of petty perse-

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cutions and ecclesiastical opposition there are numerous examples. The spirit of the Inquisition still smolders beneath the surface, but the new spirit of world-democracy makes more and more grotesque and futile the intolerance and bigotry of the Dark Ages.

Protestantism in Latin-America has been in the van of every movement toward progress and has contributed much toward the foundations of the new era. Without the Protestant movement, the present state of advance would be impossible. To-day Protestantism is in the anomalous position of being inadequate in equipment and manpower to meet the situation created or to supply the demands arising everywhere for adequate expression of free institutions. The lump is large and the leaven has been small, but the contagion of liberty and the awakening of conscience demand an adequate equipment and program.

There is promise of a new and worthy approach in the large purposes of the great denominations to undertake in adequate manner a program of world-reconstruction made imperative by the close of the great war. The collapse of all but moral and spiritual forces as a guarantee of peace renders all former alignments obsolete and forces the church to new methods and more comprehensive undertakings. It is now resolved to go up and possess this goodly land on the mere borders of which we have lingered for

nearly a century. The coming generation will see a reorganization and reconstruction of the Protestant program in Latin-America, and before the end of the twentieth century this mighty continent will have attained a noble citizenship in the neighborhood of great races.