CHAPTER XI

THE ORGANIZATION

WHEN the United States finally decided to build the Panama Canal, the next question of gravity which pressed for consideration was the creation of the organization by which it was to be built. Many problems were encountered, and after repeated changes in personnel and rearrangements of duties, the situation finally resolved into an organization headed by one man, clothed with the necessary powers, and held responsible for the consequent results.

The completion of the preliminaries for the acquisition of title to the Canal Zone and to the property and rights of the New Panama Canal Company took place when Congress, on April 28, 1904, made an appropriation of $10,000,000, which was to be paid to the Republic of Panama. Six days later the United States formally took possession of the Canal Zone and of the property of the Panama Canal Company, when at 7:30 o’clock in the morning, Lieut. Mark Brooke, of the United States Army, took over the keys and raised the American flag. The following day President Roosevelt announced the appointment of John Findley Wallace, of Massachusetts, as chief engineer of the canal at a salary of $25,000 a year, the appointment to be effective on the 1st day of June.
The first ship to arrive at Panama carried Maj. Gen. George W. Davis, who was to govern the Canal Zone; Col. William C. Gorgas, who was to make it sanitary; and George R. Shanton, who was to drive out the criminal element. Governor Davis was a member of the Isthmian Canal Commission, Colonel Gorgas had proved his worth in the sanitation of Cuba, and Shanton had been a “rough rider” with Colonel Roosevelt in the Cuban campaign.

When Chief Engineer Wallace arrived on the scene he found there an all but abandoned project. There were hundreds of French houses, but nearly all of them were in the jungle and practically unfit for human habitation. He found millions of dollars’ worth of French machinery, but almost none of it in condition to be put into service immediately. He knew in a general way the line of the canal, but surveys were lacking to determine its exact location at every point. With this situation in front of him, he found it necessary to concentrate his efforts upon the problem of getting ready for the work. While he was doing this the people at home began to demand that the dirt fly. Colonel Gorgas also found conditions which challenged his best efforts. Colon was a paradise of disease, Panama was no better. It was only by making both of these cities over again, from a sanitary standpoint, that any hope could be held out for reasonably healthy conditions.

During his stay on the Isthmus Mr. Wallace found himself handicapped at every turn by red tape, a new thing in his experience as a construction engineer. He could buy nothing without
THE ORGANIZATION asking for bids; every idea he sought to put into execution had to be submitted to Washington, and he found himself so harassed and handicapped that he wanted a new plan of organization.

Acting in accordance with his recommendations, President Roosevelt decided to accept the resignation of the existing Canal Commission, and to appoint a new one, in which, instead of having independent departments, with the governor independent of the chief engineer, and the chief sanitary officer independent of both the governor and the chief engineer, there should be a more united relation, in which all questions were to be decided by the commission as a whole, the final authority being vested in an executive committee composed of the chairman, the governor of the Canal Zone, and the chief engineer.

Under this plan, the second Isthmian Canal Commission was organized. It consisted of Theodore P. Shonts, chairman; Charles E. Magoon, Governor of the Canal Zone; John F. Wallace, chief engineer; Mordecai T. Endicott; Peter C. Hains; Oswald H. Ernst; and Benjamin A. Harrod.

Following the suggestion of Chief Engineer Wallace, the control of the Panama Railroad was also vested in the new commission.

While these changes were being made Chief Engineer Wallace was in Washington. There was dissatisfaction on the Isthmus with an accompanying spirit of unrest, and, to make matters worse, a yellow-fever epidemic broke out.

Only a few days after Mr. Wallace reached the Isthmus, he cabled the Secretary of War that he wished to return to Washington, hinting that he might re-
sign. Secretary Taft cabled to Governor Magoon for an opinion as to the motives which were behind this step on the part of Mr. Wallace, and was advised that it was brought about by the offer of a better salary and the fear of the yellow-fever epidemic. When Mr. Wallace reached New York he had a stormy interview with Secretary Taft, who roundly denounced him for quitting at such a critical time. Mr. Wallace declared his lack of confidence in the ability of Colonel Gorgas to control the yellow-fever epidemic, and asserted that the continual interference of red tape was so distracting to him as to make new employment attractive. President Roosevelt upheld his Secretary of War in his denunciation of Mr. Wallace, and promptly appointed John F. Stevens chief engineer at a salary of $30,000.

John F. Stevens arrived on the Isthmus on July 27, 1905. He found the Panama Railroad almost in a state of collapse. He declared that the only claim heard for it was that there had been no collisions for some time. "A collision has its good points as well as its bad ones," he observed, "for it indicates that there is something moving on the railroad."

Mr. Stevens immediately set to work to build up the road, and to provide the means for housing and feeding the canal army. But like his predecessor he found Government red tape hampering, and in his first annual report begged for "a thorough business administration unhampered by any tendency to technicalities, into which our public work sometimes drifts." He protested against civil-service requirements on the Isthmus,
and against the eight-hour working day; and President Roosevelt met his protests by exempting all employees except clerks from the operations of civil-service rules, and by abrogating the eight-hour day.

It was under the régime of Mr. Stevens that the question arose as to whether the canal should be built as a sea-level channel through the Isthmus, or as a lock canal with the water in the middle section 85 feet above the level of the sea. President Roosevelt thereupon appointed a board of consulting engineers, made up of 14 members, to visit the Isthmus and determine what type of canal should be built. Five members of this board of consulting engineers were foreigners appointed by their respective Governments at the request of President Roosevelt. They included the inspector general of Public Works of France, the consulting engineer of the Suez Canal, the chief engineer of the Manchester Canal, the chief engineer of the Kiel Canal, and the chief engineer of the Dutch dike system. Three of the American engineers and all five of the foreign engineers voted in favor of a sea-level canal. Chief Engineer Stevens and all but one member of the Isthmian Canal Commission concurred in the vote of the minority, made up wholly of American engineers in favor of the lock canal. President Roosevelt sustained the minority report, and Congress sustained him in the law of June 29, 1906.

In the fall of 1906 Chairman Shonts came out in advocacy of a plan to build the canal by contract. Here arose a difference between Mr. Shonts and Mr. Stevens, and Chairman Shonts
shortly thereafter resigned. A few months later Chief Engineer Stevens also resigned. It is said that his resignation was mainly due to his objection to the appointment of Army engineers as members of the Canal Commission, and to a letter he wrote the President in which he scored the limitations of red tape and Government methods generally. When Mr. Stevens quitted the Isthmus he left behind him the nucleus of the general organization for building of the canal. He saw housing conditions brought up to the required standard, established the necessary commissary where canal employees could supply their needs at reasonable prices, and aided Colonel Gorgas in his fight to make the Isthmus healthful.

At this juncture the organization destined to build the canal was put into effect, with Colonel George W. Goethals at its head. Colonel Gorgas, the chief sanitary officer, was the only important official of the old régime held over. The other members of the commission were Maj. D. D. Gaillard and Maj. William L. Sibert, of the United States Engineer Corps; Civil Engineer H. H. Rousseau, of the United States Navy; and Messrs. J. C. S. Blackburn and Jackson Smith.

Under former commissions the Governor of the Canal Zone had ranked above the chief engineer, and the chairman, the chief engineer, and the governor had had rival powers, which resulted in a great deal of friction. Under the new order the offices of chairman and chief engineer were consolidated, and the governor was reduced to the title of "head of the Department of Civil Administration," reporting to the chairman, as did the
chief sanitary officer and all of the division engineers.

This commission, in personnel, remained intact during the long period of construction, except for the resignation in 1908 of Jackson Smith, who was succeeded by Lieut. Col. Harry F. Hodges; and for the resignation in 1910 of Mr. Blackburn, who was succeeded by Morris H. Thatcher. Mr. Thatcher, in turn, was succeeded in 1913 by Richard L. Metcalfe as head of the Department of Civil Administration.

During the construction period there were several rearrangements of the duties of the Army engineers associated with Colonel Goethals. From June, 1908, Major Gaillard, afterwards promoted to a lieutenant-colonelcy, was in charge of the ditch-digging work between Gatun and Pedro Miguel, which included the entire Gatun Lake and Culebra Cut sections. It is everywhere admitted that so far as difficulties were concerned, he had the hardest job on the Isthmus, next to the chief engineer. Colonel Gaillard entered the United States Military Academy in 1884 and was graduated with honors entitling him to appointment in the Corps of Engineers. Before being selected as a member of the Canal Commission, he had had much experience in important work. For two years he was in charge of all river and harbor improvement in the Lake Superior region. When he first went to the Isthmus he was assigned as the supervising engineer in charge of harbors, the building of breakwaters, etc.

Lieut. Col. William L. Sibert, another of the Army engineers who was made a member of the
Canal Commission, was graduated from West Point in 1884 and was made a lieutenant of engineers. From 1892 to 1894 he was assistant engineer in charge of the construction of the ship channel connecting the Great Lakes. The four years following he was in charge of the river and harbor work in Arkansas, and following that, spent one year teaching civil engineering in the Engineering School of Application. He then went to the Philippines as chief engineer of the Eighth Army Corps and became chief engineer and general manager of the Manila & Dagupan Railroad. From 1900 to 1907 he was in charge of the Ohio River improvements between Pittsburgh and Louisville. As division engineer of the Atlantic division of the Panama Canal he was in charge of the construction of the Gatun locks, Gatun Dam, and the breakwaters at the Atlantic entrance to the canal.

Civil Engineer Harry H. Rousseau, of the United States Navy, was appointed a member of the Isthmian Canal Commission at the same time that Chief Engineer Goethals was selected to head the organization. He had had much experience in engineering work prior to the appointment and was a personal appointee of President Roosevelt, with whom he had come in contact when he was serving in the Bureau of Yards and Docks of the Navy Department when Mr. Roosevelt was assistant secretary of that Department. He entered the employ of the United States through the civil service, having been appointed a civil engineer in the Navy with the rank of lieutenant, after a competitive examination in 1898. For four
years he was an engineer of the bureau of which he afterwards became chief, and for four years following, from 1903 to 1907, he was engineer of the improvements of Mare Island Navy Yard, California. The duties of Commissioner Rousseau were changed from time to time, and he was finally given charge of the work of constructing the terminals at the ends of the canal. At the same time he was made assistant to the chief engineer, having charge of all mechanical questions arising on the canal.

When Jackson Smith, one of the two civilian members of the Canal Commission, resigned, he was succeeded by an Army officer, Col. Harry F. Hodges, who would have been a member of the commission from the first, upon the request of Colonel Goethals, had not the United States Engineer Corps required his services. Colonel Hodges was graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1881, and immediately entered upon seven years of duty on river and harbor improvements in the United States. This was followed by four years' service as assistant professor of engineering at West Point, and that duty, in turn, by six years of work on rivers and harbors and fortifications. During the Spanish American War he served in Porto Rico, and then returned to river and harbor duty for two years. In 1901-02 he was chief engineer of the Department of Cuba, from which duty he was transferred to the War Department, where he became assistant to the chief of engineers. His experience in river and harbor work, coupled with his success as the designer of the locks of the American Sault Ste.
Marie Canal, fitted him for the work at Panama. He became assistant chief engineer and purchasing agent of the canal in 1907, and the following year was chosen a member of the commission to succeed Mr. Smith. The work of designing the locks and the lock machinery fell upon his shoulders. When President Roosevelt wanted a man to handle the delicate problems arising out of the peculiar relations with the Republic of Panama and the United States, he selected Joseph C. S. Blackburn, of Kentucky, who had just finished a long term of service in the United States Senate. Senator Blackburn was well equipped for such a position, combining that suavity indicated by the velvet glove with that determination of purpose which lies in the iron hand. The service of Col. William C. Gorgas, the chief sanitary officer on the Isthmus, began earlier than that of any of the higher officials. He went to the Isthmus immediately after it was taken over by the United States. He has been described as a man "with a gentle manner, but with a hard policy toward the mosquito." He was born in Mobile, Ala., in 1854, the son of Gen. Josiah Gorgas, of the Confederate Army. He became a member of the Medical Corps of the United States Army in 1880, and since his work at the head of the Cuban health campaign his name has been a household word in the United States. In establishing the Isthmian Canal Commission, which was destined to make the Panama Canal a reality, President Roosevelt selected Joseph Buckingham Bishop as its secretary. Mr. Bishop was made the editor of the Canal Record, a weekly paper
which was the official organ of the Canal Commission. He is a born investigator and when any matter arose concerning the work on the canal, about which the chief engineer desired an impartial report, he usually referred it to Mr. Bishop.

When the matter of organizing the work arose it was decided to arouse a spirit of emulation and rivalry, and S. B. Williamson, a civilian engineer, was put in charge of the Pacific end of the canal, with duties similar to those of the Army engineer on the Atlantic side. Mr. Williamson proved to be a master of the art of accomplishing a great deal with a given amount of money, and the cost sheets of the Pacific end will ever stand as a monument to his efficiency.

The list of engineers and other officials who contributed to the success of the work at Panama is a long one, but among them may be mentioned: Col. Chester Harding, who was the resident engineer at Gatun; W. G. Comber, who headed the dredging work on the Pacific end of the canal during the early days of the American undertaking, of the entire canal during the final stages; W. G. Rourke, who was resident engineer in Culebra Cut for a number of years; Caleb M. Saville, who worked out the data for the construction of the Gatun Dam; H. O. Cole, who succeeded S. B. Williamson on the Pacific end work; Lieut. Frederick Mears, who relocated the Panama Railroad; John Burke, who had charge of the commissary; Maj. Eugene T. Wilson, the chief subsistence officer; Brig. Gen. C. A. Devol, who was in charge of the quartermaster’s department; E. J. Williams, Jr., the disbursing officer; and Col. Tom
F. Cook, the picturesque chief of the Division of Posts and Customs.

To all these, and to scores of others who are not mentioned here merely because of the limitations of space, the American people owe the great success at Panama. The organization was imbued with a spirit of loyalty to the great task, and having its accomplishment singly in mind there was little room for jealous bickerings and none at all for scandal and corruption.

Every man who had a part in it always will be proud of his share, and that pride will be supported and justified by all Americans.
CHAPTER XII

THE AMERICAN WORKERS

The directory, supervisory, and mechanical work in constructing the canal was done by Americans. The engineers, the foremen, the steam shovelers, the operators of spoil trains, the concrete mixers, and, in short, the skilled workers were American citizens; the common and unskilled laborers were West Indians and Europeans. It is to the American workers therefore that the credit is due, for without their direction and aid in every operation the work could not have been done.

Never was there a more loyal, a more earnest, a more enthusiastic band of workmen than these same Americans. The steam shoveler felt as much pride, as much responsibility, in the task as did the chief engineer.

The difficulties under which they labored, the enervating climate, the absence from home, the lack of diversion and recreation, but served to temper the steel in their make-up. The American spirit was there, dominating every detail of the whole big job. Every man was determined to "make good," not for himself alone, but for the organization of which he was a part, and for his country.

In the beginning conditions were bad. There
were few conveniences to make life comfortable, and innumerable inconveniences harassing those who went there. The food was bad and the water was not as good as the food. The quarters were old French houses rescued from the jungle and filled with scorpions.

The result was that few of those who first went to the Isthmus remained, and those who returned to the United States spread far and wide reports of bad conditions on the Isthmus.

With this situation in mind the Canal Commission decided that two things had to be done. Wholesome living conditions had to be created for the people who came to the Isthmus, and a standard of wages had to be set that would prove attractive to good men at home. It was thus that the pay for the Americans on the canal came to be placed at 50 per cent higher than pay for the same character of work in the States. This soon proved a strong incentive to men to leave the States and go to Panama, and as living conditions were improved the number of men willing to accept work on the Isthmus increased.

Two classes of Americans turned their faces toward the Tropics as a result of the inducements held out by the Canal Commission. One was made up of those who were willing to go and stay a year or two, accumulating in that time experience and, perhaps, saving some little money; the other was made up of men whose desire was to go to the Isthmus and stay with the job, utilizing the opportunities it afforded for building up a comfortable bank account.

As the work moved forward those of weak pur-
BRIG. GEN. CARROLL A. DEVOL

AMERICAN LIVING QUARTERS AT CRISTOBAL
HARRY H. ROUSSEAU

LOWERING A CAISSON SECTION
pose and indifference to opportunity gradually dropped out. Their places were taken by others, until through a process of years of elimination there were approximately 5,000 Americans at Panama when the canal was finished; an army was made up almost wholly of men with a purpose in life and consequently of men who could be relied upon to do their work to the best of their ability. The result was that the last years of the task of construction saw every man loyal to his work and anxious to see the job move forward.

American visitors to the Isthmus had occasion to be proud of their countrymen there. Every tourist from a foreign country has commented upon the distinguished courtesy received at the hands of these men. One of them, perhaps England's most noted travel lecturer, said:

"The thing which impressed me more than anything else, outside of the gigantic work and the masterful way in which it is being done, was the exquisite courtesy of every American I met during my stay. I found every one of them not only ready to give such information as he might have but glad to do so. Each man was as proud of the work as if it were his own, and as ready to show his part of it to a stranger as if that stranger were his best friend. It was a delight to me from beginning to end to see the magnificent type of American manhood at work, and the pride taken by every worker in the project."

Every other tourist brought away the same impression. A man who went there without any other credentials than a desire to see the work was
shown the same courtesy and consideration as one with a pocketful of letters of introduction.

The Americans on the Isthmus did not count any hardship too great if it were demanded for the successful prosecution of the work. A case in point is that of J. A. Loulan, the engineer in charge of the rock-crushing plant at Ancon. One morning he was introduced to a visitor from the States who remarked that everything seemed to be running so smoothly that he supposed the work of a supervising engineer was no longer a difficult task. "Well," replied the engineer, "at least it does not pay to worry. Last night at 2 o'clock I was called out of bed by telephone and informed that a Jamaican negro hostler had accidentally knocked the chock from under the wheels of an engine he was firing up, and that it had run down the grade and off the end of the track into about two feet of soft earth. We worked from that time on until breakfast to get the engine back, and were satisfied to know that the accident did not delay the operations at the crusher. Not a man of the force was late getting back to work after four hours of strenuous extra night duty."

Speaking of the patience of the men Commissioner H. H. Rousseau said "The reason for all this is not far to seek; the man who has 'nerves' would never stick it out on a job like this. The climate, the exile from home, and the character of the work all conspire against the man who can not be patient. He soon finds that the Isthmus is no place for him. The result is that a process of elimination has gone on until the men who have 'nerves' have all left and their places
filled with those who are stoical enough to take things as they come."

The Americans on the Isthmus were early-risers. The first train from Colon for Panama leaves about 5 o’clock and the first train from Panama for Colon at 6:50. Almost any morning during the construction period one might walk into the dining room at the Tivoli Hotel and see a number of canal engineers breakfasting there who had left Colon on the early train. When one of them was asked if he did not find it something of a hardship to rise so early, he replied:

“Well, you see, from the standpoint of a man just from the States it would seem rather an unheard-of hour for a man to get out and go to work; but we have to meet conditions as we find them down here, and we soon get reconciled to it. There is scarcely a night that I am not called by telephone two or three times, and I have to get up in time to catch the early train several mornings in the week, so I get up at the same hour the other mornings as well. We are well paid, and we owe it to our country to make whatever sacrifices the work demands. And after a month or two we get out of the habit of feeling that it is a sacrifice.”

It is this spirit of devotion to the work that enabled the canal authorities to press it to a successful completion with such unprecedented rapidity. These men knew full well that their sacrifices in the interest of progress were appreciated. The most rigid spirit of friendly competition was maintained from the beginning.

The spirit of rivalry nowhere counted for more than among the steam-shovel men. In 1907 it
was decided to publish in the Canal Record the best steam-shovel performances from week to week. This immediately put every steam-shovel gang on its mettle, and soon there was a great race with nearly a hundred entries, a race that continued from that day until the completion of the excavation. The result was that records of steam-shovel performances were made eclipsing everything that had gone before. The average daily excavation per shovel rose from year to year until it was double in the end what it was in the beginning.

As heretofore pointed out, the process of elimination that went on continuously during the construction work sent large numbers of American workers back to the States from the Isthmus. During a single year about three-fifths of the Americans threw up their jobs and returned home. The average stay of Americans during the construction period was about a year. Bachelors were much more given to returning to the States than married men. The endless round of working, eating, sleeping, with its small chance of diversion, made the average bachelor glad to get back to the States within two years. On the other hand, the married men found home life just about as pleasant as in the States. They had with them about 2,000 women, and as many children. Many of the latter were born under the American Eagle at Panama.

The boys who were born there may, if they choose, become native Panamans. The son of a former President of Panama, in talking with Commissioner Rousseau, advised him to make a
Panaman citizen of little Harry Harwood Rousseau, Jr. "You see," said he, and he spoke in all earnestness and seriousness, "he will stand so much better chance of becoming President of the Republic of Panama than of becoming President of the United States."

The American children on the Zone, brimming over with life and health, proved conclusively that the Tropics worked no hardship upon them.

The Canal Commission, from the beginning to the end, made the welfare of the army of workers one of its first cares. As the days of a completed canal approached, every effort was made to enable the employees who had to be laid off to find employment in the States. Provision was made that they could accumulate their leave of absence in such a way as to entitle them to 84 days of full pay after leaving. This was arranged so as to give them sufficient time to establish connections in the States again, without being forced to do it without pay.

Close records also were kept of each employee, and the official immediately over each man was ordered to give him a rating card showing his record on the Canal Zone. No higher credentials could be carried by anyone seeking employment than to have a card from the Canal Commission showing a rating of "Excellent."

Owing to the firmness with which the commission ruled, there was little trouble in the way of strikes. In 1910 a lot of boiler makers who were getting 65 cents an hour on the per diem basis, struck for 75 cents an hour. Their demands were not met and some of them threw up their jobs.
The commission immediately arranged with its Washington office to fill their places, and they had no chance whatever to get further employment on the Isthmus.

The commission was given the power, by President Roosevelt, to order anyone to leave the Isthmus whose presence there was regarded as a detriment to the work. The result was that as soon as any man was found to be fomenting trouble, he was advised that a ship was returning to the United States on a certain date and that it would be expedient for him to take passage thereon. This power of deportation was more autocratic than any like power in the United States, but it proved of immense value in keeping things going satisfactorily at Panama. It was a power whose exercise was called for but few times, since the very fact that the commission had the power was usually a sufficient deterrent.

There are two societies on the Isthmus which tell of the effects of homesickness of the Americans in the employ of the Canal Commission—the Incas, and the Society of the Chagres. The Incas are a group of men who meet annually on May 4th for a dinner. The one requirement for membership in this dining club is service on the canal from the beginning of the American occupation. In 1913 about 60 men were left on the Isthmus of all those Americans who were there at the time of the transfer of the canal property to the United States in 1904.

The Society of the Chagres was organized in the fall of 1911. It is made up of American white employees who have worked six years continuously
on the canal. When President Roosevelt visited the Isthmus in the late fall of 1906 he declared that he intended to provide some memorial or badge which would always distinguish the man who for a certain space of time had done his work well on the Isthmus, just as the button of the Grand Army distinguishes the man who did his work well in the Civil War. Two years later a ton of copper, bronze, and tin was taken from old French locomotives and excavators and shipped to Philadelphia, where it was made into medals by the United States Mint. These medals are about the size of a dollar and each person who has served two years is entitled to one. It is estimated that by the time the last work is done on the canal, about 6,000 of these medals will have been distributed. For each additional two years a man worked, the Canal Commission gave a bar of the same material.

The Society of the Chagres, therefore, is made up of men who have served at least six years, and who have won their medals and two service bars. The emblem of the society is a circular button showing on a small, black background six horizontal bars in gold which are surrounded by a narrow gold border. In 1913 only about 400 out of the many thousands of Americans at one time or another employed in the construction of the Panama Canal were entitled to wear the insignia of this society.
CHAPTER XIII

THE NEGRO WORKERS

The West Indian negro contributed about 60 per cent of the brawn required to build the Panama Canal. When the United States undertook the work the West Indian negro had a bad reputation as a workman. It was said that he lacked physical strength; that he had little or no pluck; that he was absolutely unreliable; that he was unusually susceptible to disease; and that in view of these things the canal never could be finished if he were to supply the greater part of the labor. But he lived down this bad reputation in large part, and, although it must be admitted that he is shiftless always, inconstant frequently, and exasperating as a rule, he developed into a good workman.

The Government paid the West Indian laborer 90 cents a day, furnished him with free lodgings in quarters, and sold him three square meals a day for 9 cents each, a total of 27 cents a day for board and lodging. On the balance of 63 cents, the West Indian negro who saved was able to go back home and become a sort of Rockefeller among his compatriots. His possible savings, as a matter of fact, were about two and a half times the total wages he received in his native country.

But the sanitary quarters, and the necessarily
strict discipline maintained therein, did not please him. He yearned for his thatched hut in the "bush," for his family, and the freedom of the tropical world. Thus the homesickness of the well-quartered, well-fed negro became a greater hindrance to the work than the ill-fed condition of the "bush dweller." The result was that the commission reached the conclusion that it could better maintain a suitable force by allowing the negroes to live as they chose. Therefore, permission was given them to live in the "bush," and about nine-tenths of them promptly exchanged the sanitary restrictions of the commission quarters, and the wholesome food of the commission mess kitchen, for the dolce far niente of the "bush." The result of this experiment in larger liberty was in part a success and in part a failure. The list of names on the roll of workers was largely lengthened, but there was no great addition to the force of the men at work on any given day. It was a common saying in the Zone that if the negro were paid twice as much he would work only half as long. Most of them worked about four days a week and enjoyed themselves the other three. It may be that the "bush dweller" was not fed as scientifically as the man in the quarters, but he had his chickens, his yam and bean patch, his family and his fiddle, and he made up in enjoyment what he lost in scientific care.

Marriage bonds are loose in the West Indies, and common-law marriages are the rule rather than the exception. But, as one traveled across the Isthmus and saw the hundreds of little thatched huts lining the edge of the jungle, he could see
that the families who lived there seemed to be as happy, and the children as numerous, as though both civil and religious marriage ceremonies had bound man and wife together.

When the Americans first began work it was an accepted dictum that one Spaniard or one Italian could do as much work as three negroes. The negroes seemed to be weak. It took six of them to carry a railroad tie where two Spaniards might carry it as well. This belief that the Spaniard was more efficient than the negro stirred the West Indians to get down to work, and in a year or two they were almost as efficient while they were working as were the Spaniards, but the Spaniards worked six days a week while the negroes worked only four.

Of course there were those who spent practically everything as they made it, and they constituted no small percentage of the total negro force. But, on the other hand, some of the negroes were industrious, constant, and thrifty. They saved all they could, working steadily for a year or two, and then went back to Jamaica or Barbados to invest their money in a bit of land and become freeholders and consequently better citizens.

The negro laborers at first were obtained by recruiting agents at work in the various West Indian Islands, principally Jamaica and Barbados. The recruiting service carried about 30,000 to the Isthmus, of whom 20,000 were from Barbados and 6,000 from Jamaica. It was not more than a year or two, however, after the work got under way, until there was little occasion for recruiting. Every ship that went back to Barbados or to
Jamaica carried with it some who had made what they considered a sufficient fortune. Every community possessed those who had gone to Panama with only the clothes on their backs, a small tin trunk, a dollar canvas steamer chair and, mayhap, a few chickens; and who had come back with savings enough to set them up for life. This fired dozens from each of those same communities with the desire to go and do likewise. The result was that the canal employment lists were kept full by those who came on their own initiative.

The terms of entrance to the Canal Zone were easy, the steerage fares were low, and as a result the excess of arrivals over departures sometimes amounted to 20,000 in a single year. The steamship companies had to keep careful and persistent watch to prevent stowaways. Even at that there were hundreds who sought to reach the Isthmus in this way in spite of the fact that they were usually carried back without being permitted to land at Colon.

There was little or no friction between the whites and the blacks on the Canal Zone. This immunity from racial clashes resulted from two causes — one was the incomparable courtesy of the West Indian negro and the other his knowledge that he could expect good treatment only so long as he kept out of trouble. Few of them, indeed, were ever inclined to be offensive. They are usually educated in the three “R’s,” and are also very polite. Ask one a question and the answer will be: “Oh, yes, Sir,” or “Oh, no, Sir,” or if he has not understood, “Beg pardon, Sir.” He would no more omit the honorific than a Japanese maiden ad-
dressing her father would forget to call him "Honorable."

The different types of West Indian negroes found on the Canal Zone constituted an endless study in human characteristics. They were all great lovers of travel, and no regular train ever made a trip without from two to half a dozen coaches filled with them. After pay day practically every negro on the Zone was wont to get out and get a glimpse of the country.

Without exception they are adepts in carrying things on their heads; consequently, they usually possess an erect carriage and splendid bearing. It is said that the first ambition of a West Indian negro child is to learn to carry things on its head in imitation of its parents. Frequently a negro will be seen with nothing in either hand, but carrying a closed umbrella balanced horizontally on his head. Once in a while one may be seen to get a letter from the post office, place it on top of his head, weight it down with a stone, and march off without any apparent knowledge that he has executed a circus stunt.

Some of the negroes who came to work on the canal never saw a wheelbarrow before arriving there. Upon one occasion some French negroes from Martinique were placed on a job of pick and shovel work. Three of them loaded a wheelbarrow with earth, then one of them stooped down, the other two put the wheelbarrow on his head and he walked away with it. But, with all of his inexperience, the Martinique negro proved to be the best West Indian worker on the canal.

The Martinique negroes were the most pictur-
esque of all the West Indians on the job. The women wore striking though simple costumes, bandana handkerchiefs around their heads, and bright-colored calico dresses usually caught up on one side or at the back, thus anticipating the Parisian fashion of the slit skirt by many years.

A large number of the negroes lived in small tenement houses built by private capital, and oftener than not one room served the entire family. Nearly every one of the American settlements had its West Indian quarter where these buildings and the Chinese stores flourished to the exclusion of everything else. At the Pacific end of the Panama Railroad there was a suburb known as Caledonia, which was given over almost entirely to West Indian families. One could drive through there any day and see half-grown children dressed only in Eden's garb. In other parts of the canal territory one saw very few naked children except in the back streets of Colon.

The Government took the best of care of the negroes on the work during the entire construction period. There were hospital facilities at both ends of the canal and sick camps along the line. The commissary protected them against extortion by the native merchants and gave them the same favorable rates enjoyed by the Americans. The color line was kindly but firmly drawn throughout the work, the negroes being designated as silver employees and the Americans as gold employees. The post offices had signs indicating which entrances were for silver employees and which for gold employees. The commissaries had the same provisions, and the railroad company made the
general distinction as much as it could by first and second class passenger rates. Very few of the negroes ever made any protest against this. Once in a while an American negro would go to the post office and be told that he must call at the "silver" window. He would protest for a while, but finding it useless, would acquiesce.

The idea of speaking of "silver and gold employees," rather than black and white employees, was originated by E. J. Williams, Jr., the disbursing officer of the Canal Commission. He first put this designation on the entrances to the pay car and it was immediately adopted as the solution of the troubles growing out of the intermingling of the races.

One of the most interesting experiences that could come to any visitor to the Isthmus was a trip across the Zone on the pay car; to see 24 tons of silver and 1,600 pounds of gold paid out for a single month’s work; and to watch the 30,000 negroes, the 5,000 Americans, and the 3,000 or 4,000 Europeans on the job file through the pay car and get their money. The negroes were usually a good-natured, grinning lot of men and boys, but they were wont to get impatient, not with the amount of money they drew but with its weight. Under an agreement with the Panama Government the Canal Commission endeavored to keep the Panaman silver money at par. Two dollars Panaman money was worth one dollar American, and the employees were paid in Panaman coin. Thus a negro who earned $22 during the month would get 44 of the "spiggoty" dollars. These "spiggoty" dollars are the same
size as our own silver dollars and to carry them around was something of a task.

When the negroes were asked what they proposed to do with their money the almost invariable reply was: “Put it to a good use, sir.” American money was always at a premium with them and the money-changers in the various towns usually did a land-office business on pay day.

Paper money was not used on the pay car at all. In the first place, there was always danger of its blowing away, and in the second place paper money in the hands of negro workmen soon assumed a most unsanitary condition. The negroes were always desirous of getting American paper money because they could send it home more cheaply than gold.

Large numbers of West Indian women, the majority of them with their relatives, lived on the Zone during the construction period. They were for the most part industrious and made very good household servants. They were nearly always polite and deferential, some of them even saying, “Please, Ma’am,” when saying “Good morning.”

It was a rare experience to travel on a ship carrying workers to the Canal Zone from the Islands of the West Indies. Ships calling at Kingston, Jamaica, would usually take on a hundred or more passengers. They would be quartered either forward or aft on the main deck. They would carry aboard with them all kinds of small packages. Some would have small boxes of chickens or pigeons, and some little old sawbuck-fashioned folding beds covered with canvas. As soon as inspected by the doctor for trachoma each negro would
select the most favorable spot, gather his furniture around him, and settle down in one place, there to remain almost without moving during the whole of the 40-hour trip across the Caribbean. When the water was fine and the sailing smooth the first cabin passengers might conclude that they were carrying a negro camp meeting. On the other hand, if the weather were bad and the sea rough, a sicker lot of people nowhere might be found. One of the favorite negro preventives of seasickness is St. Thomas bay rum applied liberally to the face, although to the on-looker it never seems to prevent or cure a single case.

Before landing at Colon every one of these negroes had to be vaccinated. Almost without exception they tried to prevent the virus "taking" by rubbing the scarified spot with lime juice or with some other preparation. Meals on board generally consisted of rice and potatoes, and, perhaps, coffee and bread. One might see a dozen young girls in a group eating with one hand and with the other polishing their complexions with the half of a lime.

With all his faults — and they were not few — the West Indian negro laborer probably was the best workman that could have been employed for the job at Panama. He was usually as irresponsible, as carefree, and yet as reliable a workman as our own American cottonfield hand. He made a law-abiding citizen on the Zone, was tractable as a workman, and pretty certain always to make a fair return to the United States on the money it paid him in wages.

Under the firm but gentle guidance of the
master American hand, he did his work so well that he has forever erased from the record of his kind certain charges of inefficiency and laziness that had long stood as a black mark against him.

The Canal Commission so appreciated his good work that it made arrangements to return him to his native country when his services no longer were required, there to take up the life he led before he heard the call of the “spiggoty” dollars that took him across the Caribbean.

He will miss the life on the Isthmus. He was worked harder, he was treated better, and he was paid higher wages there than he ever will be again in his life. Perhaps he has saved; if so, he retires to be a nabob. Perhaps he has wasted; if so, he must go back to the hand-to-mouth existence that he knew in the days before.

But after all, the experience of the thousands of West Indian negroes employed on the canal will have a stimulating effect on their home countries, and their general level of industrial and social conditions will be raised.

At any rate, the American Republic always must stand indebted to these easy-going, care-free black men who supplied the brawn to break the giant back of Culebra.
TO BUILD the canal required the labor of some fifty thousand men. To induce these men to go to Panama, to stay there, to work there, and to work there efficiently, was no light undertaking. Health was promised them by the most efficient sanitary organization that ever battled with disease. Wealth was promised them, relatively speaking, in the form of wages and salaries much higher than they could obtain at home for the same work. But health and wealth, much desired and much prized as they are, can not of themselves compensate for transplanting a man to an alien shore and an alien atmosphere, especially if that shore be tropic and that atmosphere hot. There must also be comfort.

And comfort was promised to the canal diggers by the commissary department. Good food at prices cheaper than one pays in the United States, and quarters of the best—these things the commissary held out as a part of the rewards at Panama.

Of course this was not the chief object of the commissary department—it was the incidental factor that in the end almost obscured the main issue. The main business was so well done that everybody took it for granted, just as no one will
remark about the sun shining although that is the most important fact we know. The main business of the commissary was to keep the canal diggers fed and housed so that they would have the strength for their tasks. How this was done, how fresh beef and ice cream were made daily staples in tropic Panama, how the canal army was fed, is a big story in itself.

The history of the French régime was such as to prejudice the whole world against the canal region and to deter any but the most adventurous spirit from entering there into a gamble with death. The Americans soon found that without extraordinary inducements it would be next to impossible to recruit a force able to build the canal. Therefore it was determined to make the rewards so great that extra dollars to be gained by going to Panama would outweigh the fears of those who had any desire to go. It was decided to pay the employees of the Canal Commission and the Panama Railroad Company wages and salaries approximately one-half higher than those obtaining at home for the same work. Furthermore, it was decided that the Government should furnish free quarters, free medical service, free light, and other items which enter into the expense budget of the average family. It was found advisable to establish Government hotels, messes, and kitchens, where the needs of every employee from the highest officer to the most lowly negro laborer could be met, and to operate them at cost.

Still another problem had to be faced; that of providing places where the people employed in building the canal could escape from the high
prices fixed by the merchants of Panama and Colon. With this end in view, a great department store, carrying upward of 5,000 different articles, was built at Cristobal. This store established branches in every settlement of canal workers where patrons could go to ship and receive the benefit of prices much lower than those prevailing with regular Panaman merchants.

Anyone who will study carefully the annual reports of the operation of the commissary of the Panama Railroad Company, will realize what great profits are made by the various middlemen in the United States who handle food products between the producer and the consumer. In 1912 the commissary had gross sales amounting to $6,702,000, with purchases amounting to $5,325,000. This represents a gross profit of 26 per cent. The cost of transportation from New York and distribution on the Isthmus, amounted to about 24 per cent, leaving a net profit of approximately 2 per cent on the sales of goods. When it is remembered that transportation of commissary products from New York amounted approximately to a quarter of a million dollars a year, and that wagon deliveries on the Isthmus added $50,000 a year to this, it will be seen that the expenses of distribution at Panama were approximately on the same footing with those in the United States.

In the case of dressed beef, one finds a most illuminating example of how it is possible to sell the ordinary items of a family budget to the consumer at rates much lower than those obtaining in the United States. According to the most authentic information dressed beef laid down at Panama
costs more, quality for quality, than it costs the ordinary retail butcher in the States. At one time in 1912 the commissary was paying $11.94 ¼ a hundred pounds for whole dressed beeves laid down in New York. This was for the best corn-fed western steers, a grade of beef that is found only in the best retail butcher shops of any American city. Yet, with the expense of ocean-refrigerator carriage added, and with other operating costs equal to those of the retail butcher in the States, the commissary found it possible to sell to the consumer, delivered at his kitchen door, porterhouse steaks from this beef at 20 cents, sirloin steaks and roasts at 19 cents, and round steaks at 13 cents a pound. At this same time the average American housewife was paying from 26 to 30 cents for porterhouse steaks, from 22 to 26 cents for sirloin steaks and roasts, and from 17 to 22 cents for round steaks; and in the butcher shops in the United States where grades of meat comparable to those at Panama were handled the figures were usually around the top quotations.

One cannot escape asking the question how it is that if the Panama Railroad commissary could pay approximately 12 cents a pound for dressed beef at New York, deliver it in refrigeration at Cristobal, thence to the housewife by train and wagon, and make a gross profit of some 26 per cent by the operation, that the American retail butcher can reasonably claim that at the price he sells his meat he is making little or no net profit.

One finds the same scale of prices on other commodities at Panama as meats. Only the very best goods are handled in the commissary. Any
reasonable need of any employee could be supplied by the commissary at prices probably lower than a retail merchant in the United States could buy the same commodities.

A few instances of how the commissary fared when its supply ran short will serve to illustrate the grasping disposition of the average Panaman merchant.

In one case high waters in the Chagres interrupted traffic on the Panama Railroad, and the price of ice in Panama City promptly jumped from 50 cents to $1 a hundred pounds. At another time a ship bringing coffee to the Isthmus ran aground and the commissary had to buy coffee in the Panama market. It had to pay 6 cents a pound more at wholesale for the coffee than it was selling for at retail in Panama the day before the ship went aground. On another occasion a vessel carrying a supply of milk went ashore and the wholesale price of that commodity jumped a hundred per cent overnight. The Panaman merchants made a long and persistent fight to get the privilege of doing the business which is done by the commissary, but the canal officials were too wise to allow the working force to be dependent upon native business men for family budget needs.

Although the commissary did an annual business of nearly $7,000,000 a year during the height of the construction period, it received comparatively little actual money for the commodities it sold. A great deal of this business was with the subsistence department of the Canal Commission, furnishing supplies for the hotels, European laborers' messes, and common laborers' kitchens.
Practically all of the remainder was with the employees of the commission, and was done through coupon books. When an individual wanted to buy from the commissary he asked that a coupon book be issued him. If it were found that he had sufficient money coming to him for services rendered to cover the cost of the book, it was issued to him and the clerk in the commissary detached coupons to cover the purchases. When the monthly pay roll was made up, the cost of the coupon books was deducted from the amount due the employee for services. Many employees and their families lived too far away from the commissaries to make daily visits, so they simply deposited their coupon books with the main commissary at Cristobal and sent their orders in by mail from day to day. The commissary clerks would fill these written orders, sending the goods out on the first train.

In addition to buying and selling products for the benefit of the canal workers, the commissary operated a number of manufacturing establishments. It had a bakery using some 20,000 barrels of flour, baking 6,000,000 loaves of bread and other things in proportion annually; an ice-cream plant freezing 138,000 gallons of ice-cream annually; a laundry washing 4,250,000 pieces a year; a coffee-roasting plant; and a large cold-storage warehouse. About 70,000 people were constantly supplied with commodities from the commissary.

In its efforts to meet the needs of the several classes of employees on the Canal Zone the commission established four different kinds of eating
places,—a large general hotel, a score of line hotels, Spanish messes, and West Indian laborers' kitchens. At Ancon it built the large Tivoli Hotel costing half a million dollars, for the accommodation of visitors; and of those high-class employees who desired modern hotel facilities. This hotel is the social center of the Canal Zone. Here practically all of the tourists come and stay while on the Isthmus.

During the year 1912 this hotel cleared $53,000 in its operations. The cost of the supplies for the meals served, of which there were 161,000, was approximately 51 cents per meal. The cost of services was approximately 19 cents, making a total of 70 cents per meal. The rates were $3 up to $5.50 a day, employees being given special concessions.

The line hotels were, more properly speaking, merely dining-rooms where the American employees were furnished substantial meals for 30 cents each. Outsiders paid 50 cents each for these meals. They were up to a very high standard. Once the late Senator Thomas H. Carter, of Montana, was a member of a Senate committee visiting the Isthmus and he invited the subsistence officer, Maj. Wilson, to come to Washington and show the manager of the Senate restaurant how to prepare a good meal. A year later, after Senator Albert B. Cummins, of Iowa, had eaten one of the lunches at Gatun, he renewed the invitation of Senator Carter, telling Maj. Wilson he was sure that if he were to come Senators would get better meals for their money. At one of the Congressional hearings on the Isthmus Representative T. W. Sims,
WASHINGTON HOTEL, COLON

MAJOR EUGENE T. WILSON

THE TIVOLI HOTEL, ANCON
of Tennessee, asked that the menu of a meal he had eaten at one of these hotels be inserted in the record. Major Wilson inserted the menu for several days instead. The following is the menu at the Cristobal Hotel for January 20, 1912:

Breakfast. — Oranges, sliced bananas, oatmeal, eggs to order, German potatoes, ham or bacon, hot cakes, maple sirup, tea, coffee, cocoa.

Lunch. — Vegetable soup, fried pork chops, apple sauce, boiled potatoes, pork and beans, sliced buttered beets, stewed cranberries, creamed parsnips, lemon meringue pie, tea, coffee, cocoa.

Dinner. — Consomme vermicelli, beefsteak, natural gravy, lyonnaise potatoes, stewed beans, sliced beets, stewed apples, carrots a la Julienne, hot biscuits, ice-cream, chocolate cake, tea, coffee, cocoa.

The line hotels in 1912, which were operated at a loss of $12,000, served over 2,000,000 meals. The cost of the supplies per meal amounted to $0.2504 and the service to $0.0165, making the average meal cost $0.3065, while the employees were charged 30 cents. Approximately 2,000 Americans were continuous patrons of the line hotels.

The messes for European laborers were operated in 1912 at a total cost of $405,000. The returns from their operations amounted to $443,000, showing a net profit of $38,000 on 1,108,000 rations. The net profit per day’s ration approximated $1.3 cents. The supplies entering into the ration cost $0.3106 and the service of preparing it $0.0547.

The national diet for Europeans would appear very monotonous to Americans. For the Span-
iards who constituted the major portion of the European employees, it was a "rancho," which is a mixture of stewed meat, potatoes, cabbage, tomatoes and garbanzos heavily flavored with Spanish sweet pepper. Their soups were made very stiff, really a meal in themselves, since they were about the consistency of Irish stew mashed up. A day's ration for Spanish laborers ran about as follows:

Breakfast. — Roast beef, pork sausage, corned-beef, sardines or bacon, one-half loaf of bread, chocolate and milk.

Dinner. — Garbanzos or macaroni, roast beef or hamburger steak, fried potatoes, oranges or bananas, one-half loaf of bread, coffee.

Supper. — Rice soup, peas or beans, rancho, one-quarter loaf of bread, tea.

The Government charged the European laborers 40 cents a day for their meals. Their mess halls were large, airy, comfortable and conspicuously clean. The European laborers nearly all patronized these mess halls; about 3,200 of them constantly were fed at these places.

Wherever there was a West Indian negro settlement along the line of the canal the commission operated a mess kitchen. These kitchens were kept scrupulously clean and the laborers were furnished meals at 9 cents each. Each laborer who patronized the kitchen had his little kit into which the attendants put his meal, and he could carry it anywhere he desired to eat it. In spite of the fact that these meals corresponded almost exactly to the American Regular Army field rations, they were never popular with the West Indian negroes. Although there were some 25,000 of
these laborers on the canal in 1912, only a little more than a half million rations were issued to them during the year. Less than 15 per cent of the negro force patronized the commission kitchen.

The following is a specimen day’s ration in a West Indian kitchen:

Breakfast. — Cocoa and milk, porridge, bread, jam.

Dinner. — Pea soup, beef, doughboys, rice, bread, bananas.

Supper. — Stewed beef, boiled potatoes, stewed navy beans, bread, tea.

During the construction period of the canal the average American received approximately $150 a month for his labor. Those who were married and remained in the service a reasonable time were provided, rent free, with family quarters. Their light bills were never rendered, the coal for their kitchen stoves cost them nothing, and the iceman never came around to collect. The bachelors were provided with bachelor quarters with the necessary furniture for making them comfortable. The average married quarters cost from $1,200 to $1,800 each, and the average quarters for a bachelor about $500 to construct. The higher officials had separate houses; lesser officials were furnished with semi-detached houses. The majority of the rank and file of American married employees were housed in roomy, four-flat houses. The verandas were broad and screened in with the best copper netting, and all quarters were provided with necessary furniture at Government expense.
The assignment of quarters and furniture called for a great deal of diplomacy on the part of the quartermaster's department, since, if Mrs. Jones happened to visit Mrs. Smith, and found that she had a swell-front dresser in her bedroom, while her own was a straight-front dresser, an irate lady was very shortly calling on the district quartermaster and demanding to know why such discrimination should be practiced. Perhaps she had been on the Canal Zone longer than Mrs. Smith, and felt that if anyone were entitled to the swell-front dresser she was the one. The district quartermaster had to explain with all the patience at his command that it was not a case of discrimination but merely that the commission had bought swell-front dressers at a later date for the same price that it formerly had paid for the straight-front ones, and that consequently the people who furnished houses later got them.

On another occasion Mrs. Brown, calling on Mrs. White, found that Mrs. White had an electric light on her side porch. She immediately fared forth to pull the hair of the quartermaster for this discrimination, but was somewhat taken back when that official calmly informed her that the light had been put there for a few days in anticipation of a children's party that was to be given by Mrs. White one night that week.

The marvelous success of the commissary, not only in affording its patrons better service at lower prices, but also in making a substantial profit on the undertaking, had been referred to as the most valuable lesson taught by the whole
canal digging operation. It has proved the efficiency of government agencies in fields far removed from the ordinary operations of government, and it may be that its experience will be used to advantage in combating the high cost of living in the United States itself.
CHAPTER XV

LIFE ON THE ZONE

TRANSPLANT a man or a woman from a home in a temperate climate to an abode in the Tropics, and there is bound to be trouble. Disturbances in the body are expected and, proper precautions being taken, most often are warded off. Disturbances in the mind are not anticipated, preventive measures are seldom taken, and there comes the trouble. That is why the Young Men’s Christian Association and the American Federation of Women’s Clubs had their part to do in digging the Panama Canal, a part second in importance only to the sanitary work under Colonel Gorgas.

It’s an odd thing — this transplanting a man from the temperate to the torrid zone. It affects men of different nations in different ways. It is disastrous in inverse ratio to the adaptability of the man transplanted. A German or a Dutchman goes to the Tropics and almost without a struggle yields to the demands of the new climate all his orderly daily habits. Your Dutchman in Java will, except on state occasions, wear the native dress (or undress); eat the native food; live in the native house; and, like as not, take a native woman to wife. One thing only — he will retain his schnapps. The German is only a little less
adaptable, clings only a little longer to the routine of the Fatherland, but he, too, keeps his beer.

Your Englishman, on the contrary, defies the tropical sun and scorns to make any changes in his daily habit that he had not fixed upon as necessary and proper before he left his right little, tight little, island. He does, it is true, wear a pith helmet. That is due partly, perhaps, to his fear of the sun, but it is much more due to the fact that he associates it with lands where faces are not white; therefore he wears it in Egypt in the winter when it is shivery cold with the same religious devotion that he wears it in India when the mercury is running out of the top of the thermometer. Your Englishman, it is true, wears white duck clothes in the Tropics, but not the fiercest heat that old Sol ever produced could induce him for one moment to exchange his flannel underwear for cotton or to leave off his woolen hose. It is a pretty theory and not without much support, that it is this British defiance of tropical customs that has given him the mastery over Tropic peoples. And wherever goes the Briton there goes also Scotch-and-soda.

The Americans steer a middle course. They dress for the heat and make themselves comfortable as possible. They consume even greater quantities of ice than they do at home, and the average American eats every day in summer enough ice to kill a score of Englishmen. At least, that’s what the Englishmen would think.

But the American in the Tropics tenaciously clings to many of his home habits, despite the changed conditions of his place of sojourn. He
must have his bath, even though he talks less about it than the Englishman. He must have his three square meals a day, and breakfast must be a real breakfast. He demands screens to protect him from pestiferous insects, no less for comfort's sake than health's. And then he demands two other things—a soda fountain and a base-ball team.

It is true that he often will indulge in a British peg of Scotch-and-soda, or in a German stein of beer, but the native drink that he takes with him to the Tropics, and one that he alone consumes, and the one that he, in season and out of season, demands, is the sweet, innocent, and non-alcoholic product of the soda fountain. How incomprehensible is this to the sons of other nations no American may ever understand.

It may seem to be going far field to discuss even in the general way the differing tempers of men of different nations transplanted from a temperate to a torrid clime. But, as a matter of fact, it has a direct bearing on the accomplishment at Panama, of which Americans are so proud.

When the Americans first undertook the task, the denizens of the Isthmus prepared for them only such entertainment as had been acceptable in other days. The only places open to the tired worker in the evening were the saloons, selling bad whiskey and worse beer; or darker hells of sure and quick damnation. There were no theaters that would appeal to the American taste, no sports that the clean American would tolerate. In short, when the American in the early days of the construction was wearied with that weariness
that would not respond to resting, there was but one thing left. He got home—sick and drunk.

In those early days there were few women. Most of the men who came then were moved rather by a spirit of adventure than by a determination to share in a tremendous job of work, and such men were not married. It was not long until the men at the head discovered that the married men were more content, that they lost less time from the work, and produced more results when on the job than did the bachelors. (This, of course, must not be taken as an indictment against every individual bachelor who worked at Panama, but rather as a characterization based on the average of that class.) Thus in the very order of things it became the policy of the commission to encourage unmarried men at work to marry, and to bring married men from the States rather than bachelors. Inducements were held out, putting a premium on matrimony. The bachelor worker had good quarters, but he perhaps shared but a room in a bungalow, whereas the married man had a four-room house of his own, with a big porch, and free furniture, free light, and the problem of the cost of living solved by the paternal commissary.

So matrimony flourished. But when the women came in increasing numbers, and with them many children, another problem arose. Women born in temperate climes suffer more in the Tropics than do men. The dry, dry heat of the dry season is succeeded by the wet, wet heat of the rainy months. There is never any escape from that horrible, hateful, hellish heat. Is it to be baked
or steamed? The changing seasons offer no other alternative. And the Fear! Not for a moment may one forget that sickness and death stalk in the jungle; that a glass of water or an unscreened door may be the end of it all. There is no normality, no relaxation, no care free rest for the woman in the Tropics.

At Panama her housekeeping duties were lightened by the excellence of the commissary system, so that they were not enough to keep her mind occupied. She became homesick and hysterical. So, then, it being desirable to have married men on the job, it became necessary to do something to keep the women at the minimum stage of unhappiness. The Y. M. C. A clubhouse, with their gymnasiums, their libraries, their games, their sports, and their clubiness, had been the substitute for home offered to the lonely American man at Panama. The Civic Federation was invited to do what it could for the women. It sent an agent of the American Federation of Women's Clubs to Panama, who organized women's clubs, and these, by putting the women to work, made them, in a measure, forget the Heat and the Fear.

Miss Helen Varick Boswell visited the Isthmus in the fall of 1907 and assisted the women in forming their clubs. She found them literally hungry for such activities and they responded with a will to her suggestion. The result was frequent meetings in every town in the Canal Zone and innumerable activities on the part of the women interested in club work.

The transformation was most remarkable.
Where almost every woman on the Isthmus seemed to be unhappy, now everyone who needed an outlet for her mental and social instincts found it in club work. Where once they quarreled and disputed about their house furnishings, life on the Isthmus, and the general status of things on the Canal Zone, now the women seemed to take a happy and contented view of things, and became as much interested in the work of building the canal as were their husbands, their fathers, and their brothers. Looking back over the task, and realizing how much longer the married men stayed on the job, and how much more essential they were to the completion of the canal than the bachelors, the cares of the canal authorities to keep the women satisfied was a master stroke.

When the club movement was launched one of the first steps was to organize classes in Spanish. Women from every part of the Zone attended these Spanish classes and took up the work of learning the language with zeal. Comparatively few of them had any opportunity to learn Spanish, even in its most rudimentary form, from household servants, since the same lethargy that characterized the native men of Panama, and made them totally indifferent to the opportunities for work on the Canal Zone, also characterized the Panaman women, with the results that most of the American households at Panama had English-speaking Jamaican servants instead of Spanish-speaking Panamans.

The servant problem was not as serious as it is in the average American city. There was always a full supply of Jamaican negro women
ready for engagement as household servants. They were polite and efficient. Almost without exception they had a deeply religious turn of mind, although they might transgress the Mosaic law far enough to substitute plain water for violet water on the boudoir table of their mistresses. Usually they were very neat of person and very careful in the manner of doing their work. The wages they commanded were approximately equal to those asked in the ordinary American city.

The greatest social diversion of the Isthmus, of course, was dancing. Every two weeks the Tivoli Club gave a dance at the Tivoli Hotel. Trains to carry visitors were run all the way across the Isthmus and no American ever needed to miss a dance at the Tivoli Hotel because of unsuitable railroad accommodations.

Each small town had its own dancing clubs and in those towns where there were Y. M. C. A. buildings, the dances were held in them. The new Hotel Washington proved a very popular rendezvous for the dancers, and in the future the big functions of this kind probably will alternate between the Tivoli at one end of the canal and the Washington at the other.

The university men maintained the University Club in the city of Panama, directly on the water front. This club frequently opened its doors to women and its functions were always regarded as events in Isthmian social history. In Colon there was organized several years ago a club known as the Stranger’s Club. This club, as did the University Club at Panama, welcomed the American stranger.
The Isthmian Canal Commission always looked carefully after the religious activities of the people of the Canal Zone. Its provision of places of worship and facilities for getting to them was strictly nonsectarian, and directed solely to giving every sect and every faith opportunity to worship in its own way. Several chaplains were maintained at Government expense, and railroad and wagonette service for carrying people to their places of worship was maintained throughout the years of the American occupation.

The West Indian negroes were provided with churches and with homes for the leaders of their spiritual flocks. Church buildings were erected at every settlement, and in many cases were so constructed that the lower story could be used for a church and the second story for lodge purposes. These buildings were 70 by 36 feet, with lodge rooms 60 by 36 feet.

The women on the Canal Zone were interested in religious work from the beginning of their residence there. An Isthmian Sunday School Association maintained church extension work. When the Women's Federation of Clubs finally disbanded, in April, 1913, it presented its library to this association and its pictures to the Ancon Study Club. There was an art society at Ancon, which did much to foster art work on the Zone during the days of the canal construction. The organization of Camp Fire Girls extended its activities to Panama, and many leading women there contributed both means and time to help the girls on the Isthmus.

The women of the Zone did not fail to enlist
themselves in any movement for good in their communities. A few years since there was a little blind boy on the Isthmus and the Federation of Women’s Clubs decided that he ought to have better educational advantages than could be provided at Panama. Therefore, they agreed to finance his going to Boston to enter an institution for the education of the blind. When the Federation disbanded, owing to the gradual departure of members for the States, it did not do so until it had created a committee which was to continue indefinitely in charge of the education of this blind boy.

Many secret societies existed on the Isthmus, the oldest one made up of Americans being the Sojourners Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons, organized in Colon in 1898. There were Odd Fellows’ lodges and lodges of Redmen, Modern Woodmen, Knights of Pythias, Elks, Junior Order of American Mechanics, and representative bodies of many other American secret orders. An Isthmian order is that of the Kangaroos, whose motto is: “He is best who does best.” This order was organized in 1907 under the laws of Tennessee, and the mother council was organized at Empire the same year. The object of the Kangaroos is to hold mock sessions of court and to extract from them all of the fun and, at the same time, all of the good that they will yield.

The men on the Isthmus, almost completely isolated as they were from American political concerns, never allowed their interest in political affairs at home to become completely atrophied. There was a common saying that the Panamans
were the only people on the Isthmus that could vote, but at times the Americans would at least simulate politics at home with the resulting campaigns and elections. During the presidential campaign of 1912 it was decided to hold a mock election in several of the American settlements. The elections were for national offices and for municipal offices as well. There were a number of parties, and in the national elections there were the usual group of insurgents, progressives, reactionaries, and the like.

There were nominations for dog catchers and town gourmets, while the party platforms abounded in all the political claptrap of the ordinary American document of like nature. Cartoons were circulated showing the Panama Railroad to be a monopolistic corporation; flaring handbills proving that the latest town grouch had not acquitted himself properly in office; statistical tables showing that the dog catcher had allowed more dogs to get away from him than he had caught; and all sorts of other campaign tricks and dodges were brought into play, just as though there were real issues at stake and real men to be elected. At Colon the presidential returns showed 33 votes for Taft, 200 for Wilson and 224 for Roosevelt. There were 204 votes in favor of Woman Suffrage, both state and national, and 75 votes against it.

As has been said, when the American first went to Panama the only diversion a man could find was to go to a cheap saloon and meet his friends. It was a condition that was as unsatisfactory to the men themselves as it was to the
moral sentiment of those behind the work, and almost as dangerous to the success of the undertaking as would have been an outbreak of some epidemic disease. This led the commission to urge the erection of clubhouses in several of the more populous settlements, to be conducted under the auspices of the Young Men’s Christian Association, but to be operated on a basis that would bring to the people those rational amusements of which they stood so much in need.

From time to time clubhouses of this type were established in seven of the American settlements and the work they did in promoting the contentment and happiness of the people can be appreciated only by those who have witnessed the conditions of living in Canal Zone towns where there were no such clubhouses.

Almost the first effect of the construction of a clubhouse was a heavy falling off in barroom attendance, and simultaneously a decline in the receipts from the sales of liquor. It is estimated that these receipts fell off 75 per cent within a short time after the clubhouses were opened. The men who had been buying beer at 25 cents a bottle, or whiskey at 15 cents a thimbleful, were now frequenting the clubhouses, playing billiards, rolling tenpins, writing letters, reading their home papers, or engaging in other diversions which served to banish homesickness.

When the Y. M. C. A. clubhouses were opened a practical man was put at the head of each. While no one would think of card-playing or dancing at a Y. M. C. A. in the States, both were to be found in the association clubhouses of the
Isthmus. Bowling alleys, billiard rooms, gymnasiums, and many other features for entertainment were established in the clubhouses. Bowling teams were organized; billiard and pool contests were started; gymnastic instruction was given; pleasant reading rooms with easy chairs, cool breezes, and good lights were provided; circulating libraries were established; good soda fountains were put in operation where one could get a glass of soda long enough to quench the deepest thirst; and in general the clubhouses were made the most attractive places in town—places where any man, married or single, might spend his leisure moments with profit and with pleasure.

Every effort was put forth to capitalize the spirit of rivalry in the interest of the men. The result was that in each clubhouse there were continuous contests of one kind or another, which afforded entertainment for those engaged and held the interest of those who were looking on. Then the champions of each clubhouse, whether individuals or teams, were pitted against the stars of other places, and in this way there was always “something doing” around each clubhouse.

In addition to maintaining a supervision over the sports of the Isthmus, the clubhouses provided night schools for those who desired to improve such educational opportunities. These night schools were rather well patronized by the new arrivals on the Isthmus, but there is something in that climate which, after a man has been there for a year, makes him want to rest whenever he is off duty. Going to night school became an intolerable bore by that time, so very
few men kept up their attendance after the first year. The study of Spanish was found to be one exception to this rule, for, besides the satisfaction of being able to talk with native Panamans and the Spaniards, there was the hope of financial reward. Any employee who could pass an examination in Spanish stood a better show of getting promotion in the service. Besides, the man who had grit enough to carry through a course of study on the Isthmus, with its enervating climate, was almost certain to climb the ladder of success wherever he went.

A review of the work of the seven Y. M. C. A. clubhouses for 1912 gives a good idea of what they did during the entire construction period. It required a force of 42 Americans and 64 West Indians to operate these seven clubhouses. Twelve of the Americans were paid out of the funds of the Canal Commission and 30 out of the funds of the Y. M. C. A. Of the negro employees 43 were paid by the Canal Commission and 21 by the Y. M. C. A. The American force for all seven clubhouses consisted of one superintendent, four secretaries, four assistant secretaries, one clerk, ten night clerks, six bowling alley night attendants, six pool room night attendants, and seven barbers. At the end of that year there were 2,100 members of the Y. M. C. A., no less than 58 per cent of all the American employees living in towns having clubhouses being members of the association.

During the year seven companies of players and musicians were engaged to provide amusement at the clubhouses. They gave 85 entertainments
which had a total attendance of 21,000. Local talent and moving pictures provided 406 entertainments with a total attendance of 96,000. Amateur oratorio societies, operatic troupes, minstrel troupes, glee clubs, mixed choruses, vaudeville and black-face sketches were organized during the year through the efforts of the members cooperating with the secretaries. These organizations made the whole circuit of the Isthmus. Weekly moving-picture exhibitions were given and a man was employed who gave his entire attention to them. Carefully chosen films were ordered from the United States, special attention being given to educational features.

Special tournaments in bowling, billiards, and pool were organized and gold, silver, and bronze medals were awarded the winners. Over a hundred thousand bowling games and nearly 300,000 games of pool and billiards were played during the year. Trained physical directors were employed to direct the gymnastic exercises at the clubhouses and there was an attendance of 15,000 at these classes during the year. A pentathlon meet was held at Empire for the purpose of developing all-around athletes. Religious meetings and song services were held at such times as not to interfere with the organized religious work on the Zone, the average attendance at 214 meetings being 50 and the average attendance at Bible and discussion clubs 52. The average enrollment was 65 in the Spanish class. Forty-two thousand books were withdrawn for home reading during the year.

Soft drinks, ice-cream, light lunches, and the
like were served on the cool verandas of the clubhouses, the receipts from these sales amounting to approximately $50,000. Nearly 4,000 calls on hospital patients were made by committees for the visitation of the sick. Boys from 10 to 16 years of age were allowed special privileges in the clubhouses, and the secretaries arranged several outings during the year. The total boys' membership was 146. The disbursements from the funds of the Isthmian Canal Commission amounted to $50,000 and those from clubhouse funds amounted to $114,000. The total receipts for the year amounted to $118,000. The affairs of the clubhouses were in the hands of the advisory committee appointed by the chairman and chief engineer of the Isthmian Canal Commission.

In providing amusements the Canal Commission overlooked no opportunity in the way of furnishing special trains and affording other facilities for encouraging play by the canal workers. Each town had its ball team and its ball park, and there was just as much enthusiasm in watching the standing of the several clubs in the Isthmian League as in the States in watching the performances of the several clubs in the American and National leagues. When there was a championship series to be played there was just as much excitement over it as if it were a post-season contest between the Athletics and the Giants.

It is probable that better amusements will be provided under the permanent régime than were during the construction period. With ships constantly passing through the canal, many opera companies, especially those from Spain and Italy,
will have opportunity to stop for a night or two at Panama, while their ships are coaling or shipping cargo. In Panama City there is a splendid theater built by the Panaman Government largely out of funds derived from payments made by the United States on account of the canal rights.

As the major portion of the permanent force will be quartered at Ancon and Balboa, they will be able to drive to the theater or take the street car. A new street-car system has just been established, and those who can not afford the luxury of carriages will find in it opportunities for taking airings as well as going to the theater. This system runs from the permanent settlement at Balboa through the city of Panama and down over the savannahs towards old Panama. It is the first street-car system ever operated on the Isthmus, and will probably prove much more satisfactory than the little, old, dirty coaches which have afforded the only means of transportation on the Zone.

The building of a number of roads along the canal to facilitate the movement of military forces has made it possible to get a satisfactory use of automobiles. Agencies already have been opened for a number of the lower-priced cars in anticipation that a large number of the canal employees will buy automobiles in order to get the benefit of these good roads. There are few places where automobiling affords more pleasant diversion than at Panama. After the sun goes down the evenings are just cool enough and the breezes just strong enough to make an automobile ride a delightful experience.

There are good opportunities for lovers of hunt-
ing and fishing on the Isthmus. There is wild game in plenty — deer abounding in the entire region contiguous to the canal and alligators being found in all of the principal streams. There are both sea and river fishing, and some tapirs and other wild animals still are left to attract the efforts of the modern huntsman.

The entertainment headquarters on the Canal Zone under the permanent occupation will be the big clubhouse at Balboa, which is being built at a cost of about $50,000. This clubhouse will not only have all of the features of the clubhouses of the construction period, but will be equipped with a large auditorium, with a complete library and with every facility for amusement and entertainment that experience on the Isthmus has called for.

It can not be said that social life on the Isthmus during the period of canal construction was ideal. Its inspiration was to be found in the desire to make the best of a bad situation. Men and women all knew that their stay in Panama was but temporary, none of them looked upon the Canal Zone as home, and all of them counted time in two eras — Before we came to Panama, and When we leave Panama.

Of course there was dining and dancing, and the bridge tables were never idle. But every dinner hostess knew that every guest knew exactly what every dish on the table cost, and she knew that guest knew she knew. The family income was fixed and public. All one had to do was to read the official bulletins.

The same paternalistic commissary that reduced
the cost of living and made housekeeping so easy, also tended with socialistic frankness to bring everybody to a dead level. It was useless to attempt any of the little deceits that make life so interesting at home.

Although the American is a home-loving animal, he managed to get on fairly well in the alien atmosphere of the Tropic jungle. He brought with him his home life, his base ball and his soda fountain. And, considering how such things go in the Tropics, he managed to live a clean life while he was doing a clean piece of work.