CHAPTER VII

THE LAND OF DREAMS

Any detailed history of the Isthmus during the eighteenth century would be uninteresting, save perhaps the mention of an occasional conflict between the Spanish settlers and the Indians of Darien. In the accounts of piratical raids in the latter half of the seventeenth century, the Indian was an ever-present factor even in that part of the Isthmus that is now being so rapidly modernized by American enterprise. During the days of its glory Nombre de Dios was never free from danger of an attack by the Maroons or Cimmaroons, while Porto Bello, in later years, considered these tribes a not infrequent menace.

During the years from 1700 until far into the latter half of the century the savages of Darien not only resisted all attempts at settling their country, but made occasional forays into territory settled by the Spaniards. Attempts on the part of the Jesuit missionaries to penetrate the lower Isthmus met with repeated failure—often resulting in the pillage of their outposts and the massacre of the occupants.
Even to this day Yaviza, a town on one of the tributaries of the Tuyra River, founded by these Jesuit priests in 1740, is an outpost of the Darien Indians and remains largely forbidden ground. Beyond Yaviza the white man, unless he is a trader well known to the tribes, seldom ventures. The Indians of San Blas, frequent visitors to Colon, are the only type familiar to the resident of the Canal Zone.

But if desultory conflicts between the savage and the Spanish settler form the most exciting events of Isthmian history during the eighteenth century, they do not mean that Panama occupied no place in the minds of men across the sea. The world-famous Isthmus, with its vast possibilities, has been a place to dream about from the day of its discovery. Only a narrow strip of land in the inevitable path of the world's commerce!

Even before the dawn of the century of which we speak, one prominent man had dreamed of the commercial possibilities of the Isthmus. It was William Patterson, founder of the Bank of England, who seized upon the favorable report of Lionel Wafer, of piratical fame, to make the Isthmus the objective point of one of the most colossal schemes in history. That it failed miserably does not cast discredit upon the man who dreamed of its possibilities. Like the famous Mississippi Bubble, this Isthmian Bubble burst because it was ahead of its time.
SAN BLAS INDIANS AT ARMILLA
Patterson planned to establish on the Isthmus colonies that would control the key to the world's trade, and thus make great his own country, Scotland. With the idea of first controlling the trade between the Eastern and the Western hemispheres, he went among the merchants of Scotland to solicit funds. He raised £900,000, mostly among his own people, and in 1698, with twelve hundred colonists recruited in Scotland, sailed for the Isthmian seaboard.

Landing along the Isthmus of Darien not far from the spot made famous by Balboa and Pedrarias, the Scotch colonists named the small bay which they entered, New Caledonia. The place is known to-day as Puerto Escoces. Founding the towns of New Edinburg and St. Andrews, they had scarcely settled when the fevers of this infested coast devastated the colony, the settlers from bonny Scotland succumbing by hundreds. When Starvation stalked alongside the specter, Disease, the disheartened remnant returned to Scotland in June, 1699.

Not daunted, the company sent forth another party of colonists, thirteen hundred in number, the same year. It also returned, as did a third colony sent out in February, 1700. The last settlers might have remained had not the hostility of the Spaniards driven them away. Thus ended, at the sacrifice of an immense sum of money and of many lives, one man's scheme for converting Panama into commer-
cial capital. In 1715, the Parliament of Great Britain, making tardy amends for a great man's misfortune, gave Patterson an indemnity of £18,241 for his losses in the Darien project.

A hundred years later another great man was dreaming of Panama in an altogether different fashion. Baron von Humboldt, German naturalist and traveler, during his well-known and fruitful voyage to Spanish America, found time to dream of the canal which he saw would some day connect the two oceans. He mentioned nine possible routes, some of them most visionary in the light of present-day knowledge, but he did not fail to include all the feasible ones. He computed the various elevations, and because of its advantages in this respect, named Panama as the most favorable route.

Another man whom we can imagine as dreaming of the commercial future of the American Isthmus before Humboldt visited it, was Lord Horatio Nelson, the great English Admiral. Long before the event at Trafalgar had given him undying fame, the English government had sent him in charge of an expedition to seize the lakes of Nicaragua with the idea of using them later in a scheme for controlling the interoceanic commerce. This was in 1780, when England and Spain were quarreling for possession of the Nicaraguan seaboard. Though Nelson planned to seize the whole strip of country from ocean
to ocean, his expedition really accomplished little. Its commander injured his health in the attempt, and returned to England after barely dipping into the project.

In glancing over the names of individuals prominent in modern European history who found time to think about this great prospect across the seas, it is interesting to speculate what might have been the result had Louis Napoleon been successful in launching on the American Isthmus a scheme similar to that by which he sought to establish his power in Mexico. Even vaster designs may have actuated the ambitious emperor in his attempts to gain control of the Isthmus of Panama.

Louis was a prisoner of state under Louis Philippe when he first became interested in the Isthmus and especially in Nicaragua. Upon his escape from prison in 1846 he went to England and published articles on his views, comparing the future of the Isthmus to the past of Constantinople, whose geographical position rendered her the "Queen of the ancient world." But intrigues in France kept him too busy to push his scheme. He clung to it, however, and carried it to the point of having a canal route surveyed and of securing a concession from the Nicaraguan government. Though he never accomplished more than this because of his precarious position at home, it is worth while to remember that
he saw into the possibilities of the Isthmus. Had Napoleon III been firmly seated on his throne, there is no telling what effect his intriguing might have had on the history of the Isthmus. He was, perhaps, still dreaming of it in 1870, when Germany descended upon France and put an end to his empire and to his career.

Then, too, Panama is a land of schoolboy dreams. No part of American history is more absorbing to the schoolboy than that which deals with exploration and discovery. What golden fancies have been woven about that old Spaniard who went to Florida to hunt for the "fountain of everlasting youth," or of him who marched on a conquering expedition up the Mississippi Valley and made the Indians believe he was a child of the Sun whom they dared not molest? We should not be fair to our younger readers if we failed to tell them that these same heroes, Ponce de Leon, De Soto and others equally well known, have had their place in the history of discovery at Panama. We but mention some of the best known of them.

Amerigo Vespucci, whose name was inadvertently given to the western hemisphere, cruised along the Gulf of Darien as early as 1499, and for the next eight years traveled up and down the mainland, many times touching the shores of Panama, in search of that strait which was believed to exist there-
abouts. De Cosa and Pinzon, commanders respectively of the *Santa Maria* and the *Niña* on Columbus’s first voyage, made early trips along the Isthmian coast in quest of the strait and of gold. De Soto, who goes down in fame as the discoverer of the Mississippi and is infamous because of his Indian-killing expedition along that same stream, explored the coast as far up as Yucatan. Cortez, the conqueror of Mexico, was one of the fathers of the plan to dig some kind of a waterway across the American Isthmus. Pizarro, the despoiler of Aztec civilization in Peru, played an important rôle in affairs of the Isthmus during those strenuous days following Balboa’s startling discovery of the Pacific, a rôle which is a part of the Balboa story, already told.

Many more names might be mentioned; the most important must suffice, however, for it is time to tell what manner of place the Isthmus of Panama was, to attract so many Spanish explorers and adventurers. The land was a tropical jungle, differing very little from its present appearance. The flora and fauna which the Spanish pioneers saw were the same which greet the eye of the American hunter to-day when, armed with his Winchester, he sets out from a Canal Zone village to kill a deer, a jaguar or a mountain cow.

But how different the inhabitants! Instead of a
sparsely settled interior and a few towns, with a population all told of less than a half million in the whole Republic, the Isthmus of Panama then had two million people. From the agricultural plains of Chiriqui in the northernmost part to the mountain fastnesses of San Blas in the south, the Spaniards found Indians who were contented and prosperous. They were the Chibchas, who had reached a plane of civilization not unlike that of the Incas of Peru and the Aztecs of Mexico. In Chiriqui and neighboring northern provinces their culture was highest, due perhaps, not only to the influences of Aztec refinement, but to the richness of Mayan civilization in Yucatan, some of which had filtered down to the Isthmus.

The glories of this civilization are being unearthed in the province of Chiriqui every day. Within the past few years, a systematic study of this Indian culture has been made by digging up the buried evidences of it from the graves of the early race. Barrel after barrel of pottery has been shipped out of the province by scientists, curio-seekers and museums. A classification of these buried mementoes of a past age places the Isthmian Indian of the fifteenth century on a plane not far below his neighbors of Mexico and Peru.

These Indians had passed the stone and the bronze age. In many ways they gave evidence of
an Asiatic origin, as do other early American tribes. This is shown in their worship of the sun, stars and moon, and their use of the decimal system. Like the Asiatics, they had a calendar with a week of three days and a cycle of fifteen years. They were not cannibals, but offered human sacrifice as did the Aztecs. The Isthmian Indian was not warlike, nor did he have a strong centralized government such as the Incas enjoyed. These two causes account for his allowing the Spaniards to enslave him, make him a beast of burden and depopulate his race with amazing cruelties. The atrocious treatment to which he submitted practically exterminated the Isthmian Indian in a brief hundred years. That part of the original two million who were not wiped out, root and branch, became subdued, eventually intermarried with the conquering races and to-day their descendants reside in their native land as the modern Panamanians who are usually a mixture of Spanish and Indian.

One striking exception to this mixture of races is the San Blas Indian. Living in the almost inaccessible tropical mountains of southern Panama, this race, or collection of tribes, has kept the Indian blood pure. In appearance the San Blas Indian is typical. He has high cheek bones, copper color, large head, straight black hair, bow legs and low but powerful physique. The San Blas natives still
enjoy the tribal life under a *cacique*, or chieftain. Though the men with their odd appearance and unique dress are a common and interesting sight on the streets of Colon, where they come to trade, the women never appear in public.

It is a San Blas tradition that no white man has ever been allowed to stay overnight in their country. So well intrenched is this tradition that the white visitor in the land is first invited, and then ordered, to leave San Blas before nightfall. The chief characteristic of these native Indians, who have so ably preserved their racial individuality, is their marked ability as sailors. A San Blas Indian can navigate a *cayuca* (a dugout with one sail) on almost any kind of sea. When the ocean liners have difficulty in making Limon Bay, the San Blas Indian sails skillfully into Colon harbor, after a run of perhaps fifty miles from his home down the coast. He brings a load of coconuts, hides, tropical fruits and a little gold. Though the yellow metal is known to exist in the San Blas country, the natives have never brought it in sufficient quantities to encourage white men to brave the native prejudices in attempting to exploit it.
SAN BLAS INDIAN WOMAN

An unusual snapshot secured by the authors
CHAPTER VIII

THE PANAMA OF TO-DAY

Panama has bulked so large in the imagination of men that it is worth while to take a short range view of the country and of its people as they are to-day. The Republic of Panama lies wholly in the tropics between 76° and 84° longitude and 7° and 10° latitude. The country is roughly rolling, rising in the extreme east to an elevation of about three thousand feet and in the west to nearly eleven thousand feet; the highest elevation being Chiriqui Volcano in the Province of Chiriqui. The average width of Panama is nearly one hundred miles and its length about four hundred miles.

The proximity of the oceans renders the climate moderate and equable. The temperature presents little variation; so little that American residents in the Canal Zone do not have recourse to the weather as a safe topic for desultory conversation. Variation in temperature averages from 70° at night to 92° in the daytime, and this average does not vary with the seasons. A wet season and a dry season take the place of spring, summer, fall and winter in the
States, the rainy period lasting eight months of the year. In May and June the precipitation is about what may be expected in the Central States; from July to January the rain is very excessive; while there is practically no rain in January, February, March and April.

The principal resources of Panama are its lumber and its agricultural possibilities. Little has been done in the development of either, but beginnings are now being made. In many parts of the Republic lumbering industries are springing up. English and American syndicates are financing them, and as fast as the mahogany, cocobolo, lignum-vitæ and other fine timber lands are cleared they are being converted into plantations, chiefly rubber and coconut.

The natives attach little value to the fine specimens of mahogany and other woods. They frequently hew a cayuca—a dugout boat—from a splendid mahogany log eighteen or twenty feet in length. Such a log in the United States, it is said, would be worth between two and three thousand dollars. Across a small stream near Chepo in the Bayana River country is a mahogany wood log forty feet long and five feet in diameter. In a piano factory in the States this log would be valued at several thousand dollars.

Within the borders of Panama there are more
than three hundred and fifty thousand people. Most of them live in small towns and villages. Panama and Colon are the largest cities, having respectively about thirty-five thousand and twenty thousand people. David and Boquete are considerable communities in the west. With these exceptions the towns in Panama are small groups of bamboo huts, thatched to keep out sun and rain.

In the jungle one frequently comes upon a thatched hut where dwell the farmer and his wife with a family of seven or eight children. The furnishings of these primitive homes are rude; gourds and coconut shells are the chief culinary utensils. The bare ground is more often than not the bed, the table, the chair, the workbench and very possibly the chicken roost. An old-fashioned muzzle-loading rifle and a powder horn combine utility and adornment. When a stranger appears the whole family gather about to welcome him and to minister to his needs as well as they can with their limited facilities.

A few coconut trees, a small patch of bananas and a garden, medium sized and well grown with weeds, are usually the only evidences of any provision for the future. But the future does not trouble these humble creatures; they rely on Nature and mañana to supply their simple needs. Suffrage, tariff and kindred interests do not touch them. There is no necessity for providing against winter,
to incite them to activity; there is little to stimulate the ambition or to sharpen the wits. These residents of Panama's interior have very little need for communication with the outside world, since the daily routine consists in getting a living from Nature as she presents opportunity for it at their very doors. Yet the native in the "bush" visits his neighbors, makes an occasional trip to the nearest village, and is beginning to take more than a desultory interest in the politics of his country. He was an important factor in the election of the president of Panama in 1912, and the Liberal Party, representing progress and advancement, receives his support.

Occasionally one finds evidences that the native of the interior is beginning to know the outside world. A soap box bearing the brand of a well-known American firm may serve as his washstand. Cheap lithographs sometimes adorn the walls of his cottage. The farmer himself wears a pair of cotton-ade trousers and a hickory shirt, both products of foreign manufacture; while the members of his family disport themselves in calico and gingham.

The people of the interior are devout Catholics—as are all Latin American people. In every interior community the church fêtes and festivals are observed with punctilious regard. Indeed, the most vivid impressions of this religious feeling can be obtained in the rural sections. At Taboga there is an
I. PATIO SCENE NEAR DAVID
II. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION DAY, DAVID
impressive celebration every Easter. Holy Week, which precedes Easter Sunday, is devoted to the observances of this ceremony; and from Friday until Sunday there is a graphic portrayal of the events of Christ's passion which those days commemorate. Former residents of the village return for this passion play, lodgings are scarce and the village is filled with visitors. All the members of the local parish participate in this devotional ceremony. The young men, dressed as Roman soldiers, guard the sanctuary in the church. The maidens of the village have their share in the ceremony in honor of the Virgin Mary, and all the villagers find place in the nightly processions in which the sanctuary and the images from the church are carried through the village, on floats. All these ceremonies are characterized by a reverent devotion. One feels that during them Christianity is, to these simple people, a living, pulsating faith.

In contrast with the type of native found in the interior sections, there are the purely Spanish people who are energetic and progressive. Many of them have homes that would be a credit to an American farmer. Their farms are well kept and show thrift not inferior to that found in our best American communities. A few such farms are to be seen in the neighborhood of Panama City and in the western provinces, where conditions are more favorable for
agriculture. This is particularly true around David and Boquete.

The better class of Spanish residents in Panama City and Colon are refined, cultivated and intelligent people, among whom the canal builders have found intimate and interesting friends. These people have been educated in American and in foreign universities. The Panamanians of the first families are regular attendants at the semimonthly balls given by Commission employees at the Tivoli Hotel. Once an entry is gained to their charming homes the visitor begins a delightful friendship.

At present the one absorbing interest in Panama is the construction of the great canal. Contrary to the popular notion, the Canal takes a south-easterly direction from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. The Canal Zone, a strip of land extending five miles on each side of the canal, cuts the Republic of Panama into two almost equal parts. Except that the jungle has been cleared away near the scene of operations, the country covered by our jurisdiction is not in any essential particular different from the adjacent country. The present scheme of government for the Canal Zone, after the completion of the canal, provides for the return of the Zone to its original jungle growth, as it prohibits any settlement there and any agricultural development. Such a tropical jungle would be an invaluable aid
in the protection of the canal against possible invasion by land.

The population of the Canal Zone differs materially from that of the Republic of Panama. In the Canal Zone one finds a most cosmopolitan people, gathered together from the four corners of the earth to help build the great waterway. In addition to the Americans, there are in the employ of the Isthmian Canal Commission West Indians, East Indians, Spaniards, Colombians, Panamanians, American Negroes, Italians, Greeks and what not. Of course the most important members of this complex working force are the Americans.

Americans in the Canal Zone are not so far out of the world as one might think. Indeed, to them the Canal Zone has become an American community, with its churches, clubs, entertainment halls and typical American homes. The Commission employee who has come from the United States has brought his institutions with him. After a strenuous week's work he finds the same recreation on Sunday that engages thousands of his countrymen at home. He has his library table with its books, magazines and newspapers. He may go to church, and will surely send his children to Sunday School. He enjoys a Sunday dinner not unlike that which you would have at home. Then in the afternoon he may go swimming or to a baseball game. In the evening he
may attend a sacred concert at the Y.M.C.A. Club House. Or perhaps he has spent the day in Panama City, where he watched the lottery drawing at ten o'clock on Sunday morning, drove into the savannas in the afternoon and took dinner at the Central or the Tivoli, while listening to a concert by the I.C.C. band or the National band of the Republic.

If it was the Sunday on which the I.C.C. band gives its concert in his home town he certainly stayed at home; for the excellent concerts of this organization are important events in the social life of each Canal Zone village. The Commission band is composed of employees who have weekly rehearsals and weekly concerts under the direction of a trained leader. The band is supported from Commission funds, each member receiving a compensation for his services. The music director is employed in that capacity and devotes his entire time to musical affairs given under official direction.

Social life among the Americans in the Zone finds its outlet in dances, dinner parties, bridge parties, moving picture shows, beach parties, picnics, tennis, bowling, bathing, and boating. The men talk politics with as much fervor as if they were voting in the various political contests at home. During the national campaign numerous straw elections, preceded by speech making, political rallies and campaigning for favorite candidates, add a realistic
I. PEARL ISLANDS, PANAMA BAY
II. PEARL DIVERS

I. THE PANAMA LOTTERY
II. SKATING ON SEA WALL
AT FORT LORENZO

A popular picnic resort for the Canal builders
feature to this form of play which really keeps the employee interested in his citizenship.

The craving for entertainment which every normal American carries with him is gratified in the Canal Zone by the managers of the Y.M.C.A. Club House. They bring entertainers from the States; and get up local talent minstrel shows, comic operas, vaudeville shows and concerts. During the winter months grand opera companies sing Carmen, Il Trovatore and other classics, in Spanish, at the National Theatre in Panama City. Americans form an enthusiastic and appreciative part of the audience at these operas. Each year at least one circus comes to the Canal Zone on its way to South America; everybody goes.

Perhaps nowhere in the world is July Fourth celebrated with more enthusiasm than in Panama. Each employee contributes toward a fund for this celebration, which includes patriotic exercises, athletic contests, aquatic events and baseball games, throughout the day; and an elaborate display of fireworks at night. Thousands of dollars are spent on these fireworks, and valuable prizes are given the winners in the athletic and aquatic contests.

The non-American members of the Canal Zone population are very interesting. In the foreign sections of the towns John Chinaman, who "likee Milika man velle much," distributes his oriental
goods. John is not a one-price merchant, and he seldom lets a seriously inclined customer escape without relieving him of some of his substance. John's children attend the American schools, and none stand higher than they. It may be said of John that while he is an enterprising citizen his enterprise never gets him entangled in the law. His crookedness is not unlike that of some of our noted American captains of industry — it is usually legitimate so far as courts and the law are concerned.

The East Indian also has his shops in the native sections; linens, laces and silks are his principal stock in trade. Following the custom of his race, he does not rely wholly on his shop; he goes out after business, and he may be seen any day and in any community with a great pack swung over his back, visiting the American housewife on the Isthmus. A day or two after pay day his tribe are especially active. Like the Chinaman, he adjusts the price of a commodity to the experience and the financial strength of his customer. The sign boards of these venders make interesting reading. Sing On, for instance, sells "disturbances of many varieties to the thirsty."

A census taken in March, 1912, presents some interesting figures regarding the population of the Canal Zone. Great Britain furnishes (largely from its West Indian domain) the greatest number of inhabitants, 30,859; the United States comes next,
with 11,850; Panama supplies 7636; Spain 4305; France, 2760; Colombia, 1521; Greece, 1291. Other countries are represented by various numbers of people; from Italy, with 812, down to Roumania, Liberia and Bulgaria, which have one each. The grand total is 62,810, of which 45,163 are males and 17,647 females. These figures do not include the employees of the United States government in Panama and in Colon. Classified by races, the population of the Canal Zone is as follows: White, 20,063; Black, 38,425; Indian, 648; Yellow, 527; Hindu, 381; Filipino, 2; mixed, 11,636. Of the 11,850 American citizens enumerated, 1375 are from Pennsylvania, 1372 from New York, 692 from Ohio, 453 from Illinois, 386 from Massachusetts, 382 from Indiana.

It is estimated that at the time of the last census there were 42,000 people in the employ of the Canal Commission. Practically all the white Americans are employed in supervisory positions or in positions requiring skill, while the unskilled labor is done by day laborers, most of whom are West Indians and Spaniards or Spanish-speaking people.