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ZONE POLICEMAN

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Ancon, Canal Zone, June :

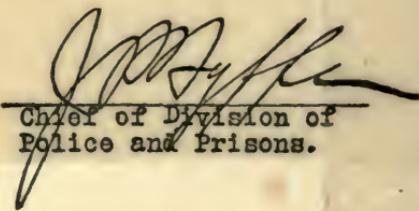
SPECIAL ORDER No. 1156 :

His voluntary resignation having been received and First-class Policeman HARRY A. FRANCK, No. 88, who was in the Canal Zone Police Force on March 13, 1912, is, with approval of the Acting Head of the Department of Civil Administration,

DISCHARGED,

effective at the close of business, June 17, 1912.

There is objection to his reemployment.*



Chief of Division of
Police and Prisons.

*Any Zone Policeman resigning within two years of his appointment receives "objection to reemployment."—H. A. F.

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The Zone Police mounted squad on "Aviation Day"

ZONE POLICEMAN

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A CLOSE RANGE STUDY OF THE
PANAMA CANAL AND ITS WORKERS

BY

HARRY A. FRANCK

Author of "A Vagabond Journey Around the
World" and "Four Months
Afoot in Spain"



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1913

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TO
A HOST OF GOOD FELLOWS
THE ZONE POLICE

Quito, December 31, 1912

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The Zone Police mounted squad on "Aviation Day" *Frontispiece*
 (Photograph by Leo Hays)

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ZONE POLICEMAN 88

CHAPTER I

STRIP by strip there opened out before me, as I climbed the "Thousand Stairs" to the red-roofed Administration Building, the broad panorama of Panama and her bay; below, the city of closely packed roofs and three-topped plazas compressed in a scallop of the sun-gleaming Pacific, with its peaked and wooded islands to far Taboga tilting motionless away to the curve of the earth; behind, the low, irregular jungled hills stretching hazily off into South America. On the third-story landing I paused to wipe the light sweat from forehead and hatband, then pushed open the screen door of the passageway that leads to police headquarters.

"Emm—What military service have you had?" asked "the Captain," looking up from the letter I had presented and swinging half round in his swivel-chair to fix his clear eyes upon me.

"None."

"No?" he said slowly, in a wondering voice; and so long grew the silence, and so plainly did there

spread across "the Captain's" face the unspoken question, "Well, then what the devil are you applying here for?" that I felt all at once the stern necessity of putting in a word for myself or lose the day entirely.

"But I speak Spanish and —"

"Ah!" cried "the Captain," with the rising inflection of awakened interest, "That puts another face on the matter."

Slowly his eyes wandered, with the far-away look of inner reflection, to the vacant chair of "the Chief" on the opposite side of the broad flat desk, then out the wide-open window and across the shimmering roofs of Ancon to the far green ridges of the youthful Republic, ablaze with the unbroken tropical sunshine. The whirr of a telephone bell broke in upon his meditation. In sharp, clear-cut phrases he answered the questions that came to him over the wire, hung up the receiver, and pushed the apparatus away from him with a forceful gesture.

"Inspector." he called suddenly; but a moment having passed without response, he went on in his sharp-cut tones, "How do you think you would like police work?"

"I believe I should."

"The Captain" shuffled for a moment one of several stacks of unfolded letters on his desk.

"Well, it's the most thankless damned job in Creation," he went on, almost dreamily, "but it cer-

tainly gives a man much touch with human nature from all angles, and — well, I suppose we do some good. Somebody's got to do it, anyway."

"Of course I suppose it would depend on what class of police work I got," I put in, recalling the warning of the writer of my letter of introduction that, "You may get assigned to some dinky little station and never see anything of the Zone,"—"I'm better at moving around than sitting still. I notice you have policemen on your trains, or perhaps in special duty languages would be —"

"Yes, I was thinking along that line, too," said "the Captain."

He rose suddenly from his chair and led the way into an adjoining room, busy with several young Americans over desks and typewriters.

"Inspector," he said, as a tall and slender yet muscular man of Indian erectness and noticeably careful grooming rose to his feet, "Here's one of those rare people, an American who speaks some foreign languages. Have a talk with him. Perhaps we can arrange to fix him up both for his good and our own."

"Ever done police duty?" began the Inspector, when "the Captain" had returned to the corner office.

"No."

"Military ser—"

"Nor that either."

"Well, we usually require it," mused the Inspector slowly, flashing his diamond ring, "but with your special qualifications perhaps —

"You'd probably be of most use to us in plain clothes," he continued, after a dozen questions as to my former activities; "We could put you in uniform for the first month or six weeks until you know the Isthmus, and then —

"Our greatest trouble is burglary," he broke off abruptly, rising to reach a copy of the "Canal Zone Laws"; "If you have nothing else on hand you might run these over; and the 'Police Rules and Regulations,'" he added, handing me a small, flat volume bound in light brown imitation leather.

I sat down in an arm-chair against the wall and fell to reading, amid the clickity-click of typewriters, telephone calls even from far-off Colon on the Atlantic, and the constant going and coming of a negro orderly in shinningly ironed khaki uniform. By and by the Inspector drifted into the main office, where his voice blended for some time with that of "the Captain." At length he came back bearing a copy of the day's *Star and Herald*, turned back to the "Estrella de Panamá" pages so rarely opened in the Zone.

"Just run us off a translation of that, if you don't mind," he said, pointing to a short paragraph in Spanish.

Some two minutes later I handed him the English



The Administration Building at Ancon



The "Thousand Stairs"

version of the account of a near-duel between two Panamanians, and took once more to reading. It was more than an hour later that I was again interrupted.

“You ’ll want to catch the 5:25 back to Corozal?” inquired the Inspector; “Mr.—, give him transportation to Culebra and back, and an order for physical examination.

“You might fill out this application blank,” he added, handing me a long legal sheet, “then in case you are appointed that much will be done.”

The document began with the usual, “Name —, Birthplace —, and so on.” There followed the information that the appointee “must be at least five feet eight; weigh one hundred and forty, chest at least thirty-four inches —” Then suddenly near the bottom of the back of the sheet my eyes caught the startling words; —“Unless you are sure you are a man of physical appearance far above the average do not fill out this application.”

I was suddenly aware of a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach; the blank all but slipped from my nerveless fingers. Then all at once there came back to me the words of some chance acquaintance of some far-off time and place, words which were the only memory that remained to me of the speaker, except that he had lived long and gathered much experience, “Bluff, my boy, is what carries a man through the world. Act as if you ’re sure you are

and can and you 'll generally make the other fellow think so." I sat down at a desk and filled out the application in my most self-confident flourish.

"Go to Culebra to-morrow," said the Inspector, as I bade the room good-day and stepped forth with my most military stride and bearing, "and report back here Friday morning."

I descended to the world below, not by the long perspective of stairs that leads down and across the gully to the heart of Ancon, but by a short-cut that took me quickly into a foreign land. The graveled highway at the foot of the hill I might not have guessed was an international boundary had I not chanced to notice the instant change from the trim, screened Zone buildings, each in its green lawn, to the featureless architecture of a city where grass is all but unknown; for the formalities of crossing this frontier are the same as those of crossing any village street. It was my first entrance into the land of the *panameños*, technically known on the Zone as "Spigoties," and familiarly, with a tinge of despise, as "Spigs"; because the first Americans to arrive in the land found a few natives and cabmen who claimed to "Speaga dee Eng-leesh."

To Americans direct from the States Panama city ranks still as rather a miserable dawdling village. But that is due chiefly to lack of perspective. Against the background of Central America

it seemed almost a great, certainly a flourishing, city. Even to-day there are many who complain of its unpleasant odors; to those who have lived in other tropical cities its scent is like the perfumes of Araby; and none but those can in any degree realize what "Tio Sam" has done for the place.

Toward sunset I passed through a gateway with scores of fellow-countrymen, all as composedly at home as in the heart of their native land. Across the platform stood a train distinctively American in every feature, a bilious-yellow train divided by the baggage car into two sections, of which the five second-class coaches behind the engine, with their wooden benches, were densely packed in every available space with workmen and laborer's wives, from Spaniards to ebony negroes, with the average color decidedly dark. In the first-class cars at the Panama end were Americans, all but exclusively white Americans, with only here and there a "Spigoty" with his long greased hair, his finger rings, and his effeminate gestures, and even a negro or two. For though Uncle Sam may permit individual states to do so, he may not himself openly abjure before the world his assertion as to the equality of all men by enacting "Jim Crow" laws.

We were soon off. Settled back in the ample seat of the first real train I had boarded in months, with the roar of its length over the smooth and solid roadbed, the deep-voiced, masculine whistle instead of the

painful, puerile screech that had recently assailed my ear, I all but forgot I was in a foreign land. The fact was recalled by the passing of the train-guard,—an erect and self-possessed young American in “Texas” hat, khaki uniform, and leather leggings, striding along the aisle with a jerking, half-arrogant swing of the shoulders. So, perhaps, might I too soon be parading across the Isthmus! It was not, to be sure, exactly the rôle I had planned to play on the Zone. I had come rather with the hope of shouldering a shovel and descending into the canal with other workmen, that I might some day solemnly raise my right hand and boast, “I helped dig IT.” But that was in the callow days before I had arrived and learned the awful gulf that separates the sacred white American from the rest of the Canal Zone world. Besides, had I not always wanted to be a policeman and twirl a club and stalk with heavy, law-compelling tread ever since I had first stared speechless upon one of those noble beings on my first trip out into the world twenty-one years before?

It was not without effort that I rose in time next morning to continue on the 6:37 from Corozal across another bit of the Zone. Exactly thus should one first see the Great Work, piece-meal, slowly; unless he will go home with it all in an undigested lump. The train rolled across a stretch of almost uninhabited country, with a vast plain of broken rock



Among the ruins of Old Panama



Corozal Police Station

on the right, plunged unexpectedly through a short tunnel, and stopped at a station perched on the edge of a ridge above a small Zone town backed by some vast structure, above which here and there a huge crane loomed against the sky of dawn. Another mile and the collectors were announcing as brazenly as if they challenged the few "Spigs" on board to correct them, "Peter M'Gill! Peter M'Gill!" We were already moving on again before I had guessed that by this noise they designated none other than the famous Pedro Miguel. The sun rose suddenly as we swung sharply to the left and rumbled across a girderless bridge. Barely had I time to discover that we were crossing the great canal itself and to catch a brief glimpse of the jagged gulf in either direction, before the train had left it behind, as if the sight of the world-famous channel were not worth a pause, and was roaring on through a hilly country of perpetual summer. A peculiarly shaped reservoir sped past on the left, twice or thrice more the green horizon rose and fell, and at 7:30 we drew up at the base of Culebra, the Zone capital.

On the screened veranda of a somewhat sooty and dismal building high up near the summit of the town, another and I were pacing anxiously back and forth when, well on in the morning, an abrupt and rather gloomy-faced American dashed into the building and one of the rooms thereof, snapping over his shoulder as he disappeared, "One of you!"

The other had precedence. Then soon from behind the wooden shutters came a growl of "Next!" and two moments later I was standing in the reputed costume of Adam on the scales within. At about ten-second intervals a monosyllable fell from the lips of the morose American as he delved into my personal make-up from crown to toe with all the instrumental circumspection known to his secret-discovering profession. Then with a gruff "Dress!" he sat down at a table to scratch a few fantastic marks on the blank I had brought, and hand it to me as I caught up my last garment and turned to the door. But, alas — tight sealed! and all the day, though carrying the information in my pocket, I must live in complete ignorance of whether I had been found lacking an eye or a lung. For sooner would one have asked his future of the scowling Parques than venture to invoke a hint thereof from that furrow-browed being from the Land of Brusknness.

Meanwhile, as if it had been thus planned to give me such opportunity, I stood at the very vortex of canal interest and fame, with nearly an entire day before the evening train should carry me back to Corozal. I descended to the "observation platform." Here at last at my very feet was the famous "cut" known to the world by the name of Culebra; a mighty channel a furlong wide plunging sheer through "Snake Mountain," that rocky range of

scrub-wooded hills; severing the continental divide. At first view the scene was bewildering. Only gradually did the eye gather details out of the mass. Before and beyond were pounding rock drills, belching locomotives, there arose the rattle and bump of long trains of flat-cars on many tracks, the crash of falling boulders, the snort of the straining steam-shovels heaping the cars high with earth and rock, everywhere were groups of little men, some working leisurely, some scrambling down into the rocky bed of the canal or dodging the clanging trains, all far below and stretching endless in either direction, while over all the scene hovered a veritable Pittsburg of smoke.

All long-heralded sights — such is the nature of the world and man — are at first glimpse disappointing. To this rule the great Culebra “cut” was no exception. After all this was merely a hill, a moderate ridge, this backbone of the Isthmus the sundering of which had sent its echoes to all corners of the earth. The long-fed imagination had led one to picture a towering mountain, a very Andes.

But as I looked longer, noting how little by comparison were the trains I knew to be of regulation U. S. size, how literally tiny were the scores upon scores of men far down below who were doing this thing, its significance regained bit by bit its proper proportions. Train after train-load of the spoil of the “cut” ground away towards the Pacific; and

here man had been digging steadily, if not always earnestly, since a year before I was born. The gigantic scene recalled to the mind the "industrial army" of which Carlyle was prone to preach, with the same discipline and organization as an army in the field; and every now and then, to bear out the figure, there burst forth the mighty cannonade, not of war, but of peace and progress in the form of earth-upheaving and house-rocking blasts of dynamite, tearing away the solid rock below at the very feet of the town.

I took to the railroad and struck on further into the unknown country. Almost before I was well started I found myself in another town, yet larger than Culebra and with the name "Empire" in the station building; and nearly every rod of the way between had been lined with villages of negroes and all breeds and colors of canal workers. So on again along a broad macadamized highway that bent and rose through low bushy ridges, past an army encamped in wood and tin barracks on a hillside, with khaki uniformed soldiers a horse and a foot enlivening all the roadway and the neighboring fields. Never a mile without its town — how different will all this be when the canal is finished and all this community is gone to Alaska or has scattered itself again over the face of the earth, and dense tropical solitude has settled down once more over the scene.

Panama, they had said, is insupportably hot.

Comparing it with other lands I knew I could not but smile at the notion. Again it was the lack of perspective. Sweat ran easily, yet so fresh the air and so refreshing the breeze sweeping incessantly across from the Atlantic that even the sweating was almost enjoyable. Hot! Yes, like June on the Canadian border — though not like July. It is hot in St. Louis on an August Sunday, with all the refreshment doors tight closed — to strangers; hot in the cottonfields of Texas, but with these plutonic corners the heat of the Zone shows little rivalry.

The way led round a cone-shaped hill crowned by another military camp with the Stars and Stripes flapping far above, until I came at last in sight of the renowned Chagres, seven miles above Culebra, to all appearances a meek and harmless little stream spanned by a huge new iron bridge and forbidden to come and play in the unfinished canal by a little dam of earth that a steam-shovel will some day eat up in a few hours. Here, where it ends and the flat country begins, I descended into the "cut," dry and waterless, with a stone-quarry bottom. A sharp climb out on the opposite side and I plunged into rampant jungle, half expecting snake-bites on my exposed ankles — another pre-conceived notion — and at length falling into a narrow jungle trail that pitched down through a dense-grown gully, came upon a fenced compound with several Zone buildings,

on the banks of the Chagres, down to which sloped a broad green lawn.

Here dwells hale and ruddy "Old Fritz," for long years keeper of the fluviograph that measures and gives warning of the rampages of the Chagres. Fritz will talk to you in almost any tongue you may choose, as he can tell you of adventures in almost any land, all with a captivating accent and in the vocabulary of a man who has lived long among men and nature. Nor are Fritz' opinions those gleaned from other men or the printed page. So we fell to fanning ourselves this January afternoon on the screened and shaded veranda above the Chagres, and "Old Fritz," lighting his pipe, raised his slippered feet to the screen railing and, tossing away the charred remnant of a match, began:—

"Vidout var dere iss no brogress. Ven all der world iss at peace, all der vorld goes to shleep."

Police headquarters looked all but deserted on Friday morning. There had been "something doing" in Zone criminal annals the night before, and not only "the Captain" but both "the Chief" and the Inspector were "somewhere out along the line." I sat down in the arm-chair against the wall. A half-hour, perhaps, had I read when "Eddie"—I am not entitled, perhaps, to such familiarity, but the solemn title of "chief clerk" is far too stiff and formal for that soul of good-heartedness striving

in vain to hide behind a bluff exterior — “Eddie,” I say, blew a last cloud of smoke from his lungs to the ceiling, tossed aside the butt of his cigarette, and motioned to me to take the chair beside his desk.

“It’s all off!” said a voice within me. For the expression on “Eddie’s” face was that of a man with an unpleasant duty to perform, and his opening words were in exactly that tone of voice in which a man begins. “I am sorry, but —” Had I not often used it myself?

“The Captain,” is how he really did begin, “called me up from Colon last night, and —”

“Here’s where I get my case not pressed,” I found myself whispering. In all probability that sealed document I had sent in the day before announced me as a physical wreck.

“— and told me,” continued “Eddie” in his sad, regretful tone, “to tell you we will take you on the force as a first-class policeman. It happens, however, that the department of Civil Administration is about to begin a census of the Zone, and they are looking for any men that can speak Spanish. If we take you on, therefore, the Captain would assign you to the census department until that work is done — it will probably take something over a month — and then you would be returned to regular police duty. The Chief says he’d rather have you learn the Isthmus on census than on police pay.

“Or,” went on “Eddie,” just as I was about to

break in with, "All right, that suits me,"— "or, if you prefer, the census department will enroll you as a regular enumerator and we'll take you on the force as soon as that job is over. The — er — pay," added "Eddie," reaching for a cigarette but changing his mind, "of enumerators will be five dollars a day, and — er — five a day beats eighty a month by more than a nose."

We descended a story and I was soon in conference with a slender, sharp-faced young man of mobile features and penetrating eyes behind which a smile seemed always to be lurking. On the Canal Zone, as in British colonies, one is frequently struck by the youthfulness of men in positions of importance.

"I'll probably assign you to Empire district," the slender young man was saying, "there's everything up there and almost any language will sure be some help to us. This time we are taking a thorough, complete census of all the Zone clear back to the Zone line. Here's a sample card and list of instructions."

In other words kind Uncle Sam was about to give me authority to enter every dwelling in the most cosmopolitan and thickly populated district of his Canal Zone, and to put questions to every dweller therein, note-book and pencil in hand; authority to ramble around a month or more in sunshine and jungle — and pay me for the privilege. There are really two methods of seeing the ~~Canal~~ Zone; as an

employee or as a guest at the Tivoli, both of them at about five dollars a day — but at opposite ends of the thermometer.

There remained a week-end between that Friday morning and the last day of January, set for the beginning of the census. Certainly I should not regret the arrival of the day when I should become an employee, with all the privileges and coupon-books thereunto appertained. For the Zone is no easy dwelling-place for the non-employee. Our worthy Uncle of the chin whiskers makes it quite plain that, while he may tolerate the mere visitor, he does not care to have him hanging around; makes it so plain, in fact, that a few weeks purely of sight-seeing on the Zone implies an adamantine financial backing. In his screened and full-provided towns, where the employee lives in such well-furnished comfort, the tourist might beat his knuckles bare and shake yellow gold in the other hand, and be coldly refused even a lodging for the night; and while he may eat a meal in the employees' hotels — at near twice the employee's price — the very attitude in which he is received says openly that he is admitted only on suffrance — permitted to eat only because if he starved to death our Uncle would have the bother of burying him and his Zone Police the arduous toil of making out an accident report.

Meanwhile I must change my dwelling-place. For the quartermaster of Corozal had need of all the

rooms within his domain, need so imperative that seventeen *bona fide* and wrathful employees were even then bunking in the pool-room of Corozal hotel. Work on the Zone was moving steadily Pacificward and the accommodations refused to come with it — at least at the same degree of speed.

Nor was I especially averse to the transfer. The room-mate with whom fate had cast me in House 81 was a pleasant enough fellow, a youth of unobjectionable personal manners even though his “eight-hour graft” was in the sooty seat of a steam-crane high above Miraflores locks. But he had one slight idiosyncrasy that might in time have grown annoying. On the night of our first acquaintance, after we had lain exchanging random experiences till the evening heat had begun a retreat before the gentle night breeze, I was awakened from the first doze by my companion sitting suddenly up in his cot across the room.

“Say, I hope you’re not nervous?” he remarked.

“Not immoderately.”

“One of my stunts is night-mare,” he went on, rising to switch on the electric light, “and when I get ’em I generally imagine my room-mate is a burglar trying to go through my junk and —”

He reached under his pillow and brought to light a “Colt’s” of 45 caliber; then crossing the room he pointed to three large irregular splintered holes in the wall some three or four inches above me, and

which I had not already seen simply because I had not chanced to look that way.

“There ’s the last three. But I ’m tryin’ to break myself of ’em,” he concluded, slipping the revolver back under his pillow and turning off the light again.

Which is among the various reasons why it was without protest that, with “the Captain’s” telephoned consent on the ground that I was now virtually on the force, I took up my residence in Corozal police station. ’T is a peaceful little building of the usual Zone type on a breezy knoll across the railroad, with a spreading tree and a little well-tended flower plot before it, and the broad world stretching away in all directions behind. Here lived Policeman T—— and B——. “First-class policemen” perhaps I should take care to specify, for in Zone parlance the unqualified noun implies African ancestry. But it seems easier to use an adjective of color when necessary. Among their regular duties was that of weighing down the rocking-chairs on the airy front veranda, whence each nook and cranny of Corozal was in sight, and of strolling across to greet the train-guard of the seven daily passengers; though the irregular ones that might burst upon them at any moment were not unlikely to resemble a Moro expedition in the Philippines. B—— and I shared the big main room; for T——, being the haughty station commander, occupied the parlor suite beside the office. That was all, except the

black Trinidadian boy who sat on the wooden shelf that was his bed behind a huge padlocked door and gazed dreamily out through the bars — when he was not carrying a bundle to the train for his wardens or engaged in the janitor duties that kept Corozal station so spick and span. Oh! To be sure there were also a couple of negro policemen in the smaller room behind the thin wooden partition of our own, but negro policemen scarcely count in Zone Police reckonings.

“By Heck! They must use a lot o’ mules t’ haul aout all thet dirt,” observed an Arkansas farmer to his nephew, home from the Zone on vacation. He would have thought so indeed could he have spent a day at Corozal and watched the unbroken deafening procession of dirt-trains scream by on their way to the Pacific,—straining Moguls dragging a furlong of “Lidgerwood flats,” swaying “Oliver dumps” with their side chains clanking, a succession as incessant of “empties” grinding back again into the midst of the fray. On the tail of every train lounged an American conductor, dressed more like a miner, though his “front” and “hind” negro brakemen were as apt to be in silk ties and patent-leathers. To say nothing of the train-loads that go Atlanticward and to jungle “dumps” and to many an unnoticed “fill.” Then when he had thus watched the day through it would have been of interest to go and chat with some of the “Old Timers”

who live here beside the track and who have seen, or at least heard, this same endless stream of rock and earth race by six days a week, fifty-two weeks a year for six years, as constant and heavily-laden to-day as in the beginning. He might discover, as not all his fellow-countrymen have as yet, that the little surgical operation on Mother Earth we are engaged in is no mule job.

The week-end gave me time to get back in touch with affairs in the States among the newspaper files at the Y. M. C. A. building. Uncle Sam surely makes life comfortable for his children wherever he takes hold. It is not enough that he shall clean up and set in order these tropical pest-holes; he will have the employee fancy himself completely at home. Here I sat in one of the dozen big airy recreation halls, well stocked with man's playthings, which the government has erected on the Zone; I, who two weeks before had been thankful for lodging on the earth floor of a Honduran hut. The Y. M. C. A. is the chief social center on the Isthmus, the rendezvous and leisure-hour headquarters of the thousands that inhabit bachelor quarters—except the few of the purely barroom type. "Everybody's Association" it might perhaps more properly be called, for ladies find welcome and the laughter of children over the parlor games is rarely lacking. It is not the circumspect place that are many of its type in the States, but a real man's place where he can buy his ciga-

rettes and smoke his pipe in peace, a place for men as men are, not as the fashion plates that mama's fond imagination pictures them. With all its excellences it would be unjust to complain that the Zone "Y. M." is a trifle "low-brow" in its tastes, that the books on its shelves are apt to be "popular" novels rather than reading matter, that its phonographs are most frequently screeching vaudeville noises while the Slezak and Homer disks lie tucked away far down near the bottom of the stack.

With the new week I moved to Empire, the "Rules and Regulations" in a pocket and the most indispensable of my possessions under an arm. Once more we rumbled through Miraflores tunnel through a mole-hill, past her concrete light-house among the astonished palms, and her giant hose of water wiping away the rock hills, across the trestleless bridge with its photographic glimpse of the canal before and behind for the limber-necked, and again I found myself in the metropolis of the Canal Zone. At the quartermaster's office my "application for quarters" was duly filed without a word and a slip assigning me to Room 3, House 47, as silently returned. I climbed by a stone-faced U. S. road to my new home on the slope of a ridge overlooking the railway and its buildings below.

It was the noon-hour. My two room-mates, therefore, were on hand for inspection, sprawingly engrossed in a — quite innocent and legal — card

game on a table littered with tobacco, pipes, matches, dog-eared wads of every species of literature from real estate pamphlets to locomotive journals, and a further mass of indiscriminate matter that none but a professional inventory man would attempt to classify. About the room was the usual clutter of all manner of things in the usual unarranged, "unwomaned" Zone way, which the negro janitor feels it neither his duty nor privilege to bring to order; while on and about my cot and bureau were helter-skeltered the sundry possessions of an absent employee, who had left for his six-weeks' vacation without hanging up his shirt—after the fashion of "Zoners." So when I had wiped away the dust that had been gathering thereon since the days of de Lesseps and chucked my odds and ends into a bureau drawer, I was settled,—a full-fledged Zone employee in the quarters to which every man on the "gold roll" is entitled free of charge.

Just here it may be well to explain that the I. C. C. has very dexterously dodged the necessity of lining the Zone with the offensive signs "Black" and "White." 'T would not be exactly the distinction desired anyway. Hence the line has been drawn between "Gold" and "Silver" employees. The first division, paid in gold coin, is made up, with a few exceptions, of white American citizens. To the second belong any of the darker shade, and all common laborers of whatever color, these receiving their

wages in Panamanian silver. 'T is a deep and sharp-drawn line. The story runs that Liza Lawsome, not long arrived from Jamaica, entering the office of a Zone dentist, paused suddenly before the announcement:

Crownwork. Gold and Silver Fillings.
Extractions wholly without Pain.

There was deep disappointment in face and voice as she sat down with a flounce of her starched and snow-white skirt, gasping:

“ Oh, Doctah, does I *have* to have silver fillings? ”

My room-mates, “ Mitch ” and “ Tom, ” sat respectively at the throttle of a locomotive that jerked dirt-trains out of the “ cut ” and straddled a steam-shovel that ate its way into Culebra range. Whence, of course, they were covered with the grease and grime incident to those occupations. Which did not make them any the less companionable — though it did promise a distinct increase in my laundry bill. When they had descended again to the labor-train and been snatched away to their appointed tasks, I sat a short hour in one of the black “ Mission ” rocking-chairs on the screened veranda puzzling over a serious problem. The quarters of the “ gold ” employee is as completely furnished as any reasonable man could demand, his iron cot with springs and mattress unimpeachable — but just there the ma-

ternal generosity of the government ceases. He must furnish his own sheets and pillow — *must* because placards on the wall sternly warn him not to sleep on the bare mattress; and the New York Sunday edition that had served me thus far I had carelessly left behind at Corozal police station. To be sure there were sheets for sale in Empire, at the Commissary — where money has the purchasing-power of cobble-stones, and coupon-books come only to those who have worked a day or more on the Zone. Then the Jamaican janitor, drifting in to potter about the room, evidently guessed the cause of my perplexity, for he turned to point to the bed of the absent “Mitch” and gurgled:

“Jes’ you make lub to dat man what got dat bed. Him got plenty ob sheets.” Which proved a wise suggestion.

Empire hotel sat a bit down the hill. There the “gold” ranks were again subdivided. The coatless ate and sweltered inside the great dining-room; the formal sat in haughty state in what was virtually a second-story veranda overlooking the railroad yards and a part of the town, where were tables of four, electric fans, and “Ben” to serve with butler formality. I found it worth while to climb the hill for my coat thrice a day. As yet I was jangling down a Panamanian dollar at each appearance, but the day was not far distant when I should receive the “recruits” hotel-book and soon grow as ac-

customed as the rest to having a coupon snatched from it by the yellow negro at the door. Uncle Sam's boarding scale on the Zone is widely varied. Three meals cost the non-employee \$1.50, the "gold" employee \$.90, the white European laborer \$.40, and negroes in general \$.30.

That afternoon, when the sun had begun to bow its head on the thither side of the canal, I climbed to the newly labeled census office on the knoll behind the police station, from the piazza of which all native Empire lies within sweep of the eye. "The boss," a smiling youth only well started on his third decade, whose regular duties were in the sanitary department, had already moved bed, bag, and baggage into the room that had been assigned the census, that he might be "always on the job."

Not till eight that evening, however, did the force gather to look itself over. There was the commander-in-chief of the census bureau, sent down from Washington specifically for the task in hand, under whom as chairmen we settled down into a sort of director's meeting, a wholly informal, coatless, cigarette-smoking meeting in which even the chief himself did not feel it necessary to let his dignity weigh upon him. He had been sent down alone. Hence there had been great scrambling to gather together on the Zone men enough who spoke Spanish — and with no striking success. Most noticeable of my fellow-enumerators, being in uniform, were three Marines

from Bas Obispo, fluent with the working Spanish they had picked up from Mindanao to Puerto Rico, and flush-checked with the prospect of a full month on "pass," to say nothing of the \$4.40 a day that would be added to their daily military income of \$.60. Then there were four of darker hue,—Panamanians and West Indians; and how rare are Spanish-speaking Americans on the Zone was proved by the admittance of such complexions to the "gold" roll.

Of native U. S. civilians there were but two of us. Of whom Barter, speaking only his nasal New Jersey, must perforce be assigned to the "gold" quarters, leaving me the native town of Empire. At which we were both satisfied, Barter because he did not like to sully himself by contact with foreigners, I because one need not travel clear to the Canal Zone to study the ways of Americans. As for the other seven, each was assigned his strip of land something over a mile wide and five long running back to the western boundary of the Zone. That region of wilderness known as "Beyond the Canal" was to be left for special treatment later. The Zone had been divided for census purposes into four sections, with headquarters and supervisor in Ancon, Empire, Gorgona, and Cristobal respectively. Our district, stretching from the trestleless bridge over the canal to a great tree near Bas Obispo, was easily the fat of the land, the most populous, most

cosmopolitan, and embracing within its limits the greatest task on the Zone.

Meanwhile we had fallen to studying the "Instructions to Enumerators," the very first article of which was such as to give pause and reflection;

"When you have once signed on as an enumerator you cannot cease to exercise your functions as such without justifiable cause under penalty of \$500 fine."

Which warning was quickly followed by the hair-raising announcement:

"If you set down the name of a fictitious person" — what can have given the good census department the notion of such a possibility? — "you will be fined \$2,000 or sentenced to five years' imprisonment, or both."

From there on the injunctions grew less nerve-racking: "You must use a medium soft black pencil (which will be furnished)" — law-breaking under such conditions would be absurdity — "use no ditto marks and" — here I could not but shudder as there passed before my eyes memories of college lecture rooms and all the strange marks that have come to mean something to me alone — "take pains to write legibly!"

Then we arose and swarmed upstairs to an empty court-room, where Judge G——, throwing away his cigarette and removing his Iowa feet from the bar of justice, caused us each to raise a right hand and swear an oath as solemn as ever president on March

fourth. An oath, I repeat, not merely to uphold and defend the constitution against all enemies, armed or armless, but furthermore "not to share with any one any of the information you gather as an enumerator, or show a census card, or keep a copy of same." Yet, I trust I can spin this simple yarn of my Canal Zone days without offense to Uncle Sam against the day when mayhap I shall have occasion to apply to him again for occupation. For that reason I shall take abundant care to give no information whatsoever in the following pages.