the sea, and behind them the "black" where the negroes must be content with second-hand breezes. Some of the costs of the canal are here,—sturdy black men in a sort of bed-tick pajamas sitting on the verandas or in wheel chairs, some with one leg gone, some with both. One could not but wonder how it feels to be hopelessly ruined in body early in life for helping to dig a ditch for a foreign power that, however well it may treat you materially, cares not a whistle-blast more for you than for its old worn-out locomotives rusting away in the jungle.

Under the beautiful royal palms beyond, all bent inland in the constant breeze are park benches where one can sit with the Atlantic spreading away to infinity before, breaking with its ages-old, mysterious roll on the shore just as it did before the European's white sails first broke the gleaming skyline. Out to sea runs the growing breakwater from Toro Point, the great wireless tower, yet just across the bay on a little jutting, dense-grown tongue of land is the jungle hut of a jungle family as utterly untouched by civilization as was the verdant valley of Typee on the day Melville and Toby came stumbling down into it from the hills above.

But meanwhile I was not getting the long hours of unbroken sleep the heavy mental toil of enumeration requires. Free government bachelor quarters makes strange bed-fellows — or at least room-fellows. Quartermasters, like justice, are hopelessly blind or I
might have been assigned quarters upon the financial knoll where habits and hours were a bit more in keeping with my own. But a bachelor is a bachelor on the Zone, and though he be clerk to his highness "the Colonel" himself he may find himself carelessly tossed into a "rough-neck" brotherhood.

House 47 was distinctly an abode of "rough-necks." A "rough-neck," it may be essential to explain to those who never ate at the same table with one, is a bull-necked, whole-hearted, hard-headed, cast-iron fellow who can ride the beam of a snorting, rock-tearing steam-shovel all day, wrestle the night through with various starred Hennessey and its rivals, and continue that round indefinitely without once failing to turn up to straddle his beam in the morning. He seems to have been created without the insertion of nerves, though he is never lacking in "nerve." He is a fine fellow in his way, but you sometimes wish his way branched off from yours for a few hours, when bed-time or a mood for quiet musing comes. He is a man you are glad to meet in a saloon — if you are in a mood to be there — or tearing away at the cliffs of Culebra; but there are other places where he does not seem exactly to fit into the landscape.

House 47, I say, was a house of "rough-necks." That fact became particularly evident soon after supper, when the seven phonographs were striking up their seven kinds of ragtime on seven sides of us; and
it was the small hours before the poker games, carried on in much the same spirit as Comanche warfare, broke up through all the house. Then, too, many a "rough-neck" is far from silent even after he has fallen asleep; and about the time complete quiet seemed to be settling down it was four-thirty; and a jarring chorus of alarm-clocks wrought new upheaval.

Then there was each individual annoyance. Let me barely mention two or three. Of my room-mates, "Mitch" had sat at a locomotive throttle fourteen years in the States and Mexico, besides the four years he had been hauling dirt out of the "cut." Youthful ambition "Mitch" had left behind, for though he could still look forward to forty, railroad rules had so changed in the States during his absence that he would have had to learn his trade over again to be able to "run" there. Moreover four years on the Zone does not make a man look forward with pleasure to a States winter. So "Mitch," like many another "Zoner," was planning to buy with the savings of his $210 a month "when the job is done" a chunk of land on some sunny slope of a southern state and settle down for an easy descent through old age.

There was nothing objectionable about "Mitch"—except perhaps his preference for late-hour poker. But he had a way of stopping with one leg out of his trousers when at last all the house had calmed down and cots were ceasing to creak, to make some such
wholly irrelevant remark as; "By —, that — despatcher give me 609 to-day and she would n’t pull a greased string out of a knot-hole”— and thereby always hung a tale that was sure to range over half the track mileage of the States and wander off somewhere into the sandy cactus wilderness of Chihuahua at least before "Mitch" succeeded in getting out of the other trouser leg.

The cot directly across from my own groaned — occasionally — under the coarse-grained bulk of Tom. Tom was a "rough-neck" par excellence, so much so that even in a houseful of them he was known as "Tom the Rough-neck," which to Tom was high tribute. Some preferred to call him "Tom the Noisy." He was built like a steam caisson, or an oil-barrel, though without fat, with a neck that reminded you of a Miúra bull with his head down just before the estoque; and when he neglected to button his undershirt — a not infrequent oversight — he displayed the hairy chest of a mammoth gorilla.

Tom's philosophy of getting through life was exactly the same as his philosophy of getting through a rocky hillside with his steam-shovel. When it came to argument Tom was invariably right; not that he was over-supplied with logic, but because he possessed a voice and the bellows to work it that could rise to the roar of his own steam-shovel on those weeks when he chose to enter the shovel competition, and
would have utterly overthrown, drowned out, and annihilated James Stewart Mill himself.

Tom always should have had money, for your "rough-neck" on the Zone has decidedly the advantage over the white-collared college graduate when the pay-car comes around. But of course being a genuine "rough-neck" Tom was always deep in debt, except on the three days after pay-day, when he was rolling in wealth.

Once I fancied the bulk of my troubles was over. Tom disappeared, leaving not a trace behind—except his working-clothes tumbled on and about his cot. Then it turned out that he was not dead, but in Ancon hospital taking the Keeley cure; and one summer evening he blew in again, his "cure" effected—with a bottle in his coat pocket and two inside his vest. So the next day there was Tom celebrating his recovery all over House 47 and when next morning he did finally go back to his shovel there were scattered about the room six empty quart bottles each labeled "whiskey." Luckily Tom ran a shovel instead of a passenger train and could claw away at his hillside as savagely as he chose without any danger whatever, beyond that of killing himself or an odd "nigger" or two.

We had other treasures on exhibition in 47. There was "Shorty," for instance. "Shorty" was a jolly, ugly open-handed, four-eyed little snipe of a rough-neck machinist who had lost "in the line of duty"
two fingers highly useful in his trade. In consequence he was now, after the generous fashion of the I. C. C., on full pay for a year without work, providing he did not leave the Zone. And while "Shorty," like the great majority of us, was a very tolerable member of society under the ordinary circumstances of having to earn his "three squares a day," paid leisure hung most ponderously upon him.

The amusements in Empire are few — and not especially amusing. There is really only one unfailing one. That is slid in glass receptacles across a yellow varnished counter down on Railroad Avenue opposite Empire Machine Shops. So it happened that "Shorty" was gradually winning the title of a thirty-third degree "booze-fighter," and passengers on any afternoon train who took the trouble to glance in at a wide-open door just Atlantic-ward of the station might have beheld him with his back to the track and one foot slightly raised and resting lightly and with the nonchalance of long practice on a gas-pipe that had missed its legitimate mission. In fact "Shorty" had come to that point where he would rather be caught in church than found dead without a bottle on him, and arriving home overflowing with joy about midnight slept away most of the day in 47 that he might spend as much of the night as the early closing laws of the Zone permitted at the amusement headquarters of Empire.

With these few hints of the life that raged be-
neath the roof of 47 it may perhaps be comprehensible, without going into detail, why I came to contemplate a change of quarters. I detest a kicker. I have small use for any but the man who will take his allotted share with the rest of the world without either whining or snarling. Yet when an official government census enumerator falls asleep on the edge of a tenement washtub with a question dead on his lips, or solemnly sets down a crow-black Jamaican as "white," it is Uncle Sam who is suffering and time for correction.

But it is one thing for a Canal Zone employee to resolve to move, and quite another to carry out that resolution. Nero was a meek, unassertive, submissive, tractable little chap, keenly sensible to the sufferings of his fellows, compared with a Zone quartermaster. So the first time I ventured to push open the screen door next to the post office I was grateful to escape unmaimed. But at last, when I had done a whole month's penance in 47, I resorted to strategy. On March first I entered the dreaded precinct shielded behind "the boss" with his contagious smile, and the musical quartermaster of Empire was overthrown and defeated, and I marched forth clutching in one hand a new "assignment to quarters."

That night I moved. The new, or more properly the older, room was in House 35, a one-story building of the old French type, many of which the Americans revamped upon taking possession of the
Isthmian junk-heap, across and a bit down the grav-eled street. It was a single room, with no room-mate to question, which I might decorate and other-wise embellish according to my own personal idiosyncrasies. At the back, with a door between, dwelt the superintendent of the Zone telephone sys-tem, with a convenient instrument on his table. In short, fortune seemed at last to be grinning broadly upon me. But the sequel. I hate to mention it. I won't. It's absurdly commonplace. Commonplace? Not a bit of it. He was a champion, an artist in his special-ty. How can I have used that word in connec-tion with his incomparable performance? Or at-tempt to give a hint of life on the Canal Zone without mentioning the most conspicuous factor in it? He lived in the next room south, a half-inch wooden partition reaching half-way to the ceiling between his pillow and mine. By day he lay on his back in the right hand seat of a locomotive cab with his hand on the throttle and the soles of his shoes on the boiler plate he was just long enough to fit into that position without wrinkling. During the early even-ing he lay on his back in a stout Mission rocking-chair on the front porch of House 35, Empire, C. Z. And about 8 P.M. daily he retired within to lie on his back on a regulation I. C. C. metal cot they are stoutly built one pine half-inch from my own. Obviously twenty-four hours a day of such onerous...
occupation had left some slight effects on his figure. His shape was strikingly similar to that of a push-ball. Had he fallen down at the top of Ancon or Balboa hill it would have been an even bet whether he would have rolled down sidewise or endwise—if his general type of build and specifications will permit any such distinction.

When I first came upon him, reposing serenely in the porch rocking-chair on the cushion that upholstered his spinal column, I was pleased. Clearly he was no "rough-neck"—he could n't have been and kept his figure. There was no question but that he was perfectly harmless; his stories ought to prove cheerful and laugh-provoking and kindly. His very presence seemed to promise to raise several degrees the merriment in that corner of House 35.

It did. Toward eight, as I have hinted, he transferred from rocking-chair to cot. He was not afflicted with troublesome nerves. At times he was an entire minute in falling asleep. Usually, however, his time was something under the half; and he slept with the innocent, undisturbed sleep of a babe for at least twelve unbroken hours, unless the necessity of getting across the "cut" to his engine absolutely prohibited. Just there was the trouble. His first gentle, slumberous breath sounded like a small boy sliding down the sheet-iron roof of 35. His second resembled a force of carpenters tearing out the half-grown partitions. His third—but mere words are
an absurdity. At times the noises from his gorilla-like throat softened down till one merely fancied himself in the hog-corral of a Chicago stockyards; at others we prayed that we might at once be transferred there. A thousand times during the night we were certain he was on the very point of choking to death, and sat up in bed praying he would n't, and offering our month's salary to charity if he would; and through all our fatiguing anguish he snorted undisturbedly on. In House 35 he was known as "the Sloth." It was a gentle and kindly title.

There were a few inexperienced inmates who had not yet utterly given up hope. The long hours of the night were spent in solemn conference. Pounding on the walls with hammers, chairs, and shoe-heels was like singing a lullaby. One genius invented a species of foghorn which proved very effective — in waking up all Empire east of the tracks, except "the Sloth." Some took to dropping their heavier and more dispensable possessions over the partition. One memorable night a fellow-sufferer cast over a young dry-goods box which, bouncing from the snorer's figure to the floor, caused him to lose a beat — one; and the feat is still one of the proud memories of 35. On Sundays when all the rest of the world was up and shaved and breakfasted and off on the 8:39 of a brilliant, sunny day to Panama, "the Sloth" would be still imperturbably snorting and choking in the
depths of his cot. And in the evening, as the train roamed back through the fresh cool jungle dusk and deposited us at Empire station, and we crossed the wooden bridge before the hotel and began to climb the graveled path behind, hoping against hope that we might find crape on that door, from the night ahead would break on our ears a sound as of a hippopotamus struggling wildly against going down for the third and last time.

Most annoying of all, "the Sloth" was not even a bona fide bachelor. He proudly announced that, though he was a model of marital virtue, he had not lived with his wife in many years. I never heard a man who knew him by night ask why. It was close upon criminal negligence on the part of the I. C. C. to overlook its opportunity in this matter. There were so many, many uninhabited hilltops on the Zone where a private Sloth-dwelling might have been slapped together from the remains of falling towns at Gatun end; near it a grandstand might even have been erected and admission charged. Or at least the daily climb to it would have helped to reduce a push-ball figure, and thereby have improved the general appearance of the Canal Zone force.
CHAPTER IV

ONE morning early in March "the boss" and I crossed the suspension bridge over the canal. A handcar and six husky negroes awaited us, and we were soon bumping away over temporary spurs through the jungle, to strike at length the "relocation" opposite the giant tree near Bas Obispo that marked the northern limit of our district.

The P. R. R., you will recall, has been operating across the Isthmus since 1855. When the United States took over the Zone in 1904 it built a new double-tracked line of five-foot gauge for nearly the whole forty-seven miles. Much of this, however, runs through territory soon to be covered by Gatun Lake, nearly all the rest of it is on the wrong side of the canal. An almost entirely new line, therefore, is being built through the virgin jungle on the South American side of the canal, which is to be the permanent line and is known in Zone parlance as the "relocation." This is forty-nine miles in length from Panama to Colon, and is single track only, as freight traffic especially is expected, very naturally, to be lighter after the canal is opened. Already that portion from the Chagres to the Atlantic had been put
in use — on February fifteenth, to be exact; and the time was not far off when the section within our district — from Gamboa to Pedro Miguel — would also be in operation.

That portion runs through the wilderness a mile or more back from the canal, through jungled hills so dense with vegetation one could only make one's way through it with the ubiquitous machete of the native jungle-dweller, except where tiny trails appear that lead to squatters' thatched huts thrown together of tin, dynamite and dry-goods boxes and jungle reeds in little scattered patches of clearing. Some of these hills have been cut half away for the new line — great generous "cuts," for to the giant 90-ton steam-shovels a few hundred cubic yards of earth more or less is of slight importance. All else is virtually impenetrable jungle. Travelers by rail across the Isthmus, as no doubt many ships' passengers will be in the years to come while their steamer is being slowly raised and lowered to and from the eighty-five-foot lake, will see little of the canal,— a glimpse of the Bas Obispo "cut" at Gamboa and little else from the time they leave Gatun till they return to the present line at Pedro Miguel station. But in compensation they will see some wondrous jungle scenery,— a tangled tropical wilderness with great masses of bush flowers of brilliant hues, gigantic ferns, countless palm and banana trees, wonderfully slender arrow-straight
trees rising smooth and branchless more than a hundred feet to end in an immense bouquet of brilliant purplish-hue blossoms.

"The boss" barely noticed these things. One quickly grows accustomed to them. Why, Americans who have been down on the Zone for a year don't know there's a palm-tree on the Isthmus—or at least they do not remember there were no palm-trees in Keokuk, Iowa, when they left there.

Along this new-graveled line, still unused except by work-trains, we rode in our six negro-power car, dropping off in the gravel each time we caught sight of any species of human being. Every little way was a gang, averaging some thirty men, distinct in nationality,—Antiguans shoveling gravel, Martiniques snarling and quarreling as they wallowed thigh-deep in swamps and pools, a company of Greeks unloading train-loads of ties, Spaniards leisurely but steadily grading and surfacing, track bands of "Spigoties" chopping away the aggressive jungle with their machetes—the one task at which the native Panamanian (or Colombian, as many still call themselves) is worth his brass-check. Every here and there we caught labor's odds and ends, diminutive "water-boys," likewise of varying nationality, a negro switch-boy dozing under the bit of shelter he had rigged up of jungle ferns, frightening many a black laborer speechless as we pounced upon him emerging from his "soldiering"
in the jungle; occasionally even a native bushman on his way to market from his palm-thatched home generations old back in the bush, who has scarcely noticed yet that the canal is being dug, fell into our hands and was inexorably set down in spite of all protest unless he could prove beyond question that he had already been "taken" or lived beyond the Zone line.

Thus we scribbled incessantly on, even through the noon hour, dragging gangs one by one away from their tasks, shaking laborers out of the brief after-lunch siesta in a patch of shade. "The boss" was hampered by having only two languages where ten were needed. In the early afternoon he went on to Paraiso to feed himself and the traction power, while I held the fort. Soon after rain fell, a sort of advance agent of the rainy season, a sudden tropical downpour that ran in rivulets down across the pink card-boards and my victims. Yet strange to note, the writing of the medium soft pencil remained as clear and unsmudged as in the driest weather, and so clean a rain was it that it did not even soil my white cotton shirt. I continued unheeding, only to note with surprise a few minutes later that the sun was shining on the dense green jungle about me as brilliantly as ever and that I was dry again as when I had set out in the morning.

"The boss" returned, and when I had eaten the crackers and the bottle of pink lemonade he brought,
we pushed on toward the Pacific. Till at length in mid-afternoon we came to the top of the descent to Pedro Miguel and knew that the end of our district was at hand. So powerful was the breeze from the Atlantic that our six man-power engine sweated profusely as they toiled against it, even on the downgrade of the return to Empire.

To "Scotty" had been assigned my Empire "recalls" and I had been given a new and virgin territory,—namely, the town of Paraiso. It lies "somewhat back from the village street," that is, the P. R. R. Indeed, trains do not deign to notice its existence except on Sundays. But there is the temporary bridge over the canal which few engineers venture to "snake her across" at any great speed, and the enumerator housed in Empire need not even be a graduate "hobo" to be able to drop off there a bit after seven in the morning and prance away up the chamois path into the town.

Wherever on the Zone you espy a town of two-story skeleton screened buildings scattered over hills, with winding gravel roads and trees and flowers between there you may be sure live American "gold" employees. Yet somehow the Canal Commission had dodged the monotony you expected, somehow they have broken up the grim lines that make so dismal the best-intentioned factory town. There are hints that the builders have heard somewhere of the science of landscape gardening. At times these same houses
Toward noon the labor-train screamed in. Laborers hurrying to the mess-hall.
are deceiving, for all I. C. C. buildings bear a strong family resemblance, and it is only at the door that you know whether it is bachelors' quarters, a family residence, or the supreme court.

From the outside world "P'reeso" scarcely draws a glance of attention; but once in it you find a whole Zone town with all the accustomed paraphernalia of I. C. C. hotel and commissary, hospital and police station, all ruled over and held in check by the famous "Colonel" in command of the latter. Moreover Paraiso will some day come again into her own, when the "relocation" opens and brings her back on the main line, while proud Culebra and haughty Empire, stranded on a railless shore of the canal, will wither and waste away and even their broad macadamized roads will sink beneath a second-growth jungle.

Renson had come to lend assistance. He set to work among the negro cabins, the upper gallery seats of Paraiso's amphitheater of hills, for Renson had been a free agent for more than a month now and was not exactly in a condition to interview American housewives. My own task began down at the row of inhabited box-cars, and so on through shacks and tenements with many Spanish laborers' wives. Then toward noon the labor-train screamed in, with two "gold" coaches and many open cattle-cars with long benches jammed with sweaty workmen, easily six hundred men in the six cars, who swept in upon
the town like a flood through a suddenly opened sluiceway as the train barely paused and shrieked away again.

Renson and I dashed for the laborers' mess-halls, where hundreds of sun-bronzed foreigners, divided only as to color, packed pell-mell around a score of wooden tables heavily stocked with rough and tumble food—yet so different from the old French catch as catch can days when each man owned his black pot and toiled all through the noon-hour to cook himself an unsanitary lunch. We jotted them down at express speed, with changes of tongue so abrupt that our heads were soon reeling, and in the place where our minds should have been sounded only a confused chaotic uproar like a wrangling within the covers of a polyglot dictionary. Then suddenly I landed a Russian! It was the final straw. I like to speak Spanish, I can endure the creaking of Turks attempting to talk Italian, I can bend an ear to the excruciating "French" of Martinique negroes, I have boldly faced sputtering Arabs, but I will not run the risk of talking Russian. It was the second and last case during my census days when I was forced to call for interpretative assistance.

At best we caught only a small percentage at each table before the crowd had wolfed and melted away. An odd half-dozen more, perhaps, we found stretched out in the shade under the mess-hall and neighboring quarters before the imperative screech of the
labor-train whistle ended a scene that must be several times repeated, and now left us silent and alone, to wander wet and weary to the nearest white bachelor quarters, there to lie on our backs an hour or more till the polyglot jumble of words in the back of our heads had each climbed again to its proper shelf.

Speaking of white bachelor quarters, therein lay the enumerator's greatest problem. The Spaniard or the Jamaican is in nine cases out of ten fluently familiar with his companion's antecedents and pedigree. He can generally furnish all the information the census department calls for. But it is quite otherwise with the American bachelor. He may know his room-mate's exact degree of skill at poker, he probably knows his private opinion of "the Colonel," he is sure to know his degree of enmity to the prohibition movement; but he is not at all certain to know his name and rarely indeed has he the shadow of a notion when and in what particular corner of the States he began the game of existence. So loose are ties down on the Zone that a man's room-mate might go off into the jungle and die and the former not dream of inquiring for him for a week. Especially we world-wanderers, as are a large percentage of "Zoners," with virtually no fixed roots in any soil, floating wherever the job suggests or the spirit moves, have the facts of our past in our own heads only. No wanderer of experience would dream of asking his fellow where he came from. The answer
would be too apt to be, "from the last place." So difficult did this matter become that I gave up rushing for the bus to Pedro Miguel each evening and the even more distressing necessity of catching that premature 6:30 train each morning in Empire and, packing a sheet and pillow and tooth-brush, moved down to Paraiso that I might spend the first half of the night in quest of these elusive bits of bachelor information.

Meanwhile the enrolling by day continued unabated. I had my first experience enumerating "gold" married quarters—white American families; just enough for experience and not enough to suffer severely. The enrolling of West Indians was pleasanter. The wives of locomotive engineers and steam-shovel crancmen were not infrequently supercilious ladies who resented being disturbed during their "social functions" and lacked the training in politeness of Jamaican "mammies." Living in Paradise now under a paternal all-providing government, they seemed to have forgotten the rolling-pin days of the past.

It was here in Paraiso that I first encountered that strange, that wondrous strange custom of lying about one's age. Negro women never did. What more absurd, uncalled-for piece of dishonesty! Does Mrs. Smith fear that Mrs. Jones next door will succeed in pumping out of me that capital bit of information? Little does she know the long
Some of the "Enumerated"
prison sentence at "hard labor" that stares me in the face for any such slip; to say nothing of my naturally incommunicative disposition. Or is she ashamed to let me know the truth?—unaware that all such information goes in at my ears and down my pencil to the pink card before me like a message over the wires, leaving no more trace behind. Surely she must know that I care not a pencil-point whether she is eighteen or fifty-two, nor remember which one minute after her screen door has slammed behind me—unless she has caused me to glance up in wonder at her silvering temples of thirty-five when she simpers "twenty-two"—and to set her down as forty to be on the safe side. Oh now, please, ladies, do not understand me as accusing the American wives of Paraiso in general of this weakness. The large majority were quite pleasant, frank, and overflowing with cheery good sense. But the percentage who were not was far larger than I, who am also an American, was pleased to find it.

But doubly astonishing were the few cases of lying by proxy. A "clean-cut," college-graduated civil engineer of thirty-two whom one would have cited as an example of the best type of American, gave all data concerning himself in an unimpeachable manner. His wife was absent. When the question of her age arose he gave it, with the slightest catch in his voice, as twenty. Now that might be all very well. Men of thirty-two are occasionally so
fortunate as to marry girls of twenty. But a moment later the gentleman in question finds himself announcing that his wife has been living on the Zone with him since 1907; and that she was born in New England! Thus is he tripped over his own clothesline. For New England girls do not marry at fifteen; mother would not let them even if they would.

I, too, had gradually worked my way high up among the nondescript cabins on the upper rim of Paraiso that seem on the very verge of pitching headlong into the noisy, smoky canal far below with the jar of the next explosion, when one sunny mid-afternoon I caught sight of Renson dejectedly trudging down across what might be called the "Maiden" of Paraiso, back of the two-story lodgehall. I took leave of my ebony hostess and descended. Renson's troubles were indeed disheartening. Back in the jungled fringe of the town he had fallen into a swarm of Martiniques, and Renson's French being nothing more than an unstudied mixture of English and Spanish, he had not gathered much information. Moreover negro women from the French isles are enough to frighten any virtuous young Marine.

"What's the sense o' me tryin' to chew the fat in French?" asked Renson, with tears in his voice. "I ain't in no condition to work at this census business any longer anyway. I ain't got to bed before three in the morning this week"—in his air was
open suggestion that it was some one else's fault—
"Some day I'll be gettin' in bad, too. This mornin'
a fool nigger woman asked me if I didn't want her
black pickaninny I was enumeratin', thinkin' it was
a good joke. You know how these bush kids is
runnin' around all over the country before a white
man's brat could walk on its hind legs. 'Yes,' I
says, 'if I was goin' alligator huntin' an' needed
bait!' I come near catchin' the brat up by the feet
an' beatin' its can off. I'm out o' luck any way,
an'--"

The fact is Renson was aching to be "fired."
More than thirty days had he been subject only to
his own will, and it was high time he returned to the
nursery discipline of camp. Moreover he was out
of cigarettes. I slipped him one and smoothed him
down as its fumes grew — for Renson was as tract-
able as a child, rightly treated — and set him to
taking Jamaican tenements in the center of town,
while I struck off into the jungled Martinique hills
myself.

There were signs abroad that the census job was
drawing to a close. My first pay-day had already
come and gone and I had strolled up the gravel walk
one noon-day to the Disbursing Office with my yel-
low pay certificate duly initialed by the examiner
of accounts, and was handed my first four twenty-
dollar gold pieces — for hotel and commissary books
sadly reduce a good paycheck. Already one evening
I had entered the census office to find "the boss" just peeling off his sweat-dripping undershirt and dotted with skin-pricking jungle life after a day mule-back on the thither side of the canal; an utterly fruitless day, for not only had he failed during eight hours of plunging through the wilderness to find a single hut not already decorated with the "enumerated" tag, but not even a banana could he lay hands on when the noon-hour overhauled him far from the ministrations of "Ben" and the breeze-swept veranda of Empire hotel.

It was, I believe, the afternoon following Renson's linguistic troubles that "the boss" came jogging into Paraiso on his sturdy mule. In his eagerness to "clean up" the territory we fell to corraling negroes everywhere, in the streets, at work, buying their supplies at the commissary, sleeping in the shade of wayside trees, anywhere and everywhere, until at last in his excitement "the boss" let his medium soft pencil slip by the column for color and dashed down the abbreviation for "mixed" after the question, "Married or Single?" Which may have been near enough the truth of the case, but suggested it was time to quit. So we marked Paraiso "finished except for recalls" and returned to Empire.

One by one our fellow-enumerators had dropped by the wayside, some by mutual agreement, some without any agreement whatever. Renson was now
relieved from census duty, to his great joy, there remained but four of us,—"the boss" and "Mac" in the office, "Scotty" and I outside. A deep conference ensued and, as if I had not had good luck enough already, it was decided that we two should go through the "cut" itself. It was like offering us a salary to view all the Great Work in detail, for virtually all the excavation of any importance on the Zone lay within the confines of our district.

So one day "Scotty" and I descended at the girderless railroad bridge and, taking each one side of the canal, set out to canvass its every nook and cranny. The canal as it then stood was about the width of two city blocks, an immense chasm piled and tumbled with broken rock and earth, in the center a ditch already filled with grimy water, on either side several levels of rough rock ledges with sheer rugged stone faces; for the hills were being cut away in layers each far above the other. High above us rose the jagged walls of the "cut" with towns hanging by their fingernails all along its edge, and ahead in the abysmal, smoky distance the great channel gashed through Culebra mountain.

The different levels varied from ten to twenty feet one above the other, each with a railroad on it, back and forth along which incessantly rumbled and screeched dirt-trains full or empty, halting before the steam-shovels, that shivered and spouted thick black
smoke as they ate away the rocky hills and cast them in great giant handfuls on the train of one-sided flat-cars that moved forward bit by bit at the flourish of the conductor's yellow flag. Steam-shovels that seemed human in all except their mammoth fearless strength tore up the solid rock with snorts of rage and the panting of industry, now and then flinging some troublesome, stubborn boulder angrily upon the cars. Yet they could be dainty as human fingers too, could pick up a railroad spike or push a rock gently an inch further across the car. Each was run by two white Americans, or at least what would prove such when they reached the shower-bath in their quarters—the craneman far out on the shovel arm, the engineer within the machine itself with a labyrinth of levers demanding his unbroken attention. Then there was of course a gang of negroes, firemen and the like, attached to each shovel.

All the day through I climbed and scrambled back and forth between the different levels, dodging from one track to another and along the rocky floor of the canal, needing eyes and ears both in front and behind, not merely for trains but for a hundred hidden and unknown dangers to keep the nerves taut. Now and then a palatial motorcar, like some railroad breed of taxi, sped by with its musical insistent jingling bells, usually with one of the countless parties of government guests or tourists in spotless white which the dry season brings. Dirt-trains kept
the right of way, however, for the Work always comes first at Panama. Or it might be the famous "yellow car" itself with members of the Commission. Once it came all but empty and there dropped off inconspicuously a man in baggy duck trousers, a black alpaca coat of many wrinkles; and an unassuming straw hat, a white-haired man with blue—almost babyish blue-eyes, a cigarette dangling from his lips as he strolled about with restless yet quiet energy. There has been no flash and glitter of military uniforms on the Zone since the French sailed for home, but every one knew "the Colonel" for all that, the soldier who has never "seen service," who has never heard the shrapnel scream by overhead, yet to whom the world owes more thanks than six conquering generals rolled into one.

Scores of "trypod" and "Star" drills, whole battalions of deafening machines run by compressed air brought from miles away, are pounding and grinding and jamming holes in the living rock. After them will presently come nonchalantly strolling along gangs of the ubiquitous black "powdermen" and carelessly throw down boxes of dynamite and pound the drill-holes full thereof and tamp them down ready to "blow" at 11:30 and 5:30 when the workmen are out of range,—those mighty explosions that twelve times a week set the porch chairs of every I. C. C. house on the Isthmus to rocking, and are heard far out at sea.
Anywhere near the drills is such a roaring and jangling that I must bellow at the top of my voice to be heard at all. The entire gamut of sound-waves surrounds and enfolds me, and with it all the powerful Atlantic breeze sweeps deafeningly through the channel. Down in the bottom of the canal if one step behind anything that shuts off the breeze it is tropically hot; yet up on the edge of the chasm above, the trees are always nodding and bowing before the ceaseless wind from off the Caribbean. Scores of "switcheros" drowse under their sheet-iron wigwams, erected not so much as protection from the sun, for the drovers are mostly negroes and immune to that, as from young rocks that the dynamite blasts frequently toss a quarter-mile. Then over it all hang heavy clouds of soft-coal dust from trains and shovels, shifting down upon the black, white and mixed, and the enumerator alike; a dirty, noisy, perilous, enjoyable job.

Everywhere are gangs of men, sometimes two or three gangs working together at the same task. Shovel gangs, track gangs, surfacing gangs, dynamite gangs, gangs doing everything imaginable with shovel and pick and crowbar, gangs down on the floor of the canal, gangs far up the steep walls of cut rock, gangs stretching away in either direction till those far off look like upright bands of the leaf-cutting ants of Panamanian jungles; gangs nearly all, whatever their nationality, in the blue shirts and
khaki trousers of the Zone commissary, giving a peculiar color scheme to all the scene.

Now and then the boss is a stony-eyed American with a black cigar clamped between his teeth. More often he is of the same nationality as the workers, quite likely from the same town, who jabbers a little imitation English. Which is one of the reasons why a force of "time inspectors" is constantly dodging in and out over the job, time-book and pencil in hand, lest some fellow-townsman of the boss be earning his $1.50 a day under the shade of a tree back in the jungle. Here are Basques in their boinas, preferring their native "Euscarra" to Spanish; French "niggers" and English "niggers" whom it is to the interest of peace and order to keep as far apart as possible; occasionally a few sunburned blond men in a shovel gang, but they prove to be Teutons or Scandinavians; laborers of every color and degree—except American laborers, more than conspicuous by their absence. For the American negro is an untractable creature in large numbers, and the caste system that forbids white Americans from engaging in common labor side by side with negroes is to be expected in an enterprise of which the leaders are not only military men but largely southerners, however many may be shivering in the streets of Chicago or roaming hungrily through the byways of St. Louis. It is well so, perhaps. None of us who feels an affection for the Zone
would wish to see its atmosphere lowered from what it is to the brutal depths of our railroad construction camps in the States.

The attention of certain state legislatures might advantageously be called to the Zone Spaniard's drinking-cup. It is really a tin can on the end of a long stick, cover and all. The top is punched sieve-like that the water may enter as it is dipped in the bucket with which the water-boy strains along. In the bottom is a single small hole out of which spurts into the drinker's mouth a little stream of water as he holds it high above his head, as once he drank wine from his leather bota in far-off Spain. Many a Spanish gang comes entirely from the same town, notably Salamanca or Ávila. I set them to staring and chattering by some simple remark about their birthplace: "Fine view from the Paseo del Rastro, eh?" "Does the puente romano still cross the river?" But I had soon to cease such personalities, for picks and shovels lay idle as long as I remained in sight and Uncle Sam was the loser.

So many were the gangs that I advanced barely a half-mile during this first day and, lost in my work, forgot the hour until it was suddenly recalled by the insistent, strident tooting of whistles that forewarns the setting-off of the dynamite charges from the little red electric boxes along the edge of the "cut." I turned back toward Paraiso and, all but stumbling over little red-wound wires everywhere on
the ground, dodging in and out, running forward, halting or suddenly retreating, I worked my way gradually forward, while all the world about me was upheaving and spouting and belching forth to the heavens, as if I had been caught in the crater of a volcano as it suddenly erupted without warning.

The history of Panama is strewn with "dynamite stories." Even the French had theirs in their sixteen per cent. of the excavation of Culebra; in American annals there is one for every week. Three days before, one of my Empire friends set off one afternoon for a stroll through the "cut" he had not seen for a year. In a retired spot he came upon two negroes pounding an irregular bundle. "What you doing, boys?" he inquired with idle curiosity. "Jes' a breakin' up dis yere dynamite, boss," languidly answered one of the blacks. My friend was one of those apprehensive, over-cautious fellows so rare on the Zone. Without so much as taking his leave he set off at a run. Some two car-lengths beyond an explosion pitched him forward and all but lifted him off his feet. When he looked back the negroes had left. Indeed neither of them has reported for work since.

Then there was "Mac's" case. In his ambition for census efficiency "Mac" was in the habit of stopping workmen wherever he met them. One day he encountered a Jamaican carrying a box of dyna-
mite on his head and, according to his custom, shouted:

"Hey, boy! Had your census taken yet?"

"What dat, boss?" cried the Jamaican with wide-open eyes, as he threw the box at "Mac's" feet and stood at respectful attention.

Somehow "Mac" lacked a bit of his old zealouslyness thereafter.

On the second day I pushed past Cucaracha, scene of the greatest "slide" in the history of the canal when forty-seven acres went into the "cut," burying under untold tons of earth and rock steam-shovels and railroads, "Star" and "trypod" drills, and all else in sight—except the "rough-necks," who are far too fast on their feet to be buried against their will. One by one I dragged shovel gangs away to a distance where my shouting could be heard, one by one I commanded drillmen to shut off their deafening machines, all day I dodged switching, snorting trains, clambered by steep rocky paths, or ladders from one level to another, howling above the roar of the "cut" the time-worn questions, straining my ear to catch the answer. Many a negro did not know the meaning of the word "census," and must have it explained to him in words of one syllable. Many a time I climbed to some lofty rock ledge lined with drills and, gesticulating like a semaphore in signal practice, caught at last the wandering attention of a negro, to shout sore-throated above the
incecant pounding of machines and the roaring of the Atlantic breeze:

"Hello, boy! Census taken yet?"

A long vacant stare, then at last, perhaps, the answer:

"Oh, yes sah, boss."

"When and where?"

"In Spanish Town, Jamaica, three year ago, sah."

Which was not an attempt to be facetious but an answer in all seriousness. Why should not one census, like one baptism, suffice for a life-time? It was fortunate that enumerators were not accustomed to carry deadly weapons.

Quick changes from negro to Spanish gangs demonstrated beyond all future question how much more native intelligence has the white man. Rarely did I need to ask a Spaniard a question twice, still less ask him to repeat the answer. His replies came back sharp and swift as a pelota from a cesta. West Indians not only must hear the question an average of three times but could seldom give the simplest information clearly enough to be intelligible, though ostensibly speaking English. A Spanish card one might fill out and be gone in less time than the negro could be roused from his racial torpor. Yet of the Spaniards on the Zone surely seventy per cent. were wholly illiterate, while the negroes from the British West Indies, thanks to their good fortune in being
ruled over by the world's best colonist, could almost invariably read and write; many of those shoveling in the "cut" have been trained in trigonometry.

Few are the "Zoners" now who do not consider the Spaniard the best workman ever imported in all the sixty-five years from the railroad surveying to the completion of the canal. The stocky, muscle-bound little fellows come no longer to America as conquistadores, but to shovel dirt. And yet more cheery, willing workers, more law-abiding subjects are scarcely to be found. It is unfortunate we could not have imported Spaniards for all the canal work; even they have naturally learned some "soldiering" from the example of lazy negroes who, where laborers must be had, are a bit better than no labor — though not much.

The third day came, and high above me towered the rock cliffs of Culebra's palm-crowned hill, steam-shovels approaching the summit in echelon, here and there an incipient earth and rock "slide" dribbling warningly down. He who still fancies the digging of the canal an ordinary task should have tramped with us through just our section, halting to speak to every man in it, climbing out of this man-made cañon twice a day, a strenuous climb even near its ends, while at Culebra one looks up at all but unscalable mountain walls on either side.

From time to time we hear murmurs from abroad that Americans are making light of catastrophies on
A Gang of Greeks

An I. C. C. free public school for non-whites
the Isthmus, that they cover up their great disasters by a strict censorship of news. The latter is mere absurdity. As to catastrophies, a great "slide" or a premature dynamite explosion are serious disaster to Americans on the job just as they would be to Europeans. But whereas the continental European would sit down before the misfortune and weep, the American swears a round oath, spits on his hands, and pitches in to shovel the "slide" out again. He is n't belittling the disasters; it is merely that he knows the canal has got to be dug and goes ahead and digs it. That is the greatest thing on the Zone. Amid all the childish snarling of "Spigoties," the back-biting of Europe, the congressional wrangles, the Cabinet politics, the man on the job,—"the Colonel," the average American, the "rough-neck"—goes right on digging the canal day by day as if he had never heard a rumor of all this outside noise.

Mighty is the job from one point of view; yet tiny from another. With all his enormous equipment, his peerless ingenuity, and his feverish activity all little man has succeeded in doing is to scratch a little surface wound in Mother Earth, cutting open a few superficial veins, of water, that trickle down the rocky face of the "cut."

By March twelfth we had carried our task past and under Empire suspension bridge, and the end of the "cut" was almost in sight. That day I clawed
and scrambled a score of times up the face of rock walls. I zigzagged through long rows of negroes pounding holes in rock ledges. I stumbled and splashed my way through gangs of Martinique "muckers." I slid down the face of government-made cliffs on the seat of my commissary breeches. I fought my way up again to stalk through long lines of men picking away at the dizzy edge of sheer precipices. I rolled down in the sand and rubble of what threatened to develop into "slides." I crawled under snorting steam-shovels to drag out besooted negroes—negroes so besooted I had to ask them their color—while dodging the gigantic swinging shovel itself, to say nothing of "dhobie" blasts and rocks of the size of drummers' trunks that spilled from it as it swung. I climbed up into the quivering monster itself to interrupt the engineer at his levers, to shout at the craneman on his beam. I sprang aboard every train that was not running at full speed, walking along the running-board into the cab; if not to "get" the engineer at least to gain new life from his private ice-water tank. I scrambled over tenders and quarter-miles of "Lidgerwood flats" piled high with broken rock and earth, to scream at the American conductor and his black brakemen, often to find myself, by the time I had set down one of them, carried entirely out of my district, to Pedro Miguel or beyond the Chagres, and have to "hit the grit" in "hobo" fashion and catch
something back to the spot where I left off. In short I poked into every corner of the "cut" known to man, bawling in the November-first voice of a presidential candidate to everything in trousers:

"Eh! 'Ad yer census taken yet?"

And what was my reward? From the northern edge of Empire to where the "cut" sinks away into the Chagres and the low, flat country beyond, I enrolled—just thirteen persons. It was then and there, though it still lacked an hour of noon, that I ceased to be a census enumerator. With slow and deliberate step I climbed out of the canal and across a pathed field to Bas Obispo and, sitting down in the shade of her station, patiently awaited the train that would carry me back to Empire.

Four thousand, six hundred and seventy-seven Zone residents had I enrolled during those six weeks. Something over half of these were Jamaicans. Of the states Pennsylvania was best represented. Martinique negroes, Greeks, Spaniards, and Panamanians were some eighty per cent. illiterate; of some three hundred of the first only a half dozen even claimed to read and write; and non-wedlock was virtually universal among them.

Rumor has it that there are seventy-two separate states and dependencies represented on the Isthmus. My own cards showed a few less. Most conspicuous absences, besides American negroes, were natives of Honduras, of four countries of South America, of
most of Africa, and of entire Australia. That this was largely due to chance was shown by the fact that my fellow-enumerators found persons from all these countries.

I had enrolled persons born in the following places:

All the United States except three or four states in the far northwest; Canada, Mexico, Guatemala, Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Canal Zone, Colombia, Venezuela, British Guiana (Demarara), French and Dutch Guiana, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile, Cuba, Hayti and Santo Domingo, Jamaica, Barbados, St. Vincent, Trinidad, Saint Lucia, Montserrat, Dominica, Nevis, Nassau, Eleuthera and Inagua, Martinique, Guadaloupe, Saint Thomas (Danish West Indies), Curacao and Tobago, England, Ireland, Scotland, Holland, Finland, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Russia, France, Spain, Andorra, Portugal, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Greece, Servia, Turkey, Canary Islands, Syria, Palestine, Arabia, India (from Tuticorin to Lahore), China, Japan, Egypt, Sierra Leone, South Africa and — the High Seas.

"Where you born, boy?" I had run across a wrinkled old negro who had worked more than thirty years for the P. R. R.

"'Deed ah dōn' know, boss,"

"Oh, come! Don't know where you were born?"

"Fo' Gawd, boss, ah 's tellin' yō de truff. Ah dōn know, 'cause ah born to sea."
“Well, what country are you a subject of?”
“Truly ah cahn’t say, boss.”
“Well what nationality was your father?”
“Ah neveh see him, sah.”
“Well then where the devil did you first land after you were born?”
"'Deed ah cahn’t say, boss. T'ink it were one o' dem islands. Reckon ah 's a subjec' o' de' worl', boss."

Weeks afterward the population of Uncle Sam's ten by fifty-mile strip of tropics was found to have been on February first, 1912, 62,810. No, anxious reader, I am not giving away inside information; the source of my remarks is the public prints. Of these about 25,000 were British subjects (West Indian negroes with very few exceptions). Of the entire population 37,428 were employed by the U. S. government. Of white Americans, of the Brahmin caste of the "gold" roll, there were employed on the Zone but 5,228.