CHAPTER VIII

"THERE is much in this police business," said "the Captain," with his slow, deliberate enunciation, "that must lead to a blank wall. Out of ten cases to investigate it is quite possible nine will result in nothing. This percentage could not of course be true of a thousand cases and a man's services still be considered satisfactory. But of ten it is quite possible. As for knowing how to do detective work, all I bring to the department myself is some ordinary common sense and a little knowledge of human nature, and with these I try to work things out as best I can. This peeping-through-the-key-hole police work I know nothing whatever about, and don't want to. Nor do I expect a man to."

I had been discussing with "the Captain" my dissatisfaction at my failure to "get results" in an important case. A few weeks on the force had changed many a preconceived notion of police life. It had gradually become evident, for instance, that the profession of detective is adventurous, absorbing, heart-stopping chiefly between the covers of popular fiction; that real detective work, like almost any other vocation, is made up largely of the
little unimportant every-day details, with only a rare assignment bulking above the mass. As "the Captain" said, it was just plain every-day work carried on by the application of ordinary common sense. Such best-seller artifices as disguise were absurd. Not only would disguise in all but the rarest cases be impossible, but useless. The A-B-C of plain-clothes work is to learn to know a man by his face rather than by his clothing — and at the outset one will be astonished to find how much he has hitherto been depending on the latter. It must be the same with criminals, too, unless your criminal is an amateur or a fool, in which event you will "land" him without the trouble of disguising. A detective furthermore should not be a handsome man or a man of striking appearance in any way; the ideal plain-clothes man is the little insignificant snipe whom even the ladies will not notice.

Since April tenth I had been settled in notorious House 111, Ancon, a sort of frontiersman resort or smugglers' retreat — had there been anything to smuggle — where to have fallen through the veranda screening would have been to fall into a foreign land. As pay-day approached there came the duty of standing a half-hour at the station gate before the departure of each train to watch and discuss with the ponderous, smiling, dark-skinned chief of Panama's plain-clothes squad, or with a vigilante the suspicious characters and known crooks of all colors
going out along the line. On the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth the I. C. C. pay-car, that bank on wheels guarded by a squad of Z. P., sprinkled its half-million a day along the Zone. Then plain-clothes duty was not merely to scan the embarking passengers but to ride out with each train to one of the busy towns. There scores upon scores of soil-smeared workmen swarmed over all the landscape with long paper-wrapped rolls of Panamanian silver in their hands, while flashily dressed touts and crooks of both sexes drifted out from Panama with every train to worm their insidious way into wherever the scent of coin promised another month free from labor. To add to those crowded times the chief dissipation of the West Indian during the few days following pay-day that his earnings last is to ride aimlessly and joyously back and forth on the trains.

There is one advantage, though some policemen call it by quite the opposite name, in being stationed at Ancon. When crime takes a holiday and do-nothing threatens tropical dementia, or a man tires of his native land and people a short stroll down the asphalt takes him into the city of Panama. Barely across the street where his badge becomes mere metal, and he must take care not to arrest absent-mindedly the first violator of Zone laws—whom he is sure to come upon within the first block—he notes that the English tongue has suddenly
almost disappeared. On every hand, lightly sprinkled with many other dialects, sounds Spanish, the slovenly Spanish of Panama in which *bueno* is "hüeno" and *calle* is "caye." As he swings languidly to the right into Avenida Central he grows gradually aware that there has settled down about him a cold indifference, an atmosphere quite different from that on his own side of the line. Those he addresses in the tongue of the land reply to his questions with their customary gestures and fixed phrases of courtesy. But no more; and a cold dead silence falls sharply upon the last word, and at times, if the experience be comparatively new, there seems to hover in the air something that reminds him that way back fifty-six years ago there was a "massacre" of Americans in Panama city. For the Panamanian has little love for the United States or its people; which is the customary thanks any man or nation gets for lifting a dirty half-breed gamin from the gutter.

Off in the vortex of the city lolls Panama's public market, where Chinamen are the chief sellers and flies the chief consumers. Myriads of fruits in every stage of development and disintegration, haggled bits of meat, the hundred sights and sounds and smells one hurries past suggest that Panama may even have outdone Central America before Uncle Sam came with his garbage-cans and his switch. Further on, down at the old
harbor, lingers a hint of the picturesqueness of Panama in pre-canal days. Clumsy boats, empty, or deep-laden with fruit from, or freight to, the several islands that sprinkle the bay, splash and bump against the little cement wharf. Aged wooden "windjammers" doze at their moorings, everywhere are jabbering natives with that shifty half-cast eye and frequent evidence of deep-rooted disease. Almost every known race mingle in Panama city, even to Chinese coolies in their umbrella hats and rolled up cotton trousers, delving in rich market gardens on the edges of the town or dog-trotting through the streets under two baskets dancing on the ends of a bamboo pole, till one fancies oneself at times in Singapore or Shanghái. The black Zone laborer, too, often prefers to live in Panama for the greater freedom it affords — there he does n't have to clean his sink so often, marry his "wife," or banish his chickens from the bedroom. Policemen with their clubs swarm everywhere, for no particular reason than that the little republic is forbidden to play at army, and with the presidential election approaching political henchmen must be kept good-humored. Not a few of these officers are West Indians who speak not a word of Spanish — nor any other tongue, strictly speaking.

Rubber-tired carriages roll constantly by along Uncle Sam's macadam, amid the jingling of their musical bells. Every one takes a carriage in Pan-
ama. Any man can afford ten cents even if he has no expense account; besides he runs no risk of being overcharged, which is a greater advantage than the cost. All this may be different when Panama’s electric line, all the way from Balboa docks to Las Sabanas, is opened—but that’s another year. Meanwhile the lolling in carriages comes to be quite second nature.

But like any tropical Spanish town Panama seethes only by night, especially Saturday and Sunday nights when the paternal Zone government allows its children to spend the evening in town. Then frequent trains, unknown during the week, begin with the setting of the sun to disgorge Americans of all grades and sizes through the clicking turnstiles into the arms of gesticulating hackmen, some to squirm away afoot between the carriages, all to be swallowed up within ten minutes in the great sea of “colored” people. So that, large as may be each train-load, white American faces are so rare on Panama streets that one involuntarily glances at each that passes in the throng.

It is the “gum-shoc’s” duty to know and be unknown in as many places as possible. Wherefore on such nights, whatever his choice, he drifts early down by the “Normandie” and on into the “Pana-zone” to see who is out, and why. In the latter emporium he adds a bottle of beer to his expense account, endures for a few moments the bawling above
Panama City from Police Headquarters
the scream of the piano of two Americans of Palestinian antecedents, admires some local hero, like "Baldy" for instance, who is credited with doing what Napoleon could not do, and floats on, perhaps to screw up his courage and venture into the thinly-clad Teatro Apolo. He who knows where to look, or was born under a lucky star, may even see on these merry evenings a big Marine from Bas Obispo or a burly soldier of the Tenth howling some joyful song with six or seven little "Spig" policemen climbing about on his frame. At such times everything but real blood, flows in Panama. Her history runs that way. On the day she won her independence from Spain it is said the General in Chief cut his finger on a wine glass. The day she won it from Colombia there was a Chinaman killed—but every one agrees that was due to the celestial's criminal carelessness.

Down at the quieter end of the city are "Las Bovedas," that curving sea-wall Phillip of Spain tried to make out from his palace walls, as many another, regal and otherwise, has strained his eyes in vain to see where his good coin has gone. But the walls are there all right, though Phillip never saw them; crumbling a bit, yet still a sturdy barrier to the sea. A broad cement and grass promenade runs atop, wide as an American street. Thirty or forty feet below the low parapet sounds the deep, time-mellowed voice of the Pacific, as there rolls higher
and higher up the rock ledges that great tide so different from the scarcely noticeable one at Colon. The summer breeze never dies down, never grows boisterous. On the landward side Panama lies mumbling to itself, down in the hollow between squats Chiriqui prison with its American warden, once a Zone policeman; while in the round stone watch-towers on the curving parapets lean prison guards with fixed bayonets and incessantly blow the shrill tin whistles that is the universal Latin-American artifice for keeping policemen awake. On the way back to the city the élite—or befriended—may drop in at the University Club at the end of the wall for a cooling libation.

On Sunday night comes the band concert in the palm-ringed Cathedral Plaza. There is one on Thursday, too, in Plaza Santa Ana, but that is packed with all colors and considered "rather vulgah." In the square by the cathedral the aggregate color is far lighter. Pure African blood hangs chiefly in the outskirts. Then the haughty aristocrats of Panama, proud of their own individual shade of color, may be seen in the same promenade with American ladies—even a garrison widow or two—from out along the line. Panamanian girls gaudily dressed and suggesting to the nostrils perambulating drug-stores shuttle back and forth with their perfumed dandies. Above the throng pass the heads and shoulders of unemotional, self-pos-
"Zoners" forced to live in box-cars are furnished all the comforts of home.

"The Chief" addresses the "crack shots" at the target range.
sessed Americans, erect and soldierly. Sergeant Jack of Ancon station was sure to be there in his faultless civilian garb, a figure neat but not gaudy; and even busy Lieutenant Long was known to break away from his stacked-up duties and his black stenographer and come to overtop all else in the square save the palm-trees whispering together in the evening breeze between the numbers.

There is no favoritism in Zone police work. Every crime reported receives full investigation, be it only a Greek laborer losing a pair of trousers or —

There was the case that fell to me early in May, for instance. A box billed from New York to Peru had been broken open on Balboa dock and — one bottle of cognac stolen. Unfortunately the matter was turned over to me so long after the perpetration of the dastardly crime that the possible culprits among the dock hands had wholly recovered from the probable consumption of the evidence. But I succeeded in gathering material for a splendid typewritten report of all I had not been able to unearth, to file away among other priceless headquarters’ archives.

Not that the Z. P. has not its big jobs. The force to a man distinctly remembers that absorbing two months between the escape of wild black Felix Paul and the day they dragged him back into the penitentiary. No less fresh in memory are the expe-
ditions against Maurice Pelote, or François Barduc, the murderer of Miraflores. All Martinique negroes, be it noted; and of all things on this earth, including greased pigs, the hardest to catch is a Martinique criminal. After all, four or five murders on the Zone in three years is no startling record in such a swarm of nationalities.

Cases large and small which it would be neither of interest, nor politic to detail poured in during the following weeks. Among them was the counterfeit case unearthed by some Shylock Holmes on the Panamanian force, that called for a long perspiring hunt for the "plant" in odd corners of the Zone. Then there was ——, an ex-Z. P. who lost his three years' savings on the train, for which reason I shadowed a well-known American — for it is a Z. P. rule that no one is above suspicion — about Panama afoot and in carriages nearly all night, in true dime-novel fashion. There was the day that I was given a dangerous convict to deliver at Culebra Penitentiary. The criminal was about three feet long, jet black, his worldly possessions comprising two more or less garments, one reaching as far down as his knees and the other as far up as the base of his neck. He had long been a familiar sight to "Zoners" among the swarm of bootblacks that infest the corner near the P. R. R. station. He claimed to be eleven, and looked it. But having already served time for burglary and horse-stealing, his conviction
for stealing a gold necklace from a negro washerwoman of San Miguel left the Chief Justice no choice but to send him to meditate a half-year at Culebra. There is no reform school on the Zone. The few American minors who have been found guilty of misdoing have been banished to their native land. When the deputy warden had sufficiently recovered from the shock brought upon him by the sight of his new charge to give me a receipt for him, I raced for the noon train back to the city.

Thereon I sat down beside Pol — First-Class Policeman X——, surprised to find him off duty and in civilian clothes. There was a dreamy, far-away look in his eyes, and not until the train was racing past Rio Grande reservoir did he turn to confide to me the following extraordinary occurrence:

"Last night I dreamed old Judge — had my father and my mother up before him. On the stand he asked my mother her age — and the funny part of it is my mother has been dead over ten years. She turned around and wrote on the wall with a piece of chalk '1859,' the year she was born. Then my father was called and he wrote '1853.' That's all there was to the dream. But take it from me I know what it means. Now just add 'em together, and multiply by five — because I could see five people in the court-room — divide by two — father and mother—and I get —," he drew out a crumpled "arrest" form covered with penciled fig-
ures, "— 9280. And there —" his voice dropped low, "— is your winning number for next Sunday."

So certain was this, that First-Class X—— had bribed another policeman to take his eight-hour shift, dressed in his vacation best, bought a ticket to Panama and return, with real money at tourist prices, and would spend the blazing afternoon seeking among the scores of vendors in the city for lottery ticket 9280. And if he did not find it there he certainly paid his fare all the way to Colon and back to continue his search. I believe he at length found and acquired the whole ticket, for the customary sum of $2.50. But there must have been a slip in the arithmetic, or mother's chalk; for the winning number that Sunday was 8895.

Frequent as are these melancholy errors, scores of "Zoners" cling faithfully to their arithmetical superstitions. Many a man spends his recreation hours working out the winning numbers by some secret recipe of his own. There are men on the Z. P. who, if you can get them started on the subject of lottery tickets, will keep it up until you run away, showing you the infallibility of their various systems, believing the drawing to be honest, yet oblivious to the fact that both the one and the other cannot be true. Dreams are held in special favor. It is probably safe to assert that one-half the numbers over 1,000 and under 10,000 that appear in Zone dreams are snapped up next day in lottery
tickets. Many have systems of figuring out the all-important number from the figures on engines and cars. More than one Zone housewife has slipped into the kitchen to find the roast burning and her West Indian cook hiding hastily behind her ample skirt a long list of the figures on every freight-car that has passed that morning, from which by some Antillian miscalculation and the murmuring of certain invocations she was to find the magic number that would bring her cooking days to an end.

Yet there is sometimes method in their madness. Did not "Joe" who slept in the next room to me at Gatun "hit Duque for two pieces"—which is to say he had $3,000 to sprinkle along with his police salary? Yet personally the only really appealing "system" was that of Cristobal. Upon his arrival on the Isthmus four years ago he picked out a number at random, took out a yearly subscription to it, and thought no more about it than one does of a newspaper delivered at the door each morning—until one Monday during this month of May, after he had squandered something over $500, on worthless bits of paper, he strolled into the lottery office and was handed an inconspicuous little bag containing $7,500 in yellow gold.

Like all Z. P. "rookies" (recruits) I had been warned early to beware the "sympathy dodge." But experience is the only real teacher. One afternoon I bestraddled a crazy, stilt-legged Jamaican
horse to go out into the bush beyond the Panama line to fetch and deliver a citizen of that sovereign republic who was wanted on the Zone for horse-stealing. At the town of Sabanas, where those Panamanians who have bagged the most loot since American occupation have their "summer" homes, — giddy, brick-painted monstrosities among the great trees, deep green foliage and brilliant flower-beds (pause a moment and think of brilliant red houses in the tropics; it will make you better acquainted with the "Spig") I dropped in at the police station for ice-water and information. I found it in charge of a negro policeman who knew nothing, and had forgotten that. When, therefore, it also chanced that an officer of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals stopped before the gate with a coachman of Panama, it fell upon me to assume command. The horse was the usual emaciated rat of an animal indigenous to Panama City. When overhauled, the driver was beating the animal uphill on his way to Old Panama to bring back a party of tourists visiting the ruins. How he expected the decrepit beast to carry four more persons was a mystery. When the harness was lifted there was disclosed the expected half-dozen large raw sores. We tied the animal in the shade near hay and water and adjourned to the station.

The coachman, a weary, unshaven Spaniard whose red eyelids showed lack of sleep, was weeping co-
piously. He claimed to be a madrileño — which was evident; that he had been a coachman in Spain and Panama all his life without ever before having been arrested — which was possible. He was merely one of many drivers for a livery-stable owner in Panama. Ordered to go for the tourists, he had called his employer’s attention to the danger of crossing Zone territory with a horse in that condition; but the owner had ordered him to cover up the sores with pads and harness and drive along.

It was a very sad case. Here was a poor, honest coachman struggling to support a wife and I don’t recall how many children, but any number sounds quite reasonable in Panama, who was about to be punished for the fault of another. The paradox of honest and coachman did not strike me until later. He was certainly telling the truth — you come to recognize it readily in all ordinary cases after a few weeks in plain clothes. The real culprit was, of course, the employer. My righteous wrath demanded that he and not his poor serf be punished. I could not release the driver. But I would see that the truth was brought out in court next morning and a warrant sworn out against the owner. With showering tears and rib-shaking sobs the coachman promised to tell the judge the whole story. I went through him, and locking him up with assurances of my deepest sympathy and full assistance, stilted on toward the little village of shacks scattered out of
sight among the hills, and valleys across the border.

Coachman, witnesses, and arresting officer, to say nothing of horse, carriage, and sores were on hand when court opened next morning. As I expected, the judge failed to ask the poor fellow a single question that would bring out the complicity of his employer; did not in fact discover there was an employer. I asked to be sworn, and gave the true version of the case. The judge listened earnestly. When I had ended, he recalled the coachman. The latter expressed his astonishment that I should have made any such statements. He denied them in toto. His employer had nothing whatever to do with the case. The fault was entirely his, and no one else was in the remotest degree connected with the matter.

"Five dollars!" snapped the judge.

The coachman paid, hitched up the rat of a horse, and wabbled away into Panama.

Police business, taking me down into "the Grove" that night, I found the driver, clean-shaven and better dressed, waiting for fares before the principal house of that section.

"What kind of a game —," I began.

"Señor," he cried, and tears again seemed on the point of falling, "every word I told you was true. But of course I could n't testify against the patrón. He 'd discharge me and blackmail me, and you know
I have a wife and innumerable children to support. Come on over and have a drink."

This justice business, one soon learns, is of the same infallible stuff as the rest of life. After all it is only the personal opinion of the judge between two persons swearing on oath to diametrically opposed statements; and for all the impressiveness of deep furrowed brows I did not find that the average judge had any more power of reading human nature than the average of the rest of us. I well remember the morning when a meek little Panamanian was testifying in his own behalf, in Spanish of course, when the judge broke in without even asking for a translation of the testimony:

"That 'll do! Because of your gestures I believe you are trying to bunco this court. You are lying — tell him that," this to the negro interpreter; and he therewith sentenced the witness to jail.

As if any Panamanian could talk earnestly of anything without waving his arms about him.

The telephone-bell rang one afternoon. It was always doing that, twenty-four hours a day; but this time it sounded especially sharp and insistent. In the adjoining room, over the "blotter," snapped the brusk stereotyped nasal reply:

"Aneon! Bingham talking!"

The instrument buzzed a moment and the deskman looked up to say:

" 'Andy' and a nigger just fell over into Pedro"
Miguel locks. They're sending in his body. The nigger lit on his head and hurt his leg."

His body! How uncanny it sounded! "Andy," that bunch of muscles who had made such short work of the circus wrestler in Gatun and whom I had seen not twenty-four hours before bubbling with life was now a "body." Things happen quickly on the Zone, and he whom the fates have picked to go generally shows no hesitation in his exit. But at least a man who dies for the I. C. C. has the affairs he left behind him attended to in a thorough manner. In ten minutes to a half-hour one of the Z. P. is on the ground taking note of every detail of the accident. A special train or engine rushes the body to the morgue in Ancon hospital grounds. A coroner's jury is soon meeting under the chairmanship of a policeman, long reports of everything concerning the victim or the accident are soon flowing Administration-ward. The police accident report is detailed and in triplicate. There is sure to be in the "personal files" at Culebra a history of the deceased and the names of his nearest relative or friend both on the Isthmus and in the States; for every employee must make out his biography at the time of his engagement. There are men whose regular duty it is to list and take care of his possessions down to the last lead pencil, and to forward them to the legal heirs. A year's pay goes to his family — were as much required of every employer and his
the burden of proving the accident the fault of the employee, how the safety appliances in factories would multiply. There is a man attached to Ancon hospital whose unenviable duty it is to write a letter of condolence to the relatives in the States.

And so the "Kangaroos" or the "Red Men" or whatever his lodge was filed behind the I. C. C. casket to the church in Ancon, and "Andy" was laid away under another of the simple white iron crosses that thickly populate many a Zone hillside, and he was charged up to the big debit column of the costs of the canal. On the cross is his new number; for officially a "Zoner" is always a number; that of the brass-check he wears as a watch-charm alive, that at the head of his grave when his canal-digging is over.

Late one unoccupied afternoon I picked up the path behind the Administration Building and, skirting a Zone residence, began to climb that famous oblong mound that dominates the Pacific end of the landscape from every direction,—Ancon Hill. For a way a fairly steep and stony path lead through thick undergrowth. Then this ceased, and a far steeper trail zigzagged up the face of the bare mountain, covered only with thin dead grass. The setting sun cast its shadow obliquely across the summit when I reached it,—a long ridge, with groves of trees, running off abruptly toward the sea. On the opposite side Uncle Sam was cutting away a whole
side of the hill. But the five o'clock whistle had blown, and whole armies of little workmen swarmed across all the landscape far below, and silence soon settled down save for the dredges at Balboa that chug on through the night. But for myself the hill was wholly unpeopled. A sturdy ocean breeze swept steadily across it. The sinking sun set the jungle afire in a spot that would have startled those who do not know that it rises in the Pacific at Panama, crude, glaring colors glowed, fading to gentler and more delicate tints, then the evening shadow that had climbed the hill with me spread like a great black veil over all the world.

But the moon nearing its full followed almost on the heels of the setting sun and, casting its half-day over a scene rich in nature and history, invited the eye to swing clear round the hazy circle. Below lay Panama dully rumbling with night traffic. Silent Ancon, still better lighted, cuddled upon the lower skirts of the hill itself. Then beyond, the curving bay, half seen, half guessed, with its long promontory dying away into the hazy moonlit distance, lighted up here and there by bush fires in the jungled hills. Some way out winked the cluster of lights that marked Las Sabanas. In front, the placid Pacific, the "South Sea" of the Spaniards, spread dimly away into the void of night, its several islands seen only by the darker darkness that marked where they lay.
A "Policeman"

Panamanian Convicts
On the other side of the hill the rumble of cranes and night labor came up from Balboa dock. There, began the canal, which the eye could follow away into the dim hilly inland distance — and come upon a great cluster of lights that was Corozal, then another group that was Miraflores, close followed by those of Pedro Miguel; and yet further, rising to such height as to be almost indistinguishable from the lower stars the lights of the negro cabins of upper Paraiso twinkled dimly above a broad glow that was Paraiso itself. There the vista ended. For at Paraiso the canal turns to the left for its plunge through Culebra hill, and all that follows,—Empire, Cascadas, and far Gatun, was visible only in the imagination.

If only the film of time might roll back and there pass again before our eyes all that has come to pass within sight of Ancon hilltop. Across the bay there, where now are only jungle-tangled ruins, Pizarro set out with his handful of vagabonds to conquer South America; there old Buccaneer Morgan laid his bloody hand. Back in the hills there men died by scores trying to carry a ship across the Isthmus, the Spanish viceroys passed with their rich trains, there on some unknown knoll Balboa reached four hundred years ago the climax of a career that began with stowing away in a cask and ended under the headsman’s ax — no end of it, down to the “Forty-niners” going hopefully out and returning filled
with gold or disease, or leaving their bones here in the jungle before they really were "Forty-niners"; on down to the railroad days with men wading in swamps with survey kits, and frequently lying down to die. Then if a bit of the future, too, could for a moment be unveiled, and one might watch the first ship glide majestically and silently into the canal and away into the jungle like some amphibious monster.

It was along in those days that we were looking for a "murderous assaulter." At a Saturday night dance in a native shack back in Miraflores bush the usual riot had broken out about midnight and a revolver had come into play. As a result there was a Peruvian mulatto up in Ancon hospital who had been shot through the mouth, the bullet being somewhere in his neck. It became my frequent duty, among other Z. P.'s, to take suspects up the hill for possible identification.

One morning I strolled into the station and fell to laughing. The early train had brought in on suspicion a Spanish laborer of twenty or twenty-two; a pretty, girlish chap with huge blue eyes over which hung long black lashes like those painted on Nürnberg dolls. No one with a shadow of faith in human nature left would have believed him capable of any crime; any one at all acquainted with Spaniards must have known he could not shoot a hare, would in fact be afraid to fire off a gun.
The fear in his big blue eyes struggled with his ingenuous, girlish smile as I marched him through the long hall full of white beds and darker inmates. The Peruvian sat bolstered up in his cot, a stoical, revengeful glare on his reddish-brown swollen face. He gazed a long minute at the boy's face, across which flitted the flush of fear and embarrassment, at the big doll's eyes, then shook a raised forefinger slowly back and forth before his nose — the negative of Spanish-speaking peoples. Then he groaned, spat in a tin-can beside him, and called for paper and pencil. In the note-book I handed him he wrote in atrociously spelled Spanish:

"The man that came to the dance with this man is the man that shot me with a bullet."

The blue-eyed boy promised to point out his companion of that night. We took the 10:55 and reached Pedro Miguel during the noon hour. Down in a box-car camp between the railroad and the canal the boy called for "José" and there presented himself immediately a tall, studious, solemn-faced Spaniard of spare frame, about forty, dressed in overalls and working shirt. Here was even less a criminal type than the boy.

"Señor," I asked, "did you go to the dance in Miraflores last Saturday night with this youth?"

"Sí, señor."

"Then I place you under arrest. We will take the one o'clock train."
He opened his mouth to protest, but closed it again without having uttered a sound. He opened it a second time, then sat suddenly down on the low edge of the box-car porch. A more genuinely astonished man I have never seen. No actor could have approached it. Still, whatever my own conviction, it was my business to bring him before his accuser. After a time he recovered sufficiently to ask permission to change his clothes, and disappeared in one of the resident box-cars. The boy was already being fed in another. Had my prisoners been of almost any one of the other seventy-one nationalities I should not have thought of letting them out of my sight. But the Zone Spaniard's respect for law is proverbial.

"José! Pinched José!" cried his American boss, when I explained that he would find himself a man short that afternoon. "You people are sure barking up the wrong tree this time. Why, José has been my engineer for over two years, and the steadiest man on the Zone. He writes for some Spanish paper and tells 'em the truth over there so straight that the rest of 'em down here, the anarchists and all that bunch, are aching to get him into trouble. But they'll never get anything on José. Have him tell you about it in Spanish if you sabe the lingo."

But José was a gallego, whence instead of the voluble flood of protesting words one expects from a
Spaniard on such an occasion, he wrapped himself in a stoical silence. Not until we were on our way to the railroad station did I get him to talk. Then he explained in quiet, unflowery, gestureless language.

He had come to the Canal Zone chiefly to gather literary material. Not being a man of wealth, however, nor one satisfied with superficial observation, he had sought employment at his trade as stationary engineer. Besides laying in a stock for more important writing he hoped to do in the future, he was Zone correspondent of "El Liberal" of Madrid and other Spanish cities. In the social life of his fellow-countrymen on the Isthmus he had taken no part, whatever. He was too busy. He did not drink. He could not dance; he saw no sense in squandering time in such frivolities. But ever since his arrival he had been promising himself to attend one of these wild Saturday-night debauches in the edge of the jungle that he might use a description of it in some later work. So he had coaxed his one personal friend, the boy, to go with him. It was virtually the one thing besides work that he had ever done on the Zone. They had stayed two hours, and had left the moment the trouble began. Yet here he was arrested.

I bade him cheer up, to consider the trip to Ancon merely an afternoon excursion on government pass. He remained downcast.

"But think of the experience!" I cried. "Now
you can tell exactly how it feels to be arrested—first-hand literary material."

But he was not philosopher enough to look at it from that point of view. To his Spanish mind arrest, even in innocence, was a disgrace for which no amount of "material" could compensate. It is a common failing. How many of us set out into the world for experience, yet growl with rage or sit downcast and silent all the way from Pedro Miguel to Panama if one such experience gives us a rough half-hour, or robs us of ten minutes sleep.

At the hospital the Peruvian gurgled and spat, beckoned for paper and wrote:

"This is the man."

"What man?" I asked.

"The man who came with that man," he scribbled, nodding his heavy face toward the blue-eyed boy.

"But is this the man that shot you?" I demanded.

"The man who came with that man is the one," he scrawled.

"Well, then this is the man that shot you?" I cried.

But he would not answer definitely to that, but sat a long time glaring out of his swollen, vindictive countenance propped up in his pillows at the tall, solemn correspondent. By and by he motioned again for paper.

"I think so. I am not sure," he miswrote.

I did not think so, and as the sum total of his
descriptions of his assailant during the past several days amounted to "a tall man, rather short, with a face and two eyes"—he was very insistent about the eyes, which is the reason the doll-eyed boy had fallen into the drag-net—I permitted myself to accept my own opinion as evidence. The Peruvian was in all likelihood in no condition to recognize a man from a loup-garou by the time the fracas started. Much ardent water had flowed that night. I took the suspects down to Ancon station and let them cool off in porch rocking-chairs. Then I gave them passes back to Pedro Miguel for the evening train. The doll-eyed boy smiled girlishly upon me as he descended the steps, but the correspondent strode slowly away with the downcast, cheerless countenance of a man who has been hurt beyond recovery.

There were strangely contrasted days in the "gum-shoe's" calendar. Two examples taken almost at random will give the idea. On May twentieth I lolled all day in a porch rocker at Ancon station, reading a novel. Along in the afternoon Corporal Castillo drifted in. For a time he stood leaning against the desk-rail, his felt hat pushed far back on his head, his eyes fixed on some point in the interior of China. Then suddenly he snatched up a sheet of I. C. C. stationery, dropped down at a typewriter, and wrote at express speed a letter in Spanish. Next he grasped a telephone and, in the words of the deskman, "spit Spig into the 'phone"
for several minutes. That over he caught up an envelope, sealed the letter and addressed it. An instant later the station was in an uproar looking for a stamp. One was found, the Corporal stuck it on the letter, fell suddenly motionless and stared for a long time at vacancy. Then a new thought struck him. He jerked open a drawer of the “gum-shoe” desk, flung the letter inside — where I found it accidentally one day some weeks afterward — and dropping into the swivel-chair laid his feet on the “gum-shoe” blotter and a moment later seemed to have fallen asleep.

By all of which signs those of us who knew him began to suspect that the Corporal had something on his mind. Not a few considered him the best detective on the force; at least he was different enough from a printer’s ink detective to be a real one. But naturally the strain of heading a detective bureau for weeks was beginning to wear upon him.

“Damn it!” said the Corporal suddenly, opening his eyes, “I can’t be in six places at once. You’ll have to handle these cases,” and he drew from a pocket and handed me three typewritten sheets, then drifted away into the dusk. I looked them over and returned to the porch rocker and the last chapters of the novel.

A meek touch on the leg awoke me at four next morning. I looked up to see dimly a black face
under a khaki helmet bent over me whispering, "It de time, sah," and fade noiselessly away. It was the frontier policeman carrying out his orders of the night before. For once there was not a carriage in sight. I stumbled sleepily down into Panama and for some distance along Avenida Central before I was able to hail an all night hawker chasing a worn little wreck of a horse along the macadam. I spread my lanky form over the worn cushions and we spavined along the graveled boundary line, past the Chinese cemetery where John can preserve and burn joss to his ancestors to the end of time, out through East Balboa just awakening to life, and reached Balboa docks as day was breaking. I was not long there, and the equine caricature ambled the three miles back to town in what seemed reasonable time, considering. As we turned again into Avenida Central my watch told me there was time and to spare to catch the morning passenger. I was not a little surprised therefore to hear just then two sharp rings on the station gong. I dived headlong into the station and brought up against a locked gate, caught a glimpse of two or three ladies weeping and the tail of the passenger disappearing under the bridge. Americans have introduced the untropical idea of starting their trains on time, to the disgust of the "Spig" in general and the occasional discomfiture of Americans. I dashed wildly out through the station, across Panama's main street, down a
rugged lane to the first steps descending to the track, and tumbled joyously onto a slowly moving train—to discover that it was the Balboa labor-train and that the Colon passenger was already half-way to Diablo Hill.

A Panama policeman of dusky hue, leaning against a gate-post, eyed me drowsily as I slowly climbed the steps, mopping my brow and staring at my watch.

"What time does that 6:35 train leave?" I demanded.

"Yo, señor," he said with ministerial dignity, shifting slowly to the other shoulder, "no tengo conocimiento de esas cosas" (I have no knowledge of those things).

He probably did not know there is a railroad from Panama to Colon. It has only been in operation since 1855.

Later I found the fault lay with my brass watch.

With a perspiration up for all day I set out along the track. Rounding Diablo Hill the realization that I was hungry came upon me simultaneously with the thought that unless I got through the door of Corozal hotel by 7:30 I was likely to remain so. Breakfast over, I caught the morning supply-train to Miraflores, there to dash through the locks for a five-minute interview. I walked to Pedro Miguel and, descending from the embankment of the main line, "nailed" a dirt-train returning empty and stood up for a breezy ride down through the "cut." It
was the same old smoky, toilsome place, a perceptible bit lower. As in the case of a small boy only those can see its growth who have been away for a time. The train stopped with a jerk at the foot of Culebra. I walked a half-mile and caught a loaded dirt-train to Cascadas. The matter there to be investigated required ten minutes. That over, I "got in touch" at the nearest telephone, and the Corporal's voice called for my immediate presence at headquarters. There chanced to be passing through Cascadas at that moment a Panama-bound freight, the caboose of which caught me up on the fly; and forty minutes later I was racing up the long stairs.

There I learned among other things that a man I was anxious to have a word with was coming in on the noon train, but would be unavailable after arrival. I sprang into a cab and was soon rolling away again, past the Chinese cemetery. At the commissary crossing in East Balboa we were held up by an empty dirt-train returning from the dump. I tossed a coin at the cabman and scrambled aboard. The train raced through Corozal, down the grade and around the curve at unslacking speed. I dropped off in front of Miraflores police station, keeping my feet, thanks to practice and good luck, and dashing up through the village, dragged myself breathlessly aboard the passenger train as its head and shoulders had already disappeared in the tunnel.

The ticket-collector pointed out my man to me
in the first passenger coach, the "ladies' car"—he is a school-teacher and tobacco smoke distresses him—and by the time we pulled into Panama I had the desired information. Dinner was not to be thought of; I had barely time to dash through the second-class gate and back along the track to Balboa labor-train. From the docks a sand-train carried me to Pedro Miguel.

There was a craneman in Bas Obispo "cut" whose testimony was wanted. I reached him by two short walks and a ride. His statements suggested the advisability of questioning his room-mate, a towerman in Miraflores freight-yards. Luck would have it that my chauffeur friend—— was just then passing with an I. C. C. motor-car and only a photographer for a New York weekly aboard. I found room to squeeze in. The car raced away through the "cut," up the declivity, and dropped me at the foot of the tower. The room-mate referred me to a locomotive engineer and, being a towerman, gave me the exact location of his engine. I found it at the foot of Cucaracha slide with a train nearly loaded. By the time the engineer had added his whit of information, we were swinging around toward the Pacific dump. I dropped off and, climbing up the flank of Ancon hill, descended through the hospital grounds.

Where the royal palms are finest and there opens out the broadest view of Panama, Ancon, and the
bay, I gave myself five minutes’ pause, after which a carriage bore me to a shop near Cathedral Plaza where second-hand goods are bought—and no questions asked. On the way back to Ancon station I visited two similar establishments.

I had been lolling in the swivel-chair a full ten minutes, perhaps, when the telephone rang. It was "the Captain" calling for me. When I reached the third-story back he handed me extradition papers to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs in Panama. A half-hour later, wholly outstripping the mañana idea, I had signed a receipt for the Jap in question and transferred him from Panama to Ancon jail. Whereupon I descended to the evening passenger and rode to Pedro Miguel for five minutes’ conversation, and caught the labor-train Panamaward. At Corozal I stepped off for a word with the officer on the platform and the labor-train plunged on again, after the fashion of labor-trains, spilling the last half of its disembarking passengers along the way. Ten minutes later the headlight of the last passenger swung around the curve and carried me away to Panama.

That might have done for the day, but I had gathered a momentum it was hard to check. Not long after returning from the police mess to the swivel chair a slight omission in the day’s program occurred to me. I called up Corozal police station.
“What?” said a mashed-potato voice at the other end of the wire.

“Who’s talking?”

“Policeman Green, sah.”

“Station commander there?”

“No, sah. Station commander he gone just over to de Y. M. to play billiards, sah. Dey one big match on to-night.”

Of course I could have “got” him there. But on second thoughts it would be better to see him in person and clear up at the same time a little matter in one of the labor camps, and not run the risk of causing the loss of the billiard championship. Besides Corozal is cooler to sleep in than Ancon. In a black starry night I set out along the invisible railroad for the first station.

An hour later, everything settled to my satisfaction, I had discovered a vacant bed in Corozal bachelor quarters and was pulling off my coat preparatory to the shower-bath and a well-earned night’s repose. Suddenly I heard a peculiar noise in the adjoining room, much like that of a seal coming to the surface after being long under water. My curiosity awakened, I sauntered a few feet along the veranda. Beside one of the cots stood a short, roly-poly little man, the lower third of whom showed rosy pink below his bell-shaped white nightie. As he turned his face toward the light to switch it off I swallowed the roof of my mouth and clawed at the
clap-boarding for support. It was "the Sloth!" He had been transferred. I slipped hastily into my coat and, turning up the collar, plunged out into the rain and the night and stumbled blindly away on weary legs towards Panama.