to June—the island is, of course, unhealthy. The alternate action of sun and rain upon the rank vegetable growth, saturated with moisture and seething in a constant summer-heat, necessarily keeps up a perpetual process of rotting fermentation, which engenders intermittent, bilious, congestive, and yellow fevers, and the other malignant results of impure miasmatic exhalation. There is, however, a constant sea-breeze during the dry season, that blows from the cool north, which tempers the heat, and somewhat mitigates the unhealthiness of the climate, by diluting the poisonous atmosphere which hangs like a pall of death over the island, and stifles the breath of human life.

The island of Manzanilla lies, near the opening, in a bend of Navy or Limon Bay, at the northeast. There is a wide expanse of sea on all but the southern side, where a narrow strait of water separates it from the mainland. The chief harbor is on the west, where the largest ships can anchor within a short distance of the shore; but such is the exposure to the fierce northers which occasionally blow, that no vessel is perfectly secure. The hazardous anchorage was sadly illustrated a short time since, when a fierce north wind blew in from the At-
Atlantic, and swept the fleet of traders from their moorings, carrying a brig through the wooden pier, dashing a large vessel—from which no man escaped—upon the neighboring shore, and strewing the beach with wrecks, which yet remain as memorials of the fatal storm. The steamer *Illinois*, then in dock, was only saved from destruction, of which she was in great peril, by hastily firing up, letting go her hawser, and forcing herself, with all the might of her engine, into the very teeth of the wind. The harbor will never be secure until a large breakwater is built at the northwest of the island—at the point where now a wooden bridge stretches out, with a tall look-out at the extremity, which serves as a lighthouse at night—to protect it from the fierce northers and the swell of the Atlantic, which comes sweeping all before it like a tornado. There is a roadstead on the east of the island, where there is also a considerable depth of water, but it is so little secure that it does not deserve to be termed a harbor. Sailing vessels have, in the difficulty of getting away from the island, with almost a perpetual head-wind to beat against, to pay dearly for the propitious northern gale which hurries them into port.

Navy Bay was but little known to ancient
navigators, with the exception of those bold robbers, the pirate Morgan and his men, who made it their hiding-place, whence they pounced out, with drawn hangers and blazing cannon, upon the silver-laden Spanish galleons, sailing from the neighboring Chagres and Portobello; and to modern sailors, until the adventurous American appropriators, armed with ax and shovel, commenced their march of civilization. In 1850, the engineers and laborers of the Panama Railroad Company, under the spirited leadership of the indefatigable traveler, the late John L. Stephens, with a favoring wind blowing fresh from their own northern land of vigorous enterprise, sailed into Navy Bay, and landed upon the coral beach of Manzanilla island. The forest rapidly yielded to the well-plied ax of the hardy adventurers, whose untiring labors by day soon found a rest by night under the cover of an American roof of Maine shingles. American enterprise never faltered before the terrors of a wilderness of vegetation, the growth of ages, the deep darkness of which shadowed the eye like a perpetual cloud, while the howl of the tiger from its depths startled the ear, and the pestilential breath of its jungle fevered the blood. The strong arm struck blow after blow, encouraged by the bold heart which feared
neither the pestilence nor the wild blast; the resisting barriers of the overgrown wilderness gave way, and now American enterprise has stretched its iron arms across the hitherto impenetrable Isthmus of Darien, which bring together in one embrace the Atlantic and Pacific.

The town of Aspinwall, as the Atlantic terminus of the railroad, soon became the nucleus of a settlement, and at this moment rejoices in the proud distinction of a city. There are some sanguine anticipations of its future, as I discovered when the ingenious draughtsman of the Railroad Company rolled out the plan of the city, and pointed out to me, with intense enthusiasm, the great Aspinwall in future, expanding over several feet of Bristol-board, with its wide avenues, A, B, C, and so on, to the exhaustion of the whole alphabet (the numerals being brought into play for the side streets). The courteous artist—who, I fear, is too much given to the cultivation of the "ideal"—kindly led me all over the modern Carthage, through the avenues, down the cross streets, along the great docks, giving me an imaginary drive on the magnificent promenade which surrounds the city, and takes up a very large portion of the Bristol-board; and, finally, dropping me in the
great central Park, left me there to rest my tired imagination. I was somewhat lost, I must confess, when, after taking leave of my good-natured, but I fear somewhat crack-brained guide, I attempted to find my way in the real city to that beautiful park and that pleasant promenade. In fact, I could not get any farther in the alphabet of the avenues than A and B, and was puzzled to count as far as number III. in the numerals. Avenue C appeared an impenetrable jungle to my confused brain; and although I had counted streets I. and II. as I passed over two wooden bridges so denominated, I could not for the world of me discover how I was to get through number III. unless, like Cæsar, I plunged into a very considerable arm of the sea which flows into the centre of the town, at the imminent hazard of drowning, and with the certainty of a tertian ague, which were the unpleasant consequences of a similar imprudence to the afore-mentioned distinguished Roman.

A hundred or so are about the whole number of houses in Aspinwall. Upon the beach at the northern end of the island are a few scattered buildings, gay with white paint and green blinds, chiefly occupied by the officials of the Panama Railroad, while to the right of
these are the works and dépôt of the company with machine shops and reservoirs. The shore at the north curves round, leading easterly to an uncleared portion of the island, where a narrow rim of white beach separates the sea from the impenetrable jungle. As we turn westerly and follow the shore, taking the Mess House as the point of departure, we come upon a building of corrugated iron in progress of erection, intended for the residence of the British Consul, if he will ever have the courage to live in what is only a great target for all the artillery of heaven. The lightning during the rainy season keeps it in a continual blaze of illumination, and I mourned, in common with Colonel Totten, whose house is next door, over several prostrate cocoa-nut palms, which had been struck down in consequence of their fatal propinquity to the iron-house. As we proceed we pass three wooden, peaked-roofed cottages with green blinds and verandas, inhabited by employés of the Company; hurry past some ugly whitewashed buildings, which the pale-faced sailor and the melancholy convalescent negro, sitting smoking their pipes on the steps, remind us are hospitals, and soon passing by some outlying huts with half naked nègresse and pot-bellied children sunning them-
selves in front, we make our way into the thicker part of the settlement over marshy pools corrupt with decaying matter, black rotten roots of trees, and all kinds of putrefying offal, which resist even the street-cleaning capacities of those famous black scavengers, the Turkey buzzards, which gather in flocks about it. We now get upon the railroad track, which leads us into the main street. A meagre row of houses facing the water made up of the railroad office, a store or two, some half dozen lodging and drinking establishments, and the “Lone Star,” bounds the so-called street on one side, and the railroad track, upon its embankment of a few feet above the level of the shore, bounds the other.

There is another and only one other street, which you reach by crossing a wooden bridge, that a sober man can only safely traverse by dint of deliberate care in the day-time, and a drunken man never, and which stretches over a large sheet of water that ebbs and flows in the very centre of the so-called city. This second street begins at the coral beach at the northern end of the island, and runs southward until it terminates in a swamp. At the two extremities houses bound it on both sides; in the middle there is a narrow pathway over an
insecure foot-bridge, with some tumble down pine buildings on one side only, with their foundations soaking in the swamp, their back windows inhaling the malaria from the manzanilla jungle in the rear, and their front ones opening upon the dirty water which we have already described that fills up the central part of the city. The hotels—great, straggling, wooden houses—gape here with their wide open doors, and catch California travelers, who are sent away with a fever as a memento of the place, and shops, groggeries, billiard-rooms, and drinking saloons thrust out their flaring signs to entice the passer-by. All the houses in Aspinwall are wooden with the exception of the stuccoed Railroad office, the British Consul’s precarious corrugated iron dwelling, and a brick building in the course of erection under the slow hands of some Jamaica negro masons. The more pretentious of the wooden buildings were sent out from Maine or Georgia bodily, and among them is the largest building in the place, the United States Hotel, which belongs to a Mr. Aspinwall of New York, and which I was sorry to hear does not pay.

The inhabitants of Aspinwall—some eight hundred in number—are of every variety of
race and shade in color. The railroad officials, steamboat agents, foreign consuls, and a score of Yankee traders, hotel-keepers, billiard mark-ers, and bar-tenders, comprise all the whites, who are the exclusive few. The better class of shop-keepers are Mulattoes from Jamaica, St. Domingo, and the other West Indian Isl-ands, while the dispensers of cheap grog, and hucksters of fruit and small wares are chiefly negroes. The main body of the population is made up of laborers, grinning coal-black ne-groes from Jamaica, yellow natives of mixed African and Indian blood, and sad, sedate, tur-baned Hindoos, the poor exiled Coolies from the Ganges.

The arrival of the Californian passengers from New York or Panama each fortnight is a great event at Aspinwall. The population is doubled at once by the new-comers, who, ar-riving from New York and San Francisco, often meet together in the town, and exchange greet-ings from the two oceans. The inanimate leth-argy of the place is at once quickened by the stirring adventurers. The hotels, deserted the day before as empty packing-boxes, are throng-ed, and mine hosts, awakened once more to the consciousness of their functions of taking in people; bar-rooms again reek with an atmos-
phere of gin-sling and brandy-cock-tail, which the now busy, bilious-faced bar-keeper, only yesterday prostrate with fever, shuffles across the counter in a quick succession of drinks to his throng of impatient, thirsty customers; billiard balls, long stowed away in pockets, begin to circulate, driven by the full force of sturdy, red flannel-sleeved arms; the shops flutter out in the breeze their displays of Panama hats and loose linen garments, and adding a hundred per cent. to their prices, do a brisk business; the very monkeys quicken their agility, the parrots chatter with redoubled loquacity, the macaws shriek sharper than ever, the wild hogs, ant-eaters, and even the sloths (for all these zoological varieties abound in the houses, hotels, and shops of Aspinwall) are aroused to unwonted animation.

Apart from the devoted family of the agent of the Atlantic steamers, by whose refined and generous hospitality I was consoled for the absence of home, there is no society blessed by the gentle and holy influence of cultivated woman. The natural consequence of this want of the most powerful, since it is the most resistless, social tie, is a wild recklessness of life, which startles one subdued, if not entirely subjected, by the obligations of a more conventional
society. While the residents of Aspinwall are the freest, frankest, and most hospitable of men, it can not be denied that a little more constraint, however it might stifle and restrict their generous qualities, would improve their health and not injure their morals. There was a perpetual excitement among those men I met, which may be partly attributed to the excessive nervous sensibility engendered by the climate and its diseases; but I am sure it was increased by their habits. I do not wish to affect the Puritan, nor do I care that the reader should suppose that I am now, or ever, in a very penitent mood; but I will at this moment both profess and confess. I profess the belief that drinking Champagne cock-tails before breakfast, and smoking forty cigars daily, to be an immoderate enjoyment of the good things of this world. Now, by the way of a peccavi, I will make a clean breast of it, by acknowledging that I, in common with my Aspinwall friends, did both.

Now let the uncharitable reader pause before he condemns me. Hear, oh ye civilized Pharisee! It was hot—remember I was writhing in the grasp of the torrid crab—I was thirsty, and drink I must. "Well," you coolly interpose, "take a glass of water." "Thank you!
a glass of pure Croton with all my heart," I answer; "but the Croton pipes are not yet laid as far as Aspinwall, and the tanks of rain-water, the only supply in that delectable city, are stagnant and fever-and-aguish." "What shall I drink?" I asked the friend at my side. "A Champagne cock-tail—the most delicious thing in the world—let me make you one," was his response; and he suited the action to the word. A bottle of prime, sparkling "Mum" was brought, a refreshing plateful of crystal ice, fresh from Rockland by the last steamer, and rather a medicinal looking bottle, upon which was written in direct, brief terms, "Bitters." My friend, whose benevolent eyes expressed pity for my sufferings, while his lips were eloquent of prospective alleviation to myself, and of consciousness, the result of long experience, of his own anticipated enjoyment, pounded the crystal ice, with a series of quick, successive blows, pattered it into the tumblers like a shower of hail, dropped in the bitters, which diffused a glow like that of early sunrise, dashed in the sugar, which somewhat clouded the beautiful prospect, and gave what the artists call a dead tint to the mixture; then out popped the eager "Mum," and the Champagne cock-tail, thus perfected, went whirling, roar-
ing, foaming, and flowing down mine and the friendly concocter's thirsty throats. I have preached my sermon, and illustrated it by my own bad example, from which the reader may take warning, and not taste Champagne cocktails, for they are so supremely good that if he once takes them, he will continue to take them, and not take the former.

I say nothing by way of protest against the frequent practice of drinking quinine cock-tails, in which quinine is substituted for bitters, and the by no means agreeable but constant habit of freely indulging in quinine pills; for these are excusable, if not necessary on the score of health. It is a melancholy fact, that such is the unhealthiness of Aspinwall, that its inhabitants are obliged to mix medicine with their daily drink, and to pass around their pill-boxes with the frequency of a French snuff-taker of the ancient régime. I have been seriously invited, time and again, to drink a quinine cocktail, and to help myself out of a proffered box, to a pill or two, which, I need not say, I politely declined.

I had no reason to go into the hospitals, which I did, and saw some miserable specimens of suffering humanity, to find out the state of health in Aspinwall. A walk in the
streets was painfully convincing of the fact that I was among the sick and the dying. The features of every man, woman, or child, European, African, Asiatic, or American, I met had the ghastly look of those who suffer from the malignant effects of miasmatic poison. I do not believe there is a wholesome person in all Aspinwall; at any rate, every single individual I asked confessed to having suffered from the disease of the climate. The little negro Jamaica children invariably answered my question as to how they liked the country, with the plaintive words, "Me no like dis country, berra bad country; me hab de feber ebry oder day." A physician employed by the Railroad Company, who has been two years on the Isthmus, told me plainly that no one who resided over two months in Aspinwall escaped fever; that the first attack was generally a severe bilious remittent, which not seldom resulted in death, and was always followed by habitual fever and ague. Such, he assured me, was the intense malignity of the miasmatic poison, that perfect recovery from the disease of the climate, or any acclimation, unless a perpetual fever and ague may be so termed, was impossible. The beasts even do not escape. That hardest of animals, the mule, is a frequent sufferer, and
I made the acquaintance of a poor Newfoundland dog that was a martyr to the universal complaint.

Aspinwall and its neighborhood, though abounding in causes destructive of life, are very deficient in the necessaries for its support. A scant supply of drinking water is obtained by collecting the rain in large iron tanks, which as yet are so few that the inhabitants are forced to send to Gatun, several miles distant, to satisfy their wants. The chief articles of food come from the New York market, although the neighboring coasts supply a few fowls and a small quantity of the tropical fruits and vegetables. Canoes occasionally arrive with melons, green coconuts, pines, yams, and oranges, and a sparse market of these is displayed on the shore by the Indian hucksters, who have become, under the civilizing influences of Aspinwall, tolerably sharp at a bargain. Fish must abound in the bay, but there seems to have been little development as yet of this resource. Milk is obtained from the goats, which are seen picking up a scanty subsistence from the refuse vegetable garbage in the town.

Having packed my portmanteau, I paid the
following washing bill, which will show that a fair day's labor receives a fair day's wages in Aspinwall:

Aspinwall.

To Charlotte Miles.

February 23, 1855.

To washing twenty-four pieces wearing apparel at 20 cents each.......................... $4 80

Charlotte Miles, whom I had never the pleasure of seeing in person, as she did her business with me through her negro proxy, Sam of the Mess House, might have become the owner in perpetuity of my stockings, for washing each one of which she charged twenty cents, at the tenth of the sum a pair, and she would have had no bargain at that. Charlotte Miles having received her money, I prepared to leave Aspinwall for Panama.
CHAPTER III.

RIDE ON THE RAILROAD.

I WAS pleased when it was announced, in accordance with the projected programme of the entertainment of our party on the Isthmus, that we were to take an early departure from that plague-spot, Aspinwall. That disease and premature death were endemic in that region of swamp and vegetable rottenness, was quite evident without any minute investigation
into the topographical characteristics of a city, the foundation of which is below the level of the Atlantic, and every breath of its air charged with the poisonous exhalation of vegetable decay. There was no need to investigate the physical causes which, in accordance with the laws of health, must lead to the deadly effects of malignant disease. There was no necessity of studying the statistics, which are but a continuous record of death, when the ghastly face of every man you met was a *memento mori*. It is not only the American white man who wilts, decays, and dies, in the malignant atmosphere, which is the breath of death and not of life, inspired by the inhabitant of Aspinwall.

The people of all countries, and of all races and color, whom the call of duty, the stimulus of enterprise, and the hard necessities of labor have gathered together in Aspinwall, are equally forced to pay the fatal tribute demanded by the inexorable fate which overshadows with its dark wings that region, and strikes down every one prostrate in resistless acknowledgment of its terrible tyranny. The hearty and energetic Caucasian from Europe and the United States, the temperate Asiatic, the tropical African, and the phlegmatic native Indian, are alike subject-
ed to the terrors of that land of the pestilence. When, therefore, on the morning of February 18, the shrill sound of the steam-whistle, piercing through the open door, and the rattling casements of the "Mess House," aroused us with its familiar note of preparation, and startled the voracious buzzards, which were disputing eagerly with decay, the carrion washed up by the waves of the Atlantic to our very door, there was not one of us who did not gladly welcome the token of departure.

The seventeen who composed our party were a miscellaneous gathering of stockholders, young lawyers, men about town, and newspaper reporters, headed by a director of the Railroad Company. It had been resolved in Congress assembled, of the Board of Directors at New York, that the opening of the road from the Atlantic to the Pacific was an occasion that ought not to be allowed to pass unimproved. It was undoubtedly a great, a very great occasion, and should be celebrated with becoming éclat. The enthusiasm of the public required to be stimulated, as was clearly proven by the fact that the stock stagnated in Wall Street at the dead level of par, when, if justly appreciated, it could not fail to rise to a premium of 50 per cent. at the lowest calculation.
Europe, too, was either in a state of profound ignorance of its own interests, or in such a complete dead-lock at Sebastopol, that it was felt necessary to disperse the financial clouds in that country, and quicken enterprise with an electrical shock from the brisk battery of American energy. The proposal to borrow a million or so, which had been generously tendered to the London bankers, that they might be made sharers with their American brethren in the profits of the great enterprise, was not responded to in the same free spirit with which it had been proffered, and it was determined that reluctant Threadneedle Street should be aroused to a more lively sense of its own interest, as far as Panama bonds were concerned.

Accordingly, it having been resolved that the world should be shaken out of its apathetic indifference to the Panama Railroad, the directors selected a worthy representative of their board to beat up recruits for a triumphant march across the Isthmus, and to lay in supplies of Champagne, rounds of beef, pickled oysters, and other necessary stores for the expedition. If old Marshal Saxe was correct in the dogma that "he was the best general who fed his soldiers best," the company had no
reason to regret their appointment of one who worthily answered the expectation of all in this very important particular.

Some notabilities of the bar and the pulpit, and various loquacious members of Congress, and other dignitaries, were urged to blow their trumpets on the occasion; but they refused, either from a prudent dislike to Panama fever, or because “their engagements prevented them from taking part in the interesting celebration of the great occasion of the union of the two oceans,” which they, of course, “deeply regretted.” The worthy director, therefore, disappointed of the magnates, made up his party, like the rich man in the parable, of the first he met; so we seventeen were not a distinguished company, though a respectable one nevertheless.

A programme had been carefully deliberated upon during the voyage. The happy accident of the presence of no less a personage than the Minister to New Granada, was shrewdly turned to the advantage of the occasion. His felicity of speech, practiced in the diffuse school of congressional oratory, secured us abundant words for every occasion, and his official importance gave the necessary emphasis to all he said. He was put down at once for the oration at the laying of the corner-stone of the memorial
in honor of the projectors of the Panama Railroad, and his ready eloquence appropriated for other parts in the programme. The young lawyers not unwillingly consented to perform at the projected banquet, and showed a commendable diligence in studying up their various subjects, writing their speeches over and over, giving a fresh polish to their rhetoric at each renewed effort, and finally rehearsing them so often to a select audience, among which I was a favored listener, that they could, and did, repeat them a hundred times a day without faltering in a single word. One of the reporters for the press kindly anticipated a call upon him, by generously volunteering to do duty for himself and others, and subsequently suffered a martyrdom on his legs, which called out the sympathy of the public in general, and his brethren in particular.

The especial object of our journey by the railroad was to put into execution what had been so elaborately prepared. All the Isthmus was in a state of excited anticipation of the event, and the performers on the occasion were no less moved. The Minister to Nicaragua ruminated his tobacco cud with unusual nervous agitation, and kept a brisk look-out for his morocco portfolio, big with his swelling oratory;
and the other aspiring orators were eager to break the eggs of their eloquence, which had been so long in a state of incubation, and anxious to try themselves as newly-fledged Demosthenes within the sound of the roar of the Pacific.

Aspinwall was in a state of unusual stir on the morning of our departure. All the stars and stripes in the town and harbor had been unfurled at an early hour, and were fluttering in the sea-breeze from every roof and masthead. The hotels and drinking-saloons were gay with their bits of bunting. The Negro laborers were intensely enthusiastic on the occasion, and came out in great force. Some making carnival in grotesque disguises, and all grinning their white ivories and shouting vociferously. The melancholy Coolies, who leaned their turbaned heads against the corners of the houses, or reclined in graceful attitudes beneath the shade of the balconies, were alone silent and unmoved. A party of Jamaica Negroes had got possession of a rusty cannon, and kept firing it with the glee of so many boys on a holiday. Their shouts of merriment went ringing through the crowd, when of a sudden the joyful hurra was turned into a shriek of woe. A Negro, who was loading the cannon, was struck with the rammer from the prema-
ture discharge of the piece, in consequence of
the man whose duty it was to assist him hav-
ing lifted his finger from the vent. We left
the poor fellow surrounded by a throng of wail-
ing Negroes, prostrate on the ground, insensi-
ble from the concussion of the blow, and with
the flesh torn from his face. We learned sub-
sequently that he died.

The passengers for California gathered from
the various hotels throughout the town, where
they had been detained a night, much to their
discontent, and now thronged in a noisy crowd
about the Railroad office bargaining for ban-
avas, green cocoa-nuts, and oranges, with the
Jamaica Negro-women, who went in and out
among the gathered groups, poising their load-
ed baskets upon their heads, eagerly pressing
their merchandise upon their chaffering custom-
ers, with their glossy, ebony faces spread out
into an expansive grin, which showed their
teeth glistening large, white, and regular as
the keys of a piano set in rosewood, or chatter-
ering angrily with each other in amusing ne-
gro talk. The bell rang, the engine, which
had been impatiently moving to and fro, sprang
to its place, the passengers thronged into the
cars, and with a shrill whistle, a shout from
the miscellaneous crowd gathered in the street,
and a wave of the handkerchief from a solitary white woman in the upper balcony of the \"Lone Star,\" we were off.

Emerging from the long sheds of the railroad dépôt car after car, the train briskly moved along the street with its meagre row of buildings on the left, which fell one after the other from the eye, and passed away rapidly in the distance like a scud of thin white cloud. So, too, on the right, quickly disappeared the harbor and its little fleet of coasters, the Steamship Company's long wooden pier and offices, showing whiter in the bright morning sun, and in deeper contrast than ever with the green cocoa-nut grove, and the great black hull of the steamer; so, too, for a moment only, the bright surface of the bay glittered on the eye, as the train passed along the shore of the island across the inlet, and plunged into the depths of the forest.

As we lounged at our ease in the well-appointed New Jersey car, and smoked, and talked, and looked with admiring wonder upon the tropical profusion of beauty, which every turn of the road revealed to the view, it was difficult to appreciate the enterprise, the skill, the labor, and the suffering, which had been so prodigally expended in effecting what came to
us only in the shape of comfort and enjoyment. How rapidly we glided mile after mile, and so smoothly, that the ashes were not shaken from the cigar we were smoking in such comfortable contentment, and yet there was hardly a foot of the way which was not a prodigy of laborious enterprise. The town we had left was, but five years ago, a forest, and the pathway a jungle. Enterprise had struck down the one, and made its resolute march through the other.

For seven miles the road passes through a deep marsh, in which the engineers, during the original survey, struggled breast-high, day after day, and yet, in spite of such toilsome and perilous labor, fixed their steady eyes straight forward, went on step by step, and accomplished their purpose. These seven miles are firm now as a stone pavement. Piles upon piles have been driven deep down into the spongy soil, and the foundation covered thick with a persistent earth, brought from Monkey Hill, which overhangs the railroad track two miles from Aspinwall.

On we go, dry shod, over the marsh, through the forest, which shuts out with its great walls of verdure on either side, the hot sun, and darkens the road with a perpetual shade. The luxuriance of the vegetation is beyond the pow-
ers of description. Now we pass impenetrable thickets of mangroves, rising out of deep marshes, and sending from each branch down into the earth, and from each root into the air, offshoots which gather together into a matted growth, where the observer seeks in vain to unravel the mysterious involution of trunk, root, branch, and foliage. Now we come upon gigantic espaves and coratos, with girths of thirty feet, and statures of a hundred and thirty feet, out of a single trunk of which, without a plank or a seam, the natives build great vessels of twelve tons burden. These giants of the forest seem, like the Titans, offspring of heaven and earth, for they embrace with their mighty arms the one, and cling deep down into the bosom of the other; and the great twining plants which, rising from their roots, coil about their trunks, bind themselves in twisted fibre about their branches, and joining these great trees inseparably together, fasten them to the ground, remind us of the imprisonment which the Titans of old suffered from the cruelty of their father, Cœlus.

Again we cross a stream, rippling between banks of verdant growth, where the graceful bamboo waves over the water its feathery top, and the groves of the vegetable ivory palm, in-
termingled with the wild fig-tree, spread their shade, and rustling gently in the breeze, whisper a slight murmur of solitude in the ear, and suggest a passing dream of repose.

Then, again, the train coiling its winding way about the base of a hill, and emerging from the forest, the view opens suddenly upon an expanded savanna, where the tropical sun shines down in a flood of light upon a river bending through an undulating park of green verdure, with clumps of trees here and there, with cattle feeding in their shade, and a settlement of native, palm-thatched, bamboo huts, half hid in groves of banana and orange. So we hurry from scene to scene, pushing on through the flood of tropical vegetation, with endless vistas of beauty that come and go like the dreams of a summer's day. But we must proceed more deliberately.

Gatun, seven miles from Aspinwall, was our first stopping-place, where we rested for a moment, that the newspaper reporters might have an opportunity of taking note of the expression of the enthusiasm of the Gatun officials and laborers, on the occasion of the day's celebration. Accordingly, I read afterward in the Journal of Commerce, or in some other of the equally poetical papers diurnally served up with our morning coffee, that we passed under "a tri-
umphal arch, where the graceful palm, entwined with the brilliant flowers of the Isthmus, waved over our heads.” I recollect having seen, on the top of a clay bank, in front of a Maine house of pine boards, partly falling into decay, one white man, two Negroes, and a Cooly, who were shouting at the top of their voice, and firing off a blunderbuss between them, the report of which I heard distinctly, for it flashed almost in my face as I passed, and seemed to go off with accumulative force, probably from being loaded and fired by four men.

At Gatun station the railroad comes close to the right bank of the Chagres, and keeps it for twelve miles or so, during which there is an occasional view of the tortuous course of the river, always upon the right of the traveler facing Panama. From the Gatun station we saw the native village of that name, with its huts scattered on the opposite bank of the Chagres; facing the mouth of the river Gatun. Many of the dusky inhabitants, the men in clean, white linen jackets and Panama hats, and the women in loose gowns, weighed down with cotton fringe, which revealed their dark figures to the waist, had crossed from the village to the opposite bank, and stood at the side
of the train in full holiday-glee, shouting as it passed.

Thence the train steamed away again through the tropical forest, stopping here and there to feed the engine with wood, which lay in piles along the route, or to take in water from the wooden tanks, which already were blackened with decay, and overgrown with vines of the convolvulus, gay with its blue bell-shaped flowers. I was surprised at the rarity of blossoms in the rich profusion of tropical growth. I saw but few varieties: a yellow flower growing upon a lofty spreading forest tree, some white lilies brought out in bright relief from the thick surface of green which mantled the marshes, and abundant crimson-blossomed spikes, which protruded from the dark caverns of verdure on either side like enormous red tongues of tired monsters lolling out and cooling in the fresh air.

We caught a rapid glance of the Carthaginian native laborers of the yellow mixed blood of the Spaniard, Negro, and Indian, cutting down with their machetas the wild banana, and the other thick undergrowth which the cars brushed as they passed. The sturdy Jamaica Negroes in throngs were plying the pick and the spade, in company with the turbaned, lithe-limbed
Coolies, who were lending an indolent hand, and an occasional Chinese, who might be seen loitering lazily by the roadside.

From Gatun, diverging a mile or so from the river Chagres on the right, passing Tiger Hill on the left—where if there are any tigers we did not see one, nor did we even see the tail of a monkey, or hear the chatter of a parrot, for the steam-whistle has frightened every thing but man into the deep hiding-places of the forest—coming up to the bank of the river again at Ahorca Lagarto, we reached Bujio Soldado. Here, on a green bank situated at a bend of the Chagres, which doubles and doubles upon itself a thousand times during its tortuous course, is a picturesque rustic cottage, thatched with palm, and shaded with vines and a grove of bananas. Its balconies in the rear look up and down the river, which forms an elbow at this point, and the beholder sees a wide expanse of water that reflects the deep shade of the tropical forest, which crowds up the banks of the Chagres from the water’s edge far inland into the remote depths of the luxuriant wilderness. The cottage was the favorite residence of John L. Stephens the traveler, and here he enjoyed those intervals of repose which his energetic devotion to, and his untiring ac-
tivity in, the railroad enterprise but rarely al-
lowed him.

The train moves on, passing through the
settlement of Frijol with its scattered huts, its
sparse patches of maize and sugar-cane, and
its score of half-naked natives, until it reaches
Barbacoas, where the engine checks its course
and crosses with deliberate care the great wood-
en bridge which spans the Chagres, and leads
the railroad track to the left bank of that river.
The bridge is 600 feet in length, and is of
American pine, brought by a curious conjunc-
tion of the old and the new, from Darien in
Georgia. Solid masonry supports the bridge;
and the great timbers of the wooden superstruc-
ture, bound together with iron girders, look as
if they might endure for ages, but alas! in that
destructive climate they will be in ruin in a short
twelve months. West of Barbacoas, on the
right of the traveler looking Panama-ward,
rises the Cierro Gigante, the loftiest eminence
of the Isthmus, from which Nunez de Bal-
boa first saw, in one glance, the Pacific and
Atlantic; and as he rapturously gazed upon
the two oceans, separated by the narrow
Isthmus, which was diminished in his ele-
vated view to a mere handful of earth, felt
like a conqueror, and glowed with the con-
viction that the whole world was within his grasp.

We have now the Chagres on the left, and pass through the forest, which rarely permits a view of the dark waters of the river, except here and there, where the cleared space of a settlement on its banks, as for example the village of Gorgona, along which the railroad track is laid, gives passage to the sun, and discloses the stream sparkling in its light. Leaving Gorgona and its group of thatched huts, with their moist palm-leaf eaves, distilling clouds of vapor in the hot sun, its groves of oranges and bananas ripening in the noonday heat, and its yellow-faced inhabitants swinging in their grass hammocks, or indolently lolling in the shade, we plunge again into the forest, and thence in a moment out upon the open savanna, where we reach Matachin.

On arriving at Matachin, which is seven miles from Barbacoas, and thirty-five from Aspinwall, the train stopped, and our party, which had been increased at Aspinwall by the addition of various railroad officials, steamboat agents, and other dignitaries, and honored with a special car, the last of ten, bright and fresh from the Yankee factory, alighted, headed by the American Minister with his portentous morocco
portfolio, alternately borne by her excellency, the Plenipotentiary's wife, and his vivacious daughter, who accompanied him. The passengers for California thronged out after us, presenting the usual characteristics of dare-devil manners, and free-and-easy costume, and went roystering about in slouched hats, red shirts, and heavy boots, disturbing the stillness of the hills with their noisy shouts.

It will be recollected that the chief purpose of our journey was to lay the corner-stone of a memorial in honor of the three original projectors of the Panama Railroad—J. L. Stephens, Aspinwall, and Chauncey. The spot chosen for the future monument, is the summit of one of a series of natural mounds, which, from their regularity of form, and their smooth acclivities of perpetual verdure, where the sensitive plant, interspersed with yellow flowers, shrinks from the tread, have the appearance of artificial formation. The ground undulates in these regular hills in the centre of an amphitheatre of distant mountains. Palm-trees surround their base, and wave gracefully in the breeze, which tempers the heat of the noonday tropical sun.

The scene which opened on our view, as we stood upon the mound, was magnificent, even in comparison with the tropical beauty we had
already reveled in. A park-like expanse of level land stretched away on one side, with spreading trees here and there of the India rubber and of the mangrove, with herds of cattle feeding on the rich pasture; on the other, there was the palm-thatched bamboo cottage of a planter, the owner of the ground, and who, with his garden, the orange-trees of which were thrusting their golden fruit into his windows, his herds of cattle, his fields of maize and of sugar-cane, has reason to congratulate himself upon his thriving condition, as also upon the beauty in the bosom of which he repose. In the distance the scene was closed in by mountains, from the heights and through the valleys of which floods of green verdure came pouring down until they overflowed the banks of the Chagres and Obispo, which rivers unite their waters at Matachin, and flow calmly in the shade under the overhanging foliage, or hurry rapidly in the centre current from the bright glances of the sun.

The palms which surrounded the base of the mound on which we stood were rustling in the breeze, and through their moving foliage we could see the railroad train with its engine, which was throwing out in the wind its flowing banner of steam, as if to indicate that it had
subjected the land to its universal dominion. Two sturdy Negroes came toiling up with the great corner-stone, and having made their way through the crowd, which gathered about the Summit, the United States Plenipotentiary opened the morocco portfolio and delivered himself of his oration, about which I need say nothing here, for the orator providently made a dozen copies or so, and generously distributed them to the New York papers, where no doubt all my readers have carefully enlightened themselves. I fear all the company were not very close listeners to the Plenipotentiary's oratory, for, as the steam-whistle hurried us down the hill, I could see that some had taken the occasion to forage about the neighboring country, and were loaded with oranges and bananas and other tempting plunder.

We were now off again, and a cold collation having been prepared for the travelers in the special car, we had a jolly scramble for the sandwiches, olives, and pickles, which we washed down with ever-flowing draughts of Champagne and brandy-and-water. I did not see, it must be confessed, with very clear eyes the next station, Obispo, or listen with a very intelligent apprehension to all the General—a military gentleman of renown belonging to Car-
thagena, who, among his other deeds inscribed upon the roll of fame, I recollect that he was the first to introduce the vegetable ivory of his country into Europe—who sat next to me, had to say about Cruces, which we had passed some two miles to the left of the route, opposite Matachin. Cruces, however, is now obsolete under the railroad dispensation, though it will be always memorable in the early history of the emigration of the gold-seekers to California. It was there that the traveler first took to mule on his way to Panama, during the pouring rainy season of the Isthmus, though in the dry it was at Gorgona, farther down the river. A mule-path, once paved, said to have been built by Pizarro, leads in a break-neck, helter-skelter course up the hills and down the hills, through the narrow gorges, and across the muddy streams from Cruces to Panama, and is a hard day's ride.

Seven miles' steaming from Matachin brought us to Culebra, the Summit, as the railroad people call it, since it is the highest point on the route, being 250 feet above high tide of the Pacific. We had thus been struggling up hill from Aspinwall at the degree of ascent of 61 feet per mile, and, once at the top, we were compensated by the more rapid descent to Pan-
ama of 70 feet per mile. Here had been the heaviest work on the line, where a mass of earth, 1300 feet in length and 24 feet in depth, containing 30,000 feet in all, had been cut through to make way for the lords of creation, who were now so triumphantly speeding onward in what we are pleased to term, in spite of bowie-knives and revolvers, the march of civilization. All these entertaining statistics were communicated to me by the superintendent of the road, as he lighted his cigar by mine, and can be depended upon, for I noted them down at the moment for the especial behoof of the matter-of-fact reader. There are other cuttings on the route of no considerable depth, however, and we had passed between banks of clay and walls of columnar basalt, and through quarries of a gray freestone, out of which the stone abutments of the bridges and other masonry had been constructed, all of which were already softened to the eye by the verdure of hanging plants and clinging creepers, which grow with such miraculous rapidity in the fertile soil of the Isthmus. The embankment at the Summit is of a loose soil, and so close that we could almost touch it from the cars, and hundreds of black and yellow laborers were busy in throwing back the earth which the
first shower softens, washes down, and sweeps across the track, greatly to the obstruction of travel and the successful progress of the railroad enterprise.

At the Summit, on either side of the track, there is an irregular line of some forty or so whitewashed shanties and bamboo huts, among which "Old Joe Prince's" groggeries, with its staring, painted sign, stands conspicuous. Here, a few months ago, was the terminus of the railroad, where passengers alighted in the mud, and refreshing themselves with bad brandy at "Old Joe Prince's," or in some of the other delectable retreats for the tired traveler, took either to mule or railroad-car, as they were going from or to Panama. Now Culebra, or the Summit, as it is oftener called, is but a railway-station where the traveler barely has time to snuff the gin-reeking atmosphere of the groggeries, or to wet his lips across "Old Joe Prince's" slushy bar.

Dark women, in Panama hats and loose drapery, came thronging about the windows of the cars as we stopped, and supplied us generously with oranges, bananas, and pineapples, at a price that we would have refused to pay in New York. A half-dozen oranges cost me the better part of a dollar; but I thought them
cheap as I regaled myself with their juicy freshness, parched as I was with the exciting ride, and baked dry by the tropical sun, which was now darting its red-hot rays through the windows, and scorching the cover of the car. The oranges had a green, unripe look, like all I ate in the country, and a smooth, tight-bound skin, as if they had been plucked too soon from the mellowing touch of the sun; but as I plunged my dry mouth into their inmost depths and drew up their fountains of juice, I felt a torrent of cool liquid sweetness pouring down my thirsty throat, invigorating me with its refreshing moisture, and stimulating me with its aromatic taste. I never ate such oranges as those of Panama: they are the juiciest, the sweetest, the coolest, and the best-flavored of any that ever turned their golden globes to a tropical sun.

Just as we were about starting there waddled into our special car a native mahogany-colored woman, who did not seem at all conscious, half-barbarian as she was, of the civilized distinction of white and black, and, in spite of her Negro blood, looked as proud as the best of us. She wore a fine Panama hat, from beneath which squirmed two long twists of black shining wool; loose white drapery, trimmed with cotton lace
flounces above instead of below, enveloped the lower part of her person, while the upper was naked almost to the waist; a necklace, in which American eagles plentifully abounded, connected together by golden chains, hung around her ebony throat as the Oriental women adorn themselves with sequins, and her toes were just squeezed into bright-red satin slippers, which gave a freshly-bitten, raw-meat look to her splay, unstockinged feet, which projected behind in all their full proportion of wholesome Negro heel. Captain S—— of our party, who prided himself upon his gallantry, soon crowded himself alongside of this Isthmian belle, and in a very few minutes the gallant skipper had more than his fair share of the seat, while his companion grinned her white teeth, and wagged her tails of wool with infinite laughter. The Captain insisted afterward, confidentially, that it was a decided conquest; but I shrewdly suspect that it was the worthy navigator’s Spanish, which was not certainly of the purest Castilian, and not his personal attractions, or his wit, which had almost dislocated those grinning jaws and shaken off those tails of wool.

An old acquaintance, Don Carlos Z——, whom I had recollected in olden time, as a sedate merchant in Panama, with quill pacifically
poised upon his ear, now came in, all whiskered like a Pandoor, with his mustaches stretching out audaciously beneath a slouched brigand hat, and his broad frame flaming with a red flannel coat, and his girdle stuck full with knives and revolvers. He told us, over a pinch of his snuff, in a few clipped words—as was always his matter-of-fact business-like manner—that he had withdrawn from the more pacific retirement of the counting-room, and having been installed Captain of the ragged Railroad Guard, now roamed over the Isthmus to the terror of all evil-doers. With this addition to our company we started again, and turned scornfully and rapidly away from "Old Joe Prince’s" and his by-no-means respectable-looking neighborhood of irregular, tottering taverns and groggeries, which seemed to be much the worse for liquor, and appeared to be staggering fast down the hill of ruin and of Culebra together. The settlement at the Summit does little credit to American civilization; it is, in fact, but a rag torn from her skirts in the course of her helter-skelter progress through the wilderness.

Now we shoot rapidly down the slope eleven miles to Panama, through the forests again and out upon the Savannas, until we come within a few miles of the end of the route, where we
slide easily along a level and open country to the Pacific, the sight of whose broad bosom, heaving and panting in the sun, is welcomed with shouts of delight as the train coils in among the cocoa-nut palms, and stops at the Playa Prieta on the very verge of the shore. Our watches tell us we have been only four hours and a half in making the transit of forty-eight miles from ocean to ocean. A steamer, with its great black hull rolling in the swell of the bay in the distance, some two miles off, was awaiting the arrival of the passengers for California, and as I alighted, before I had fairly shaken the stiffness out of my legs after my long ride, I could see our fellow-travelers, in red flannel, crowding down to the beach, with their blankets strapped over their shoulders, and, followed by troops of native orange-women, and naked ebony lads, springing into the boats, which leaped as lively as a shoal of fish in the surf, ready to bear the eager crowd to the distant ship.

Our party straggled on past the barn-like railroad-offices, through the neighboring settlement of bamboo huts, with their noisy swarm of yellow natives; thence along the rough, shelving shore, where we caught a glance of the boats making their way, one after another, to the steamer, like a line of floating pelicans. We
continued our way through a part of the suburbs of Panama, past the provision shops, where festoons of beef hung by the yard over the doors, drying in the sun, and bags of meal, and of dried beans, with calabashes piled with red peppers, and palm-leaf baskets heaped with oranges, crowded the entrances, while the lazy proprietors, with tawny skins, swayed in hammocks in the dark shade inside, and their swarming families of naked piccaninies dabbled in the dirt, and sported in the gutters which stagnated in the centre of the street. Then we stumbled along the irregular paved way—never repaired since the days of Pizarro—over the mouldy stone bridge, green with verdure, which arches the trench, now filled with rank tropical growth, and passed through the dilapidated stone gate within the ruined walls of the city of Panama. With a few turns along the narrow streets, dark with the shadows of the projecting balconies, which nearly touched from opposite sides, we reached our destination, and were soon lounging at our ease in the cool spaciousness of the great naked rooms of the Aspinwall House.
PACIFIC TERMINUS OF PANAMA RAILROAD.
CHAPTER IV.

THE RAILROAD CONSIDERED.

I WILL here interrupt the narrative of the personal adventures of our party with a record of some facts I learned during my visit to the Isthmus, in regard to the important enterprise of the Panama Railroad.

The locomotive first passed from ocean to ocean on the 27th January, 1855, conveying the Chief Engineer, Colonel Totten, and some of his coadjutors—a triumphant result of which these men of skill and enterprise reaped the first fruition, as to them belonged the glory. The trains have run with more or less regularity ever since, securing to the traveler the comforting assurance, that he can reasonably hope to pass from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the Pacific to the Atlantic in the short period of little more than four hours, with all the facility and comfort that the same space may be traversed on any of the best roads in the United States.

This result will be appreciated by the trav-
eler who has once undergone the trials of a journey across the Isthmus during the days of the now obsolete mule and canoe. He will recall the long days and nights upon the Chagres river, and the hard ride over the rough road to Panama. He will think with a shudder how, swinging from the tall sides of the great steamer, tossing miles away in the swell of the open roadstead, which dashes its waves against the steep foundations of the rock-built fort of San Lorenzo, he timidly dropped into the slight canoe, which rose and fell like a bubble on the waves, and was finally cast ashore in the surf at the hazard of his life. He will recollect how, alternately chilled in the cold sea-waves, and broiled in the hot sun, he shuddered with a dread presentiment of Chagres’ fever, as he went up the hot beach, and thence into the inhospitable pine-board settlement of Chagres. He will recollect how he shrunk from the gaunt spectres of Yankees who haunted the place, and who only reminded him of their humanity by their eager demands for his dollars. He will recollect the struggle with his thronging fellow-travelers for the scant boats; and if he had the good luck to secure a foot-rest in a crowded canoe, he will not forget how eagerly he sprung from the shore infected
with pestilence and vice. He will recollect the three days and nights of his wearisome ascent of the ever-bending river, the never-ceasing monotonous cries of the Negro boatmen, as they toiled along the banks, tugging at the overhanging foliage, startling the chattering monkeys, putting to flight the noisy parrots, and disturbing the sleepy alligators, which slid their huge, black, slimy bodies from the mud-reefs into the water. With the tedious monotony of his slow progress by day, and no rest at night, in his contracted canoe, shared with coarse adventurers, and no relief in the exorbitantly-paid entertainment at the hovels which stretched their mud-floors, and dispensed their stringy pork, muddy coffee, and wretched brandy by the wayside, for the refreshment of the traveler, he will recollect how spiritedly he took to mule at Cruces, and sped joyfully on until, soon jaded by the hard ride, he at last reached Panama, fatigued and dispirited, where, perhaps, if with powers of endurance equal to every trial, he slept, or if not, tossed restlessly about on his hard cot in the early agonies of fever. The old traveler will recollect all this, and rejoice in the comforts of the Panama Railroad.

Four days and nights was the usual duration of the journey from Chagres to Panama, and