two days and nights from Panama to Chagres. The fatigue, the long exposure in an unhealthy climate, the deprivation or all comforts of eating, drinking, and sleeping, and the close jostling with a miscellaneous crowd of reckless adventurers, made the transit of the Isthmus impossible to travelers without a powerful stimulus, like that of the Californian gold excitement.

It was some time after the Railroad Company "broke ground" in December, 1850, that the old route to Panama was diverted from Chagres to Aspinwall. In July, 1852, only 23½ miles of the railroad, from Aspinwall to Barba- coas, was ready for travel; and passengers thence went by the river Chagres to Gorgona or Cruces, and took to mule by the old road to Panama. In December, 1854, Culebra or the Summit, was the terminus; and not until January 27th, 1855, had a locomotive passed over the whole road of forty-nine miles, from ocean to ocean. Nearly five years were thus consumed before the entire track was practically fit for travel.

During my visit to the Isthmus, in the months of February and March, four sets of passengers to and from California, averaging about three hundred each, made the transit in the average time of four and a half hours, and on neither occasion was there aught to interfere with the
personal enjoyment and safety of the traveler. During the intervals, however, although the train ran daily, there was an occasional detention. The yielding of the large embankment at the Summit, washed down by a heavy and unseasonable shower—for even the dry season has its rains not infrequently—detained the train all night, very *mal apropos*, and much to the discomfort of a pleasure party on their return from Aspinwall.

I was a sufferer on two occasions from the engine having run off the track. Once, at Aspinwall, where, being hurried through an early dinner by the impatient whistle of the engine, I seized my carpet-bag, and hastened away in the hot noonday sun, and found the locomotive, which had been just before so proudly snorting and so gayly showing its paces past the windows of the Mess House, silent and prostrate by the side of the track. My early dinner might have been prolonged into a late supper, in spite of the premature whistle of the engine; for the sun had nearly touched the green heights of the bay, and the tall masts of the shipping, and the cocoa-nut palms were throwing their long shadows upon the glistening white pier as the train started, and the deep darkness of a night in the forest had walled us
in long before our arrival at Panama. On the second occasion, our party was on its return from the Railroad glorification on the Pacific, and had reached Obispo, some fifteen miles, when the engine again ran off the track, and forced us to spend the night in that delectable neighborhood, as will appear in the course of the narrative. These untoward circumstances arose from the incomplete construction of the road. The embankments not being thrown back to a sufficient distance, or properly secured, occasional slides of earth were unavoidable, and there not being the necessary switches or turntables, and the engine being driven in consequence backward upon a portion of the route, the running off the track was, of course, a not infrequent result.

The railroad then—though the great result of a direct communication between the Atlantic and Pacific has been effected—is still incomplete. Many miles of it are yet supported upon trestle-work—wooden props—which often lift the trains scores of feet in the air, whence the traveler, clutching fast to his seat, looks down upon deep gorges of rough, precipitous rock, and angry, swollen streams, with an alarm which is only relieved by his passage to the solid security of terra firma. There are also
portions of the road where the train seems to feel its way with unusual caution, and jolts along with an irregularity of movement which is sure to excite the curiosity of the inquisitive, if not the fears of the anxious traveler. The knowing ones, if they are communicative and have no fear of Wall Street, will tell you that these are the soft parts of the road. And if you push your inquiries, you will learn that this softness is in consequence of the yielding soil, which has no more tenacity than softsoap, or the result of the decay of the sleepers, or cross-ties of native wood, which are crumbling into dust from the ceaseless borings of that busy little insect, the comihen, or rotting away in the quick decay of the hot, moist climate. The traveler, as he looks upon the pine buildings of the stations, and the wooden water-tanks, is surprised at the black stains of decay, the marks of ruin, and the rank growth which covers them, and hardly believes he is upon a new road just opened to travel, until he discovers that days quicken life and hasten death, in that region of rapid change, with greater speed than years in his own land of slow development. Time is no laggard in the tropics; and Life and Death follow his flying steps in quick succession. You may see by the road-
side the giant trees, felled but a few months, already wrapt about with green shrouds of verdure, jeweled with sparkling flowrets, which a generous, reverential nature has thrown around the unsightly decay of these patriarchs of the forest. Again, wherever man’s intrusive hand has bared the rock-ribbed mountain, or uncovered the fair bosom of the earth, a kind nature has thrown her flowing mantle of verdant growth.*

The deficiencies of the road are being promptly met by the inexhaustible energies of the chief engineer, and thousands of laborers are busy ballasting and filling in the trestle-work. Great piles of *lignum vitae*, or *quaiacum* ties, brought from the forests of Carthagena, are heaped up by the roadside at Aspinwall, and will be substituted for the decayed ones of native wood. It is however believed, that even the toughness of the *lignum vitae* will soon yield to the rapid decomposition of the climate of the Isthmus. In fact, there are some which have been tried not many months, which, according to one of the employés of the road,

* Such is the rapid growth of the vegetation, that there are parts of the road which require to be cleared twice a year; and there is little doubt that, if the road were left to itself for a single twelvemonth, it would not be discoverable by a solitary trace.
already show signs of decay. Stone masonry will be found necessary to give the road the permanency of a lasting institution. Iron bridges, which, the chief engineer authoritatively states, have been already "adopted," will be substituted for all the wooden structures. "Adopted"—the word Colonel Totten ingeniously, if not ingenuously, uses*—refers, however, it is supposed, to the operations at the railway-office in Broadway, for that gentleman pointed out an iron bridge of some half-dozen feet in length, as the only one "adopted" on the route, on the 2d March, 1855, out of some one hundred and thirty to be necessarily "adopted" in the future. The bridges vary from six feet to six hundred, and cross two large rivers, the Chagres and Gatun, and endless streams and gullies.

It will also be necessary to build the stations and tanks of brick, stone, iron, or of some more enduring material than wood, as they are rapidly falling into ruin, and look more like the antiquated remnants of the past, than the fresh structures of the enterprise of to-day. When these contemplated and necessary repairs and changes shall have been effected, the Panama Railroad will be a permanent monument of American skill and enterprise.

The construction of the road was undertaken upon too narrow a basis, as to expenditure of money and labor. Stimulated by the hope of immediate gain, from the gold discovery, which was attracting the world to California, and flooding the Isthmus with an emigration which poured in torrents from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the commercial originators of the enterprise thought only of the tribute they might extort from the hurrying crowds of eager adventurers, or the gold they might glean from the rich harvest of the diggings of the Sacramento. The great object was to secure an immediate benefit from what was believed to be a temporary occasion. The practicability of a road was soon proved by the surveys of competent engineers, and estimates made of the cost. The former pleased Wall Street, for it showed the speculation feasible; the latter were received with dissatisfaction, for they threw doubt upon its paying. Accordingly, engineer after engineer was dismissed, until one was found whose arithmetic accorded with the close calculations of avaricious trade. A man of science, and great practical experience, had the candor to estimate the cost of the road at seven millions, and was, of course, pooh-poohed at the time, but would probably now be honored as a true
prophet, as the result has justified the correctness of his calculations.

John L. Stephens, the traveler, however, must be excepted from those who, purely with mercenary motives, early engaged in the Panama Railroad enterprise. The grandeur of the union of the two oceans, the opening of a high road to the intercourse of all the world, the binding together of distant nations, and the consequent progress of civilization, warmed his imagination, and yielding up home, its comforts and its literary ease, in which he so much delighted, and sacrificing health and life in his devotion to the cause, he looked beyond the mere temptation of present gain, to the brighter prospect of furthering the interests of humanity.

With a parsimony which has turned out not to be by any means the best economy, the railroad was commenced as a temporary expedient, and constructed as hastily and cheaply as possible, that it might receive its share of the golden shower which was just then fertilizing American enterprise. Both the labor and expense exceeded the hopeful expectations of trade, and it was soon found that the supposed cost of three millions and a half would be doubled, and that the difficulties were so great that the hundreds of laborers would have to be in-
increased to thousands, and the era for the consummation of the great undertaking postponed from 1853 to 1855. A more liberal and comprehensive view of the necessities of the enterprise would have provided, from the commencement, against the present unavoidable reconstruction, the substitution of iron bridges and more enduring ties, the building of new dépôts and stations, and the long postponement of the completion of the road.

However incomplete the present result, the difficulties in its accomplishment have been great, and the enterprise with which they have been overcome in the highest degree creditable. The Isthmus did not supply a single resource necessary for the undertaking. Not only the capital, skill, and enterprise, but the labor, the material, the wood and iron, the daily food, the clothing, the roof to cover, and the instrument to work with, came from abroad. The United States supplied the enterprising capitalists, the men of science, the engineers, the practical business managers, the superior workmen, the masons, carpenters, and forgers of iron. Distant parts of the world supplied the laborers. From Ireland came crowds of her laborious peasantry. The Negroes, stimulated to unusual energy by the prospect of reward, thronged in from Ja-
maica. The surplus populations of India and China contributed their share. The mixed races of the province of Carthagena, the Indian, Spaniard, and African completed this representation of all nations, in which the Caucasian, Mongolian, and African, the Anglo-American, European, Negro, American-Indian, and Asiatic, with all their diverse temperaments, habits, and religious faiths, mingled together appropriately to join in a work by which the ends of the earth were to be brought together for the common interests of the whole world.

Most of the material used for the construction of the road was brought from vast distances. Although the country abounded in forests, it was found necessary, from the expense of labor and the want of routes of communication, to send the timber for the most part from the United States; and not only were the rails, to a considerable extent, laid on American pine, but the bridges, and the houses and workshops of the various settlements were of the same wood, all fashioned in Maine and Georgia. The metal-work, the rails, the locomotives, and the tools were brought either from England or the United States. The daily food of the laborer even, came from a New York market.

Fleets of vessels from all parts of the world
sailed into the harbor of Aspinwall. Ships arrived from Cork crowded with Irish emigrants. From Bombay and Hong Kong came the East Indiamen thronged with Coolies and Chinamen. From the United States, steamer after steamer brought hundreds of skillful workmen. From Jamaica the little white schooners, loaded with Negroes, came in quick succession. The smart American coasters briskly arrived with their supplies of timber and provisions from the Atlantic coast; and great lumbering hulks floated into port, with their heavy freight of iron and coal from the mines of Great Britain. The whole world was put under tribute for the great enterprise.

To the difficulties which naturally ensued from undertaking an enterprise the resources of which had to be gathered from the remote ends of the world, were added the natural obstacles of the country. Forests, so closely interwoven with thick growth that they were impenetrable to light, which had darkened the country in perpetual night for ages, had to be cleared. Walls of jungle had to be struck down, and treacherous swamps, in which man had never before ventured, had to be made firm as a foundation of rock. Here was a gigantic work sufficient to task all the energies of enterprise
and the full strength of labor. When to this was added a climate which disposes, from its prostrating heat, to indolence, and an atmosphere the malignant breathing of which is poison, the result which has been accomplished seems almost superhuman.

The unhealthiness of the climate has been one of the most serious obstacles against which the enterprise has struggled. I need not dwell upon the causes which produce those diseases which are endemic on the Isthmus. The alternation of the wet and dry season, a perpetual summer-heat, and the decomposition of the profuse tropical vegetation, must of course generate an intense miasmatic poison, and I was not surprised when the oldest and most experienced of the physicians employed on the railroad declared to me that no one, of whatever race or country, who becomes a resident of the Isthmus, escapes disease.

I am indebted to the same gentleman just mentioned, for some interesting facts. From him I learned that those who were exposed to the miasmatic poison of the country were generally taken ill in four or five weeks, although sometimes, but rarely, not for four or five months after exposure. That the first attack was generally severe; and took the form
of yellow, bilious remittent, or malignant intermittent fever. That although none were exempt, the miasmatic poison affected the various races with different degrees of rapidity. That the African resisted the longest, next the Cooly, then the European, and last in order the Chinese, who gave in at once. The rate of mortality, I was informed, was, for the natives of all races, one in fifty, the Coolies, one in forty, the Negroes (foreign), one in forty, the Europeans, one in thirty, and the Chinese, one in ten. Those who recover from the immediate effects of the first attack are liable to an habitual fever and ague. The system never habituates itself to the miasmatic poison, and complete recovery from fever, during a residence on the Isthmus, is impossible. The sufferer may arise from his bed of sickness, but totters up and stalks about a mere ghost of his former self. It is thus that I never met with a wholesome-looking person among all those engaged upon the railroad. There was not one whose constitution had not been sapped by disease, and all, without exception, are in the almost daily habit of taking medicine to drive away the ever-recurring fever and ague.* I accosted,

* The Railroad Company are so far conscious of the debility engendered by a residence on the Isthmus, that they
on one occasion, a gang of six Negro laborers from Jamaica—the whole number engaged in working a hand-car—and each one told me he had had fever, although neither of them had been in the country over six months. The universal answer, to my universal question, "How do you like the country?" was, "Not at all, because of the fever."

My medical friend added his to the universal testimony in favor of quinine, which he declared to be the most effective antidote to the miasmatic poison. This drug he is in the habit of prescribing in moderate doses, and at once, without any preparatory treatment of the patient. In common with all, the doctor advocated temperate habits, and condemned the use of strong stimulants in health and disease; although the moderate use of claret wine, or the light, bitter ale was gently recommended; perhaps from a polite concession to the tastes of his guest, who discussed these interesting subjects with him, over a creaming bottle of Alsop's best East India beer, which I always relished,
drank plentifully of during my stay on the Isthmus, and never suffered from.

My note book contains the following, with which I will close my tedious professional talk: "Accidents rare on the road; recovery difficult from prostration; bones unite with difficulty, in consequence of complication from fever; operations upon natives and Africans tolerably successful; scorpion bites not serious; tarantula bites occasionally followed by erysipelas inflammation; bilious colics and constipation abound; diseases of the eye are cured with great rapidity; ulcerations of the cornea heal in two weeks without cicatrix."

A terrible fatality attended the efforts of the Railroad Company to avail themselves of the assistance of the Chinese laborers. A ship arrived, and landed on the Isthmus some eight hundred, after a fair voyage from Hong Kong, where these poor devils of the flowery kingdom had unwittingly sold themselves to the service of the railroad, perfectly ignorant of the country whither they were going, and of the trials which awaited them. The voyage was tolerably prosperous, and the Chinese bore its fatigues and sufferings with great patience, cheered by the prospects of reaching the foreign land, whither they had been tempted by the glowing descrip-
tions of those traffickers in human life, who had so liberally promised them wealth and happiness. Sixteen died on the passage, and were thrown into the sea. No sooner had the eight hundred survivors landed, than thirty-two of the number were struck down prostrate by sickness; and in less than a week afterward, eighty more laid by their side. The interpreters who accompanied them, attributed this rapid prostration to the want of their habitual opium. This drug was then distributed among them, and with the good effect of so far stimulating their energies, that two-thirds of the sick arose again from their beds, and began to labor. A Maine opium law, however, was soon promulgated on the score of the immorality of administering to so pernicious a habit, and without regard, it is hoped, to the expense; which, however, was no inconsiderable item, since the daily quota of each Chinese amounted to fifteen grains, at the cost of at least fifteen cents. Whether it was owing to the deprivation of their habitual stimulus, or the malignant effects of the climate, or home-sickness, or disappointment, in a few weeks there was hardly one out of the eight hundred Chinese who was not prostrate and unfit to labor. The poor sufferers let the pick and the shovel fall from
their hands, and yielded themselves up to the agony of despair. They now gladly welcomed death, and impatiently awaited their turn in the ranks which were falling before the pestilence. The havoc of disease went on, and would have done its work in time; but as it was sometimes merciful, and spared a life, and was deliberate though deadly, the despairing Chinese could wait no longer: he hastily seized the hand of death, and voluntarily sought destruction in its grasp. Hundreds destroyed themselves, and showed, in their various modes of suicide, the characteristic Chinese ingenuity. Some deliberately lighted their pipes, and sat themselves down upon the shore of the sea, and awaited the rising of the tide—grimly resolved to die—and sat and sat, silent and unmoved as a storm-beaten rock, as wave arose above wave, until they sank into the depths of eternity. Some bargained with their companions for death—giving their all to the friendly hand which, with a kindly touch of the trigger, would scatter their brains, and hasten their doom. Some hung themselves to the tall trees by their hair, and some twisted their queues about their necks, with a deliberate coil after coil, until their faces blackened, their eye-balls started out, their tongues protruded, and death relieved
their agony. Some cut ugly, crutch-shaped sticks, sharpened the ends to a point, and thrust their necks upon them until they were pierced through and through, and thus mangled, yielded up life in a torrent of blood. Some took great stones into their hands, and leaped into the depths of the nearest river, and clung, with resolute hold, to the weight which sunk them, gurgling in the agonies of drowning, to the bottom, until death loosened their grasp, and floated them to the surface, lifeless bodies. Some starved themselves to death—refusing either to eat or drink. Some impaled themselves upon their instruments of labor—and thus, in a few weeks after their arrival, there were but scarce two hundred Chinese left of the whole number. This miserable remnant of poor, heart-sick exiles, prostrate from the effects of the climate, and bent on death, being useless for labor, were sent to Jamaica, where they have, ever since, lingered out a miserable beggar's life.

The Railroad Company was hardly more fortunate with another importation of live freight. A cargo of Irish laborers from Cork reached Aspinwall, and so rapidly did they yield to the malignant effects of the climate, that not a good day's labor was obtained from a single one; and
so great was the mortality, that it was found necessary to ship the survivors to New York, where most died from the fever of the Isthmus which was fermenting in their blood. The laborers now employed, to the number of three thousand, on the road are of the mixed native races, chiefly from the province of Cathagena, Negroes from Jamaica, and Coolies from the East Indies.

The police of the road is not among the least arduous and expensive of the duties of the Company. The impotent government of New Granada, finding itself too weak to exert the necessary authority to control the large body of men employed as laborers on the road —many of whom are of a class requiring the strictest surveillance—has delegated full powers to the Company. Accordingly the Railroad officials have taken into their hands the police of the Isthmus, and exercise it with no weak sway. An armed guard, to the number of forty, was enrolled, and placed under the command of Ran Runnels, the famous Texian Ranger, of whom many deeds of daring and of fierce determination are recorded, by which he has made himself a terror to evil-doers. The casual observer would not remark any thing very formidable in the delicate organization of the bold Ran. He is of short stature, and of a
slight built frame. His hand is small, and looks better suited for a lady's kid glove than to handle bowie-knife or revolver. His boyish, well-combed head, and delicate features, indicate little of the daring spirit of the man; but there is a close, resolute, pressure of the thin lips, a commanding glance of the eye, a sinewy wiriness of the limbs, and an activity of movement, which are in character with his bold determination and lively energies. His guard of forty are not very impressive in appearance. A military martinet might object to such a loose assortment of bravadoes, of all colors, heights, and varieties of dress. Negroes, Mulattoes, and white men mingle indiscriminately in the ranks, who, however effective in service, would not make a much fairer show on parade than Falstaff's Ragged Regiment. A bare-footed, coatless, harum-scarum-looking set they are, and might easier pass for the forty thieves, than that
number of honest guards. With Ran Runnels, however, at their head they have cleared the Isthmus of robbers, and kept the thousands of unruly laborers in wholesome subjection. The Railroad Company, appreciating their services, have bestowed the liberal largess of from two to four thousand dollars a month upon Ran and his Ragged Regiment.

Whipping, imprisonment, and shooting down, in an emergency, have been liberally inflicted in the exercise of the powers delegated by the government of New Granada to the Company, which has the power of life and death on the Isthmus without appeal.

In spite of all the difficulties enumerated, the Panama Railroad is now an accomplished fact, and the traveler can pass from ocean to ocean with facility and comfort; and when the details of construction and reconstruction, now in progress, shall have been completed, the road will undoubtedly be as secure and permanent as the best in the world. Fully to realize the advantages of the road, however, it will be necessary to pass the traveler to and from California, from steamer to steamer, immediately on his arrival. It is especially to be wished, on the score of humanity, apart from considerations of facilitating commercial intercourse, that no one should
be unnecessarily delayed a single hour in that fatal town of Aspinwall, or in the unhealthy city of Panama. This desirable object can be readily attained by always having a steamer in reserve at either terminus; and such is, it is believed, the intention of the various steamboat proprietaries. Notwithstanding the unquestionably superior comforts of the Isthmus route to California, it has not yet monopolized the passenger traffic, for the simple reason that hitherto the journey, by the way of Nicaragua, has always been accomplished in a day or two less time. With swift boats, however, on the Atlantic and Pacific, and no detention on the Isthmus, the route by Panama and Aspinwall can be made the briefer in time, as it is undoubtedly the more comfortable and convenient.

The cost of the railroad has much exceeded the original expectations of the Company. A competent writer in the *New York Tribune*, of the date of March 13, 1855, estimates it at seven millions. Colonel Totten, the engineer, declares, however, that six millions is the extent of the cost; but this sum does not probably include the expense of the reconstruction of parts of the road, the substitution of iron bridges, which have been "adopted," the laying down of *lignum vitae* ties, and other changes
acknowledged to be necessary. The same writer whom I have quoted estimates the aggregate receipts at $730,000, while Colonel Totten, the engineer, declares that this sum is much below the actual amount; and it has been stated that $120,000 was received from the traffic of the single month of March.

The want of a harbor at Panama is an insuperable obstacle to the carrying of heavy freight, without a very important and expensive addition to the construction of the road. At present the terminus at the Pacific Ocean is outside the gates of the city of Panama, and all freight as well as passengers must be conveyed a distance of at least two miles to ship—the harbor not admitting sea-vessels of any considerable draft nearer to the shore. The expense of lightering and the necessary damage which attends it, are such as to render such a mode of conveyance of freight impracticable. The Railroad Company are perfectly aware of the incompleteness of their work, and, having purchased three islands in the bay, propose to establish a harbor at one of them, and connect the whole to the mainland by means of a pier, in order that the Railroad may terminate at the sides of the ship. Another plan—that of building a dock like those of Liverpool—has been proposed. Either will
be a great undertaking, worthy of the enterprise which has already effected so much, and one or the other will be absolutely necessary fully to accomplish the great purpose of the Railroad, that of revolutionizing the course of trade of the world, by diverting it from the old channel of Cape Horn. The millions which may be required to carry out this design will not be held back by those who have already poured out with no grudging hand their generous largesses for the benefit of commercial enterprise. When this consummation of the noble design shall be effected, and the channel of trade changed, the Panama Railroad will become, in the language of the enthusiastic Darien projector Patterson, the "Door of the Seas, and the Key of the Universe." Then will the commercial enterprise and scientific skill which have begun this wonder of the age be rewarded with something more substantial than glory—a remunerative balance sheet to their credit account.

Note.

M. Emile Chevalier, in an article on the Panama Railroad in the Revue des Deux Mondes of June 1, 1850, makes the following estimate of the cost and revenue of the road:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>$4,900,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross receipts</td>
<td>860,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual expense</td>
<td>344,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net revenue</td>
<td>516,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
being about ten per cent. upon the sum supposed to be expended. In this estimate, however, the cost is underrated. Colonel Totten, the chief engineer, acknowledges it to have been six millions on the 12th March, which is probably two millions less than the actual sum which has been, or will be, expended. M. Chevalier, moreover, exaggerates the number of passengers, which he puts down at 30,000—ten thousand beyond the real amount—annually, and the quantity of specie transported, which he estimates at 100,000,000—four times the average sum.

The estimate of a writer in the New York Tribune, of the date of March 13, is as follows:

"At present, the only revenue is from passengers, the mails, specie, and express parcels, the aggregate amount of which is not above $730,000. If the road should enjoy the monopoly of California travel, this may be increased two or three hundred thousand dollars, provided the number of passengers to and from California should not diminish, whereas it is diminishing year by year. Suppose the possible revenue to be one million, leaving out of consideration all heavy freight-carrying, which we consider out of the question in the present state of the road, the expenses can never be much less than fifty per cent. of the gross receipts. At this moment there are 3,000 laborers employed, at eighty cents a day for work, and thirty cents for support, a large number of mechanics who receive from two to three dollars daily, and thirty officials, paid about $100,000, making a total of more than a million of dollars. This array of workmen and laborers will be required for a long time yet, and we question whether more than
a half of them can ever be dispensed with. There is a great deal still to be done on the road, in the way of embankment, substitution of new ties, iron for wooden bridges, etc. Moreover, such is the nature of the climate, the destructive character of the atmosphere and the insects, and the rapid growth of vegetation, that there will always be work for an army of laborers. Five hundred thousand dollars a year I believe to be a small estimate of the annual expenses of the road, and one million a large estimate of the revenue. We have left half a million for net income to pay the interest upon a capital of seven millions."

The following statement, by a merchant of Panama, is valuable, and shows the impracticability of the railroad route for the conveyance of freight at the present rate of charge:

"Previous to the discovery of gold in California, the charge for transporting merchandise across the Isthmus from Cruces or Gorgona, villages on the banks of the river Chagres, was about 1½ cent per pound. After the emigration to California commenced the price rose to from 20 to 40 cents per pound, and decreased as the number of mules increased, to from 15 to 18 cents per pound, until the railroad was opened to the Summit, alias Culebra, when it decreased to from 9 to 7 cents. The present rates of freight by the railroad, the merchants of the South Pacific will not pay while they can obtain freight round the Horn from Europe, at from $15 to $18 per tun, except it be for costly goods such as silks, fine muslins, jewelry, &c. The freight on merchandise by the steamers from Southampton, is £6 ($30) per tun, measurement, to Colon; and to Guayaquil
from Panama, by steamer, $22 per tun, measurement; to Payta from Panama, by steamer, $15 per tun, measurement; to Callao from Panama, by steamer, $18 per tun, measurement; to Valparaiso from Panama, by steamer, $25 per tun, measurement; to San Francisco, $80 for expresses, and $100 for other merchandise, per tun, measurement. The specie consisting generally of coined silver, and silver in bars, brought by the English steamers, from the South Pacific coast, is not conveyed across the Isthmus by the railroad, owing to the charge by this conveyance being \( \frac{1}{2} \) per cent, while it can be sent from Panama on mules to Cruces or Gorgona, and from thence down the river in barges or canoes, to Chagres for less than \( \frac{1}{4} \) per cent."

The following extract from the terms of contract with the Government of New Granada will show to what extent the large capital, say eight millions, is endangered, apart from insufficient revenue, as an investment in the Panama road:

"At the expiration of twenty years, counted from the day on which the railroad shall have been completed and opened to public use, the government may redeem the privilege for the benefit of New Granada, by the sum of five millions of dollars, to be paid as the whole amount of the indemnification. If the privilege should not be redeemed at that date, it shall continue in force ten years longer in favor of the Panama Railroad Company, and at the end of that time the government may redeem it by paying four millions of dollars; if it be not redeemed at the end of this latter period, it shall continue in force ten years still longer, at the end of which the government may re-
deem it by paying two millions of dollars. In order that the government may avail itself of the right thus reserved to it of redeeming the privilege, it shall notify the Panama Railroad Company of its intention to redeem the privilege, during the year preceding the day of the expiration of either of the three periods above expressed."
CHAPTER V.

WALK ABOUT PANAMA.

Our party, overflowing with holiday spirit, in full possession of the bare rooms, wide halls, and spreading balconies of the Aspinwall House, created a new soul within the ribs of the old hotel, which was fast dying of inanition, and cheered the desponding landlord with a hope of paying his quarter's rent. The Jamaica Negro, Thomas, the factotum of the establishment, grinned a hearty welcome as he clutched our carpet-bags with all the hunger of a starved porter; he sprang up the great stone steps, shuffled along the corridors, and ushered us with great glee into the immense rooms, where the uncarpeted cedar-floors, the thick, whitewashed walls, the enormous windows without a pane of glass or a casement, and closed in with large, green-painted, spreading shutters, like barn doors, did not present any very encouraging prospect of bedchamber-comfort; the skeleton cots, however, from which their living souls had long since departed, ranged along the wall by
the half-dozen together, gave security of no want of companionship. Warmth of hospitality, however, can be dispensed with in the torrid zone; and we found naked, thick walls, bare cedar-floors, perpetually open windows, and meagre cots, without a mattress below or a coverlet above, more favorable to repose than all the appointments of a more luxurious upholstery.

Most of our company had but two days to spend at Panama, and much of that time had been appropriated in advance to the celebration as laid down in the programme. There was the excursion to Taboga to be undergone; the lunch of the English Steam Company to be eaten; and, as if a feast spread by the substantial hospitality of John Bull were not quite enough for at least twenty-four hours, there was to be digested, on the same day, the prodigious banquet of the Railroad Company, with its long speeches, which, although so well masticated, were rather tough morsels to swallow.

Our company, as they were guests, felt it to be their first duty to respond to the hospitality of their entertainers; and accordingly, having refreshed themselves with iced brandy-and-water, Champagne cock-tails, which had now become habitual in spite of our better princi-
ples, and with oranges, pines, bananas, papaws, mangoes, and other luscious fruit to satiety, they sallied out into the city, and went laboriously to work in the hot sun, to do their utmost in sight-seeing. Separating into various groups, Panama was very effectually investigated by us Yankee visitors. Now some went straggling along the narrow streets, pricing Panama hats in the shops, and ogling the dark señoritas, who lounged in loose costume in the wooden balconies, which, ranging one above the other in the houses, threw their shadows across the road. Some strolled with profane steps, heathen Protestants as they were, through the arched entrances of the old churches, decrepit with ruin, mouldy with decay, and almost hid in the green growth which sprung luxuriantly from every gaping crevice, and pushed their way into the very precincts of the sanctuary, where they cast irreverent eyes upon painted-faced, spangled-robed virgins, and honored saints, in suits of yellow turned up with blue which were rather the worse for wear. The young girl, prostrate upon the stone pavement, pouring out her soul in prayer, and the tottering old man bent in trembling worship at the feet of those gaudy images, made up of wood, tarnished gilt, yellow ochre, and rags, should have awed the
profane visitors; but they turned upon their heels from the true devotion which these worshipers were wringing from their hearts, and went about scoffing at all they saw, sneering at the frouzy padres, sniffing at the tallow candles, peering into the rotting confessional-boxes, and thrusting their profane fingers into the latticed earlets, through which so many anxious hearts had palpitated the inmost secrets of their lives into the eager ears of their father-confessors.

Out of church our unbelieving countrymen pass, perhaps, into the neighboring drinking-saloon, where their patriotism is no doubt warmed by the sight of a spruce bar-keeper in linen jacket from their own native land, compounding a draught for a brother Yankee, whose bilious eyes, yellow face, and shaky hand, tell of the effects of the climate, and oft-repeated calls for bitters. Two meagre youths of native blood are busy at the billiard-table. Some half-dozen Spaniards and Frenchmen are playing dominoes under the porch, and refreshing themselves with beer and absynthe. The American is at home here, for he hears his own language expressed with the usual idiomatic elegance prevailing in such refined society; sees in the range of crystal bottles, brilliantly set off
with gilded labels, and bright with variously-colored liquids, familiar objects; observes such swaggering manners as he need not travel far from home to witness; sniffs up an atmosphere, which has a very distinct flavor of his own land, reeking as it is with brandy and redolent of cigars, and as he turns into the fresh air, is not surprised to see by the staring sign that he has just taken his sherry-cobbler in the United States, Washington, or St. Charles saloon, as it may be.

Along the narrow street some of us go, out into the Plaza, bare and desert-like, and see here and there a shackled mule cropping the parched grass, a group of naked Negro children playing upon the steps of the great ruined church, and a line of galley slaves clanking their manacles, as with sodden looks and lingering steps they are driven by the armed Mulatto guard to the prison hard by, through the iron bars of which, and from the darkness within, start out the glaring eye-balls of an ugly-looking Negro fellow, who, we congratulate ourselves, is well secured. From the Plaza, down a street bounded on each side by heavy stone houses, we can see, through the arched gate of the old wall which surrounds the city, the waters of the bay glistening in the sun; so we stroll in that
direction, passing a freshly whitewashed build-
ing, from which droops in the hot, breathless
noonday, the stars and stripes, while beneath
their folds brightens the glowing face of a very
hot American Consul, who is doing his best to
ventilate himself in the balcony above us, and
by whom we are recognized, and accordingly
invited to the brandy-and-water hospitalities of
the Consulate, which, flow in never-ceasing
streams. Opposite the stars and stripes is
the office of the *Panama Star*, where the news-
paper reporters of our party have already an-
nounced their arrival, and been duly honored
with a record of their names in the *Court
Gazette*. Going down the street just by the
wall gate, we come to a heavy prison-like
building, from the barred windows of which,
overlooking the ruined wall, must be a fine
view of the bay, and we do not doubt those
poor nuns said to be incarcerated there—for
the building is a convent—enjoy it, if that
much of the outer world is spared them. With
a whirl of the turning box, a knock at the con-
vent gate, and a fierce rebuke for our heretical
impertinence from a savage, grinning Negress,
who was the she-dragon that guarded the sweet
love-apples closely stowed away—the duenna
who held watch over the, of course, lovely seño-
ritas within—we turn away from the frousiness of that remnant of decayed antiquity to air ourselves in the fresh breeze on the Rampart.

The Rampart is the choice promenade of the city. Its ruined walls, tottering turrets with their loopholes jagged and torn by the tooth of time, its dismantled guns, elaborately wrought of brass and richly embossed, brought, hundreds of years ago, from the great foundries of Barcelona, to defend the wealth of Panama from the buccaneers of old, and the jealous enemies of Spain in its days of grandeur and galleons, give a melancholy aspect of decay. But the foundations, laid two centuries since, strong upon the rocky reef, yet uphold the wide esplanade, scores of feet high, solid and secure from the perpetual swell of the ocean, which rolls in here its great waves, and dashes them against the base, until they are driven back high in the air in cataracts of foam. The Rampart stands upon the point projecting seaward of the tongue of land upon which Panama is built. Before us, looking southward, are groups of green islands, which diversify the wide expanse of the bay. There are Taboga and Taboguilla in the distance—ten miles away—with fleets of shipping safely anchored in their harbors. Closer, within two miles or so, are
THE RAMPART OF PANAMA.
the islands of Flamenco, Perico, and Llenaö, upon the sides of which the cocoa-nut palms can be seen rising from the white surf of the shore. From these green islands, starting out of the sea, in perpetual verdure from base to summit, upon the hills and valleys of which the capricious sky is throwing bright glances and deep shadows in quick alternation, the eye passes beyond to those distant groups, half hid in a purple light, and thence to the dark horizon, beyond which extends the great ocean.

On the right and left of the observer, as he still faces the south, the bay bends into irregular inlets, here, washing a stretch of white beach glistening in the sun, and there, bathing the base of mountains of verdure, which, rising from the shore, extend their irregular heights far inland. Panama stretches back of the Rampart, and shows its ruined churches, and its dark, mouldy houses, irregularly grouped about the shore on either side, until it is lost in the thick shade of the hills of forest which connect the tongue of land, upon which the city is built, with the main-land.

There is hardly a living soul to be met, in these dead times of Panama, upon the Rampart. A few months ago, it was alive with
swagging Californians, who were wont to turn up their noses at the defunct artillery, and show the vitality of their own ready shooters by firing off their six-barreled revolvers, to the imminent risk of the lives of all who were within pistol-shot. Now, beyond an occasional señorita, half-hid in her black vail, expectant of her lover; an Indian nurse, with a pale, sickly white child, gasping for a breath of wholesome air; a contemplative old Spaniard, smoking his cigar, and ventilating his Panama hat and linen jacket in the sea-breeze, or a curious stranger, there are no visitors to the Rampart. There is still a scant show of military possession in the neighborhood of the fortification; but we question whether among those Mulatto fellows, in bare feet, loose tow-cloth jackets and trowsers, and red flannel caps, who keep up a perpetual fire of cigars from the windows of the ruined barracks, down in the trench behind the Rampart there is a force or military skill enough to load one of the old cannon.

The various groups of our party, gathering from all parts of the city, meet together at dinner at Victor's. The Aspinwall House confined its hospitality at the rate of three dollars per cot to lounging by day and sleeping at night; our
entertainers of the Railroad Company, therefore, had given their guests the free run of Monsieur Victor's kitchen. Accordingly we ate our breakfast eggs, and our dinner steaks, and drank our claret, and our chasse café at Victor's famous Restaurant. Monsieur Victor, bon patriote that he is, was true to the traditional forms of the glorious cuisine of his native land, but was sadly false to its substance. He indulged in all sorts of patriotic reminiscences of la belle France on his bill of fare, but his table proved him recreant to his country. The grand flourish of fillets, blanquettes, entremets, legumes, and fines herbes, which Monsieur Victor daily exposed to our view, written in the neatest of hands on the whitest of paper, were creditable evidences of the patriotic heart that still beats beneath Monsieur Victor's white waistcoat, but they did not satisfy the hungry stomachs which were collapsed beneath the waistcoats of his guests. His fillets, blanquettes, and entremets, were everlasting tough beef, and his legumes and fines herbes were perpetual garlic. Monsieur Victor's ponderous silver forks and spoons, and his tall castors of oil cruets were very imposing; but I would recommend Monsieur to sell out that argenterie, and invest the proceeds in a washerwoman. The necessary peck of dirt,
carefully distributed in installments during a week at the least, would be probably more acceptable than crowding it all at once into the sugar-bowl; while a clean table-cloth occasionally, is politely suggested as an improvement of the filthy spread upon which Monsieur Victor daily displays his uninviting banquet.

The best things I could find to eat were the pigeons which abound on the Isthmus; and, when Monsieur Victor concentrated his energies on a pigeon grilè, I could forgive him for his fast-decaying reminiscences of the French cuisine, in the shape of his India-rubber fillets, and his fricandeaus de veau of tough rags. Fish, although abounding in the bay, I seldom could get, for the natives are too lazy to catch it or to bring it to market. Iguano steaks and monkey ragouts are pronounced excellent; but my stay being short on the Isthmus, I did not care to admit such foreigners to a naturalization in my native American stomach. Fruits of all kinds can be had at Panama, but never at a very moderate price, for here again the indolence of the natives interferes with an abundant supply. The oranges are excellent, so are the bananas, the papaws, the mangoes, the pines, the cheromoyas, and the thousand other luscious products. Yams and yucas abound, and are
a fair substitute for the potato, which last does not grow on the Isthmus, but is supplied at a fair price from the coasts of Peru and Chili. The French wines are generally drank at Panama, and Monsieur Victor supplied us with some acrid specimens of St. Julien and Barsac. There are no native beverages but the chicha, fermented drinks made from the pine-apple, maize, and other native products. I attempted a calabash of chicha on one occasion, and although impressed with the advice of my friend, that “it was good for me,” I could not get beyond the first glutinous, mussy taste, and accordingly remained uncognizant of the benefits of chicha.

At our dinner at Victor’s, our party compared notes of their observations on the city. Old W——, of Connecticut, had been everywhere. He had visited the ruined monasteries and convents, and suggested that a few hundred shingles might stop up the gaps of time and keep the rain out; he had beheld with pious horror the naked piccaninies wallowing in the gutters, and advised, with Christian benevolence, a supply of shirts and wooden schoolhouses; he had strolled into the neighboring forest, and seemed to be of opinion that a clearing and well-cultivated farms would be an im-
provement. The fashionable B——, of New York, did not think the streets comparable to Broadway, and thought the women by no means genteel, as they walked the streets without hats, and wore their flounces at the top of the neck instead of at the bottom of their feet. One had his experiences to relate of the market, another of the burying-ground. The man of business concluded that Panama was decidedly dull, while the poet of the company declared

“A pleasing land of drowsy head it was.”

From dinner I return to our hotel, which is but a step or so from Victor’s, and mounting to the balcony, which overhangs the street, observe the passing life. The cavalcade of riders, mostly the foreign residents returning from their afternoon ride, come clattering down the paved road, with their ambling mules and brisk little white Peruvian stallions, richly caparisoned with silver-mounted bridles and gayly-adorned high-peakèd Spanish saddles.

A spruce-looking padre passes, on his return from vespers, in long silk surplice, the gossamer skirts of which flowing in the breeze reveal a bright, pink satin lining, loose drawers of the finest linen, gathered at the knees with
golden buckles, and black silk hose, terminating in a pair of the smallest, brightly-polished shoes, set off with buckles of pure gold. A cocked beaver hat, turned up with white silk, and adorned with fringe and tassels, and a gold-headed cane, complete the costume of the dandy priest. The shining olive face and glossy black hair of the "oily man of God," the gusto with which he puffs his cigar, and the gallant manner with which he accosts the pretty dark girls of his flock, show him to be no anchorite. In fact, there is no more gallant Don Juan in the parish; and, in spite of his celibacy, his children outnumber those of the patriarchs. As for the minor morals, he is a sad transgressor, if the scandal is to be believed that only last week he staked those golden buckles on a game at monte, and lost at a cock-fight his last fee for lifting a soul from purgatory.

Next comes a slouchy Negro woman, with her long hair streaming down her back, and her sleek, ebony body half out of her loose
gown, which, in accordance with the usual fashion on the Isthmus, has its flounces at the top instead of the bottom. She carries her great Negro-baby, as naked as it was born, astraddle her hip, which seems to be dislocated for the express purpose. She, like all the world, is smoking the eternal cigar. Then follow a mother and child, gayly bedizened with all the finery of bright-ribboned Panama hats, loose calico dresses of brilliant pattern, bright-red satin slippers stuck upon the tips of thoroughly African feet, whence project backward, as the Irishman would say, unmistakable Negro heels. The child is a perfect miniature of her mother from hat to slipper, displays the same superfluity of black skin, wears the same gay calico with its reversed flounces, and rejoices in an equally gorgeous chain of golden eagles about her neck. The two seem impressed with the magnificence of their appearance, and walk with measured steps of conscious pride through the street.
There goes another characteristic denizen of the old town—the water-carrier—on his mule. He is just returning from outside the walls, where he has filled his kegs from the orange-shaded spring, and comes in, in the cool evening, to empty his moist kegs into the great, red, earthen, porous vessels of his customers, which may be seen under the shade of every balcony, exuding from their surface a perpetually cool moisture. Each keg seems to be germinating with growth, for a tuft of green leaves inserted into the holes at the top, serves to keep the water from being jolted out on the route.

As the shades of evening gather, the city becomes quite animated. Groups of native and foreign dandies come out of their shops and counting-houses, in the dark recesses of which they have been hiding themselves during the day from the sun, and congregate at the corner, where they shine “all glossy gay” in black silk French sacks, Panama hats, white trousers, and varnished boots, or seat themselves under the portico of the St. Charles saloon, opposite, in the enjoyment of cigars and sher-
ry-cobblers, cooled with Boston ice. The Jamaica Negro women are sidling in and out among the groups, ringing loud with laughter, and offering, with pert banter, the fruits and cakes they carry poised upon their heads.

As the night advances, the streets become emptied, and are left to silence; and the moon, glowing in those tropical latitudes almost with the glare of a noonday sun, brightens up the houses opposite with a golden light, and throws the shadow of the balcony of the Aspinwall House upon the pavement, with the distinct outline of a drawing. Yet late in the night, the clattering of the billiard-balls, and the clinking of glasses in the bar-room below, are distinctly heard, which somewhat disturb the pleasant thoughts of Gil Blas and his romantic companions, the licentiates, caballeros, and señoritas of Madrid, Salamanca, and Toledo, suggested by the tingling of a guitar from beneath the balcony opposite. With a sleepy confusion of the old and the new, I turn into my cot, and sleep until morning.

Next morning we were all agog at an early hour for the trip to the island of Taboga, where the agent of the English Pacific Mail Steamship Company had invited us to a lunch. Accordingly we all gathered, dressed in our
best suits of linen and drilling, the remnants of
the last New York summer's wear, about Mon-
sieur Victor's dirty spread, and having tried to
eat his tough fillets, and his jumbled-up ome-
lets which were bad, and succeeded in drink-
ing his coffee, which, apart from the loads of
dirt in the sugar, was good (Mem. They have the
very best coffee in Panama, brought from Pon-
ta Arenas on the Pacific, a hundred miles or so
north of the bay, where a couple of ship's car-
goes are annually raised, surpassing in aroma
and richness of flavor the best Mocha), we
strolled down the street, just as the black,
vailed señoritas and the slouchy Negresses, in
flaunting calicoes, were returning from matins,
and soon reached the spacious, thick-walled
stone dwelling and offices of the agent of the
United States Mail Pacific Steamship Company.
Here there was a half hour's detention, in the
course of which we made the acquaintance of
the pale-faced lady of the mansion, a sick baby,
an irritable monkey, which, after various at-
tempts in vain to conciliate with the better-half
of a mango, we found it advisable to leave to the
full run of its chain along the balcony, a chat-
tering parrot, which swung from the heavy raft-
ers above and spoke Spanish with a volubility
which put Captain S——, who prided himself
upon his Castilian, to the blush, and of an ant-
eater, which went poking his long nose about
our boots, and made us look with some anxiety
to our heels. From the balcony, which project-
ed beyond the ruined city-wall in front, we
looked upon the bay, and could see the steamer,
which was to convey us, spouting smoke from
its pipe, and wallowing, with its great black hull,
in the swell of the sea like a huge whale.

Then there was a general move, and we
passed down the great stone steps, through
the ruined gate of the wall, out upon the yel-
low beach, and went straggling upon the long
rocky reef, which stretches out into the bay,
and exposes, at low tide, its black, rough sur-
face for a mile or so. We toiled over this un-
even path, which, with its jagged, sharp edges,
its pools of sea-water, and its sloughs of mud,
was particularly hard upon the French boots
with which some of our party had honored the
occasion. The curious among us, however,
were compensated by an insight into the habits
of the countless crabs which went crawling in
and out of the labyrinths of the reef, which had
been laboriously drilled through and through
the hard rock, until it was as porous as a sponge,
by the busy *torpedo* worm. I lifted up, again and
again, large masses of the hard stone, and could
see round, white, glutinous creatures, strung through them, like candles drying in a tallow-chandler's shop. These worms are armed with a borer at the snout, sharper than any miner's tool, with which they cut out, and polish, through the hardest rock, a smooth passage for their bodies, which are as soft and yielding to the touch as boiled macaroni. These are the worms so formidable to the shipping in the bay of Panama, and which destroy, in a few months, the stoutest hulls. Wherever there is a rent in the copper, or an exposed timber, they insert their borers without delay, and soon riddle a ship until she leaks like a sieve.

From the rough ledge of reef, we spring upon patient Negro backs, and are tumbled into the bottom of an unsteady whale boat, much to the inconvenience of white trowsers and linen jackets, and thence, with the hearty pulls and noisy shouts of the half-naked black oarsmen, transferred to the specie launch. This specie launch, in spite of a very uneasy motion suggestive of sea-sickness, and some very unexpected and awkward swayings of its long boom, which threatened perpetually first to knock the life out of a man, and then to throw his body overboard, we could not help having a very great reverence for. The richest freight-
ed ships of Carthage and Tyre, the argosies of Ind, all the galleons of old loaded with the wealth of the Indies, of Mexico, and the Spanish Main, the opulent traders of London or New York, were poor in comparison with the wealth which had been heaped in that little boat, which, square-built, rough-timbered, and slouchy in movement, looked as miserable as any old miser, choked with gold and starved amidst his riches. She had carried in that dirty hold of hers near three hundred millions of gold, an amount not to be counted in a lifetime. I leave the miserable old hulk, with something of the disgust I should turn away from the scrooges who live or rather are dying daily, not far from New York, and who are no better than so many mudscows, loading with millions, while they go on drifting through life without a thought of putting themselves in better trim for the voyage to eternity.

We reach the steamer Columbus two miles away in the bay, and, climbing up its black sides, are welcomed by the brisk Captain, cheerful and bright in his white linen suit, and are at once on our way to the beautiful island of Taboga. The ten miles' run in the bay was soon accomplished, while most of our party—
to which the various steamboat agents, with their wives and the Railroad officials, had added a dozen or so—were making merry in the cabin over the liberal supplies of wines and edibles from the storehouses of the Steamship Company, and a few lovers of the picturesque were watching, from the deck, the fine effects of the alternate rain and sunshine upon the surrounding hills of verdure, and the green Archipelago of islands, which were reflecting their varying hues and shapes in the clear waters of the bay as we sailed into the harbor of Taboga. The little town was lively with noisy acclamations on our arrival, and the steamers and shipping hoisted their flags, and reiterated charge after charge from their deck-guns.

Then was beheld the approach of the magnificent Captain Bob Swab, in imposing dignity, sitting in the stern of his immaculate gig-boat. The pennant waved over his Panama hat, and as he expanded that chest of his, swelling with the conscious dignity of a steamboat Captain, and displayed to full view those gilt buttons which glistened brightly on a broad expanse of white waistcoat, there was a feeling of wonder, not unmixed with awe, at the sight of so imposing a personage. "Who is it?"
was the question, passed in respectful whispers from one to one as the boat, after making a magnificent circle about our steamer, came up alongside, and out stepped a little fellow bringing with him an atmosphere which had a very distinct odor of tar, brandy, and tobacco, and making such an effort to look dignified, as he raised his little legs, that he started the eyeballs out of his head, and almost burst the gilt buttons from his waistcoat. It turned out to be Admiral Pomosity, better known as Captain Bob Swab, of the California steamboat floating yonder in the bay.

The *Columbus* put us ashore at the dock of the English Company, and when we had admired all the wonders of the ugly, black coal-houses and machine-shops, built upon the peninsula which juts out from the island of Taboga, and the beauty of the little cottages with green verandas which peep out of the trees, and hang from the sides of the hill like bird-cages, we were transferred to a boat, under the command of a mock midshipman, in gilt buttons and gold band, who finally—after having put back on several occasions, to give us an opportunity to wring our jackets, wet through and through with a succession of deluging showers, which washed out all our faith in the dry season—put us
aboard the English steamer, where, while our party are enjoying the generous lunch of their liberal hosts, the reader may occupy himself with learning something about Taboga in the next chapter.
CHAPTER VI.

TABOGA. 1849 AND '50.

The Island of Taboga is quite remote from the geography of most folks. But a few months ago it was quite out of the world—an unnoticed green spot in the wilderness of the Pacific. An occasional Thunderer, Beagle, or Bull-dog, of her Majesty's navy, would show its teeth there, startle the unbreeched natives, and leave a remembrancer in the shape of some runaway dog of a sailor, a seed of Anglo-Saxon civilization, which, well-moistened with grog, was sure to bring forth an abounding crop of drunkenness and riot. Taboga, in those days, was known to the English admiralty, and put down in their reports and charts as an island in the Gulf of Panama, with a safe harbor, good water, and an abundance of tropical fruit, pigs, and fowls. Yankee enterprise, while on the California trail, has at last nosed it out, and, without saying much about it, can show its fleet of a score or more of steamers and sailing-vessels, snugly moored in the blue water of
Taboga harbor. There is work there, and Yankee work, too. Large store-houses, built of Maine lumber by Yankee carpenters, crammed full of all kinds of marine stores, and sheds widely extended over countless tons of coal. Cincinnati pork in unnumbered barrels, and American provisions and ship-chandlery in endless variety. Large sea-steamers are leaving there weekly, with the regularity and precision of the Collins's line and the Cunarders from Canal Street and Jersey City. There are Aspinwall's fleet and Law's new steamers always on the go, starting and arriving, coaling and provisioning, in thirty days from San Francisco and back; and there are the English company's boats that, following in the wake of the Americans, have made Taboga their resting-place, and ply monthly between Taboga and Valparaiso, stopping coastwise at Callao, Payta, and Guayaquil, and other ports on the Spanish main. There is the taut little steamer, Taboga, no bigger than a fisherman's smack, that, to the wonder of all old sailors, spiritedly braved the terrors of Cape Horn, and now runs daily, from under the cocoa-nut trees of Taboga, to the very gate of the old town of Panama.

There is Aspinwall's agent building a brand-new house, of pine board and shingles, right
among the wide-spreading mangos on the hill; and down below him, toward the golden beach, where before there was nothing but beauty, there is now his mournful-looking group of store-houses and bake-houses (with a biscuit-machine, an oven—fired with orange-tree wood and Welsh coal—and a brace of workmen, fresh from Yankeeland) all begrimed with pitch and coal tar, of undeniable utility and ugliness. Yankee agents and Yankee lumber, with a fig for the picturesque, carry the day hollow against palm-trees and orange-groves.

There is the little French restaurateur, Monsieur Jacques, in white apron and velvet capote, suggestive of eau sucrée and innocent dominoes, busy over the endless job of putting up and arranging his bijou of a café in that clump of cocoa-nut trees, which shuts him out from the yellow beach. Mons. Jacques is always in a fume; but in spite of his fuss and mille tonnerres, it will be months yet before the Café de Taboga rivals its predecessor in Mons. Jacques’s good keeping at Bordeaux.

There is a party of expectant diggers, fresh from the States, encamped among the trees, awaiting the tardy arrival of some slow Sarah Sands, for which they have bought tickets in New York months before. They have spread
their canvas tent, and made their India-rubber beds; they are sharpening their skill in cooking, and their appetites, over a pot of boiling yams; they are exercising their rifles upon the torpid pelicans or the rainbow-hued macaws; and, altogether, what with tropical skies, tropical verdure, tropical plenty, and a composing tropical atmosphere, they might be supposed to be leading a tolerably comfortable, easy kind of life; but they would give all they have, and all they expect to gather of gold in a week (no small sum), for a mere foothold upon that crowded steamer that is just off for San Francisco, with its throng of hundreds stifling with the crowd, the heat, and lust for gain.

Those drunken sailors—runaways—roaming about the beach, and quarreling with the natives, and those scattered, equivocal-looking people, neither one thing nor the other, made up from a confused medley of features, brought from Broadway, Dry Dock, down East, Kentucky, Wapping, Liverpool, and Hong-Kong; gusty-looking sea-captains, steamer-people, neither fish nor fowl; engineers, purser, stewards, firemen, waiters, and expectant voyagers. These serve to complete a tolerably fair view of the island of Taboga, under the new dispensation.
Taboga has its traditions, in a small way; it is needless to go back to the days of plumed and painted warriors, glowing with cocoa-nut oil, red ochre, and savage glory, or to those times of the cruel conquest of old Spain, when she sent on the trackless path of discovery her bold bands, the dare-devil youth of Barcelona and Madrid, armed to the teeth, eager for gold and adventure. These were the ancient diggers, with sword in hand.

Conquest had settled down into quiet possession. Plumed and painted warriors were bearing the cross of the new religion, and had been saddened into patient hewers of wood and bearers of water. There were wealth and ease in Panama, cathedrals rich with golden and silver plate, monasteries abounding with treasure, sleek monks, meek of aspect, with overmuch of this world's wealth, when Morgan, the buccaneer, with a bold pirate's crew, was coming up the river, having taken by the way the high mounted castle at Chagres. He threatened to pounce upon monk and monastery, and to bear off the rich stores of silver and of gold. Taboga was near at hand, and there monk and friar hurried, laden with their much-loved wealth. The buccaneer, having laid Panama waste with fire and sword, was at their heels; and the
frightened priests were fain, in order to save their lives, to disgorge their riches—precious heaps of tall candlesticks of purest silver, crosses and crucifixes, goblets and censers of virgin gold—very fair to look upon, and sore to part with. The old gossips of Taboga point with mysterious knowingness to buried spots of treasure. Some veteran cannon, yet reposing on the sunny side of a promontory of the island, attest an attempt at resistance, never carried out.

The Pacific Ocean rolls in a slow, heavy swell up the Gulf of Panama, for some ninety miles, until checked by the rocky strand that stretches out seaward for half a league from Panama—a warning to sailors, and a safeguard to the town—it is worked by the resisting rock into a fury of savage breakers, which go tumbling and roaring, and dashing against the high-walled fortifications of the town, and are thrown back in cataracts of spray. The ocean monarch meets and wooes his island beauties in a gentler mood; and here the course of true love does run smooth. He goes in and out among the fair groups, the verdant archipelagos of the gulf, smiling upon them in smooth waters, gently whispering his love in a subdued murmur, and slyly kissing them with his
moistened lips, in retired inlets and deeply-shaded bays. Taboga is one of a group of those islands which rise like pyramids of verdure, right out of the gulf of Panama, green with tropical growth from base to summit, from the blue sea below to the blue skies above.

On a clear noonday, looking from the high-walled fortifications of Panama, southward down a broad avenue of the gulf, formed by green islands on either side, the view closes upon Taboga, some three leagues away; its pyramidal summits look purple in the distance, and their outlines marked on the blue sky, show through the clear air as sharply traced as a drawing. The smart little steamer Taboga will whisk you away there within the hour; a ship’s cutter, with four stout tarpaulin-Jacks, will pull you there in double that time; a bungo, with a fair wind and the ebb tide in its favor, may roll there in half a day; and a canoe, with a quartette of paddlers, in nature’s sable suit, with much screeching, hard paddling, great expense of oil and sweat, and unlimited pulls at the aguardiente, will reach there somehow in the course of time. When there, time, toil, and trouble are forgotten; the senses are first gently awakened, and then lulled by the pleasant influences of the island. All the trop-
ical delights are there in overflowing abundance. The blue sky overhead, the clear blue water sobbing audibly upon the bosom of the golden beach, the rich growth of wide-spreading trees giving shade, the tropical fruit giving abundance, and sweet odors, and the moist, warm air soothing the body and nerves like a Turkish vapor-bath, all wrap you in a pleasing languor of body and soul. We are disposed to lie still upon its bosom; but let us look and stroll about.

The island of Taboga is about a mile and a half in length, and half a mile in breadth—about large enough for a good farm, or gentleman’s country seat. Its length extends north and south, crescently inclosing a deep and secure harbor, sheltered from storm and wind by the promontories of the island, and the islet of Taboguilla, which lies a floating grove of green, facing the harbor. Taboga rises from the yellow beach, which frames it like a rim of gold, in several peaks, all overgrown with dark green wood and foliage, except here and there upon the slopes, a field of maize or yams. Strange enough, to the distant eye, these spots of culture appear the only spots of barrenness amidst the wealth of tropical nature. The ravine which divides the two loftiest of the island hills, is
filled to overflowing with tropical growth, which seems to rush down in a torrent of foliage, that threatens to overwhelm with its green waves the bamboo village lying in its course at the base of the hills. The village, however, like some resisting rock, checks and divides the torrent, and it is borne on to the right and left in its flow of verdure, scattering here and there a green spray among the huts of bamboo. Down the valley, shut out from the sun by the shade of trees and entangled vines, with orange trees dropping blossoms in the water, a mountain stream flows cool and fragrant, finding its way past the very doors of the bamboo huts over the rocks, through the golden sand, into the blue sea.

There are, besides the main stream, two other smaller streams following a like course down neighboring valleys, and they all go on flowing night and day, cool and murmuring. These are perpetual fountains, shut out from the sun and hot day by an evergreen shade of tropical growth, ever ready to cool the parching heat and panting thirst of the endless summer of this torrid region. But the greater stream, which flows through the centre of the village, about which the natives have thronged like so many thirsty hounds after a hot pursuit,
is the supreme fountain. This is the chief attraction of the island to foreign visitors. Saratoga and Cheltenham never drew to them a more gallant company than this trickling mountain stream of this far-off, unknown, little island of Taboga. Here, in these latter days of travel, fine old men of war, formal aristocrats, ponderous merchantmen, men of substance, hard-working and thriving mechanic steamers, master-workmen, fast-sailing clippers, fast-men and rakes, trim little cutters, pert dandies, come to take the waters. Here at the Taboga Spa they refresh, and drink in a new energy for a further voyage of life. They are not content with overflowing bumpers here, but like knowing men of the world they take in a goodly store for the future. About the stream may be always seen a jolly company of thirsty, big-bellied casks, tended by moist serving-men, drenched sailors; these big-bellied casks, old topers as they are, are not to be contented with a single pull, but go on, drink after drink, to their full, and are at last sent off reeling down the beach, and go bobbing and rolling unstably in the water, till they are towed alongside, hoisted in by main force, and finally stowed away in the hold of the ship, and tucked in with cleets and old spars. This will
prove to be a stock of old Adam's best—the veritable Paradise brand—to be tapped, may-
hap, on a stormy night off Cape Horn "when the winds do blow," or some thirsty day of a
hot, stifling calm in the tropic; or in a hot
pursuit after whale, off the far-away northwest
coast; or homeward bound, within the sight of
native earth and sky, to fill a bumper to those
we love.

The natives of Taboga are like amphibious
ducks, they are perpetually in and out of the
water, they drink deeply of it, they bathe in it
unceasingly, they absorb it at every pore, they
are completely saturated with it. Many of the
natives have, in consequence, a soft, limpid
look, like a foreboding dropsy, and their chil-
dren have great distended pot-bellies, and look,
lying about naked, like pig-skins filled with
Spanish wine, ripening in the sun.

Following the course of this main stream up
the valley through the deep shade of a tropical
forest, along a path worn by constant foot-
steps, and bordered by bright-hued flowers,
scarlet and orange-colored, glistening out of
full-leaved thickets of the deepest green, you
come upon the Taboga bath. The bed of the
stream is here widened into a natural basin of
rock, bordered with flowering shrubs, and over-
shadowed with broad-leaved trees and a verdant net-work of vines and parasitic plants. A fall of water comes tumbling over some rocks hanging above, and striking with a gentle sound and a sparkling spray, fills the basin below, and the stream flows on its way. The traveled Sybarite may gloat over the luxurious remembrance of the completest of the bains complets at the Bains Chinois of the Parisian boulevard, of the magnetic and soothing influence of a Turkish bath, and yet he is but an anchorite in his imaginings, if he can not compass the delights of the Taboga bath. From a hot, steaming atmosphere, which dissolves the energy of the body, palsies the nerves, takes away all strength from the muscles, and loosens the joints, you go into the bath, and are at once “braced to man,” muscles, nerves, body, and will, are all strengthened with a force before unknown, and fitted for yeoman’s service. The change of temperature from the hot air to the cool water does not strike you with a chill and a shock, but you feel at once, with a sense of refreshing enjoyment, that you are in a medium most agreeable to the senses, and conformable to the comfort of the body. You can sport like a dolphin in this glorious bath, plunge into its depth, float upon its sur-
face, or, with the rock for a pedestal, receive, like a water-god, the refreshing shower from the fountain above. This is the true Hydro-
pathic establishment. Come hither, if you can, ye Bulwers, to cool your hot, seething, delir-
ious brains!

From your bath you can see the native la-
borers passing to and from their work up the valley, where their rudely cultivated field-
patches lie in the sun aslant the hills. Men, women, and children go trooping by, a crowd, of Egyptian hue, in scant, tropical costume — there they go — some carrying, poised on their swarthy shoulders, great palm-leaf bask-
ets full of fruit, oranges, plantains, pine-apples, mangoes, yams, and maize; and others, women chiefly, bearing water-jars, monstrous in size, of a red earthen hue, and oriental shape and look. You can hear, too, the noisy glee of the women of Taboga washing in the stream, and catch a glance through the green trees of some coy maiden, a nut-brown Naiad, pouring from her calabash a cool and grate-
ful shower, which goes unreservedly all over her beautiful person, that shrinks gracefully from the embrace. Strengthened with a bath, you are prepared for a walk; stopping in the village, which is on the way, for a draught
of cocoa-nut milk or a calabash bumper of chicha,* poured out by the fairy hands of Dolores herself. Emerging from the village, where you have been dodging about the huts which are scattered irregularly about, and been stumbling over the rough rocky ground on which they stand, you enter upon the path which leads to the Tamarind Grove.

Tall cocoa-nut trees, nodding their green plumes high in the air, stretch in long array, fronting the sea, and guard, like so many feath-ered grenadiers, one side of the path which leads to the Tamarind Grove; while on the other side, up the hill, there crowds a vast mass of foliage. The redwood of great might and size, the spreading mango with its russet fruit, the orange tree with its glistening green leaf, its white perfumed blossom, and its gold-en fruit; the feathery-leaved plantain, with its heaped-up abundance; graceful vines weaved in every where, flowering shrubs, a thick un-dergrowth, the modest mimosa, the sensitive plant shrinking on the earth below, all inter-

*mingle in a confused abundance of green growth, luscious fruit, and brilliant color. The sun may be pouring down a hot blaze of light upon

* Chicha, a drink made of the fermented juice of the pine-apple. It is sweet and slightly stimulating, like a mild beer.
the blue leaden surface of the still bay and its yellow beach as hard and smooth as a pavement of Sienna marble, but its hot rays are cooled by the deep shade in which you walk, and come in trembling on the path in a subdued and glimmering green light. The pathway soon opens into a freer space, where the tamarind trees extend over a level spot of earth that forms the southern end of the island. Inviting walks stretch winding in every direction through the trees, shaded above by the close intermingling of the green foliage, and lead as it may be to some palm-thatched hut nestling in the grove, or up the green hill into the tangled growth, or to the quiet bay, or down to the roaring sea-shore.

Happy, and careless as to time, we will linger and make a day of it in these ways of pleasantness and of peace. We stroll about with no object but enjoyment that comes unbidden: it comes in the warmth and softness of the atmosphere; it comes in the perfume of the air breathing the aroma of flowers and of mellow fruit; it comes in the bounty of nature that gives its rich stores with an open hand, making labor vain, and in taking away all doubt of the morrow, smooths the wrinkles of care; it comes in the delight of the
eye that looks every where upon the grace-
ful forms of tree, plant, vine, and every grow-
ing thing, and upon the varied colors of leaf,
flower, and fruit; and it comes in that sense
of luxury that is felt by the glad guest of such
a tropical feast spread by plenty and graced by
beauty.

But we are human; we can not, like the
chameleon, thrive on air; or, like the butterfly,
fatten on perfume. We will therefore go in
search of more substantial food, and take our
way through the Tamarind Grove, down that
by-path that closes upon a native hut hid
among the trees. In the distance it looks not
unlike some huge bird's nest half-covered with
the leaves, and the languid native girl swaying
in the hammock, and startled at our approach,
suggests to the fancy the fluttering of feathers.
It is in fact a native cane hut, and the ham-
mock is swinging gently to the languid move-
ment of a Taboga beauty. We enter, bending
under the low open doorway, pushing aside
the leaves, and doffing our Guayaquil sombrero
and uttering our buenos días, Señorita, with
the most courtly air at our command. After
a modest flutter and a graceful movement of
light drapery that drops like a curtain over the
full form and rounded limb that had been woo-