Personal Reminiscences *of* The Caribbean Sea *and* The Spanish Main


WEST INDIES
and
SPANISH MAIN
on Mercator's Projection
NORTH AMERICA
MISSISSIPPI
ALABAMA
LOUISIANA
TEXAS
FLORIDA
New Orleans
Galveston
Mouth of Mississippi R.
GULF OF MEXICO
Gulf of Campeachy
San Juan d' Ulloa
Tebuantepec
Gulf of Tehuantepec
MEXICO
CAMPEACHY
YUCATAN
C.Catoche
Yucatan Channel
BRITISH HONDURAS
Belize
Gulf of Honduras
GUATEMALA
HONDURAS
NICARAGUA
CENTRAL AMERICA
COSTA RICA
C.Gracias a Dios
Mosquito Coast
Mosquito Gulf
Escudo de Veragua
Chagres
Colon
Porto Bello
Nombre de Dios
Mulatas Is.
PANAMA
Panama
G.de S.Miguel
Coiba
G.of Darien
Atrato Depression
PACIFIC OCEAN
C.Sable
Florida
Strait
GULF STREAM
Havana
CUBA
I. of Pines
Puerto Principe
Santiago de Cuba
Little Cayman
Grand Cayman
JAMAICA
Kingston
Pedro Bank
Rosalind Bank
Thunder Knoll
Serranilla Bank
CARIBBEAN SEA
Gt.Bahama
Bimini Is.
Abaco
Bahama Islands
Eleuthera
Andros
Cat I.
Watlings I.
Long I.
Crooked I.
Mariguana
Caicos Is.
Inagua
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Windward Passage
Tortuga
Cap Haitien
La Navidad
Ysabel
Pto. Plata
Port Antonio
C.Tiburon
Haiti
S. DOMINGO
Port au Prince
S.Domingo
Mona Passage
Mona I.
Puerto Rico
San Juan
Vieques I.
Santa Cruz
St.Thomas
Virgin Is.
Anegada
Anegada Passage
Sombrero
Anguilla
Saba
St.Eustatius
St.Kitts
Nevis
Barbuda
Antigua
Montserrat
Guadeloupe
Marie Galante
The Saints Passage
Bird I.
Dominica
Martinique
St.Lucia
St. Vincent
Barbados
Grenada
Tobago
Trinidad
Boca de Monos
G.of Paria
Orinoco Delta
Orinoco R.
Margarita
Tortuga
La Guayra
Caracas
Buen Ayre
Aves
Curacoa
Oruba I.
Pt.Gallinas
Maracaibo
Santa Marta
Puerto Colombia
Cartagena
VENEZUELA
COLOMBIA
SOUTH AMERICA
Longitude West 80° of Greenwich
95°
90°
85°
80°
75°
70°
65°
60°
30°
25°
20°
15°
10°

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Written by
Francis Russell Hart

Boston : Nineteen Hundred and Fourteen

One hundred and twenty-five copies have been printed for Francis Russell Hart by The De Vinne Press, in June, Nineteen Hundred and Fourteen

To the Members of the
Club of Odd Volumes:

These scattered notes of the happenings of, for the most part, some twenty-odd years ago, were first written down for one of the monthly meetings of the Club.

The insistent and perhaps ill-advised suggestion of one of the members that the notes be continued and finally printed is the reason for putting into permanent form reminiscences which have, it is feared, too little of interest to merit preservation.

This little volume is presented to you in a spirit of humility. You need not read it. If it meets with your simple acceptance it will have fulfilled its destiny and the hopes of

THE AUTHOR

Boston, June, 1914.

Personal Reminiscences of the Caribbean Sea and the Spanish Main

FOR us of the New World there is no place which so fires our spirit of adventure and romance as the Caribbean Sea. The very names "West Indies" and "the Spanish Main" give to us a grateful sense of sea-fights, treasure-laden ships and atrocities, the thoughts of which give a pleasant tingle to our blood. In picturing to ourselves palm-covered shores, fever-infested jungles, and hidden harbors sheltering the black flags of swarthy buccaneers we can give our imaginations free scope, with assurance that some part of the romantic picture is true.

The brave deeds, even the frightful horrors, have a delightful quality of being part of our own family history, even if a trifle vicarious and remote. The geographical nearness of these waters and lands, the important influence of the struggles

struggles for their mastery on our own early development as a nation, and our blood kinship with the Elizabethan seamen give to the stirring events of the Caribbean a definite place in the environment which has controlled our own growth.

Then the sense of nearness in point of time is a strong fillip to our fancy. The happenings which set aglow the swashbuckler spirit dormant in all men are events of no remote time. It is not of the red and white bulls of Ireland nor of the heroes of old sagas and epics that we read, but records of stout-hearted men who lived their adventurous and mayhap reckless lives so near our own day that it may well be that the known forebears of many of us here were made fearful or gladdened by the stories of their doings—if, indeed, some of us do not number a few sturdy sea-rovers in our own family trees.

The conquering march of trade has followed the path of the *conquistadores,* but the romance has not gone. Much of the past remains, not only in the white-walled fortresses

fortresses of the old Spanish towns but in the spirit of the peoples. It is something akin to the old buccaneer spirit that causes the unrest in the Latin-American countries. The waters are no longer the battle-ground of Europe. The sight of a vessel hull down on the horizon need give the tourist no fear of boarding-pikes and plank-walking. Many of the links with the past are intimate, however—the question of a disputed title to certain lands held to-day by an American corporation hangs on the location of boundaries of a grant of land to the Columbus family four centuries ago. It matters not how often one goes, the charm, the half-mystery of the past is enthralling. It is, I believe, some forty-two times that I have sailed by the little island believed to be the first landfall of Columbus, and never without a feeling of exhilaration, a pleasant stirring of imagination and stimulation of the adventurous within me.

For three hundred years after the coming of Columbus, Europe poured its treasure-hunters into this new land. For all that period, and without cessation up

to this very day, the ships from the Spanish Main have carried to the Old World a constant stream of gold. Of later years this gold has been more honestly won from the earth than in the earlier days of plunder, and the never-ceasing stream has been broadened by the products of the fertile lands—sugar, coffee, fruits, rubber, tobacco. To tell even an outline of the story of the sea fathers of the Caribbean and the struggles of three centuries for the mastery of that sea would take too long. Often the question of peace or war in Europe was determined by the sea-fights in the Caribbean.

Cortez, Pizarro, Balboa, Drake, Frobisher, Dampier, Hawkins, Oxenham, Morgan, du Pointis, Vernon, de Grasse, Rodney—it was men like these whose deeds have given us the stories of daring and romance which have made these seas and shores memorable, and bred in us a fervent spirit of adventure. Touching lightly, if we can, for the better satisfaction of our self-esteem, on the part which our Colonial forebears bore in the slave-trade with the West Indies, we find a closer

closer and less ignoble link in the great happenings of the Spanish Main in the siege of Cartagena by the British in 1741. A body of some thirty-six hundred Colonial troops, including five companies from Massachusetts, were joined to the expedition under Admiral Vernon at Jamaica in January, 1741, and took an active part in the disastrous attempt to capture that Spanish stronghold.

Your Committee has seen fit to suggest that instead of telling you about the romantic past, and the bold sailormen and adventurous soldiers and priests who lived in that past, I should tell you somewhat of my own experiences in and about the Caribbean. Perhaps the Committee realized that my own knowledge of the vastly entertaining historical side of the Caribbean Sea is superficial, or at best, where it goes deeper than the surface, limited to certain short, disconnected periods and places.

In giving you a few personal reminiscences gained from some years of residence and about twenty-two visits, I at least have the advantage that even the most

most learned among you cannot effectively take issue with my statements.

The natural gateway from the north to the Spanish mainland bordering on the Caribbean Sea is through the Crooked Island Passage in the Bahamas. The one fact known as to the first landfall and landing-place of Columbus is that it was one of the islands in the vicinity of the northern entrance to this passage. The journal of Columbus and other evidence relative to the precise island are sufficiently contradictory to leave doubts in the mind of any unprejudiced investigator as to which of these islands Columbus first placed foot upon. The weight of the testimony, however, is in favor of Watlings Island, the location of which, and its physical characteristics, are in accord with more of the reliable recorded data than any of its neighbors.

It was almost within sight of this island that, some twenty years ago, I experienced my first West Indian hurricane, and I wish that the gift were mine to describe a hurricane at sea with the power and sublimity with which Alexander Hamilton, while

while yet a lad, described a hurricane which devastated the island of Nevis. It was a scrap of a boat I was on, the steamship "Bowden"—many of you may have known her later, as she became the "Bay State," the hospital ship of this Commonwealth during the Spanish War—a vessel, if I remember rightly, of not over six hundred tons gross burthen. No ships of a size and build like those of Columbus could have lived through that night, and even the "Alvo" of the Atlas line, a vessel nearly four times the size of the "Bowden," was lost with all on board within a comparatively few miles of us. During the early afternoon the wind had completely died out, this in itself a foreboding symptom in the region of steady northeast trades, and a long, heavy swell from the southeast had, long before the sun set, begun to make the empty ship roll about like a drunken seaman. To those experienced in West Indian waters the unnatural calm and the rising seas were clear indications of an approaching hurricane, with evidence at the very beginning of the first sharp onslaught of the wind that

we were in the dangerous semicircle of the storm. As you all know, a hurricane is a wind-storm whirling rapidly in a not very large circle—the circle itself moving at a slower rate along a somewhat prescribed path. If, as the paths of the hurricane and ship intersect, the ship finds itself so located in the circle of the hurricane that by turning tail to the blasts it can follow the circle and by so doing pass around and out of the path behind the centre, the ship is said to be in the safe semicircle. If, on the other hand, the ship is in the other half of the disturbance and runs before the storm, its course will simply lead it further and further into the thick of the hurricane. Under these conditions there is nothing to do but keep the vessel's nose to the storm and trust to God, your engines,—maybe supplemented by a sea-anchor,—and the staunchness of the craft. That a vessel and engines built by man could have stood the turmoil of that night I would not have believed had I not experienced it. I was the only passenger. The strongest man could not have held himself in his berth. Either

standing or half crouching, holding tightly on to something or lying flat on the cabin floor or deck with arms and legs braced, was all that prevented broken bones.

No part of the decks was free from breaking seas and swashing water,—the noise was one vast, unearthly shriek. So awful was that night that it had a grandeur all its own. I believe at such a time fear would be abnormal. Fear is more often the child of thought than of experience. If your whole mind is occupied with the needs of the moment to keep your bones whole, you have no time for thoughts of graver dangers. The awful sense of impending calamity was with us every moment,—in fact, I believe no man on board had the slightest belief, hardly hope, that we would ever see another day, —and yet that little group of men, born in some half-dozen parts of the earth, stuck grimly at their posts and waited for —they knew not (and who knows?) what. Three times that night two of the officers and the one passenger, clinging to ropes in the lee of the forward deck-house, were

confident, so far as it was possible to be confident of anything when the blackness made one another invisible, that the stern-post and after part of the ship had given up the struggle against the seas and racing screw and that the ship was foundering.

Yet the vessel hung together, and we told each other in hushed tones the next day, when with damaged engines and boilers we were huddled in the lee of the first landfall of Columbus, that we did n't know—and I do not know now—how our ship survived that night.

Passing on through this course marked out for us by the great Admiral himself, we can discern with strong glasses the curve of the coast at Nipe, where Columbus first landed in Cuba and now the location of a great Boston sugar company, the Nipe Bay Company.

Further to the west on a clear day, the island of Hayti and Cape Tiburón, the past rendezvous of many a formidable fleet and scene of great sea-fights, can be made out faintly on the horizon.

Rounding Cape Mayzi on the eastern-

most

most end of Cuba, most ships head for Jamaica, but, in passing, one little incident during the Spanish War, relative to the lighthouse on Cape Mayzi, is worth recording.

One of the smaller chartered boats of the then Boston (now United) Fruit Company was on the way from Jamaica to Boston, and through one of those unaccountable actions which no after-investigation explains ran ashore in bright moonlight some miles to the westward of Mayzi, on the south side of the island. The water is hundreds of fathoms deep right up to the shore, which is rocky and undercut by the seas. The boat was immovably wedged on a piece of ledge, swinging around broadside to the overhanging shore as to a quay, and the passengers and crew in due course landed comfortably by an ordinary gangplank to the shore.

Although the ship was British, the passengers were chiefly Americans, and the war with Spain was then several months old. It was with some trepidation that refuge was sought at the lighthouse, and

a request made that one of the company's ships be signalled. Picture to yourself the surprise and relief when it was found that the lighthouse-keeper and his assistants had no knowledge that Spain and the United States were at war! This was indicative of that lack of preparedness which afterwards became so evident.

If there were time, I would like to tell you something of the old Jamaica—not the new Jamaica of bananas, hotels, railroads, and tourists, but the Jamaica of those days when Sugar was king—a king so powerful and rich that the royal privy purse was generously depleted to help fight the great Napoleon. The Jamaica planters, as a fact, contributed a fund of some two hundred thousand pounds as a voluntary offering to the King of England to use in the wars against Napoleon when invasion of England was threatened and feared. I am to-day guardian of some young English children whose scanty income is ill-sufficing for their education, and yet whose great-grandfather used to ride into Kingston from his plantations with a coach and four with outriders, and who contributed

contributed personally twenty thousand pounds of that gift to the Crown. In this little hint of the experience of one family can be found an epitome of the island's history for the last hundred years. King Sugar is dead, and the Banana is king. It was not, of course, my fortune to know the island in those rich and certainly often riotous old days, but it was my happiness to know it before the panoply of the past, somewhat bedraggled perhaps, had given full place to the new régime. I knew it when family life on the big plantations still existed, when the prestige of old family names was greater than that of the great banana company,—for which at the time I was stringing telephone wires,—and when tourists were practically unknown and one moved about, as I did, on horseback with saddle-bags, in three-mule mail-coaches, or in more pretentious private traps. Frayed at the edges as were the trappings of former greatness, the hospitality and good cheer were sincere and warm, and I wish it were possible to take you to that dear, open-hearted, lovable old Jamaica.

That

That part of the mainland settled and occupied by the Spanish was called, in distinction from the islands of the Caribbean, the Spanish Main. Roughly it can be said to have included all that part of the South American and Central American coasts bordering on the Caribbean Sea, but more particularly the lands adjacent to the shore line from Lake Maracaibo to Yucatan in Central America.

The important strongholds of the early Spaniards on this mainland were Cartagena, Nombre-de-Dios, Porto Bello (near Nombre-de-Dios and which supplanted that place), and, of lesser importance, Chagres and Santa Marta. Of these Cartagena was far the most formidable and interesting. Both for that reason, and because I lived there for several years, the few scattered reminiscences of which I have made notes to tell you have as their birthplace the Republic of Colombia.

Cartagena itself is too interesting a place to pass by without a word as to its past—a past the records of which are singularly present in the almost imperishable masonry of its buildings and fortifications

Plan of Cartagena

[Ulloa's Voyages, 1st. Ed., 1748]

cations, as well as in the traditions and habits of its citizens.

The history of the European settlements in Colombia may be said to have begun about a century before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth. Columbus touched at points on the Colombian coast in the autumn of 1502.

The *conquistadores,* seeking a safe storehouse for their treasure and a rendezvous for their ships, found in the land-locked bay of Cartagena a place with every natural condition for their purpose. By confining the only navigable entrance to the bay—a body of water about two-thirds the size of Buzzards Bay—to the narrow opening at Boca Chica and protecting that entrance by two massive stone forts, they secured one of the finest and best protected harbors in the world. The city of Cartagena was founded in 1533, and the construction of its fortifications, many of which are standing in practically perfect condition to-day, began immediately. The walls were begun near the close of the sixteenth century and finished just before the end of the seventeenth.

Notwithstanding

Notwithstanding that there was no lack of slave labor, the walls are reputed to have cost so many millions that I hesitate to quote the Spanish records, which give an equivalent of over $50,000,000 of our money. The system of walls, moats, and bridges was designed to make the place impregnable from land or sea. It is noteworthy, however, that those early Spaniards did not put all of their efforts and labor into the fortifications; their other works were designed to stand for centuries; the cathedral, begun in 1538 and finished a half-century before the first shelter was built at Plymouth, stands today, a dignified if somewhat sombre memorial of that close association of the sword and the cross which must have been confusing to the minds of the toiling slaves who worked on its building. The old Inquisition Building, now the private residence of Colombian friends of mine, is a grim reminder of how near to our own time these old days were.

The convent of Santo Domingo, built in 1559 and interesting in design, is in a perfect state of preservation, and that of the

the Franciscan fathers, built in 1575, while in a less perfect condition, is picturesque as seen from my old office windows across the Plaza de la Independencia.

In 1586 the walls and fortifications were not wholly completed, and Sir Francis Drake captured the place, accepting for its release a large ransom. A little less than a century later, Admiral du Pointis, with a French fleet supplemented by a fleet of buccaneers from Hayti, again forced the payment of a ransom, and in 1741 the British fleet under Admiral Vernon, with many troops on board, took the place after a long siege.

This is the expedition to which I alluded and in which American Colonial troops were employed. The victory was, however, only partial, and accompanied by such heavy losses that it was almost more serious than a defeat.

During the first year of my residence at Cartagena I lived just under the shadow of the fortress of San Lazaro, which never surrendered and where one of the bravest and bloodiest battles of this continent was fought.

Colombia freed herself, under the leadership of Bolivar, from Spain in 1819, and twice during the war of independence Cartagena was besieged,—in fact, in the too frequent political troubles of Colombia since the day of her independence the extraordinary strength of Cartagena to withstand ordinary infantry attacks has made it a city to be besieged rather than taken by storm.

Traces of the old road to the Magdalena River and the interior still remain—the old road down which came whip-driven bands of Indians carrying the looted treasure from the mountains and river valleys of the mysterious back land whence came always the alluring tales of El Dorado. A few notes relative to that wonderful golden country—that ignis fatuus of the *conquistadores*—and some researches in a small way that in association with others I have made, may be of some interest.

In proportion to the needs of the people for a ductile metal, gold appears to have been abundant and in common use among the native tribes in nearly all

all of the early settled places on the mainland.

For the practical uses of a primitive people and for their decoration the easily worked metal, found without excessive labor in a pure state in the river beds, was adapted by crude tools to their needs. It was not strange that the prodigal use of the metal awakened in the early discoverers and settlers a lust for conquest and a belief in the New World as an inexhaustible source of treasure. Herrera tells of the gift, in 1518, to Juan de Grijalva by the cacique of Tabasco, of a complete suit of gold armor, made and fitted as if it had been made of steel.

Stories reached the coast of a wonderful country back in the mountains with a great and marvellous city fairly ablaze with glittering gold and priceless gems. The search for El Dorado and the great city of Manoa, on the banks of a mythical inland sea, began. The imagination permitted no limit to the extravagant wonders of this place: its houses were covered with golden tiles and filled with statues of pure gold, while its king sat on a

throne of solid gold. So definite were these beliefs that on nearly all sixteenth century maps the lake called Parima is shown. The imaginative and falsifying explorer is not a phenomenon of our day only. In 1534 one Juan Martinez reported that he had spent seven months in Manoa. How colossal a lie his own story was, it is now impossible to tell, but by the time it had been repeated by the excited and credulous tongues of the monks who heard his dying tale, the story was one to inflame the cupidity of the adventurous of all nations. The expedition of Sir Walter Raleigh in 1595, by way of the Orinoco, although a complete failure, as of course it had to be, was reported by him to have confirmed the tales. The location of El Dorado, although somewhat uncertain in the descriptions generally given, fixed its position at the head waters of one or the other of the great rivers. It was generally believed that up in the mountains, dimly seen by those who ventured inland, there existed a great body of auriferous earth from which the mysterious inland lake, extracting the gold,

gold, fed its waters to the Orinoco and other rivers entering the Caribbean. Humboldt made a careful study of the geography, facts, and traditions respecting El Dorado, and it was not until his time that the belief in its actual existence was ended.

In 1536 Nicolas Federmann searched the upper waters of the Magdalena, and Geronimo de Ortal tried to discover on the banks of the Meta the reputed Casa del Sol, or Temple of the Sun.

In the light of certain explorations of Lake Guatavita in Colombia, it is interesting to note that Humboldt, in an endeavor to give due weight to the possible facts that may have given basis for the stories of El Dorado, tells of an inland lake, which he believes to have been Guatavita, where the native great men, their bodies covered with powdered gold, bathed in the waters, and where the Indians reported that gold dust and golden vessels were thrown into the lake as a sacrifice to the Adoratorio de Guatavita.

The Padre Fray Pedro Simon went to teach in the Franciscan convent at Bogotá

gotá in 1604, and for nearly twenty years devoted himself to compiling historical records. He describes the lake, and the offerings, with prescribed ceremonies, of gold, jewelry, emeralds, and other things. In addition to the usual offerings in the way of worship he relates that there were men still alive who had witnessed the burial of some caciques who had ordered their bodies and wealth thrown into the lake, and that when it was rumored that strange bearded men had entered the country searching for gold, many Indians brought their hoarded treasures and offered them as a sacrifice in the lake. Some of these offerings were in such quantities that the cacique of the village of Simijaca is said to have alone thrown into the lake forty loads of gold of one quintal each, requiring to be carried by forty Indians from his village.

The cacique of Guatavita is supposed to have been, before the conquest by the Spaniards, a powerful ruler controlling a large and populous territory, and keeping up an army of many thousand warriors. The lake of Guatavita is some nine

to

Treasure from El Dorado

[Theo. de Bry, Pars vi., 1596]

to ten thousand feet above the sea, and formed on the top of one of the mountains of the Colombian Andes.

The cacique appears to have been also a sort of head priest of the Chibchas. Nearly all of the old chroniclers give descriptions of the periodical offerings and other rites observed to placate the protecting deity who was supposed to live in the lake. Grand processions of the cacique's subjects, carrying gold offerings, went up the mountain, and when gathered on the banks of the lake the cacique and his head man, embarking in canoes, went to the exact centre of the lake. There the cacique, fully anointed in a paste of powdered gold, plunged into the lake, while from about its banks the people shouted and threw far out into the waters their offerings of gold, emeralds, and other valuable gifts. It well may be that the tales of the Golden Man bathing in the lake are the foundation for the name El Dorado, afterwards applied to the whole vicinity. Prisoners taken by the Spaniards from time to time, to secure good treatment or release told of the sacred

lake in the bottom of which could be found immeasurable wealth. The Spaniards, in fact, made various attempts to drain the lake. Recent photographs show the deep cut in the further side of the surrounding hills left by the last Spanish attempt to reach the treasures by drainage. From time to time, by the use of sounding leads or by the washing of mud scraped from the banks, small gold images and emeralds have been found. In 1897 a company of Colombians started anew the work of drainage—an inconvenient matter on account of the surrounding hills. In 1899 a friend of mine, an Englishman, acquired, through a contract, the right on profit-sharing terms to complete the drainage of the lake.

A number of his friends, some attracted by the historical and archæological interest of the quest, and others by the hope of extraordinary profits, joined in furnishing the requisite funds for the engineering work necessary. This work, unfortunately delayed several years by civil war in Colombia and by other causes, was in effect completed a few years ago by a somewhat

somewhat ingenious plan. A horizontal tunnel was bored through one of the side hills to a point below, but a little to one side of, the edge of the lake. A vertical shaft was then sunk, and, when completed, so connected with the lake that the latter was drained in much the same way as the water is emptied from a bath-tub. Great difficulty has been found, however, in handling the mud and sand at the bottom. Unfortunately, the place appears to be afflicted with prolonged droughts, and during the last few years there has been practically no rainfall at all. So soon as the water had been drained off, and before the completion of any proper system of working the mud, the surface of the bottom was baked by the sun into a hard and solid mass below which the mud is in a semi-liquid state. Being handicapped by lack of funds, the work has made little progress latterly, but many beautiful gold ornaments have been found, many emeralds, quantities of beads, and much old pottery. The indications are that these were all from the mud near the shore, and that no part of the

the articles found have come from the centre, where the bulk of such things would presumably have drifted.

Within the last year additional funds have been subscribed to permit the proper working of the mud in the centre, which can only be done with adequate washing machinery and a supply of water.

Enough has already been found, however, to establish the truth of some portion of the traditions regarding the lake. We may, in fact, have found the very birthplace of that alluring story of El Dorado which drew to their death many brave souls, and was largely responsible for the vigor of the struggles for the mastery of the New World.

I will not weary you with an account of the construction and operation of the Cartagena Railroad and its allied undertakings. It is enough to say that the purpose of the railroad was to connect the harbor of Cartagena with the Magdalena River, the great commercial highway of Colombia, and incidentally to develop the country along its route. Misconceptions of various

various kinds had encouraged the promoters to expect more traffic and a more rapid development of contributory enterprises than the facts justified. Those who took over the direction of the company's affairs even before the completion of the first section of the railroad were not concerned in the conception of the undertaking. It was at that time that I became connected with the company as its general manager in Colombia. In addition to the railroad, the company operated a line of steamboats on the Magdalena River, which is navigable by boats of the Mississippi River type to the rapids at Honda, nearly six hundred miles from the coast; above the rapids, around which a line of railroad carries the cargo and passengers, smaller boats are worked on the river for a distance of some one hundred and fifty miles, connecting now—but not then—with the Girardot Railway to Bogotá.

The voyages up and down the river were always a delight to me, and to those of you who are not too fussy about your food and some of the minor comforts of travelling I can suggest no more interesting

ing and comfortable way of getting into the heart of a South American country. One of the chief delights to me, however, was always the rapids at Honda, and the excitement connected with getting our upper-river boats either up or down the rapids. The procedure was not unlike that of which you have seen pictures taken on the Nile. The boat is kept off from the rocky shore by long poles or spars held somewhat uncertainly by ten or more men each and driven forward by its own stern paddle-wheel supplemented by ropes fastened to trees on the shore and pulled by strong donkey-engines in the fore part of the boat. The passage up the rapids takes about five hours; the return passage, when required for repairs or other exigencies, from three to five minutes. The fact that the insurance did not attach from a certain point below to another point above the rapids used to give an added zest to the operation.

You must forgive me if my recollections are somewhat scattering and disconnected. I am jotting down incidents as they occur to me.

The

The railroad from Cartagena leads into the Turbaco Hills, as they are called, following the old Spanish path to the river, and reaches at an elevation of about six hundred feet, some fifteen miles from the shore, the town of Turbaco,—a little village, by the way, which had some distinction at one time, as it was here that General Santa Anna took refuge when forced to flee from Mexico. He built a large, comfortable house, and appears to have enjoyed, for some time at any rate, the comforts which could be purchased with the price paid by America. On the slope of the Turbaco Hills towards the sea I had for my amusement a small *portrero,* or cattle ranch, of about seven hundred and fifty acres, and the primitive little village of Turbaco and its people became well known to me. I remember very well one little incident from which Judge Parmenter, our secretary, should draw inspiration. I had come up from Cartagena on the afternoon train to spend the night at my bungalow on the *portrero,* and on arrival had been met by old Mary, my black Jamaica washerwoman, her shiny

shiny ebony face streaked with tears. Old as she herself was, she had just returned from a trip to Jamaica, where she had gone to make a shroud in which her mother was in due course to be buried,—not that her mother was dead, but that the long trip to prepare her for her last voyage was an act of daughterly devotion which gave great comfort to the aged black mammy in Jamaica. On her return from this cheerful errand, and the family fêtes connected therewith, she had brought with her a goose and gander, birds so rare in the fowl yards of Cartagena that she had incurred the envy of our previously friendly neighbors. The cause of the tears was soon related: The goose had been stolen, and Mary and the overseer, a tall Jamaica negro who had seen army service on the Gold Coast, more than suspected a half-breed woman of Turbaco called Manuela. The story told, and the magnitude of the tragedy realized, I started at once on horseback with Fraser, the overseer, for Turbaco, and called on my friend the alcalde.

Unhappily, Manuela was of the family of

of some member of the household of the alcalde, and for a brief moment I thought the wheels of justice had small chance of turning in a direction favorable to our quest. But our arguments prevailed, and a search-warrant, accompanied by two peons dignified by policemen's badges, issued from the Alcaldia.

The search of Manuela's wattled and thatched cottage and outbuildings not only brought to light the goose, but various small articles branded with the name of the railway company. As the alcalde pointed out, however, the warrant gave the right to search for the goose only, and nothing else could in honor be seen or noted.

Back in the dark and smoky Alcaldia the investigation ended with the return of the goose to Fraser. My overseer, however, had not the rewards which a sense of humor had given me in this tame goose chase, and protested with some anger when the alcalde was dismissing Manuela without even a reprimand. He insistently demanded that the woman be punished.

"What!" said the alcalde. "Is it not enough

enough that the poor woman has to give back the goose, after all her trouble?"

It was in this same interesting little village that on one quiet Sunday, just as the people were leaving the picturesque old Spanish church on one side of the plaza, a shower of small aërolites, accompanied by a slight detonation, fell on the very heads and at the feet of the congregation. It was undeniably a miracle, and those little pieces of heaven-born stones are still being worn as amulets by children in Turbaco, not only as the sole article of apparel, but also, in accordance with custom, as the sole precaution against all dangers of accident or disease. The fact that at the same moment the miracle occurred an unusually large blasting explosion, postponed for safety until Sunday had kept people from the neighborhood, had taken place in one of the railway rock cuts some miles away, would probably, even if known, not have lessened the efficacy of the amulets.

It must have been before the town was protected by this wholesale distribution of evil-defeating charms that a great fire took

took place there, wiping out about a quarter of its area and destroying some seventy-five or one hundred of the quick-burning thatched houses. One impression of that fire is vividly in my mind: I had been working with all the railway employees I could muster, helping tear down and drag away a group of houses, outbuildings, and fences to stop the spread of the fire in one direction, and started down a small side street to the railway storehouse for a new supply of machetes, and found in the middle of the road a whole family of peons grouped about all of their household goods, on the top of which was a chromo print of their patron saint. The man was first prayerfully entreating the saint to preserve his house from the flames, and then threatening him if he failed to do so. No other steps were being taken to keep the fire away. It was too interesting a group to leave, but with a few words of suggestion as to ways in which he and his family might aid the saint in protecting the house, I passed on.

Returning shortly afterwards, just as the flames caught the house and it burnt rapidly

rapidly with the sudden rush and roar with which these empty wattle and thatch huts always burn, I was just in time to see the owner hurl the portrait of his hitherto respected patron saint into the midst of the flames, with imprecations which only my failure to understand his rapid and angry Spanish prevents my repeating to you. As the prefect of the province afterwards told me in confidence, saints are all very well in their way, but they are entitled to the reasonable aid of the ordinary human agencies. Owing to its massive masonry construction and the exclusive use of tiled roofs, the city of Cartagena has had no serious fires, nor is it likely to have.

Perhaps one of the strangest things about all of these countries of northern South America and of Central America is the fact that the almost aboriginal life of the country knocks so closely at the gates of cities that have been civilized for centuries. Cartagena, for example, settled nearly four centuries ago, with its fine buildings, good streets, electric lights, ice-plant, clubs, and cafés, is hardly more than

than a rifle-shot from regions which must look to-day not far different from the time when Drake landed there. Except in one direction, no road on which a wheeled vehicle can travel extends for more than three miles from the centre of the city, the one exception being a privately owned narrow roadway along the harbor's edge to the country house of one of the prosperous merchants.

For amusement I once drove, during the dry season, a light two-wheeled cart up to my *portrero* of Santa Ysabel, of which I have spoken, a distance of ten miles. This was along the Camina Real, the main path to the interior, and even so it required lifting the cart over many places, and overcoming such difficulties that even my man preferred to send the cart back on a railway flat-car.

What is true of the outward evidences of civilization is to a large extent true of the habits and intellectual life of the people.

In the large cities the better class of people are intelligent and cultured. The standards of education are high. Their literary

literary taste, their knowledge of the world's history and the current events of politics, books and music are above the average of similar communities in countries which, on the whole, are far more developed. Yet within less than fifty miles are villages of five to ten thousand people who live exactly as they have lived for hundreds of years. Men of prominence in these villages, landowners, had vocabularies so limited that no words were known to them to explain the simplest thing regarding a locomotive until its actual presence made it possible. The citizens of the town of Soplaviento addressed a petition to the government asking that the railway be not permitted to have a station at their town, because, it being on the further side of a river over which we had constructed a steel bridge, they knew that no bridge could be built over which it would be safe for trains with the added weight of passengers and freight to pass. They naïvely remarked in the petition that their less well informed fellow-citizens might be tempted, in their ignorance, to board the train on their

their side of the river if the train stopped there!

The railways have changed many things, but those pioneer days of their construction were in many ways interesting, as were the people, not only those indigenous to the country, but those who came there—often, it must be confessed, for the good of the countries they had left. One of my dearest friends (and I learned to love him sincerely) was the dear old Bishop of Cartagena, Monsignor Biffi, a venerable Italian, with a long white beard, finely educated, but with a heart as simple and loving as the curé in the opening chapters of "Les Misérables." In his flowing, purple robes, with the long chain and cross hanging below his white beard, and his gentle, stately walk, he often came to dine with me. With his capacity to talk perfectly in Italian, Spanish, English, French, German, Persian, and I know not how many more tongues, he was an invaluable guest at the sort of polyglot dinners I used to give. Of one rare faculty he had the secret, which I never discovered: he always instinctively knew whether

whether the person presented to him was of his church or not. If of the Catholic faith, his hand always went forward, palm down, and it was kissed; if not of that church, his hand always went out ready for kindly and welcoming grasp in the ordinary fashion.

Although combining in himself the attributes for the priesthood with those of a cultivated gentleman and man of the world, Monsignor Biffi had all the charm which came from an unaffectedly simple nature. It was this quality of simplicity that made it possible for him to adapt his teachings to the wholly illiterate peasantry.

If church customs almost medieval in character helped hold the ignorant to a faith in *something,* let these customs be left undisturbed, he said, rather than that their faith should be weakened.

I remember an incident illustrating both the antiquity of the customs at Cartagena, and Monsignor Biffi's anxiety to do nothing to shock the reverence of the people for any of the forms which connected the church with their daily lives.

During

During Holy Week, from Thursday morning until the firing of a gun from one of the wall bastions on Easter forenoon, any labor not absolutely necessary is strictly prohibited in Cartagena. No carriages can be used. A man on horseback is stopped at the gates and ordered to dismount and lead his animal. All the ordinary functions of city life, including marketing and other almost necessary occupations, are prohibited.

Exceptions to these rules are made only when, on request, the bishop grants a written "permit," a privilege accorded but sparingly in cases of illness or other serious condition.

Our problem was how to operate the railway during the period. The trains had taken the place of the older forms of reaching the city by horse and mule, and yet, unlike the latter, the trains could not stop outside the city limits. The engine-houses, shops, water-tanks, and all the necessary terminal equipment, were within the city.

Somewhere I have preserved the original permit given to work the trains during

ing the proscribed period. Translated, it reads something as follows: "Permission is hereby given the Railway Company to operate its trains, *as is the custom in European countries,* provided they are moved as nearly as possible without noise and at the speed of a man walking, and that the whistles be not blown nor the bells permitted to ring except to avoid accident."

The italicized words served as an expedient explanation—almost apology—to those who might see the permit and be shocked at its liberality.

The failure of the French Canal Company had left stranded in that part of the world many adventurers and some few honest men. Some of both drifted into our service. One distinguished but somewhat worn and wan-looking Italian came one day looking for any sort of a job. I sent him as camp master in charge of a gang of laborers at work on the embankments near that river the crossing of which so distressed the people of Soplaviento. He did his work well, but I did not see him again for some time. Mr. T. Jefferson

Jefferson Coolidge, just then returned from his mission to France, made me a visit, and at the same time Mr. Gordon Abbott, who had come to Cartagena to see, among other things, if I were a fit person to manage the property, was also with me. These two, with an appropriate party equipment, went over the line on horseback, a journey of several days, and were astonished to find in this camp master, at the most forsaken-looking native kraal on the whole line, an Italian gentleman of courtly manners, high breeding, and fine intelligence; a man who, in fact, gave to his little tent in the mosquito swamp the atmosphere of one of the capitals of Europe. Fortunately, they all spoke French, as Gondolfi, the camp master, spoke no English.

Another interesting member of the flotsam and jetsam of our life there was Alphonse Laurent, a Frenchman of good family who had been concerned too intimately in some Royalist plot and had left France from necessity. He had served on the staff of a Russian general in the Russo-Turkish War, had been concerned

cerned in a revolution in Hayti, and had lost all he had of worldly goods at Panama—for be it known that Laurent was honest and generous, and Panama in those days was no place for a man with these qualities. He was our chief accountant until his besetting sin, over-drinking, so mixed his head on figures that we had to put him at other work. It was while he was chief accountant, however, that the incident always afterwards referred to as H——'s suicide happened.

H—— was clerk in the office; he was a Colombian of nearly pure Spanish ancestry, well connected locally, and had married the daughter of a distinguished Colombian. It was not for these reasons solely, however, that Laurent gently forgave many of the lapses which occurred owing to H——'s overfondness for the sparkling wines of France when his pockets were full, and the more cheaply effective white rum from the local stills when his purse was slim. Laurent's heart was big, and his own slender purse was always open to help those of his staff in trouble. Maybe, too, the knowledge of

his

his own growing weakness made him remain H——'s friend when his own people had refused him further aid and only Laurent's friendly excuses kept him in his job. H—— was being given one last trial—positively the last, I had told Laurent. One night late, as I sat idly watching the sea breaking on the shore at the foot of the little cocoanut palm grove behind my house just outside of the city walls, I heard the clatter of the unshod hoofs of a pony coming down the road,—the little South American ponies, with their quick, short, single-foot gait, make a curious snappy sound that we never hear in the North,—and shortly came Laurent, a picturesque sight with his big white helmet and boots and spurs (all of which seemed many sizes too big for him), hastily put on over grandly striped pajamas. It would not be right to disguise the truth. Laurent was certainly drunk—but drunk, as he would have said, as a gentleman of France should be—that is, he was still able to talk and to show that gentle politeness that never left him.

Laurent, when sober, could talk equally well

well in either French, Spanish, or English. When drunk he showed a gentlemanly impartiality and used them in a confusing fashion. He did not get off his horse, but sat somewhat unsteadily; the horse, owing to the discomfort of a nervously swinging pair of legs equipped with Spanish spurs, partook of the rider's nervousness.

His story was more or less as follows: "Oh, Mr. Hart, it is the dreadful that has happened! You know me, Señor. It is I, Laurent, after my little dinner, I sit by heart and done for that H—— (Ach! that canaille!) more than a brother could, and now what is that he has done? I, Laurent, after my little dinner, I sit by my table and take my café and perhaps one petit verre—peut-être more, not much, monsieur, but then, this country, Señor, and what can one do? And then comes that H——, his eyes like coals of fire and his voice like the dead calling, and he say to me, 'Laurent, all is over—I can live no more; I have my wife's ring taken and have used it for drink. I must die. Laurent, I come to you—you have

been my friend—you will shoot me. It is best!' So, Señor, I look at him—I say to myself, 'You coward! you will not shoot yourself, and if you do the better for your family'—and I say, 'H——, you pig, I will not shoot you. I have done much—too much for you, but this I will not do. But you can shoot yourself,' and I handed him my pistol. And that pig, Señor, he turned the pistol towards himself, and I cry out, 'No, H——, not here! You shall not a mess make of my house!' and I show him the door, and I say, 'Now shoot!' and I go back for another little glass—for that man he have shook my nerves. And I wait for the shot, but none comes. Then, ah! what do I hear, Señor?—it is that dog of an H—— running, running fast as his legs can carry him, and with my pistol, Monsieur! I saddle the pony, but not so quickly enough, for I follow too late, he gets to that saloon, el Polo Norte, and he has sold my pistol and they have given him the—oh, so many bottles for it—and, Monsieur, it is not right—I am always his one friend!" And poor Laurent wept real tears.

But

But I am taking too much time with things that in their local setting had more of interest than they have in my clumsy telling.

A tale of the Spanish Main without a flavor of a revolution would be looked at with suspicion as to its genuineness. For commercial reasons I wish I could tell you that my experiences did not include any connection with armed political disturbances. Unhappily, however, it was the misfortune of the companies I represented to be interested one way or another in the fighting zone during three years of revolution in Colombia. Many of our native employees lost their lives even while in our service, and the property loss went into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

There is often much of the opéra bouffe about these South American revolutions, but it is not always so; and when one sees the suffering, starvation, and sickness at close range, the grim wickedness and cruelty of it all sicken and madden one to an extent that cannot be explained.

In general, the bulk of the soldiers on each

each side are harmless, peaceful Indians and half-breeds, with no real interest in, or knowledge of, what they are fighting about. Rarely is any great moral principle or question of right involved, except upon paper. More often it is the greed for money and power by a few rival leaders or factions.

To tell you of the rows of peasants I have seen brought in, tied in columns by ropes, and enlisted the next day as volunteers; to tell you of the boys in their early teens made to shoulder a musket and march off to almost certain death in marshy jungles, would take too much time and serve no purpose. We transported over our road one regiment, many boys too young to bear the weights they had to carry, and in eight weeks brought back the same regiment with not one quarter still living—and even then we had to stop the train to remove those who had died in transit before taking the troop cars into the city. It will be enough to tell you of one naval engagement on the Magdalena River in which our own boats were part of both engaging fleets.

The

The natural aim of any band of insurrectionists in Colombia is either to control or to interrupt the lines of communication between the coast and the interior, by seizing the railways connecting the river with the coast harbors, or, more effectually, by controlling the river Magdalena itself. The rebellion of which I am speaking was intended to be inaugurated by the sudden and complete capture of all river craft. At nightfall on a certain day bands of rebels by concerted action seized several of our boats which had been taking in cargo at our river terminus, Calamar, and at the same time another band attempted to take quite a fleet of boats at Barranquilla, near the mouth of the river. At the latter place, however, the government at the time had the only river war-vessel it owned, a staunchly built steel boat with bows specially fitted for ramming, and with a machine-gun mounted in a protected tower on the upper deck. This boat the rebels were unable to seize, and, their attempt being known, they got away with a few of the Barranquilla boats only.

Those

Those they did seize started up the river to join the Calamar flotilla. The process of seizure was to go on board, order off at the point of the revolver such men as they did not want or need, and force those they did need to perform their duties with a man by their sides with a revolver conveniently aimed at their heads. As a method of retaining officers and crews this was generally effective. The night was pitch dark; the first boat arriving from Barranquilla brought the news of the half failure at that port, and the combined fleet made ready for action, being sure that the government, with the "Hercules," the boat with the machine-gun, and other boats with the Barranquilla garrison on board, would be not far behind their own boats.

It happened that the rebels had taken at Barranquilla one of the few remaining wooden boats on the river, the old "Colon," a boat not unlike the "Hercules" in appearance, but much slower and exceeding rotten. The result was that the government fleet of perhaps four boats, in spite of its later start, caught up with the

"Colon"

"Colon" just as she joined the other rebel craft.

Among our boats taken was one of our fastest and best, the "Helena," of some four hundred tons, on which we had one of the best pilots on the river, a pure-blooded Indian and a fine man, liked and respected by every one of us. With him was his young son, a lad of about sixteen. With the rebel commander standing by his side, poor Vargas was forced to steer the "Helena," the pride of his heart, into the thick of the engagement. Picture to yourselves a dark tropical night, a deep muddy river rapidly flowing and about a mile wide, seven or eight steamboats unlighted except for the glow from their furnaces, the sparks from their double funnels, and the continuous flashes from rifles fired by hundreds of men crouched behind piles of firewood, hastily constructed walls of tobacco bales or bags of coffee, and from the cabin windows. It is to be feared that in the darkness friends and foes lost their identity, and God alone knows whence came the bullets that sent many a man to his death that night. Suddenly

denly on the "Helena" the commander called to Vargas, "There is the 'Hercules,' you must ram her and sink her." In vain Vargas protested that the boat pointed out was not the "Hercules," but was the rebels' own boat, the "Colon." With an oath, the rebel commander put the muzzle of his pistol against poor Juan's head, and, calling him a liar and a vile name, ordered him to steer for what he believed to be the armed "Hercules," but what was in reality the "Colon." As the steel bow of the "Helena" crashed into the rotten old wooden hull of the "Colon," and the rebel commander realized his mistake, he pulled the trigger of his pistol and our good, faithful old pilot died with his hands on the wheel.

The "Colon" sank like a shot, and down the river whirled its wreckage and the bodies of some two or three hundred men to be washed out to sea. Altogether, that night, some four hundred men lost their lives. The "Helena" was badly damaged below the water-line, and riddled with bullet-holes in all her wooden upper works.

After

After the impact with the "Colon," when his father was shot, young Vargas, who by his father's orders had been lying on his stomach back of the wheel in the pilot-house, got up, took the wheel, and safely beached the boat in shallow water. From there he stole ashore, and days afterwards, a gaunt and half-starved lad, he found his way to our office at Cartagena and told his tale.

Even the periods of domestic peace in Colombia were not without occasional days or weeks of anxiety. Colombia, small as is its importance among the nations, has had its full share of troubles with not only its near neighbors but with the European powers.

Threatened invasions on the Venezuelan or Ecuadorian frontiers were matters of some interest but of no distress to us at Cartagena; but the threatened approach of five Italian war-ships to enforce the settlement of the so-called Cerruti claims against Colombia gave both the government and the railway officials much anxiety. I was out of Colombia at the time, and telegraphic communication with Cartagena

Cartagena, as often happened, was suspended through temporary trouble on the land lines. I had learned by a cablegram from Caracas that the Italian fleet, then at La Guayra, was under orders to proceed to Cartagena and there to seize the custom-house and collect the duties until the adjudicated claim of Cerruti was paid. By a happy chance it was possible to send a cablegram to Jamaica to catch a steamship sailing that day for Cartagena, and due there a full twenty-four hours before the arrival of the Italian fleet. This message not only warned the railway people, but conveyed to the Colombian Government the suggestion that the Italian admiral be promptly advised that the custom-house, located on the railway pier, was the property of an American company, and that a five per cent. lien on the duties collected was pledged as security for certain bonds held by citizens of the United States.

Advices reaching the State Department in Washington and the Italian Embassy to the same effect, an entertaining international complication was created. Our efforts

efforts to preserve both our own interests and the dignity of Colombia were further helped when the flag-ship of the Italian fleet ran aground at Boca Chica, the entrance to Cartagena harbor, delaying the actual entry of the fleet for three days. This accident not only took away from the effectiveness and dignity of the naval demonstration, but delayed the delivery of the belligerent ultimatum brought by the Italian admiral until the joint efforts of all interested had paved the way for a less drastic settlement of the difficulty.

It was during this period, if I remember rightly, that the "Incident of Her Majesty's Dispatch Bag," as we afterwards called it, occurred. Mr. M—— V—— was then either secretary or minister at Bogotá, and, having dispatches of unusual importance for the Foreign Office, he used the good offices of our river steamboats and railway service as a private conveyance for the Legation dispatches.

Simultaneously with the arrival of the bag supposed to contain the advices of particular importance came a telegram from

from V——, marked "urgent" and begging us to use all means in our power to catch that bag and detain it, as through some mistake it contained not the dispatches, but his soiled shirts and collars!

Downing Street narrowly escaped a surprise, but I venture to believe that it would not have been the only soiled linen in the archives of the Foreign Office.

From the veranda at the back of my house on the shore, outside the walls of Cartagena, a path led through a small grove of cocoanut palms down to the sea.

Early one morning, as I was taking coffee on the veranda, a motley group of bearded men, some with fur-banded hats and all wearing the heavy clothing of a cold climate, came up the path towards me. Even in a country where the unexpected is the likely thing to happen, one is hardly prepared to find in one's back yard, so to speak, a body of some ten or twelve wool-and-fur-wrapped, bearded Russians washed up apparently by the breaking surf.

The facts were no less startling than the surprise.

The Russian barque "Rota," with a cargo of fuel from Cardiff for the railway and actually consigned to me, had, in thick weather, run upon a reef and been abandoned some forty miles to the eastward of Cartagena. The master and crew, in two boats, had rowed themselves westward until, cheered by the sight of the morning light on the domes and towers of Cartagena, they had pulled up their boats at the first good landing place near the city, and by an extraordinary coincidence which sometimes occurs they had beached their boats near enough to my house to make it their first place of call for help.

With the exception of the master, they spoke Russian only, and he a little German.

With cotton suits and straw hats from the railway commissary, they made a less bizarre appearance, but I was heartily glad when, in the absence of any Russian consul, I persuaded the French consul to arrange their passage to Europe.

Among the people one came to know well, both natives and foreigners, were many

many fine men—men of education, courage, and ability, who were filling well places of usefulness in the world.

There were, however, many men (and these chiefly among the foreigners) of the adventurer type, either seeking temporary refuge along the coast or looking unceasingly for that opportunity which neither continuous disappointment nor years of wandering had made them give up the certainty of ultimately finding.

There was the tall, lanky Confederate soldier from Mississippi who, drifting southward, had held a commission with one side or the other in almost every insurrection south of the Rio Grande during the last twenty-five years.

Well over six feet, erect in bearing, but over-angular, his profession of soldier was guaranteed by a large white military helmet, which was made of tin plate glaringly whitened with enamel paint. This helmet was a constant wonder and delight to us. When taken off with the easy grace of a courtier and placed on a veranda table, it gave forth to us a sound of falling kitchen-plates, while to him I have

have no doubt it was as the clashing of armor. He was a picturesque, if only occasional, addition to our little coast colony —this Knight of La Mancha.

Then there was the more courageous but less honorable gentleman from New York who came to Cartagena and chartered, from its agents, a little ocean-going steamship, ostensibly for trading in cocoanuts with the San Blas Indians.

After one voyage in its legitimate trade, having departed with no bills paid, the vessel never returned.

For years its rusty plates would not have held together but for the barnacles on its bottom; but, even so, it was not the graves of the more doughty galleons which had called the vessel, as months afterwards we learned that with new paint, a new name, and apocryphal papers she had been sold for cash by the charterer at a port so distant that we wondered by grace of what dispensation she had travelled so far.

We counted as neighbors those on the coast or on the islands, if one or two days' sail on the regular liners or tramp ships would

would permit an occasional exchange of visits.

In this way I knew many in the foreign colonies at Santa Marta, Barranquilla, Colón, and Limón, as well as my numerous friends in Jamaica and at the more distant ports of La Guayra, Curaçao, and other places.

It was at one of these ports—I will not give its name—that I had the interesting experience of nearly witnessing a duel. I had arrived before breakfast, and was to leave about midnight on the same ship. Going up at once to breakfast with my friend, the manager of the railroad, I found with him another friend, a German, the agent of one of the steamship lines. My host was an Englishman, and not only manager of the railroad but owner of several fruit plantations up the line, and a man I had always liked, and after this day liked the more.

The German had seen military service, and was a vigorous defender of the German military idea—in particular, its code of honor.

The Englishman had been having a dispute

dispute with a native landowner called (we will say) Salcedo, over certain boundary rights which affected them both as neighboring landowners, and the dispute had reached a point where ugly words had passed between them. While we were at breakfast a General V—— was announced, who in terms of the most perfect politeness gracefully explained that his friend Señor Salcedo had been insulted, and that unless my friend showed that gentlemanly and fair spirit which he, the general, felt sure would animate him, and apologize to Señor Salcedo for the unfortunate accusations made, it would be the unhappy duty of General V——(a duty which he would perform with a thousand regrets) to ask that a friend be named to settle the details of the meeting which, for two such brave but misguided men, would be inevitable.

The German, getting the scent of an affair so after his own heart, could hardly be restrained from announcing himself as the needed friend and taking charge of the matter at once. The Englishman, however, without more interruption to his breakfast

breakfast than the barest courtesy to General V—— required, told the German to keep quiet, and then turned to the general with the information that Salcedo was an ass, that the days of duelling were over, and that if he heard any more such silly talk he would give himself the pleasure, and do Salcedo the honor, of attending him at his house with a horsewhip. After the indignant exit of General V—— the real row began. The German exploded; practically told the Englishman he was no gentleman; included me in his excommunication because I disagreed with him; and for a few minutes it looked as though some of us would have to fight a duel to keep the peace.

As our dispute was reaching the more gentle ground of an academic discussion, the portly figure of General V—— again crossed the *patio,* and with the dignity of an ambassador, but with some flashing of the eyes and much suppressed emotion, he stated that unless Señor Salcedo received within the hour an apology or the acceptance of his challenge, he, Señor Salcedo, would reserve to himself

self the right to shoot the Englishman at sight.

Our host looked at his watch, politely dismissed the general, and we continued our own quarrel, to which both fuel and zest had been added. At the end of the hour, together we walked down the road towards the steamship pier. About halfway there we passed Salcedo's house and saw him through the chinks in the veranda jalousies. The Englishman abruptly left us, lighted a cigarette directly below Salcedo's balcony, put his hands in his pockets, and walked nonchalantly up and down.

Nothing happened! No shots were fired. The German was furious.

"The Englishman is brave, but an ass," he said. "They all are. The other chap is a coward, but he might have been enough of a sneak to have really shot." Then abruptly leaving us, as the Englishman and I started down the road, he walked up on to the veranda, spat on the floor in front of Salcedo, pulled his nose, and said in Spanish, "Now send your friend to see *me*."

When

When our blood-thirsty German met us for dinner that night the details of the "affair of honor" had been arranged. It was to take place at daybreak the next morning, on the beach beyond the light-house point. Unless the German showed pity, it would be murder, as he could shoot like a frontiersman; but both inclination and business expediency would be likely, on his part, to make the affair more humorous than fatal.

A little before midnight the two men saw me aboard my ship, and with their promises of early advices of the duelling I had reluctantly to leave the port. Early the next morning, as I came from my bath and stopped outside my state-room to drink a cup of coffee in the fresh breeze of the open side-port, I saw a figure hastily disappearing in the opposite passage. It was Salcedo, who, the steward told me, had quietly come on board an hour before me, and had been "suddenly called away" (as he said) "on important business."

This reminded me at the time of a quarrel over night at the Club Cartagena, between

between two high government officials, both friends of the then President of Colombia, Dr. Nuñez. Unforgivable words passed in the presence of a number of us, and an "affair" was arranged, this, too, to be at daybreak.

Friends of both, anxious to avoid not only bloodshed but also a political scandal, hastily sought and awakened Dr. Nuñez to ask if he would not do something to prevent the duel, which would certainly prove to be "à la mort."

"Certainly," said the president. "I will eat the dead!" And the old gentleman went back to bed.

The remark, repeated at the club, brought so much ridicule on the principals that nothing more was heard of either quarrel or duel.

Rafael Nuñez, for many years the president of the Republic of Colombia and effectually its dictator, was an interesting character. During the several years I lived at Cartagena he was both my near neighbor and my landlord in the little residential settlement on the beach outside the city walls. By the exercise of that sort of

of genius which is controlled less by ethics than by the laws of expediency, he found himself, at the end of a long civil war in 1886, the practical dictator of his country and of the Constitutional Convention which had been called.

The political party of which he had become leader was an adroitly formed coalition, held together by force of his personality, which left the irreconcilable ultraclericals and radicals in two such far detached groups that for nearly ten years, until his death, Dr. Nuñez was the absolute ruler of Colombia.

His power was both impressive and mysterious. During the latter years of his administration (which was when I knew him) he lived in retirement at Cartagena, a ten days' journey from Bogotá, the seat of his government.

Of scholarly habits and tastes, modest in his bearing, simple in his life, and in no sense a soldier, even in his isolation he was able to exercise a more complete mastery over the Government and Congress at Bogotá than any president of Colombia before or since his time.

It was his misfortune and that of his country that, remarkable as was his intellectual capacity, he never had a real grasp of the fundamentals of economics. He had a knowledge of all that was finest in the literature of most countries; he was proficient in practically all the Continental languages, and his knowledge of both past and contemporaneous political history all over the world was so complete that his brilliancy in conversation was often startling. His knowledge of human nature and his rare political sagacity, by which he kept opposing forces so evenly balanced that his own weight was always necessary, retained for him a power which would have been lost to a more forceful but less adroit man.

Unhappily, the genius of Dr. Nuñez never included an understanding of even the elements of money and exchange. With the exception of some small silver coinage for use on the Isthmus of Panama and by the coffee-traders on the Venezuelan frontier, the money of the country was an irredeemable paper currency which bore the hopeful promise that the Republic

Republic of Colombia would pay the bearer the stated number of pesos in "moneda corriente del pais"—that is to say, in current money of the country, which, by reference to the code, one found to be precisely the piece of paper on which the promise was written,—a vicious circle which ought to please the most radical advocate of fiat money fallacies. The history of this currency during the years in which my relations with it were very close is interesting.

In 1891 the exchange rate in Colombia was 180. That is to say, 1.80 Colombian pesos (or dollars) would purchase $1.00 United States gold.

Owing to reasonable prosperity in the country and the absence of any important further inflation of the amount of paper issued by the government or in circulation, the exchange rate for the next two or three years did not exceed, say, 220. The average was approximately 200 for the two years, which meant that in our railway accounts, which by law had to be kept in Colombian currency, all gold expenditures,—for example, rails, cars, locomotives,

locomotives, salaries payable in United States money, and so on,—when converted into currency and entered in the books, appeared at double the gold values.

With a fairly constant exchange ratio, this, of course, made no more trouble than any ordinary conversion of one country's money into that of another. From 1895 to 1905, however, vast amounts of currency were issued to enable the government to pay not only for its extravagances but also for the expenses of quelling the prolonged insurrections which were in some parts of the country continuous during the ten years after the death of Dr. Nuñez. Exchange actually reached, at first by a gradual annual increment and then by leaps and bounds, the enormous rate of 10,000. At times, even during the progress of the rebellion, 15,000 and 20,000 exchange rates were not uncommon. Fancy, if you please, however, the heart-breaking grotesqueness of a railway accountant's books when he enters on the capital account a purchase of a locomotive at $10,000 gold in 1903 as costing one million pesos, when next above it in the account

account is one which cost the same amount in gold in 1894 and is entered as twenty thousand pesos! Accounts became a mass of confused, meaningless figures. The president's modest salary, when entered on the books, was nearly a million dollars a year. Prices, I remember, created amusement among visiting foreigners. A passenger on one of the Royal Mail boats stopping at Cartagena changed a twenty-dollar gold piece into Colombian currency. At the Hotel Americano he paid $20 each for Havana cigars, and $240 a bottle for champagne. In spite of his extravagance, he had a pocketful of soiled paper money when he returned to his ship.

It was the poor man, however—the peasant—who had the most acute suffering from the fall in value of the local money, and this fact should be noted by those who are deceived by the sophistries of cheap money advocates.

The prices of all imported commodities —for example, all clothing, textiles, agricultural implements, iron roofing, fence wires, kerosene, and flour—necessarily increased

creased in direct proportion to the rise in exchange, but the wages of the laborer responded slowly to the rapidly growing change in values, and for years remained far below the normal parity with the new conditions,—in fact, I think the agricultural laborer of the interior is still severely handicapped. While the causes of the inflation obviously worked injury to the wealthy planters, the inflation itself worked greatly to their profit. The product of the sale of their coffee, when converted into the depreciated currency, gave the planter a disproportionately large amount of this sort of money in which the laborer was paid.

The situation became so impossible for the railway at Cartagena that with the co-operation of the local merchants the railway company on one pay day paid all its employees and outstanding accounts in Colombian silver coin, imported privately from the Isthmus, at the same time issuing new tariff schedules putting all payments to the railway on a silver basis. The over-night transition from one basis of values to another was effected not only completely,

completely, but with surprisingly little difficulty.

Perhaps the tragic and the humorous are not infrequently close to each other in all parts of the world, but it seemed to me, before I had learned how wickedly serious the political uprisings often were, that the Latin-American countries had more than a normal amount of the comic opera in their daily doings.

It was during the minor insurrection late in '94, or early in '95, that over our own railway telegraph line from Calamar came the news late one afternoon that a large body of rebel troops were marching down the west bank of the river. They were said to be well armed, and in numbers sufficient to subdue easily the small garrison there, and the governor at Cartagena was urged to dispatch a special train with troops to the immediate relief of Calamar.

The news caused the greatest excitement not only at Cartagena but along the whole line of the railway between that place and Calamar. Our special trains were rapidly put together and a regiment of

of government troops entrained and started on their four hours' journey to Calamar. Meanwhile occasional dispatches from Calamar recorded the movements of the approaching enemy. The troops arrived at Calamar in time to give the necessary relief to the suffering town, which had been threatened by no more serious an invasion than a herd of cattle being driven from Portreros, near Mangangué, to the coast for ultimate shipment to Cuba.

One evening during the period when guerrilla bands of rebels were infesting the territory along the line of the railway, I remember discussing with General Vélez, then Secretary of War of the Department of Bolivar, the adequacy of the protection which the government purported to be giving the railway line between Cartagena and the village of Turbaco. We finally decided to make a personal inspection of the line, which we did on horseback during the night.

At one of the outposts we were saluted by the officer in command with an immense, rudely constructed wooden sword, not

not unlike those we have all made as boys. That and some enormous home-made epaulets were his insignia of rank, and apparently created no amusement in the minds of his variously armed volunteer subordinates. It did not seem possible that we were within the area of an actual war,—and yet a few nights afterwards, almost within calling distance of that very outpost, one of my own farm boys, bringing into town the morning milk, was attacked by guerrillas, and because he defended his cargo was badly wounded, his ears were cut off, and he was otherwise mutilated from sheer wantonness.

The burning of our railway bridges and trestles, the withdrawing of spikes and fish-plates from the rails, and other attempts to wreck the trains, particularly those carrying troops, were continuous.

Our superintendent devised a rather ingenious way of preventing serious accidents: In front of each locomotive he would place from three to six empty flat cars, which would pick up, so to speak, and absorb whatever particular form of disaster had been planned for the train itself

itself. By running always at moderate speed, this method proved so effective that we had no actual disaster except the ditching of a considerable number of flat cars.