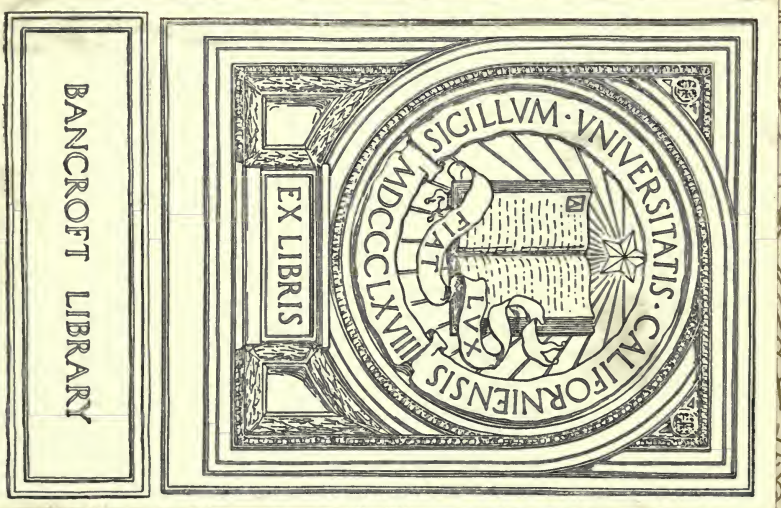


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*H. A. Richards, Colon.*

MARKET PLACE IN COLON.  
(The man is an Indian from San Blas.)





PEEPS AT MANY LANDS

# PANAMA

BY

EDITH A. BROWNE, F.R.G.S. <sup>1874-</sup>

WITH SIXTEEN FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS  
- EIGHT OF THEM IN COLOUR

LONDON  
ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

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# PANAMA

## CHAPTER I

### THE POPULAR IDEA OF PANAMA

NOT long ago I asked a boy friend of mine whether he could tell me anything about Panama, and this was his reply :

“It’s soon going to be a wonderful canal, like Suez, and then they won’t be able to make any more hats there ; but lots of people and things will have a fine chance of getting about the world faster, and without so much fag, when America is cut in halves to let ships through.”

In trying to discover what the name “Panama” usually conveys to people, I had previously put a similar question, directly and indirectly, to many grown-ups of both sexes belonging to that large class which is commonly described as “the man in the street,” and to numerous boys and girls of various ages. I was particularly pleased with my young friend’s answer because it helped me out of a difficulty.

Regarding that general inquiry, please do not imagine I conducted it on behalf of the superior folk who make a hobby of trying to prove that the world is peopled mainly by dolts, dunces and dead-and-alives. The extent of some people’s ignorance and indifference is a matter of small concern to me compared with the keenness of certain other

## Panama

people's desire for knowledge. I have been persuaded, by my own experience and observation, to believe that there is a vast, and constantly increasing multitude of all sorts and conditions of folk who naturally want to take an interest in many things, to each of which only a few people, comparatively speaking, can devote themselves as specialists. On the time and attention of every child and grown-up in that multitude a first claim is made by lessons, a particular business or a pet hobby, but not one of them wants his outlook to be bounded by his principal duty or pleasure. To such people I was to talk about Panama ; therefore to such people I went to discover what they already knew about the subject. And the single-hearted, single-minded object of my prying was to get a clue as to how best to set a-going that talk so as to guard against taking too much, or too little, for granted.

The variety of information I collected in the course of sounding public opinion soon proved so wide as to be very puzzling. There was no doubt in my mind that the numerous combinations of facts, fancies and popular fallacies of which individual opinions were composed had "Canal" and "Hats" for common factors. I was equally convinced that there were other factors, such as imagination and experience, to be included in the greatest common measure at which I was endeavouring to arrive. But try as I would, I could not solve the problem to my satisfaction. I was still turning it over in my mind when I happened to meet the young friend to whom I have already made special reference. And, by the way, he is as good a sportsman for his age as he is a scholar. This was the first time we had run across each other since my return from Panama, and he immediately began to clamour for "adventures."



## The Popular Idea of Panama

“ You tell me first,” I said, when I could get a word in edgeways, “ what you think Panama is like.”

Without a moment's hesitation came the reply I have quoted, and thus I stumbled on what I believe to be a fair sample of the popular idea of Panama. It indicates a common state of wakefulness that is of far greater importance than the common mistakes which I am about to discuss.

A map of the Western Hemisphere in a medium-sized atlas is usually responsible for our first impressions of Panama. Having learnt the definition of an isthmus and been referred to “ Panama ” as a good example thereof, we turn to a map of the New World. There we discover the name—printed in the sea, probably—at right angles to a slip of country which is situated between two big masses of land ; it is in the neighbourhood of what seems to be the narrowest part of that slip, and refers, apparently, to a dot, which we know to be the sign for a town. We come to the conclusion that there must be a town called “ Panama,” and that the isthmus which also goes by the name is only a small tract of country beginning with this town on the Pacific coast and stretching a short distance northward, through the thinnest part of the continental junction, to the Atlantic coast.

Later on we learn to form some idea of the extent of a mile, to realize the necessity for maps to be drawn to scale, and to understand that when we consult a map we are expected to take an intelligent interest in the accompanying explanation of the measurements by which the part of the world represented has been reduced to fit the paper. We also become more or less familiar with a number of maps showing the New World in detail, and in those of


# Panama

Central America we see the name "Panama" not only in small letters alongside a dot, but in important-looking capitals, which are spread out to occupy the whole length of the link whereby that tapering country is connected with South America. Gradually we get the idea that the Isthmus of Panama covers quite a large area of ground ; that, even with the best of level roads at our service, we could not cross the narrowest portion on Shank's Pony in less than six hours, or make a walking tour throughout its entire length in much less than a month. And we are inclined to doubt the existence of such roads, since we have gathered from geography books that the district is mountainous and has but few towns.

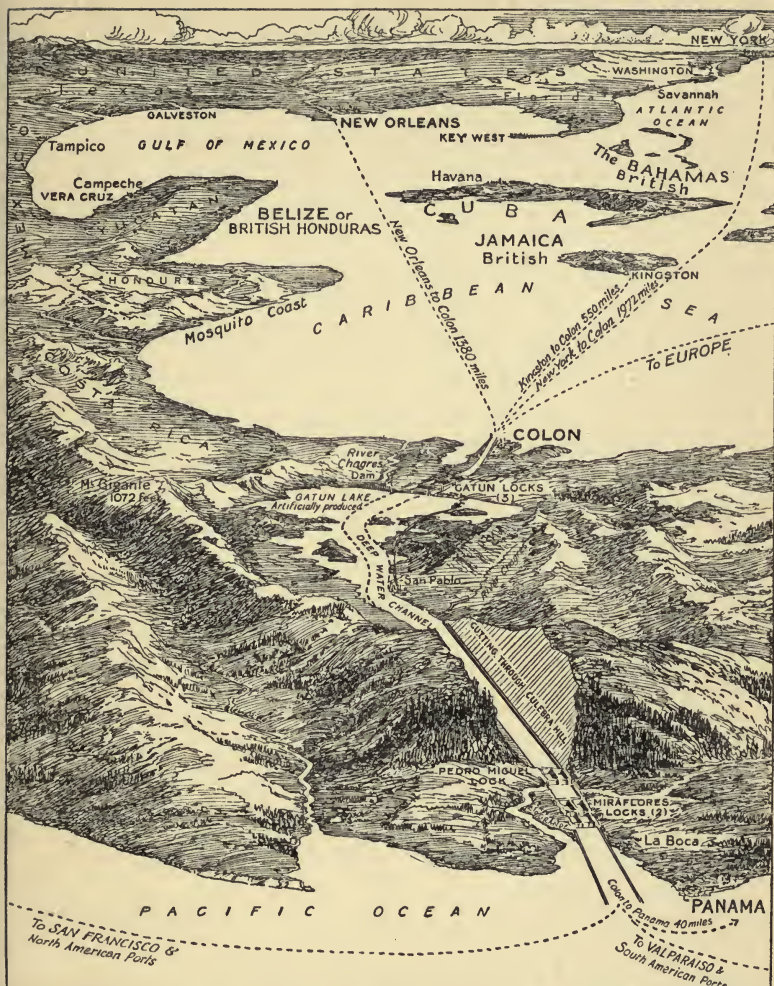
No wonder some of us upon hearing for the first time there is going to be a Panama Canal think, if only for a moment, that it will occupy practically the whole isthmus. Childish memories of Panama, as first seen on a map of the Western Hemisphere, lead the imagination very much astray by such a suggestion, but at the same time they truthfully, though roughly, indicate the Canal's general line of direction.

## CHAPTER II

### OUR PROGRAMME

THE Isthmus of Panama extends from Costa Rica, in Central America, to Colombia, in South America, and in shape resembles the letter "S" turned this way—. It is 425 miles in length, and has an average breadth of about 70 miles. The Canal crosses a part which is only about 40 miles broad ; its shore to shore route lies between Colon on the Atlantic seaboard and the city of

# Our Programme



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE PANAMA CANAL, SHOWING NEARNESS OF BRITISH POSSESSIONS.

After the drawing published by the *Review of Reviews*.

## Panama

Panama on the Pacific seaboard. The relative position of these towns being as north-west to south-east, the Canal had necessarily to be made in an oblique general-line of direction. The nature of the country to be crossed is responsible for a little zigzagging in the actual line of route, and for the astonishing way in which the course switchbacks over the highlands from sea to sea.

The popular idea of the Canal as the scene of a wedding between the waters of the Atlantic and those of the Pacific is delightfully romantic but entirely wrong. For a number of years many clever heads tried to bring about the marriage, but all their schemes were frustrated by the natural obstacles which stand in the way thereof. To effect such a union a sea-level passage, of sufficient width for a serviceable canal, would have to be carved through a formidable barrier of highlands ; and all the work of removing mountains would only be preparatory, for throughout the length and breadth of the smoothed passage a ditch would have to be dug to a depth in which the seas could unite to float ocean-going craft. The great De Lesseps, who won immortal fame by making a sea-level canal across the Isthmus of Suez portion of a sandy desert, failed in an attempt to pierce a similar passage through the rocky mountains of the Isthmus of Panama.

The Panama Canal, an outcome of American enterprise, is an epoch-marking artificial waterway. Therein lies its only kinship with the Suez Canal, a French triumph. As regards construction, appearance and character these two masterpieces are entirely dissimilar.

The Suez Canal, as all of you know, has long been in use as a short cut to the Far East. When I saw the

## Our Programme

Panama Canal, in the autumn of 1912, that short cut in the interests of Far Western development was still in the making. Much had been done, much had yet to be done, in the sea sections at either end. At this stage of our talk I can best serve my purpose by confining definite particulars of these terminal works to the simple statement that both in the Atlantic and the Pacific deep-water channels had been buoyed off and partially dredged. Of the actual pass across the Isthmus a portion at each extremity was so nearly completed that water had been allowed to fill the vast gaps ; the extensive central portion was in various advanced stages of preparation for receiving water. It was expected that the Canal would be officially opened on January 1, 1915, but that it would be ready for a ship to be taken through on a trial trip by the autumn of 1913. The men in charge of "the biggest engineering job that has ever been done in the world" were looking forward to making that trial trip on the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of the Pacific by Balboa, the explorer—second only in fame to Columbus—who first beheld the great South Sea on September 26, 1513 (October 7, according to the calendar now used). With a view to emphasizing the sharp contrast between the features of the Suez and Panama Canals, I am going to anticipate the general appearance of the latter in its finished state.

In going through the Suez Canal, from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea, a vessel passes from the open ocean into a sea-level ditch at Port Said, slowly makes her way for several hours along this duct, creeps into a series of natural lakes, steers a course through them into the confines of an obvious continuation of the duct and keeps on in this groove to Suez, whence she glides into another

## Panama

spacious sea where she can once more go full steam ahead. This Canal neither scales hills nor drops down dales : the entire surface of its waters is level with that of the seas it unites, and the flat surface of its desert confines is only slightly above the water-level. It is 100 miles long ; of sufficient depth to accommodate vessels drawing twenty-six feet of water ; and wide enough to permit of traffic being carried on simultaneously in opposite directions—but when two ships are about to meet, one receives orders by signal to tie up to the side until the other gets past, and if they are both big ships the people on their respective upper decks can very nearly reach to shake hands whilst the moving vessel is being carefully piloted clear of the stationary one.

In passing through the Panama Canal, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, a vessel sails for about four miles within the buoyed boundaries of a deep-water channel in Limon Bay, then enters the Isthmus of Panama through an opening in the low-lying arena of a hill-girt amphitheatre. Here she begins an adventurous journey through a region of jungle-clad wilds. For about three miles her course lies along a broad ditch, the water in which is kept at sea-level by the Atlantic. Suddenly she has to come to a standstill, for the ditch is blocked by a massive gateway, which supports two pairs of giant gates that are tightly closed. Presently, the twin gates on one side are flung wide, giving access to a lock chamber ; the vessel is towed into that chamber, the gates behind her are closed, and by a flight of three locks she is lifted 85 feet to the level of an artificial lake. Through that fresh-water lake, whose basin is an enormous reservoir for the waters of a large river fed by numerous tributaries, the ship travels about twenty-four miles, then,





*Marine, Panama.*



## Our Programme

slowing down, she passes into a ditch in the depths of an artificially made ravine. At the end of this nine-mile-long passage between mountain walls she enters a lock, and is lowered  $30\frac{1}{3}$  feet to a second, and much smaller, artificial lake, which is fed by the waters of another river. By way of this lake, which is at an elevation of  $54\frac{2}{3}$  feet above sea-level, she gets one and a half miles farther on her journey, and is then lowered by locks in two steps to a sea-level ditch, wherein mingle the waters of a river and of the Pacific Ocean. A run of about four miles between jungle-clad banks brings her to Balboa, which is situated on the outskirts of Panama city and at the land's end of the Canal on the Pacific coast. Here the ditch merges into a deep-water channel in the Bay of Panama, and within its buoyed boundaries the vessel sails on for about four and a half miles, when she passes out into the naturally deep waters of the open Pacific.

The entire length of the Panama Canal, from deep water in the Atlantic to deep water in the Pacific, is about fifty miles. Its length from shore-line to shore-line is about forty miles. Its minimum width of 300 feet is three times that of the Suez Canal; its maximum width is 1,000 feet, and this is maintained for several miles in the channel through the great lake. The depth varies from 41 to 85 feet. The locks are in pairs, hence vessels going in opposite directions can continue their journey simultaneously, even when some want to be taken "upstairs" and others "downstairs." The size of the largest vessel which can go through the Canal is limited by the size of the lock chambers; so generous are their dimensions that they can accommodate a titan such as the *Olympic*.

The Canal is centrally situated within a ten-miles-wide

## Panama

strip of the Isthmus of Panama. That strip is known as the "Canal Zone" and belongs to the United States of America; thither we are going to watch the Canal in the making; to follow the fortunes of the Americans in charge of the work: to get a peep at the everyday life of their black, tan, and white labour force, which has been drawn from all quarters of the globe; and to see the now toylike-looking fragment of a neighbouring canal, which swallowed up millions of money and was a gigantic French failure.

The large portions of the Isthmus on either side of the Zone constitute the Republic of Panama. Among the attractions which will lure us into native territory are sights and scenes typical of Panamanian life; remnants of the Spanish Main, which look exactly as they did in the romantic days when the New World was being gradually discovered; Indians, whose ancestors defied explorers and \*pirates from the Old World; and ruins which tell exciting stories of England and Spain as rival Empire-builders.

To this rough programme of the amusements which Panama has in store for us I must add a warning note. Not a single Panama hat shall we see being made in any part of the Isthmus. The feather-weight and flexible sun-hats which have become so popular under a misleading name are a speciality of the South American Republic of Ecuador. The town of Guayaquil is the centre of the industry, and among the group of little places which contribute to the output Montecristo is responsible for a large proportion of the finest quality specimens. I have made numerous inquiries with a view to discovering how it happened that a unique export from one country came to be so closely associated by name, in the outside world,

## Our Programme

with another country. There does not appear to be any authentic explanation of this curious misunderstanding, but here is a very plausible one that was suggested to me in Panama city by an old British resident, who can remember the time when the headgear in question was quite a novelty in England.

The rise to popularity of so-called Panama hats dates from about the middle of last century, when the first civilized facilities for traffic across the Isthmus of Panama were provided by the opening of a railway between Panama city and Colon. At that time some specimens of the native-made hats of Ecuador had already found their way to Panama city, one of the nearest neighbouring centres of population; in all probability they were originally taken there as curios by native traders. The short-cut railway between the Pacific and the Atlantic was the means of developing a heavy traffic across the Isthmus. Soon, many travellers were passing through Panama city *en route* for the west coast of North, Central, and South America, or on the way home from the far west of the New World. Naturally, they were delayed at this land-and-sea junction, as also at Colon, whilst goods were being transferred from ship to train, or *vice versa*; and, naturally, they whiled away some of their time at the junctions by wandering through the streets and seeing what they could pick up in the shops. In the bazaar-like marts of Panama they discovered a new kind of sun-hat; the novelty took their fancy because it was an ideal hat for a traveller in tropical climes—affording shade when needed, and yet capable of being tightly rolled up, umbrella fashion, for packing purposes without suffering any injury. Shopkeepers soon sold their few specimens of these hats, and, as a matter of course, sent for further supplies on a larger

# Panama

scale ; equally as a matter of course they began to make systematic efforts to court custom for goods which had attracted attention on their own merits. A brisk retail trade in the imported speciality was quickly established, and each casual patron took his new possession to some destination in a distant land. When, in some far-away spot, the owner of one of these "straws" was encouraged by a particularly sunny day to defy fashion for the sake of comfort, to his surprise friends and acquaintances did not make fun of his strange headgear. In a tone of envy, rather than of jocularly, they asked :

"Where did you get that hat?"

And always the reply was :

"Panama."

Thus, it would seem, these hats acquired the name by which they are popularly known.

## CHAPTER III

### THE WAY TO PANAMA

THE best way of getting from England to the Isthmus of Panama happens to be a particularly good one in every respect. The voyage can be made direct, from Southampton to Colon, in eighteen days ; the service is a regular one, running fortnightly, and is maintained by a fine fleet of steamers, which carry the West Indian and New York mails and belong to an old-established British shipping firm, the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company ; a considerable portion of the route lies through scenery that is world-famous for its splendour and its historic associations ; and the ports of call abound in a variety of novel entertainments.

## The Way to Panama

The services between America and Panama are equally good and more frequent. The voyage from New York to Colon only takes eight days, inclusive of a trip ashore at Cuba and Jamaica.

Strains of a familiar tune are mingling with the briny breeze as we board the steamer at Southampton. The ship's orchestra is playing in the library. Music hath charms to dull the pangs of parting, and when this last and most trying half-hour of "good-byes" has thus been deprived of some of its lingering power, the artistes will have accomplished another of the many good works which go to the making of everyday life, and which are seldom recorded, hardly ever recognized, except they be performed under exceptionally dramatic circumstances. Once the ship is under way, much of the sorrow now lurking around will speedily have its sting sheathed. The people who must go will fall under the influence of the numerous distractions of ship-life; the daily round will assert its first claim on those who must stay behind. Not that absence will lead to forgetfulness. On the contrary, for many of those who are about to part, and are not likely to meet again for years to come, there will be minutes that seem like hours, hours that seem like days, when the sting of loss will stab their hearts, again to cause pain that makes life wellnigh unbearable. And knowing this we need not feel horrified, but should, rather, be very glad, when on the starry eve of a day not a week ahead we shall certainly see most of our now downcast fellow-travellers merrily joining in a dance on the promenade deck, which has been trimmed with bunting and illuminated with fairy-lamps for the occasion; and when we shall quite likely find them "tripping the light fantastic toe" to the strains of the same popular waltz melody which is

## Panama

now tempering the pathos that haunts an outward-bound liner.

Some of you, I expect, are thinking :

But we are only going away for a short time, and for a pleasure trip. We were so pleased to hear the music as we came on board because it was jolly like we were—and now——

And now there is not the slightest necessity for you or me to get melancholy because some of our neighbours are rather sad. People who get gloomy over other folk's troubles are about as weak-kneed as those who fancy they are very ill the moment they hear that someone in the next street has influenza. Besides, sorrow is more likely to flee at the sound of laughter than at the sight of tears. So let us be our natural selves, and quite unusually cold-blooded we should be if we were not naturally inclined to feel elated at the prospect of a holiday expedition—by the by, if you do not all come back feeling happy, the entire blame will rest with me as your guide. I was not forgetting my responsibility to you in that rôle when I turned your thoughts, for a moment or two, to some of your fellow-passengers who do not happen to be holiday-makers ; you are all of you, I feel sure, likely to enjoy the voyage the more for embarking on it with a little of the understanding that makes for sympathy.

Upon leaving the home port the vessel is piloted past the Isle of Wight, and so close to the shores of both mainland and island is the deep-water passage through the Solent that, as we are favoured with a fine day, we get some memorable views of the picturesque scenery for which this part of England is famous, and of many oft-quoted landmarks such as Netley Hospital and the Needles.

Just before emerging into the open waters of the

## The Way to Panama

English Channel the ship slows down, and a small boat comes alongside to take the pilot ashore. As the little boat draws near, a rope is thrown out to her by a sailor on the lower deck of our big ship, and the free end is dexterously caught by one of the boat-hands. To-day, the little craft is easily brought alongside and held in position by means of the brace, but when a big sea is running she is more difficult to control, and the transfer business is in the nature of an adventure. The pilot makes his way from the bridge to the lower deck, followed by a sailor who carries his bag. Meanwhile, a rope ladder has been thrown over the side of the ship, and down this perilous-looking suspension the important official clammers to within a few feet of the water, when, after watching for his opportunity and quickly seizing it when it comes, he drops into his boat. His bag is lowered by a rope, the boatmen pull off, and our ship goes full steam ahead for Cherbourg, on the French coast.

Letters and telegrams can be sent off by a shore-going pilot boat. And the boat that brings a pilot aboard a vessel often carries a package of letters and telegrams for passengers, sent by friends and relations who are familiar with the postal facilities for communicating with ships on the high seas.

There is more to be gained than entertainment—peace of mind, for instance—by a little knowledge of the common events of ship life. As witness to the truth of this statement, here is a story about two inexperienced travellers with whom I once sailed; and I can assure you that from my own experience alone I could narrate several such absurd stories having a similar origin, namely fear rooted in ignorance, and dealing with delusions that might equally give rise to a panic as to a farce.

## Panama

An Eastward-bound ship made the passage down the Thames under the best of weather conditions, but this happy beginning to a voyage at a time of year when that river is wont to be mantled in fog did not have any cheering effect on two ladies who were making their first trip across the ocean. They had come on board haunted by the idea that the chances are always all against any ship reaching her destination ; indeed, they were very nearly akin to old-fashioned country-folk, for whom a train journey was a strange and terrifying undertaking in days long after most people had learnt to enter a railway carriage with as little fear as they would get into a donkey-cart.

The two nervous novices were strangers to each other, but the fates had decreed that they should be "stable companions," to use the seafaring term for people who share a cabin. They were certainly companions in distress throughout a river trip which induced the passengers as a whole to indulge in such exclamations as : "What luck to get a beautiful day like this for a start off—and in January, too." When the ship had glided through the mouth of the river on to a sea that was as smooth as a pond, they were still in no mood to appreciate blessings, but continued to buttonhole officers, crew and fellow-passengers with poorly disguised inquiries about all sorts of possible and impossible misadventures.

Night came, stars studded the sky, and in due course people retired to their cabins. At about three o'clock in the morning, when the stars were still shining brightly and the sea was still perfectly smooth, the electric light was suddenly switched on in a particular cabin. Half a second later a figure sprang up in the opposite bunk. For a few moments two terrified females, half in and half out





LOOKING ACROSS THE CULEBRA CUT, CANAL ZONE, PANAMA.



## The Way to Panama

of their bunks, sat looking at each other and straining their ears to catch every sound of some disturbance that was going on outside.

"Sh," whispered one.

"They're getting the boats out," cried the other.

"So they are," was the awestruck rejoinder.

Then they both slid to the floor and made a dart for the same lifebelt. Together they dragged it from its shelf, and heedless of two others which were sent sprawling to the ground, hung on to it like grim death. A violent struggle was interrupted by a drowsy voice from the third bunk :

"Oh, do be sensible and go to sleep, you two. What will you find to be frightened at next? We're only putting off the pilot."

### CHAPTER IV

#### THE WAY TO PANAMA (*continued*)

FROM Cherbourg our ship steers a westerly course through the English Channel until Land's End is passed ; then, having reached the open Atlantic, she heads southwest, to follow an oblique line of route that is a short cut to the Tropics. Four days after leaving Southampton we are calling at the little island of St. Michael's, in the Azores group. As the ship stays in port for a few hours we can make a brief excursion ashore.

We land at the foot of a hill, and soon discover that we are in a quaint, Portuguese town. The people we meet are Portuguese in appearance ; the steep, straggling streets, with Portuguese names, are bordered by colour-washed houses and shops, on which names and notices are displayed in the Portuguese language.

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Although we have not yet reached the Tropics, we are on an island which is famous for the production of a tropical fruit, the pineapple. St. Michael pines require a certain amount of protection, not forcing, so they are reared in glasshouses. But many plants that can only just exist in England under close confinement in a hot-house grow to perfection in the open air on these sunny shores. Let us take a carriage and drive to one of the most beautiful gardens that I know of anywhere in the world.

At a gate that gives access to some private grounds, in which, by courtesy of the owner, we have permission to roam, we are met by a gardener. Under his guidance we loiter through a long avenue of giant camellia-trees, whose branches are heavily laden with pink and white blooms ; emerge on the margin of a billowing expanse, which seems to be the show-ground for a fine collection of English cottage-gardens ; follow a serpentine path between these hardy flower-beds until, reaching a wondrous display of gardenias and suchlike sunlovers, we pass under an arch of stephanotis into a fairyland of roses ; strike off at a tangent through a thicket of Maréchal Niels ; scale a track piercing a magnificent rock-garden ; and, plunging into a tropical wilderness, traverse a trail that brings us to a sylvan glade, by which we wander into an orange-grove, and thence into an old-world Italian garden, whose trim hedges are pedestals for shear-modelled birds, animals and fantastic images.

The shrill call of a siren warns us that we must be making our way back to the steamer. We have but had time to get a peep at part of these fascinating grounds, but over and above the delight they have afforded all of us through the colour, form and scent of their flowers and





*Photo by Marine, Panama*

BANANA TRAFFIC ON THE CHAGRES RIVER

## The Way to Panama

foliage, they have, I am sure, created a strong feeling of surprise among those of you who have not been here before. Is it not an extraordinary sight, this very mixed company of Northern and Southern plants flourishing in the same atmosphere?

St. Michael's Isle is, as it were, the junction for temperate and tropical climes, and its vegetation is symbolic of the contrast between the robust forces which play such an influential part in moulding the general character, and fixing the routine of life in a northerly region, and the luxuriant powers which are largely responsible for the very different character and routine of life in a land of eternal summer. My principal object in bringing you to these gardens was to help you to realize, through a pleasant conflict of sensations, that we are going to an entirely different part of the world from that we are leaving behind.

As we turn our faces quaywards, our guide delights our hearts with the information that we are at liberty to pick any flowers that take our fancy, and as many of them as we can carry away. Had we not seen England for many months, and were now on the way back to the Old Country, one and all of us, probably, would make straight for the beds where we could collect a nosegay of stocks, pansies, mignonette, columbines, forget-me-nots and love-in-a-mist. Now, our desire is for the flowers which seem to be chorusing the news that a wealth of novel experiences will soon be falling to our lot. Manners put the break on a greedy instinct that tempts us to make the most of our limited time and complete freedom—we begin to pick single specimens of choice blooms; whereupon our guide breaks off some big sprays from a gardenia bush, distributes them, and with a wide sweep of the arm sug-

## Panama

gests that there is not the slightest reason for us to be helping ourselves so modestly.

In a jolly-boat, which is being made to live up to her name, and which looks as if she were carrying us off to take part in a Battle of Flowers, we go back to the steamer. Our cabins and the dining-tables are soon richly decorated with stephanotis, orange-blossoms, camellias, cherry-pie, and many a sprig, spray and streamer bearing bright-hued, sweet-scented blooms, which are none the less pleasing because we are ignorant of their names.

The flowers which have replaced those brought from England are in harmony with a general rise of spirits among the passengers. Not that life on the steamer has previously been at all dull, but people have been amusing themselves, and their own particular friends, by the help of such hobbies as reading, chatting, and a game of cards or chess. All experiments in the way of forming new acquaintances have been hampered by shyness and reserve.

But by high-tea time to-night the children have made some discoveries that call for common discussion and general rejoicing—the nice Captain has said they may start paddling to-morrow morning whilst the decks are being swabbed ; the tall officer (heated discussion as to whether he is the Chief, Second or Third) has promised to rig up a swing ; the jolly man with a bald head is going to get up some Juvenile Athletic Sports—running round the deck, a sack-race, chalking the pig's eye, and that sort of thing. There are to be prizes, too, lots of prizes. Where will the prizes come from ? Why, from the barber's shop, of course. Can it really be possible that Jimmy has been on board all this time without discovering the barber's shop, almost next door to his own cabin, where you can buy



## The Way to Panama

sweets, toys and all kinds of quite decent things—lots of them real silver.

Equally excited are the grown-ups who hasten to the saloon when the bugler sounds the call for dinner. Not only is everyone ready to do justice to another excellent table-d'hôte meal, but everybody is anxious to meet everybody else so as to find out how much truth there is in the rumours that have been flying round about a Fancy Dress Ball, with prizes for the best costumes made on board, a Concert, and numerous other festivities.

To-day the sun has begun to get into everyone's blood. To-morrow morning all the passengers will be wearing summer clothes, and talking together as though they had known each other for years; officers will have discarded serviceable-looking serge uniforms for holiday-looking "white ducks"; and the deck steward will be bringing round ice-creams instead of beef-tea for intermediate refreshment.

### CHAPTER V

#### THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA

A MERRY-GO-ROUND week has passed, and now, twelve days after leaving Southampton, we are in the very near neighbourhood of the West Indies. The island of Barbados is in sight, but yonder shore is a few miles farther away than it looks. Whilst we are getting into port there will be time for me to remind you of the circumstances which led to the discovery of the New World, and brought about a stirring series of events in connection with the portion thereof which is known as the Spanish Main. The West Indian islands have played an important part in the Panama Canal enterprise; and we shall

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soon be sailing along the coast of the Spanish Main, which was the scene not only of many famous exploits in the history of Spanish America, but of the discovery of a new ocean which gave birth to the idea of a Panama Canal. So I am sure you will agree with me that there could be no more suitable opportunity than we now have for a chat about Columbus and the far-reaching effects of his explorations.

Cristoval Colon, popularly known as Christopher Columbus, was born at Genoa in, or about, the year 1435. From his infancy he showed a passion for the sea, and quite an extraordinary taste for geometry, astronomy, and everything connected with navigation. He was sent to a school in Pavia, and there, at the express desire of his parents, he was allowed to devote most of his time to the subjects which particularly interested him. At the early age of fourteen he went to sea. After having made several voyages, both in the Mediterranean and the Northern Seas of Europe, he went, in 1470, to live at Lisbon, which was then the most famous European centre for naval exploration.

For more than half a century the little kingdom of Portugal had been winning renown as the pioneer in naval improvements, the discoverer of new lands, and the searcher for new sea routes. For this distinction it was indebted to Prince Henry of Portugal, a nephew of King Henry IV. of England. Prince Henry was entrusted with the administration of Portugal's naval affairs in the early part of the fifteenth century. He continued to burn the midnight oil over the study of mathematics and geography; mixed with the Moorish merchants of Africa in order to get as much information as possible from them; made numerous improvements in the art of shipbuilding;



*Photo by Marine, Panama*

TOWER AT OLD PANAMA



## The Discovery of America

fired his countrymen with an enthusiastic appreciation of the mariner's compass, and taught them how to reckon latitude and longitude by the help of the stars ; gathered around him naval adventurers from all parts of the world ; founded the town of Sagrez, and, in 1418, fitted out in that port the first exploring expedition that ever sailed from a European base. Owing to his able administration as a sea-lord Portugal discovered Madeira and the Azores.

Columbus married the daughter of one of Prince Henry's most distinguished captains, and his wife brought him a rich dowry in the form of her father's journals and charts. He studied these fascinating documents until he thoroughly understood them, made several voyages to Madeira and the Portuguese settlements in Western Africa, and gradually won fame as the greatest navigator of the age.

From his early youth he had been bent on discovering a sea route to India. All the great sailors in those days had that same ambition at heart, but from the moment the Portuguese passed Cape Verde and found the coast of Africa bending eastwards, general opinion favoured the belief that the sea route to India had already been partly tracked. Hence nearly all naval adventurers wanted to follow round the coast of Africa, for they were convinced that this was the most direct way into the Indian Ocean. But Columbus thought differently. His idea was that the shortest route to India would be found by steering westwards. The idea, which came to him when he was a child, originated in his belief that the world was round, and was fostered by the legends of ancient geographical writers, who had very exaggerated notions about the size of India. As the child developed into the man, a pet

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fancy became a haunting conviction. Mature thought and considerable seafaring experience made Columbus feel so positive that he could quickly reach the East by sailing to the West, that at last he could no longer resist the desire to seek practical proof of his theory. His patriotic heart prompted him to give his own country the first chance of reaping the benefits that would result from the discovery of a new trade route. He journeyed to Genoa and put his idea before the Senate. But as he could not arouse sufficient enthusiasm in his native land to obtain the help he needed for fitting out an expedition, he went back to Lisbon and laid his project before the King of Portugal. Prince Henry and his royal master and father, King John I., had now been dead for some years, but the new King, John II., was vigorously pursuing their naval policy. Under his patronage the explorer Bartholomew Diaz had just discovered the Cape of Good Hope. Columbus had every reason to believe that King John II. would, in the name of Portugal, jump at the chance of being his patron, too. But the King argued that the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope went far towards proving that a way could be found round Africa to the East ; that by encouraging further explorations on the old plan, which had produced a considerable amount of evidence to support the belief that it was practicable, Portugal might very soon have India within its grasp ; that Columbus's scheme, on the other hand, was purely speculative, although it sounded plausible and was very interesting.

Columbus next sought help in Spain, which country was just realizing the new power it had acquired by the union of the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile, through the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella. Ferdinand





STARLIGHT IN PANAMA BAY.



# The Discovery of America

and his courtiers scoffed at the great navigator's theory; but Isabella, who took a keen interest in the maritime enterprise of the age, and who was anxious that all the honour and profit from discoveries should not go to Portugal and Italy, came to the conclusion that Columbus's prospects of success were sufficiently good to justify her in making the private speculation of fitting out a small expedition for him. That decision, due to Isabella's ambition, enlightened outlook, and generosity, was the origin of the vast, rich and powerful possessions which Spain acquired in the New World, and of Spain's famous career as an Empire-builder. If Isabella had not been so keenly alert to Spain's interests, the British Empire might now include a considerable portion of South America. For before starting for Spain Columbus sent his brother to England to put before King Henry VII. the scheme for tracking a western passage to the East, and there is reason to believe that Henry was giving the project favourable consideration at the time Isabella actually determined to support it with funds from her private purse.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA (*continued*)

THE preparations for Columbus's departure were carried on in the port of Palos, on the coast of Andalusia. From that port he set sail on the 3rd of August, 1492, in a hundred-ton boat; two other similar cockleshells made up his entire fleet. He followed the known route to the Canary Islands, then steered westwards into the unknown waters of the Atlantic.

From the outset his sailors were troubled by fears.

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Terror even goaded them into mutiny ; they wanted Columbus to put back, and the dauntless navigator had great difficulty in persuading them to help him in his quest a little longer. Fortunately, land was sighted before fear could again lead the sailors into open rebellion. The joyous discovery was made early on the morning of the 12th of October, and within a few hours from the time when the good news rang through the ships Columbus was setting foot on the shores of the New World. He had reached one of the islands in the group now known as the " Bahamas." He found himself in a well-watered wilderness of tropical jungle, which was inhabited by tawny-skinned people. The natives seemed to be very poor ; nevertheless, they were wearing thin plates of gold as ornaments. In a dumb-show conversation Columbus learnt that the precious metal was obtained from somewhere to the south ; whereupon he sailed away to look for the treasure land. His next discovery was Cuba, but as gold did not seem to be very abundant there he resumed his voyage, and so came to Hayti. As that island showed numerous signs of being able to yield considerable wealth, Columbus erected a fort thereon and garrisoned it with members of his crew. Then he set sail for Europe.

When Columbus arrived back at Lisbon the King of Portugal gave him a great reception. But it was in Spain, naturally, that he was greeted as a hero for whom no praise could be too high, no reward too great. There was no need for him now to beg for a ship in which to go exploring. On the contrary, Spain begged him to take command of a second expedition to the West, and the moment he agreed preparations for his departure were commenced.

## The Discovery of America

Columbus started from Cadiz on a second expedition on the 25th of September, 1493, taking with him some Spanish settlers for Hayti. During this voyage he discovered a number of islands in the Caribbean Sea, several of which are now included in the British West Indies.

During his third voyage, begun on the 30th of May, 1498, Columbus landed on the island of Trinidad. Upon leaving there he again steered an experimental course, which brought him to the near neighbouring mainland.

England, however, and one of his own countrymen had forestalled him in the discovery of the American Continent. For in 1497 John Cabot, a seaman of Genoese birth, and his son Sebastian sailed from Bristol with an English crew to seek an Atlantic route to the East. They held a patent for Western discovery from Henry VII., sailed under the British flag, and were authorized, as the King's officers, to set up the British colours on any new land they might find. This expedition was England's first attempt at exploration, and it resulted in the discovery of Newfoundland on the 24th of June, 1497. But the discovery by Columbus of the South American mainland, following on his discovery of the neighbouring islands, enabled Spain to become very powerful in the New World, and to derive vast wealth therefrom, long before England followed up the Cabots discovery. It was not until the days of Drake that England again turned her attention to America.

Later on we shall be talking about Drake, and many other explorers and buccaneers who performed daring deeds in the West. Meanwhile, I want you to remember that, although we are talking about the newly discovered lands under their well-known name of "America," for many years they were believed to be western extensions

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of Asia. Columbus died with the conviction that Cuba was part of the Asiatic mainland.

Columbus first set foot on the American continent in the region now known as Venezuela. But shortly after this triumph he returned to Spain—as a prisoner in chains. His fame had aroused much jealousy; the adventurers who had joined in his expeditions were discontented because they had not found gold lying about in big nuggets; by cruelty the colonists in Hayti had driven the peaceful natives into making war on them, and Columbus had been saddled with the blame. When the King of Spain sent a Governor out to Hayti with orders to arrest its discoverer the moment he again touched at that island, many people rejoiced in the belief that they had accomplished the downfall of the now much hated Columbus. But the great explorer managed to clear his character, and once more he became a popular hero.

Columbus undertook a fourth voyage in the interests of Spain. Upon this occasion he sighted land in the neighbourhood of Nicaragua, Central America. On the 14th of September, 1502, he doubled Cape Gracias á Dios, and went on shore to explore a region to which he gave the name of Cerabora. From the natives there he learnt that gold was to be found in abundance in Veragua, a district away to the east. This news made him hasten to put to sea again. He sailed along the coast of the country now called Costa Rica, and came to the Chiriqui Lagoon. Somewhere in the vicinity of that lagoon Columbus first set foot on the Isthmus of Panama, on the 2nd of November, 1502.

Whilst reconnoitring off the Panamian coast Columbus was driven by a storm to seek shelter at a small island; as the spot where he found anchorage had an abundance

## The Discovery of America

of fruits, fish and game he called it Puerto de Bastimento—a place of supplies. A few days later he was once more cruising in the open sea, but he had not travelled many knots before another fierce gale forced him to put in to the mainland. To the haven he then had the good luck to find he gave the very appropriate name of Retrete. From Retrete he sailed westward to the mouth of a river which the Indians called Quiebra; that river, to which Columbus gave the name of Belen, now forms part of the boundary between the provinces of Colon and Veragua. At the mouth of the Belen he turned back, and sailed eastwards as far as the islands of the Mulatto Archipelago, in the Gulf of San Blas, stopping on the way at the spot which is now the site of Portobelo. After making several journeys backwards and forwards along the coast of Panama he returned to Spain, in 1504. Illness had brought him to the verge of a breakdown, and his enemies had again got the ear of the King, who was only too ready to find any excuse for not paying the reward he had promised to Columbus. The great explorer was too ill to fight for his rights. He died in seclusion on the 20th of May, 1506. His enemies had even triumphed to the extent of associating the country he had found with the name of Amerigo Vespucci, who only followed where Columbus led. But after his death his friends proved more powerful than his foes. "Columbus gave a new world to Spain" was engraved on his monument, and was the motto of his descendants.

Columbus believed that he had reached India. Herein lies the explanation of the name "West Indian Islands." And for the same reason all the aborigines of America are commonly called "Indians."

# Panama

## CHAPTER VII

### PANAMA AND THE NEGRO

OUR steamer has just dropped anchor off Bridgetown, the capital of the British West Indian island of Barbados. She will be stopping in port long enough for us to make an excursion ashore, but we must not leave the ship until the doctor has been on board to see that we are not "infectious," and the harbourmaster to satisfy himself that we are not "undesirable aliens." Meanwhile, plenty of amusement will be provided for us by "Ten little nigger boys," and a brigade of adult darkies who have come out in small boats to meet the liner.

The children are remarkably clever divers, as you will soon see if one of you will give the signal for which they are chousing. A penny will start the show. Yes, throw it into the water, anywhere you like, and the farther away the better will be the fun. Look at the youngsters racing along in their home-made skiffs, with their eyes fixed on the flying coin. A second later, and the coin has disappeared—so have the boys. Now curly black heads are popping up into the sunshine ; someone must have found the penny, for the pickaninnies would not come to the surface whilst there was a chance of making money below. See, there is the prize-winner, he is just banking the penny in his mouth. Little folks on the ship do not find any difficulty in persuading fathers and mothers to give them coppers to throw in the sea ; grown-ups join in the flinging of the largess, coins are sent flying, often after a make-believe start, in all directions, and the diving exhibition becomes more and more exciting.

The older darkies, in charge of rowing boats which

## Panama and the Negro

look very trim in comparison with the children's home-made craft, are touting for passengers ; at the same time they are so vigorously trying to do each other out of the chance of being first to mount the gangway ladder that we begin to fear all the boats will be capsized before we are ready to go ashore.

What a hubbub ! Little and big darkies are shouting at the top of their voices, and talking nineteen to the dozen. Their antics and pranks make the general meaning of their chatter quite plain ; but no wonder you are all puzzled as to what language or languages they are speaking. I can assure you that every one of them is talking English. But English as she is spoken by a West Indian negro sounds like a foreign tongue to untrained ears. By the time we have come to our journey's end you will have grown fairly familiar with the lingo in which we are now being asked for pennies and patronage, for we are going to see a great deal of Little Black Sambo and his kith and kin. There are thousands of negroes at work on the Panama Canal, and in common with all their West Indian friends and relations they have a horror of silence. When they are not talking they are singing—folk songs occasionally, but hymns with a refrain are more popular. And in talking—or writing—they never use a short word if they can possibly make shift with a long one, and show marked ability for steering clear of a simple, straightforward sentence.

The Negro race was introduced into the New World by the Spaniards because the native Indians were not strong enough to endure the hardships of serving the colonists and explorers. In the early expeditions into the interior the Indians were used as carriers, and hundreds, thousands in some parts it is said, died from the effects of being

## Panama

overworked, overloaded and roughly treated. A threatened dearth of drudges and beasts of burden led Spain into pressing the African native into her Empire-building service. Shiploads of negro slaves were sent to the West Indies, Panama, and numerous other centres of Spanish colonization ; as a result of the slave traffic, the bulk of the population in Spanish-American territory soon consisted of blacks. By the time slavery was abolished the majority of the negroes in America were many generations removed from African-born ancestors. The freed blacks looked upon the country in which they had been born as their homeland, and when they understood they could go where they chose, they showed a strong preference for staying where they were. Hence, negroes and coloured folk are more numerous than white people in many parts of the American continent and in all the West Indian islands.

When the Barbadian boatmen are allowed on board they begin a wily search for greenhorns who do not know the regulation fare to the shore. All the people on the ship seem to be familiar with the tariff. The boatmen have had countless opportunities of learning that British and American visitors to the West Indies have occasionally been away from home before ; but no amount of experience can teach a Barbadian negro not to be surprised at finding anyone who knows as much as he does ; he is the most enterprising of West Indian blacks, and the most uppish. When, at last, the boatmen's demands drop somewhere near to being reasonable, and bargaining becomes general, we come to terms for the return journey. A few minutes later we are landing at Bridgetown.





*H. A. Richards, Colon.*

PANAMANIAN POLICEMEN AND SHOEBLICK.



# Panama and the Negro

## CHAPTER VIII

### PANAMA AND THE NEGRO (*continued*)

THE island of Barbados is slightly larger than the Isle of Wight. It is very flat and has only a few beauty spots ; so far as scenery is concerned, it is the least attractive of the West Indian islands. But in many respects Barbados is the peer of its more beautiful neighbours, and it has won distinction above them all as a health resort. The soil is very fertile and the land has been remarkably well cultivated ; sugar-cane is the principal crop, and the prosperity of the little island has been largely the result of British enterprise in connection with the sugar industry. But during the last few years the Panama Canal has played an important part in advancing the interests of Barbados.

Bridgetown abounds in signs of the island's prosperity. As we wander in the neighbourhood of the wharves we have to be very careful to keep out of the way of the " spider-men," who are running towards the quay, at break-neck speed, in the shafts of skeleton carts, each of which is loaded with a hogshead of sugar. A delicious smell of toffee lurks in the air. We are shown over a warehouse that is stocked with sugar, and we pass many others that have a similar store of riches. In the principal streets we notice several big shops. Here and there we espy imposing-looking public buildings. There are white people driving about in carriages. Among the swarms of coloured folk in the streets there are no beggars.

You can understand, now, that sugar may have had a great deal to do with making this town what it is, but you are wondering how the Panama Canal can have influenced

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its fortunes. Here are a few hints which will enable you to spot several signs of that influence, and to realize the way in which it has worked :

“ In like manner as the Demerara gold-digger toils in a half-clad, half-starved condition in the distant gold-fields of Guiana, in like manner as he forgets his troubles and goes the pace immediately he returns to the haunts of civilization, so does the Barbadian toil and starve in the Canal Zone, so does he forget, or seem to forget, his recent hardships, on his arrival at Barbados after a spell of hard work, and in a similar way does he start to be a swagger fellow, whose presence makes the stores in Broad and Swan Streets hum with quickened trade. . . .

“ The dry goodsmen in Bridgetown are not one whit behind each other in catering for the tastes of the interesting individual under notice, who purchases things which he needs, things he may need, and things which he will never need with unimpeachable impartiality. . . . His soul dearly loves such joy as the possession of a suit of flaring tweeds brings with it—something with a pattern which seems to say ‘ come and have a game of chess ’ ; and his cup of happiness overflows if such minor blessings as a gaudy neckcloth decorated with a brass pin and an imitation Panama hat are thrown into the bargain.

“ There is another kind of hat which has completely captured his fancy, a variety of soft drab felt of the ‘ planter ’ pattern, but having the distinctive virtue of possessing two rims, one lying over the other. Our most estimable friend turns one rim up and the other down, and—well, ‘ there you are, ’ as the drygoodsmen say in mock admiration when they take him aside and dress him up like a Christie Minstrel. In Panama an improvised sweat-rag does fairly well as a handkerchief,

## Panama and the Negro

and still more frequently the perspiration is removed from the toiler's brow with a masterful scoop of the thumb, but the same individual once returned to Barbados must wipe his face with tinted silk, or with what he thinks is silk, because his friends in Broad Street and Swan Street tell him so—not on oath, though. One handkerchief is not enough; moreover, he must have three. One protrudes in an aggressive-looking, hornlike taper from his breast-pocket; another is deposited in his hat-crown, the edges showing around the wearer's head here and there to betray its existence; while the third handkerchief is knotted negligently around the neck and is useful in hiding 'tide-marks' of trickling perspiration on the hard-worked celluloid collar; and occasionally even a fourth coloured handkerchief, used to hail a passing friend from a tram-car bench or a cab seat, is not an unheard-of luxury. And then, too, his boots must be stylish, even though they make him swear, then limp, then swear and limp, and finally send him home with his feet innocent of boots, which he carries in his hand for comfort's sake. . . .

“The returned Panama Canal labourer is an uncommonly vain fellow, and his vanity feeds largely on his imagination, which is of a sprightly enough kind. As he struts along in all the glory of a gay tweed suit, a cylindrical collar and a flaring necktie, one can see him smiling complaisantly to himself now and then, as he glances down at this fine raiment. For once the characteristic Barbadian shrewdness seems to die out or sink into a dormant condition. The empty flattery piled on him by the active salesmen in the stores seems to get upon his nerves and make him addle-headed. While the mood lasts he is a conceited fool of the first water, who will

## Panama

walk five or ten miles to make an exhibition of himself and his new clothes to some particular individual, and as he struts along one can almost see his imagination at work, flattering him into believing that all Barbados is whispering admiringly, 'There goes Mr. Cudjo Hogg from Panama.' He will surely have bought a four-shilling nickel watch and a massive copper chain, and his face is a study as, with fitting impressiveness, he draws the 'ticker' from his pocket and examines its face with a weighty frown, a performance he repeats with an interval of a few minutes. . . .

"The red-hot fortnight after his return to Barbados, with its numerous indiscretions and excesses, has made something of a hole in 'Mr. Cudjo Hogg's' exchequer. Often, by this time, his resources are entirely depleted; he climbs down to his former humble position with abject humility of spirit, and the chances are ten to one that he will be seen lurking about on the lookout for someone to buy his nickel watch and copper chain, which is a game that requires a lot of playing in Bridgetown to be even moderately successful. Next comes the sale of the much-prized clothes, and the proceeds of the last lot sold go to the examining doctor in Bridgetown for the necessary certificate of good health to enable the 'broken ship' to set sail once again for Panama.

"It would, however, be manifestly untrue to state that all the money that flows into Barbados from Panama is frittered in the manner just described. 'Panama money' is no disguised blessing in the island, and one sees evidence of its sensible application all over the colony. On yonder hill-side little board and shingle cottages, still unpainted, have sprung into existence, each being a home procured by some faithful toiler, whose remittances to wife or

## Panama and the Negro

mother or sister had arrived regularly. Those at home had pinched and thumbed the money so that there would be a surplus from the cost of living to buy lumber for the erection of a cottage when the bread-winner at the Isthmus returned home to ply hammer and saw in carrying out his darling wish. The little home erected, off he goes to Panama again, with an itching ambition to become also the owner of the land on which he has built his house. Sometimes the case is that of two young people who wish to get married but lack the means for the initial outlay. Comes the answer to the problem, 'Go to Panama.' 'Panama Money,' has worked miracles at Barbados and made paths smooth which would otherwise have been hard and thorny.

"Visit the money order department of the Bridgetown Post Office when remittances from Panama are being cashed. What a scene is this, and what a crush, and what a stream of money we see pouring over the counter into the pockets of the people. This class of money order business has outgrown its customary accommodation, and special arrangements have had to be made to meet the increased volume of business; and the services of the police have been requisitioned to control the surging stream of eager people awaiting their turn to get their money orders cashed.

"As one observes the continuous payment of money to the people, the extent of emigration from Barbados to Panama is in some measure realized, also the extent to which the island's labour market is over-manned to be able to spare so many labourers of a class who comprise the bone and sinew of the population, and all this without any marked effect on the labour supply. Barbados has been able to spare at short notice thousands of her workers

## Panama

without the residue gaining in the slightest measure any increase in wages which one might, not unnaturally, expect to result from emigration on such wholesale lines. It would be saying too much to assert that local enterprise has in no measure been hampered by the exodus to the Isthmus. Local enterprise has been hampered ; in some cases it has been extensively hampered ; there can be no doubt about that ; but judging the matter in the light of the generally accepted doctrine, 'the greatest good for the largest number,' emigration to Panama has been to Barbados as great a blessing as it would be a curse to colonies differently circumstanced in respect to their labour supply."\*

In many ways this sketch is typical of the influence of the Panama Canal in the Making on the West Indian islands as a whole. From many of the islands big batches of coloured labourers have emigrated to Panama to work for the American "bosses." Hardly any of them have ever before been farther away from the shanty in which they were born than a near neighbouring sugar, cocoa, cotton or banana plantation. The vastness of the Canal works, the wonderful performances by the machinery, and the war which men are waging against Nature strike wonder into the hearts of people who have travelled far and seen many of man's most marvellous engineering achievements. It is not at all surprising that every negro who goes to play an active part in such an undertaking soon feels that he is indispensable to the success of the job ; and that just as soon he begins to dream of going home for a holiday, when he has made a bit of money,

\* The author is indebted to Mr. George H. H. McLellan, editor of the *Barbados Illustrated Weekly* for permission to quote from "Panama Money" in his book "Some Phases of Barbados Life."



## The Spanish Main

and showing his friends what an important person he has become—in his own estimation. “Mr. Cudjo Hogg from Panama” may be met with in any of the islands; and in any of the islands may be seen signs of “Panama Money” having been put to good use. But owing to the density of the population of Barbados, and the ambitious character of the Barbadian negro, it is in Barbados that the signs of the influence of “Panama Money” are particularly numerous and striking.

### CHAPTER IX

#### THE SPANISH MAIN

THERE is a large crowd of steerage passengers on our ship when she leaves Bridgetown. These newcomers are Barbadians, who are going to Panama. The majority of them are men, but some of the recruits for the Canal labour force are taking a wife and family with them. The party has reserved quarters on the lower deck. A few of the darkies have provided themselves with a hammock, but most of them have brought a deck chair, in which lounging accommodation is afforded by a gaudy piece of carpet. Their clothes are made after a Western fashion, but suggest an Oriental love of colour without any of the good taste in finery which is common among Eastern races. However, a darkie in workaday costume generally looks picturesque in this sunny part of the world.

At Port of Spain, in Trinidad, our next port of call, we make the acquaintance of East Indians. These people are quite different from the aboriginal Indians of America; they are natives of India, belonging to what is commonly

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known as the "coolie" class, who come to Trinidad to work on the sugar and cocoa plantations. Their passage is paid, and they are employed under a system that is very much like apprenticeship. When they have served their time as indentured labourers they are under no further obligation to the planter. A few of the coolies have re-emigrated from Trinidad to Panama ; but they are not, as a rule, sufficiently muscular for the Canal work. However, we shall see some East Indians among the motley population of the Canal Zone. The women will be wearing their national costume of pretty draperies, nose rings, silver anklets and numerous bangles, as is the custom in Trinidad ; but the men will have discarded their draperies for trousers and a vest.

A short drive through the country around Port of Spain gives us some idea of the luxuriance of tropical vegetation. But it is not until our good ship has carried us out to sea again that we begin to understand why this part of the world is so famous for its beauty. In form, the scenery of Trinidad is a fair sample of West Indian grandeur ; in richness of clothing it is typically tropical.

In making her way from Port of Spain through the Gulf of Paria into the Caribbean Sea, the steamer hugs the shore of Trinidad, thereby affording us a series of magnificent views—mountains of volcanic formation, jungle-clad hills, palm groves, wooded valleys, plantation-bedecked plains, all basking in the sunshine beneath a gloriously blue sky.

Presently we notice there is land almost as close to the other side of the ship. Trinidad was once part of the mainland ; we are now in the neighbourhood in which volcanic disturbances isolated a peninsular portion of Venezuela, and the little islands to the west of Trinidad





*Photo by Marine, Panama*

THE FUMIGATION GANG MAKING PANAMA HABITABLE

## The Spanish Main

are the remains of the link. Only a few miles to the west of this island blockade is the coast of Venezuela, hence the part of the Gulf of Paria which we have now reached is almost completely land-locked. The straits which give access to the Caribbean Sea are called the Bocas del Dragone, meaning Dragon's Mouths. It was through one of these mouths, perhaps the very one we are now entering, that Columbus sailed soon after his discovery of Trinidad ; and our ship is steering a similar course to that which helped the famous explorer to find the South American continent. As we emerge into the Caribbean Sea the shore of the Paria Peninsula comes into view—we are getting a peep at the Venezuelan district in which Columbus first set foot on the mainland of the New World.

For the remainder of the journey our route lies along the coast of the Spanish Main, past Venezuela and Colombia, and by way of the north coast of the Isthmus of Panama to Colon. We are on the threshold of a theatre in which have been enacted many of the most thrilling dramas in the world's history—things that are supposed to have happened in imaginary stories of adventure are tame in comparison with the things that actually happened on this New World stage. A few of the actors are remembered by name, others merely as the "Spaniards," the "Portuguese," the "Indians," or the "English" ; and some are spoken of as great explorers or mighty conquerors, whilst others are dubbed bloodthirsty pirates or savage heathen. Differences of nationality and religion have led some critics to bid us believe one man was a villain and others to assure us that same man was a hero ; but innumerable facts tell us simply and clearly that the bulk of the actors were among the bravest of all the brave men that ever lived.

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Whilst you are on these historic waters you will want leisure and quiet for dreaming your own dreams. Very soon you shall be free to conjure up pictures of Spanish galleons sailing this sea, pirate boats chasing the treasure vessels, the Spanish Fleet wreaking vengeance on the sea-rovers, Hawkins coming along with a ship-load of slaves, Drake on his way to plunder the "Treasure of the World," Raleigh bound for El Dorado. But first I want to make sure that you know a few important facts concerning the development of Panama.

In 1501 Rodrigo de Bastida commanded an expedition to the New World, and discovered that part of the coast of the Spanish Main lying between Cape Tiburon, on the Gulf of Darien, and the port to which Columbus gave the name of Retrete on his arrival there a year later. Following in the wake of Bastida and Columbus came Alonso de Ojeda, who began to colonize the country round the Gulf of Darien, calling the district New Andalusia. He founded a town, to which he gave the name of San Sebastian, on the eastern shore of the Gulf.

Glowing accounts of the newly discovered world were received by the Court of Spain, and most of these reports were accompanied by samples of gold. So Spain gave the name of "Castilla del Oro," or "Castle of Gold" to the region between Cape Gracias á Dios and the Gulf of Darien, and sent over a governor together with several hundred colonists. Nicuesa, first Governor of the Spanish Main, founded the town of Nombre de Dios, in Panama. Owing to the unhealthiness of the site and numerous misadventures the Governor and most of the colonists died.

A new expedition was sent to the mainland. It fitted out at Hayti, and with it as a stowaway went a high-

## The Spanish Main

spirited young rascal, named Balboa, who was running away from several people to whom he owed money. When he was discovered, hiding in a cask, the Commander threatened to throw him overboard. But he had a good tale ready, and a true one, too. He had already been to the Spanish Main, with Bastida's expedition. The Commander decided that it would be well to spare the life of such an experienced stowaway ; and influenced by Balboa's stories of the gold to be found in the Darien district he steered a course for San Sebastian. When the expedition arrived at this destination they found only the deserted ruins of a town. Evidently the settlers had been obliged to flee from the Indians. Balboa told his Commander that there was a much better site for a settlement on the opposite shore of the Gulf, and thither he piloted the expedition. The Indians tried to drive them away, but were defeated, and the white men founded a new town, to which they gave the name of Santa Maria la Antigua del Darien. Then Balboa and the Commander disagreed, and the quarrel resulted in the latter being clapped into irons and sent back to Spain.

Balboa was now deputy-king of the Golden Castle. With great zeal he set about the work of exploring the interior. Under his leadership a party of picked men plunged into the Bush ; they had to cut their way through dense forest, or follow a trail which led to an Indian encampment, where there were hundreds of warriors armed with bows and arrows to dispute their way. At last they reached the territory of a very powerful and wealthy Indian chief, who received them peaceably ; his eldest son took a great fancy to the "white chief" and gave Balboa some valuable presents and some very exciting information. From his Indian friend Balboa learnt that

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back of the mountains whose highest peaks could just be seen in the far distance there was a sea, on the shores of which dwelt a rich and powerful nation, who, like the Spaniards, possessed ships with sails, and that about a hundred miles from Darien there was a temple of gold situated on the banks of a big river.

Balboa departed to look for the golden temple, but after hunting for it in vain for some time he thought he ought to return to headquarters, to see how the colonists were faring. Upon arriving at Santa Maria he found his services were badly needed to frustrate a widespread Indian plot for driving the white men out of the land. Balboa did not wait to be attacked ; he at once made war on the Indians, who were taken by surprise and defeated. Soon after he had given the natives this further proof of the white man's power, reinforcements arrived from Spain, bringing to him from the King a commission as Captain-General de la Antigua. Balboa now decided to lead an expedition southwards in quest of the sea about which his Indian friend had told him.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SPANISH MAIN (*continued*)

IN quest of the sea on the other side of the mountains of Darien, Balboa sailed from Santa Maria del Antigua on the 1st of September (old calendar reckoning), 1513, taking with him 190 of his own men, some Indians and some dogs. Five days later the expedition landed, and, with Indian guides to lead the way, plunged into the Bush to head for the mountains. On the 8th of September they arrived at the camp of an Indian chief who cheered



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them with the assurance that there was a big ocean on the other side of the mountains, gave them some magnificent gold ornaments which he said came from places on that ocean, and offered to see them well on their way towards their goal.

The Spaniards continued their march on the 20th of September, and so rough was the road that in four days they only advanced thirty miles. Then they reached a large Indian camp, whose chief showed fight; in the battle that took place the Spaniards were hard pressed before they gained the victory. From the conquered foe they learnt that they were at the foot of the last mountain to be climbed before they would behold the sea for which they were searching—we can imagine how eagerly they must have set forth to scale the slope. As they gained the summit, on the morning of the 26th of September, there were joyous cries of “The sea”—the white man had discovered the Pacific Ocean. When they reached the coast Balboa, carrying the Spanish flag, waded knee-deep into the water and proclaimed the ocean, together with the countries bounded by it, the property of his King. The gulf in which this ceremony took place was called after San Miguel; the name of “South Sea” was given to the newly-discovered waters as a whole because they lay to the south of the Isthmus of Panama, and it was a long time before the name was changed to Pacific Ocean.

Balboa sent off a small company of his men in canoes to explore the coast. He led a party which embarked for a voyage on the open sea; this bold little band of explorers discovered a group of islands where pearls were so plentiful that the oars used in the native canoes were encrusted with them. Balboa gave the name of “Pearl

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Archipelago" to these islands. After collecting a rich store of pearls and as much gold as he could plunder, the discoverer of the South Sea made his way back to Darien.

The next year there arrived at Santa Maria del Antigua one Pedrarias, who had been sent out by the King of Spain as Governor of Darien. With him came a body of 2,000 picked Spaniards to uphold his authority. Soon after Pedrarias took the reins Balboa set forth once more to look for the Temple of Gold ; after a long and fruitless search he returned to Darien and obtained the Governor's consent to another South Sea expedition. But all the time Pedrarias was helping to equip that expedition he was plotting to ruin Balboa. The Spaniards had now heard several rumours as to the existence of a great Indian Empire, which was said to be flourishing in a country that bordered on the recently discovered sea. Pedrarias felt sure that Balboa was bent on discovering that Empire, and jealousy made him anxious that the explorer should not win fresh laurels. The expedition got away before Pedrarias was able to perfect his scheme for bringing about its commander's downfall. For the second time Balboa crossed the Isthmus of Panama, and visited the Pearl Islands. But misfortune drove him back to San Miguel. Here the expedition received orders from the Governor to return ; it was to escort Balboa back as a prisoner, who was charged with being a traitor to his King and country.

Balboa was given a trial, but only, apparently, for the sake of appearances. He defiantly denied the charges brought against him, but was allowed neither time nor opportunity to prove his innocence. By the evidence of the Governor's allies he was sent to the scaffold, in 1517.

## The Spanish Main

Two years later Pedrarias founded the city of old Panama, on the Pacific coast, and in 1521 he made that city his headquarters, taking with him a large number of the Darien colonists.

About this time Cortes completed his conquest of the "golden" Mexico, thereby breaking up and despoiling the great New World Empire of the Aztec Indians. His countrymen in Panama were anxious to outrival him in fame and wealth—and was it not said that there was a flourishing Indian Empire in a country to the south? In 1525 Pizarro, who had been one of Balboa's lieutenants, sailed from Old Panama in search of another Mexico, and discovered the "golden" Peru.

The conquest of Peru by Pizarro rapidly made the city of Old Panama one of the most important places on the Spanish Main. It became the treasure depôt for all the wealth of the West coast—gold and other valuables were poured into that depôt to be sorted for shipment. To facilitate the transport of the treasure to the Atlantic coast a road was made between Old Panama and Nombre de Dios, then the principal port on the Atlantic coast of the Isthmus. The road crossed the Chagres River at Cruces, and for part of the way, at any rate, was paved, as is shown by present-day remains.

A little later, traffic was carried on by pack-mule-train between Panama and Cruces, and small vessels sailed between that river-port and Nombre de Dios by way of the Chagres River. Towards the close of the sixteenth century Portobelo became the chief port on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus, owing to its superiority as a haven.

Onwards to the middle of the nineteenth century the Isthmus was the scene of a series of exciting fights; we will talk of the influence of arms on the history of Panama

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when we visit the sites of the principal engagements. The opening up of some gold-mines in the Darien district, and the provision of primitive facilities for transporting treasure across country were the chief activities making for Isthmian development until Panama and Colon were connected by railway in 1855.

## CHAPTER XI

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE CANAL ZONE IN 1912

THE Royal Mail steamer on which we have journeyed to Colon anchors alongside the Company's own wharf. For anyone who has the interests of the Old Country at heart, a British wharf as an outstanding feature of this important harbour, on the threshold of the Atlantic entrance to the Panama Canal, is a cheery sight. A merchantman flying the French colours, a steamer on which a German band is playing "In the Shadows," and one of the fine banana-and-passenger ships of the United Fruit Company are the British liner's near neighbours in the big docks.

In a small bay lie a fleet of plebeian steamboats, which make omnibus journeys to the little trading centres on the neighbouring coast, and a shoal of Indian canoes or "cayukas" as they are called. Coloured folk are swarming aboard one of the steamboats, whose chimney is belching forth smoke. Indians and coloured folk are trafficking in the cocoanuts, ivory nuts, and bananas with which the cayukas are laden.

Colon strikes us as being in the growing stage between a village and a provincial town. On the quayside of the city, and a few hundred yards from our landing-stage, there is a square bedecked with clumps of the variegated



*Photo by H. A. Richards, City Photo Studio, Colon*

STEAM SHOVEL DISGORING



## Impressions of the Canal Zone in 1912

shrubs called "crotons" and with an array of majestic palms, which carry their plume-like heads high in the air. The main street, which is neither broad nor narrow, runs past this square on its way to the railway-station; it is bordered on one side by moderate-sized shops, on the other by an open-air market, office bungalows, and warehouses mostly of the shed type. At the back of the main street lies a network of little shops and houses. Verandas and dilapidation are the chief characteristics of the buildings. Fascinating as is the heart of the little city, we find it a welcome relief to emerge from a stifling atmosphere on to the seaside parade. In the fresh-air neighbourhood of the sea-front are the commodious bungalows where live the officials who represent foreign interests, together with a few of the superior class Panamanians. Having sampled the best accommodation that Colon can offer her visitors, we are pleased to find a first-class hotel nearing completion in this neighbourhood.

The principal needs of the inhabitants seem to be fruit, iced drinks, shiny boots, and lottery tickets. Amidst the attractive display in the numerous open-fronted fruit-shops are choice tropical products, some of which we recognize as relations of the expensive luxuries to be seen in the very superior fruiterers' establishments at home; but in spite of the aristocratic note struck by pines, avocado pears, and suchlike southern dainties, the general appearance of the Colon fruit-shops reminds us of a costermonger's barrow, which has been stocked from Covent Garden by some smart "Bill," who has the showman's gift for arranging an exhibition. Apple-chains seem to be the favourite means of decoration. Bananas and plantains, as we are not at all surprised to find, are the commonest of the products on sale; but the great "hands" of them, that

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are hanging from roofs and walls, are a somewhat novel sight. The peanut stove, which is so often to be seen on the footpath just outside the fruit-shops, makes us think of the familiar street scene at home, which is provided by the roast-chestnut seller. The whistle of the peanut stove, as it lets off steam, is quite a musical street cry.

The swinging of many a wicket gives us peep after peep into well-patronized bars, which are gaily adorned with flags and furnished café-fashion with little tables. Hawkers compete with the bars for the custom of the thirsty populace. The brightly painted handcarts which they take about the streets are of the kind commonly used by Italian vendors of ice-cream. These travelling bars are equipped with a few glasses, a bucket of water, a dishcloth, and numerous bottles containing very highly coloured liquids. The mottoes which straggle above the shelves suggest that the Panamanians have not a very keen sense of humour—as, for instance, “We trust in God.” The barrow bearing this device reminds me of the native cook at a planter’s bungalow in Malay, who wrote in letters of icing, “Prepare to meet thy God” on the cake which he made as a Christmas present for his master.

In almost every street a lottery-ticket hawker, usually a woman, has a pitch. The lottery is a regular weekly excitement; in the interests of fair play the drawing of the numbers is done by a little daughter of the people.

The “people,” or masses, include the majority of folk born on the Isthmus outside the bounds of the Canal Zone; they are of mixed descent, the principal contributors to the stock being Spaniards, Indians, and Negroes. Pure-bred, or nearly pure-bred, Spaniards make up the small aristocratic class of Panamanians.

Although, geographically speaking, Colon is situated in



## Impressions of the Canal Zone in 1912

the Canal Zone, politically it is Panamanian territory. But America has a reserved quarter in the city, and also enjoys the right to superintend the government of the republican city as regards matters—such as sanitation, or the maintenance of order during any political crisis—which have any bearing on the interests of the Canal. The same arrangement holds good for the republican city of Panama.

In Cristobal, the American quarter of Colon, we get a first peep at the mosquito-proof houses which have helped even more than mammoth machinery in the making of the Canal. In appearance they closely resemble a meat safe. Exceptional utility could alone excuse the exceptional ugliness of these human habitations. Only a thoroughly practical "boss," with the dogged determination to carry through a gigantic job at any cost, and keenly alive to the fact that the prime factor of success in such an undertaking is a healthy labour force, could have been sufficiently inspired by courage to erect such hideous buildings for the housing of all his employees, from the commanding officer to the negro navvy. The swarms of mosquitoes which inoculated the French employees in the Isthmus with yellow fever and malaria were as powerful an agent as financial mismanagement in wrecking the Franco-Panamanian Canal enterprise. When the Americans took over the work, they at once organized a Sanitary Revolution. The rest of the civilized world scoffed, or said, "Very plucky, but it can't be done," for the Canal Zone was then a renowned death-trap. But Jonathan Boss had learnt much about the wily and pestilential mosquito during his war with Cuba. Convinced that this insect was his most fearsome foe in the Isthmus, he lost no time in waging war on the mosquito throughout the

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Canal route. By tactics such as are employed in isolating valuable property within the zone of a great fire, the little beasts' means of communication with the immediate region of the Canal route were cut off; mosquitoes cannot fly far without a rest, so around places from which it was particularly desirable to keep them away, the Bush was cleared up to boundaries that could be relied on to pull them up on their journey from the interior before they could get a chance of doing mischief among the Canal-makers. Drastic measures were taken to exterminate mosquitoes throughout the region where the Canal-makers were to work and live. All the houses in Colon and Panama were thoroughly disinfected. Swamps, pools, and suchlike breeding-places beloved by mosquitoes were drained or filled up, rivers and streams were coated with oil. And all the houses erected for the working force were mosquito-proofed with wire gauze. The work of sanitation included the establishment of hospitals for the care of the sick and wounded. Also, with a view to securing and maintaining better health conditions in the cities of Colon and Panama and along the line of the Canal, numerous municipal improvements were undertaken, such as the construction of reservoirs for furnishing a good water-supply, sewerage, pavements, and a system of roads. Owing to the skilful and persevering efforts of the Department of Sanitation of the Isthmian Canal Commission, the Panama Canal region is now renowned as one of the healthiest districts in the world.

As we leave Colon by train to journey across the Isthmus, we say to ourselves that now we are going to see the Canal. We are in the parlour car, whose every comfortable arm-chair is a window-seat. Next to our compartment is the hospital car; through the open doors

## Impressions of the Canal Zone in 1912

of the corridor we get a good view of its spacious, well-equipped interior. There are no invalids on board, but nurses and ambulances are ready for duty, and the train will stop at every station *en route* to Panama in case there should be any patients for the hospital in that city—accidents will happen in the carrying out of any big engineering job, but in spite of the many dangers that threaten the Canal-makers there have been remarkably few catastrophes since the Americans took over the work.

A few minutes after leaving Colon we are in the Bush. It seems as though we must be dreaming, so curious is the contrast between the highly-civilized train in which we are travelling and the wild luxuriance of the country through which it is carrying us. Vainly we search for a sign of the Canal amidst a procession of bright-hued flowers, masses of giant leaves, and creeper-draped shrubs.

Presently our attention is beguiled from the view outside by a negro in smart uniform, who is walking the train with refreshments; his business-like manner suggests an American training, and there is a very pronounced American accent in the voice that invites us to buy "candies." We are hesitating over a purchase with the object of studying the salesman when the train pulls up, and we hear voices calling "Gatun." Promise of new excitements makes us instantly turn our faces to the window. "Gatun"—now we shall certainly get a good view of the Canal, we think. We see one negro woman balancing on her head a basket piled up with clean clothes; another squatting on the ground alongside some bananas; and some shanties on which are written in rickety letters "Billiard Saloon," "Barber's Shop," "Cool Drinks." Our eyes travel uphill to a little town—it is typical of

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the mosquito-proofed centres of civilization that have sprung up at close intervals all along the Canal line. We are at a right distance away for getting a clear and comprehensive view of the bungalows. They are all standing on stilts; the large ones, when viewed separately, are examples of the meat-safe style, the little ones remind us of dog-kennels and fowl-houses. As a group, the buildings make us think of a menagerie.

But where are the great locks and mountainous dam with which everyone associates the name of Gatun? We look out of the windows on the opposite side of the carriage, but the only sign we can see of such wonder-works is a stretch of massive concrete wall, which rises but a few feet above the ground.

From the clearing at Gatun the train plunges into forest lands. We know that from Colon to Gatun we were being hauled up an incline; and we can see that we are in the midst of mountains. How is it that this high land is very swampy, when the low land through which we passed was quite dry? For mile after mile swamps are a feature of the landscape; and there are large tracts of forest that seem doomed to be submerged—the undergrowth is in the last stage of drowning, fast withering little trees are standing trunk-deep in water, among the giant trees there is many an ashen skeleton.

From the half-way station the train moves out backwards, as though it was going to return to Colon; soon we are discovering that it has manœuvred its way to a station on the opposite side of the valley, whence it once more travels onwards. We get a peep at an embankment of red-gold sand, which gags the mouth of a ravine, and at a magnificent panorama of mountains. Then the train plunges once more into dense tropical jungle. A few

## Impressions of the Canal Zone in 1912

miles ahead we have an experience that is in the nature of an adventure—on a rough-timber bridge, that has every appearance of having been knocked together for temporary service, the train crosses a wide and very deep ravine. Although it very obligingly crawls across the chasm, we only have time for a sweeping glance at the fascinating scenes which have suddenly come into view. To the right, the chasm is blocked by two pairs of giant, fortress-like gates, which form the back of a huge, double well. Massive side-walls and a dividing wall of concrete reach from the well floor to the mountain summit. On the steel frames of the two pairs of gates which are being erected at the front of the well numbers of men are at work; they look like tiny dwarfs. To the left, we get a long vista of the ravine, in whose depths little people, toy trains, and model machines seem to be playing pranks with dirt.

A little way beyond the bridge we meet a train-load of labourers; the jovial crowd of Spaniards, Italians, and coloured folk with which the open cars are packed might well be a beanfeast party. A few minutes later there dashes past us a long train of trucks, which are laden with masses of rock and loose dirt. And shortly after that diversion we are alighting at Panama station.

You are disappointed—in crossing the Isthmus you expected to see the Canal from beginning to end of its course; you are thinking that, although the journey through the Bush has been a novel entertainment, it has not afforded you a single glimpse of the channel of the famous waterway, and that the one good view it revealed to you of some gigantic locks, which did not seem to have any connection with an artificial channel, cannot persuade you to believe that all the towns you have passed are peopled with Canal-makers.

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You will be very surprised to hear that you have seen a great deal of the two most wonderful sections of the Panama Canal—the Gatun Lake and the Culebra Cut. Those mysterious swamps among the highlands were the Gatun Lake in the making by the gradual rise of the barricaded River Chagres. That great chasm over which the train passed was not, as it looked, a natural ravine, but the big ditch, known as the Culebra Cut, which has been hewn through the giant bodies of rocky mountains.

The train journey across the Isthmus only takes about two hours. Whilst the Canal is in course of construction, anyone who has the good fortune to visit the Isthmus should make that journey at least half a dozen times. And excursions within the actual channel of the Canal, such as we are going to indulge in, will emphasize the attractions of a train trip that can afford numerous views of country which will soon be submerged, of towns that will speedily be cleared away from the track of the rising waters, and of scenes in the everyday life of the Canal-makers, most of whom will shortly be going back to the different parts of the world whence they came to work on the “big job.”

### CHAPTER XII

#### IN THE DAYS OF THE BUCCANEERS

As the railway journey between Colon and Panama is so interesting, cheap, and comfortable, we shall make our headquarters alternately at which ever of the two cities happens to be the more convenient starting-place from which to proceed with our programme.

We are now going to make some excursions that will help us to understand the general condition of the





OUTSIDE A CHURCH IN THE MODERN CITY OF PANAMA.



## In the Days of the Buccaneers

Isthmus of Panama when the Canal was started by the French ; during these trips we shall talk about the history of the Isthmus onwards from the time when Old Panama city became one of the richest and most famous places on the Spanish Main, owing to its favourable situation as a distribution port for the wealth of the west coast of South America.

On the first of these expeditions we are setting forth from Colon by launch, and our destination is Portobelo, which has many historic associations, and some ruins to carry us back to the days of long ago. Among the memorable and tragic events which happened at Portobelo was the death of the greatest of Elizabethan sailors, Sir Francis Drake.

Although contemporary European Powers were envious of the growing wealth of Spain, no nation challenged the supreme power of the New World to prove whether she could retain by might the lands which she claimed by a "find 'ems, keeps 'em" right of title. But numerous adventurers, acting individually, tried either to relieve Spain of some of her plunder, or to share in the trade with the rich Spanish Colonies. As the Spaniards claimed the sole right of trading with the whole of America, except Brazil, which belonged to Portugal, they regarded as pirates any foreigners who dared to sail in New World waters. Two of the principal adventurers whose exploits undermined the power of Spain as an Empire builder were Francis Drake and Henry Morgan.

Francis Drake, who was born in 1540 near Tavistock, in Devonshire, was the son of very poor people. At an early age he was apprenticed to the master of a small coasting vessel. In 1565 he sailed to the Spanish Main, and the experience fired him with the ambition to make a

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bid for fortune in a part of the world where there were boundless opportunities for daring exploits that might lead to wealth and glory. In 1567 he sailed under Hawkins, who was making an enormous income by trading in slaves with the West Indies. But at last Spain managed to wreak vengeance on that prosperous foreign competitor in the slave traffic. Hawkins was attacked by the Spanish Fleet, and badly beaten. Two of his smaller vessels managed to escape to England; of one of these Drake was in command.

But although Drake determined to have nothing more to do with the slave trade, he busied himself with new schemes for winning treasure from the Spaniards. Strictly speaking, he was now filled with the desire to become a pirate; but as King Philip of Spain persecuted Protestants, Drake considered that by plundering the Catholic Monarch's rich colonies he would not only be doing himself a good turn, but would be serving England and championing the Protestant cause. In 1572 he sailed, with two small vessels, as captain of a pirate band which was bent on sacking Old Panama. Upon reaching Nombre de Dios the expedition was attacked by the Spaniards. During the conflict Drake burned Portobelo, and captured and destroyed many Spanish ships. A view of the Pacific, which he obtained by climbing a tall tree, filled him with an eager longing to sail an English ship on its waters, but before he had time to set about realizing this ambition he was seriously wounded. His men carried him to the boats, and the expedition escaped to England. Drake was enthusiastically welcomed home as a hero.

In 1577 Drake started on another voyage to the New World, taking with him five small vessels. He sailed

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down the east coast of South America and through the Straits of Magellan. But as he entered the Pacific a terrible gale arose, and when the storm abated his ship was alone on the strange waters—the other four vessels had either foundered or were making for home. Drake sailed along the western coast of South America, plundering as he went, and securing much valuable booty. Leaving Cape Francisco he sailed homewards across the Pacific, and after a long and adventurous voyage he reached England, thereby achieving the feat of circumnavigating the globe. Queen Elizabeth led the applause with which he was greeted home; she visited him on board his ship and knighted him. The magnificent welcome he received was inspired not only by natural appreciation of pluck and national pride in a great sailor, but by the patriotism that calls for an outburst of thanksgiving at the discovery of the right man to tackle an enemy at a critical period—the fearsome Spain, with her formidable fleet, was menacing England.

All of you, of course, are familiar with the story of how Drake was sent to Cadiz to stop the preparations which Spain was making to invade England; of how in one night he burnt, sank, and captured so many of the enemy's vessels that the fleet had to postpone sailing, thereby giving England considerable time for making further preparations to defend her shores; and of how, when the "Invincible" Armada eventually appeared off the Lizard, Drake calmly finished playing a game of bowls on Plymouth Hoe, then, boarding his ship, led the British fleet to the victory which made England "Mistress of the Seas."

In 1595 Drake again set sail for South America. Once more he landed on the Isthmus of Panama; this time the

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Spaniards who attacked him killed so many of his men that he decided to retreat. He reached his ship safely, but fell ill with dysentery, and died, off Portobelo, on January 28, 1596. His body was placed in a leaden coffin and committed to the deep.

When England was encouraged by the ambitious Queen Elizabeth to carry on the work of Empire-building that had been begun by the Cabots, the policy for colonial expansion was more in favour of founding new colonies in America than of fighting for the possession of the Spanish colonies. To the north of Mexico Spain had not settled in any of the districts on the Atlantic coast ; whilst Drake was playing pirate in South America, Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Sir Walter Raleigh were doing pioneer work in laying the foundations of Canada and the United States. And although Drake, transformed by patriotism and opportunity from a buccaneer into a highly respectable Admiral, undermined the power of Spain, his countrymen of his own and succeeding ages did not make any concerted attempt to conquer the Spanish-American colonies by force of arms. They zealously pursued the policy of establishing British colonies in North America, foreseeing, doubtless, that Spain's power in the New World would naturally dwindle, and finally flicker out, when her colonies realized that she was unable to keep a firm hold on them, and when they consequently began to secede and to quarrel amongst themselves.

But although England did not trouble Spain in South America, several Englishmen added to her discomfiture during the seventeenth century by their piratical exploits. The most daring and successful of these buccaneers was Henry Morgan.

Morgan cared nothing for glory, but was game for any

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adventure that might bring him money. Morgan and his pirate band had their headquarters at Jamaica. Thence they set out in 1668 to plunder Portobelo as a first step towards looting Old Panama. A good idea of the booty they were after, and of the difficulties that had to be encountered, may be gathered from even one short extract from a history of the buccaneers' exploits, as recorded by one of the pirates :

“Portobelo is judged to be the strongest place that the King of Spain possesses in all the West Indies, excepting two, that is to say, Havana and Cartagena. Here are two castles, almost inexpugnable, that defend the city, being situated at the entry of the port ; so that no ship or boat can pass without permission. The garrison consists of three hundred soldiers, and the town constantly inhabited by four hundred families, more or less. The merchants dwell not here, but only reside for a while, when the galleons come or go from Spain ; by reasons of the unhealthiness of the air, occasioned by certain vapours, that exhale from the mountains. Notwithstanding, their chief warehouses are at Portobelo, howbeit their habitations be all the year long at Panama, whence they bring the plate upon mules at such times as the fair begins and when the ships, belonging to the Company of Negroes, arrive here to sell slaves.”

The pirates landed on the Isthmus of Panama at a spot not far from Portobelo, and under cover of night they surrounded the castle near the city. The commander of this castle and his soldiers offered a stubborn resistance, but were at last obliged to surrender ; the pirates then locked the garrison in the castle and blew up prison and prisoners. Next they fell on the city, and although the brave Governor put up a splendid defence, they eventually

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possessed themselves of his castle, too ; whereupon they fell to work at pillaging, feasting, torturing their prisoners to find out where treasure had been hidden, and destroying property. The President of Panama marched with a body of soldiers to the relief of Portobelo, but the pirates compelled the Spaniards to retreat. The miserable citizens of Portobelo then unearthed their valuables, and made up the rich ransom which Morgan demanded of them. The buccaneers sailed off to divide the spoil and make merry in Jamaica.

From the historic ruins of Portobelo we make our way back to Colon, to follow the adventures of Morgan and his men when they paid a second visit to the Isthmus, in 1670.

By a launch-trip on the River Chagres we visit Fort San Lorenzo where the pirates in crossing the Isthmus would in all probability have been forced by the desperately brave Spaniards to retreat, but for an accident that set fire to the castle.

Again we cross the Isthmus from Colon to Panama. The train frequently skirts the route by which the pirates had to fight their way through the Bush, and in a starving condition encounter the Spaniards and Indians who lay in wait for them.

From Panama we take a five miles' drive to the site of Old Panama, where Morgan and his fellow-buccaneers achieved their greatest success, in 1671, by setting fire to and sacking one of the wealthiest cities on the Spanish Main. Among the existing ruins of this historic site are the walls of the Cathedral, an old bridge, catacombs, wells, bits of the ancient city's walls, and the tower of the Castle of St. Jerome.

Two years later the city of Panama was rebuilt on the

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site which it still occupies. The modern city reminds us of Colon, but is on a much larger scale.

The provinces of Panama and Veragua that composed the Isthmus up to the beginning of the nineteenth century were among the last of the Spanish-American colonies to throw off the Spanish yoke. In 1821 they secured their independence from Spain and became part of the republic of Colombia, or, as it was then called, New Granada.

In the middle of the nineteenth century the Isthmus regained, through the discovery of gold in California, some of the importance that it lost with the fall of Old Panama and the passing of the palmy days of Spanish occupation. Californian gold was taken to Panama City, and thence by pack-mule train across the Isthmus for shipment. Numbers of desperadoes of various nationalities were attracted to the locality of the trans-isthmian route, and many travellers were robbed and murdered. The rush of goldseekers to California, the development of the carrying trade across the Isthmus of Panama, and the lack of safe and quick means of transit to meet the demands of such a trade, led some American capitalists to bargain with Colombia for the right to build a railway from Colon to Panama. The railroad, as I have already told you, was opened in 1855.

Apart from the history of the Panama Canal, there is still another important date to be remembered in connection with the history of the Isthmus. On November 3, 1903, the Panamanians succeeded in putting an end to Colombian control of their country, and issued the declaration of independence of the Republic of Panama.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### THE FRENCH FIASCO

As early as 1581 a survey was made with a view to piercing a waterway through the Isthmus of Panama. Between that date and 1875 several schemes for the construction of an Isthmian Canal were discussed by Spain, Colombia, France, and the United States, and, as an outcome of numerous surveys, various routes were suggested.

In 1875, France, encouraged by the triumphant completion of the Suez Canal under the direction of De Lesseps, again became ambitious to pierce the Isthmus of Panama. A Promotion Company was formed for the purpose of drawing up a Panama Canal scheme, and obtaining from the Colombian Government the necessary grant of land, and all such privileges as might seem necessary to a successful carrying out of the enterprise in view. After lengthy negotiations, an agreement was concluded whereby this company received numerous concessions, such as the grant of a zone of land and the exclusive right to construct a canal across the Isthmus, on condition that, onwards from a given date, Colombia should be entitled to a fixed share of the income derived from the canal, that the general route of the canal should be determined by an international commission, and that the canal should always be a neutral right of way so that in case of war merchant vessels and passenger boats could pass through unmolested.

An international commission, known as the International Scientific Congress, met at Paris on May 15, 1879, under the presidency of Count de Lesseps. As a result of discussions that extended over a fortnight, the Conference







## The French Fiasco

came to the conclusion that a sea-level canal should be constructed from Limon Bay to the Bay of Panama.

The Promotion Company then transferred its rights and privileges to the Panama Canal Company, which was chartered under the laws of France. De Lesseps was given control of the new company. One of his first acts was to purchase enough shares in the Panama Railroad Company to give his company the controlling interest in that corporation ; this was a very shrewd move, seeing that it might be found necessary to take the Panama Canal across territory owned by the Railroad Company, and that the Canal Company would certainly benefit by being able to make a first claim on the services of the trains for the transport of machinery, materials, labourers and stores.

On December 30, 1879, De Lesseps, who was then seventy-seven years old, arrived at Colon as head of a surveying party that included the chief engineers of the Dutch canals and waterways, and several famous mining engineers and civil engineers. Colon gave De Lesseps and his distinguished assistants a right royal welcome. A reception committee, consisting of delegates from the State Assembly and leading citizens, was on the quay to meet the French steamer which brought the illustrious guests. On board, where preparations had been made to receive the reception committee, there was much speechifying, toasting and bandying of compliments, whilst the pick of Panamanian musicians played stirring tunes, and the crowd on the wharfside found a hundred and one ways of giving vent to their enthusiasm. In the evening the town was illuminated, and a display of fireworks was given.

De Lesseps was at work early the next morning. He made an examination of the harbour, and sought local

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information as to the direction and force of the most boisterous winds in that part of the world; then on a carefully prepared chart he marked the location of a breakwater and the probable entrance to the great Isthmian Canal. He and his party boarded the midday trans-Isthmian train. Panama City was in gala dress for the reception of the venerable hero of Suez, who was officially welcomed at the station of the republican capital in the name of the sovereign State of Panama, and escorted to the principal hotel by a military guard of honour. On January 1, 1880, De Lesseps made an examination of the country in which would be situated the Pacific terminus of the canal route he had planned by the help of the records of previous surveys which had been supplied to the Paris Congress. Within a few days he had definitely decided on the general line of route. Meanwhile he had won the complete confidence of the Panamanians by the force of his personality, and the convincing manner in which he gave very simple, explanatory solutions of the supreme difficulties which he took the greatest pains to emphasize. There were high mountains in his way—by the sinking of wells, which could be charged with explosives that would tear up large areas of rock at each discharge, they would be prepared for transit to the trains that would be waiting to clear them off his track. The River Chagres was in his way—true, it was easier to remove mountains than to alter the course of a river, but the engineering world had long ceased to regard the construction of dams and diversion channels as experiments in the science and art of changing Nature's designs.

On January 10, 1880, De Lesseps took a large party to the neighbourhood of Culebra, to witness a momentous event. A mine had been laid in the mountain side. The





*Photo by H. A. Richards, City Photo Studio, Colon*

**PART OF THE GATUN LOCKS**

## The French Fiasco

seven-year-old daughter of De Lesseps performed the ceremony of applying the electric spark whereby a mighty blast tore a huge mass of solid rock from its foundation, and heralded the beginning of the great work of making the Panama Canal.

De Lesseps toured the United States and Europe for the purpose of inducing people to invest in the Panama Canal Company. Owing to the attractive way in which he introduced the Franco-Panama scheme to the public, large numbers of people clamoured for shares, and France would have had no difficulty at that stage of the proceedings in obtaining twice as much money as she felt she needed to get from outside contributors.

The route of the Franco-Panama Canal began at Folks River, Cristobal-Colon, followed the valley of the Chagres to Bas Obispo, passed through the Culebra mountains, followed the valley of the Rio Grande to its mouth, and went two miles out to sea in Panama Bay.

By the end of three years, De Lesseps and his staff had collected a good deal of machinery and a three-thousand strong labour force on the scene of operations ; also, the work of excavating had been begun. But by this time the labourers had considerably raised the original scale of wages and were demanding still better pay, and other unforeseen difficulties had cropped up to hamper the organizers. By 1885 it was an open secret that the Company could not complete the Canal in the stipulated time or at the estimated cost, the newspapers were crying out against the reckless extravagance which was going on in the Canal Zone, and the public who had invested in the enterprise were getting nervous. So, when, in that year, De Lesseps applied for permission to raise more funds by means of a lottery, the French

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Government sent another eminent engineer to the Isthmus to report on the situation. This expert emphatically announced that the amount of excavation which had yet to be done to complete the proposed sea-level canal would, under the best of economical management, cost a great deal more money over and above the original estimate than the public, in their present attitude to the enterprise, would be likely to subscribe ; he recommended that new plans should be got out for a canal with locks, which would not require any alteration in route. De Lesseps very reluctantly consented to the change. But there was only a poor response to the appeal for further funds which the French Government made, although very attractive terms were offered to investors. By the end of 1888 the Company was obliged to go into liquidation, and early in 1889 work on the Canal was suspended. An official investigation of accounts showed that nearly \$235,000,000 (\$1 = 4s. 2d.) had been expended. De Lesseps had estimated that the Canal could be completed for a little over half that amount.

In 1894 the "New Panama Canal Company" was formed in France, and Colombia extended the date limit by which the waterway must be finished. In 1901 this Company hinted at its willingness to transfer its assets to the United States, who had been making various inquiries with a view to obtaining sole control of any practicable route for the construction of a canal between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. A deal was carried through between the New Panama Canal Company and the United States in 1904, with the consent of Panama, which had now become a separate republic. The United States paid the French company the "bargain" price of \$40,000,000 for about 655,000 acres of Isthmian land, all the excavating



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work that had been done, machinery, boats, buildings, maps, records, and the Panama railroad. A treaty was entered into between the United States and the Republic of Panama, whereby the former were granted, together with numerous other rights and privileges, the use, occupation and control in perpetuity of a ten-miles wide zone of territory, beginning three miles away from shore in the Carribean Sea and extending across the Isthmus to a boundary three miles out in the Pacific, excluding the cities of Colon and Panama ; in return, the United States guaranteed to maintain the independence of the Republic of Panama, paid over a lump sum of \$10,000,000, and undertook to make an annual payment of \$250,000 onwards from 1913.

From an international standpoint, the most important clause in the agreement between the United States and the Republic of Panama is one stipulating that the Canal shall be neutral in perpetuity. In the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty between the United States and Great Britain (1901), the neutrality condition, under which the objection by Great Britain to a canal constructed by the United States was withdrawn, runs as follows :

“The Canal shall be free and open to the vessels of commerce and of war of all nations on terms of entire equality, so that there shall be no discrimination against any such nation.”

But the United States have shown a desire to interpret the obligations of the Hay-Pauncefote treaty in a way that would give them a commercial advantage over all other nations ; arguing that the term “all nations ” does not include the United States, who have built the Canal, they have proposed to exempt from the payment of tolls for the use of the Canal all vessels engaged in the coastwise

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trade of the United States. In this spring of 1913, Americans are having heated arguments amongst themselves over the toll-payment question ; the keen business instinct, which has found such an ingenious interpretation of the term "all nations," is battling with a high sense of national honour in the formation of American public opinion as to the meaning of both the letter and the spirit of the important compact under dispute. Hope runs high that if Great Britain and the United States cannot agree as to the meaning of the treaty between them concerning the Panama Canal, the matter will be referred to an international court of arbitration.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE COMING OF THE AMERICANS

DURING the first two and a half years after the United States undertook the construction of the Panama Canal, they were busily engaged in making preparations for construction work, and in discussing whether it would be better to make a sea-level or lock type of waterway.

Owing to the great increase in size of modern ships as compared with the largest ships that were in use, or being built, when the French planned the Canal, America determined to construct a very much wider and deeper waterway than the one that had been begun by her predecessors on the Isthmus. But apart from the vast expenditure of both time and money that would be involved by the stupendous amount of excavation necessary in the construction of a sea-level canal, there were some sound scientific objections against that ideal type of canal to be taken into account—notably, the tendency of Nature to



*Photo by Marrine, Panama*

GORGONA, CANAL ZONE



## The Coming of the Americans

wreak vengeance by landslips when man interferes with the equilibrium of Mother Earth by digging and blasting. To the lock type of canal there is always the objection that traffic is impeded and valuable time lost whilst ships are being taken in turn through the locks. And there were some very special local difficulties in connection with the construction of a lock type canal for the Panama route. The Chagres River, with its tributaries, must be used as one of the principal sources of water-supply ; but up to the point where the river would be required to feed the canal, the waters of the appropriated section of its course must be maintained at a given level, and in order to subject the river to the service of the canal its course must be altered. The variation of the rainfall in the Chagres valley, and the sharp contrasts in the form of the country, presented some very difficult problems in connection with the control of the Chagres ; for instance, the Americans had to face the disconcerting evidence of statistics which gave the low-water surface of the Chagres as one foot above mean sea-level at Bohio, forty-eight feet above mean sea-level at Obispo, which is only thirteen miles from Bohio, and ninety-five feet above mean sea-level at Alhajuella, which is only eleven miles farther up the valley ; and statistics which told of the river rising over twenty-five feet in twenty-four hours at Gamboa.

On June 24, 1905, the President of the United States appointed an International Board of Consulting Engineers to report upon the type of canal which should be adopted. On January 10, 1906, the Board presented two reports : The first, or majority report, recommending a sea-level canal, was signed by eight members, five of whom were foreign experts ; the minority report favouring a lock canal at an elevation of eighty-five feet

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was signed by five members, all of whom were American experts. These reports were submitted to the Isthmian Canal Commission, which, on February 5, 1906, sent a report to the Secretary of War recommending a lock canal. On June 29, 1906, Congress authorized the construction of the lock type of canal.

Meanwhile, the Isthmian Canal Commission had been devoting itself to the business of preparing for construction work.

I have already told you about the measures they took for making the Isthmus healthy, and of the mosquito-proof buildings they erected for the housing of staff officers and the labour force.

The Commission first sought labour recruits among the negroes, both in the States and the West Indies. From a member of the Commission who, at the outset of its organizing operations, was intimately associated with the important work of recruiting labourers, I heard some amusing stories about the way the negroes took the bait which was designed to appeal to their sense of self-importance. For instance:

Mr. Ebenezer Johnson, living in some little country place in the States, would write to the head offices of the Isthmian Canal Commission in New York applying for a job as plumber. Provided his qualifications and character were found to be satisfactory, a letter, running somewhat as follows was sent to him :

“I have the honour to inform you that you have been appointed plumber to the Isthmian Canal Commission.”

A few days later the staff officer who signed that letter was pretty certain to be having this experience :

*Clerk* : Mr. Ebenezer Johnson to see you, sir.

*Staff Officer* : Who is he? I don't know him.





*Photo by Merritt, Panama*

CULEBRA CUT



## The Coming of the Americans

*Clerk* : He says he's had a letter from you.

*Staff Officer* : Show him in.

Enter Mr. Ebenezer Johnson, attired in draught-board pattern trousers, black tail-coat, fancy waistcoat, yellow tie, green socks and patent leather shoes, carrying straw hat in one hand, letter in the other. "I am Mr. Ebenezer Johnson," he announces in a tone which, combined with his manner of walking over to the table, suggests that the Panama works are at a standstill, and that the staff officer has been eagerly waiting for him to appear and announce his readiness to proceed at once to the Isthmus to set things moving there.

A very little experience on the Isthmus taught the Americans that it would be hopeless to attempt to carry through their enterprise solely with negro labour. The black man, considering himself indispensable, was idle and uppish. The authorities decided to send to Spain and Italy for labourers. White labourers were attracted by the terms offered them, and went to the Canal Zone. Spanish and Italian gangs were put to work side by side with negro gangs. The black man soon discovered that the white man was advising his friends at home to come to Panama ; also, the black man began to realize how much work he must do in a day if he did not want to lose his job.

In addition to coping with the unhealthy condition of the Isthmus, solving the housing problem, and recruiting a labour force, the preliminary work of the Commission included :

The transference to the Isthmus of construction plant, consisting of steam shovels, locomotives, cars, pile-drivers, cranes, dredges, steamboats, barges, etc., etc.

The organization of a Commissariat Service for supply-

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ing the employees with all things necessary for their comfort and convenience.

The framing of a system of civil government for the Canal Zone, together with the establishment of courts, a police force, post offices, public works, fire stations, and suchlike civil machinery.

The increasing of the capacity of the existing railway system, by double tracking many sections of the Panama railroad, enlarging yards, and establishing communication with areas available as dumping grounds.

In short, for the purpose of carrying through the "big job" she had undertaken, America built on the Canal Zone a vast construction camp, capable of accommodating some 35,000 employees, together with the wives and families of a large proportion of the married men on the rolls; also equipped that camp, and organized for it a system of service and control calculated to make every employee a healthy, happy, loyal and efficient servant.

The form of government devised for the Canal Zone by the democratic United States is autocratic. Owing to the acquisition by the United States of the Panama railroad, and the care, springing from a keen commercial instinct, which the American Government as boss of the "big job," has taken to see that its employees are well housed and properly fed, by itself housing them free and feeding them at "cost price," some people have called the Canal Zone system of government "socialism." That description of the method by which the Zone community is ruled is contradicted by the fact that the employees have no vote, no say in the way they shall or shall not be ruled.

Colonel George W. Goethals, the Chief Engineer of the Panama Canal, in whom absolute authority in the Canal Zone has been vested since 1907, has won distinc-

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tion as an able and just autocrat, in addition to universal fame as a Master Engineer.

Colonel Gorgas, the popular Head of the Department of Sanitation, is now world-famous as the man who transformed a death-trap region into a veritable health-resort.

Prominent among other men whose names must be put high on the Panama scroll of fame are Mr. Joseph Bucklin Bishop, Secretary of the Commission, and Dr. Claude C. Pierce, the Quarantine Officer at Colon, who was the first sanitary representative on the ground.

## CHAPTER XV

THE PANAMA CANAL—AUTUMN, 1912

### COLON TO GATUN.

FROM Colon to Gatun the Canal is practically finished. By the courtesy of one of the officials we are going to make the acquaintance of this section by travelling on the famous waterway.

With our host as guide, we leave Colon harbour in a launch belonging to the Isthmian Canal Commission. As the boat emerges into the open sea to sweep round into Limon Bay, we espy the long line of a breakwater, which is being built out from Toro Point to protect the Atlantic entrance of the Canal from the storms that occasionally rage with great violence in this part of the world.

Two acetylene-gas buoys mark the boundaries of a gateway amidst the waters of the Bay; the little launch passes between them—we are on the Panama Canal.

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The man at the wheel keeps the boat within a well-buoyed passage, which is a 41-foot deep channel. When we are told that beyond the buoys on the shore side the water is only 8 feet deep, and beyond those forming the outer boundary it is but 14 feet deep, we begin to realize that we are travelling along an artificial passage, and to think of the amount of work that had to be done to scoop out such a big ditch in the bed of the Bay.

We can easily understand how the ditch was made, for some of the dredges that performed the feat are still on the scene, busily working to keep the channel in good condition. We pass an old French dredge, a barge-like monster which does its below-water gorging by means of a continuous chain of buckets, like a gold-dredge ; every time a bucket "loops the loop" it fills itself to the brim with earth, and dumps a sand-and-mud pie into the capacious hold of the boat to which the chain is attached. A little farther on we see an American suction-dredge. This very large house-boat is as carefully screened as are the shore quarters of the Canal employees. The dredging machinery sucks earth from the bed of the Bay into a pipe, which communicates with the shore ; so powerful is the suction action that refuse can be discharged on a dumping ground that is anywhere within a radius of 8,000 feet from the dredge.

In lowering the bed of the Bay there was a considerable amount of rock to be removed. This was loosened by blasting, then removed by steam shovels, which dived open-mouthed, clawed up into their jaws huge masses of stone, clenched their enormous teeth, then, having been hoisted above water, unclamped their jaws to drop a two-horse-cartload mouthful in an appointed dumping-place.

After a run of about four miles the launch reaches the

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southern shores of Limon Bay, and, steering inland, passes straight from the buoyed passage into an opening that looks like the mouth of a river. Whilst our little craft proceeds within the broad confines of an inland waterway, we notice that the banks, which were low-lying at the entrance, are gradually getting higher; also, that mountain peaks, which but a short time ago seemed isolated heights in the far distance, are now becoming connected with a fast approaching panorama of hills—evidently we are travelling through rising country. Although the waterway follows a straight course, the lines of its banks are sufficiently uneven to suggest that they were carved by Nature, and that suggestion is intensified by the magnificent tangle of tropical vegetation which barricades the boundaries up to the water's scalloped edge. We cannot help feeling that we are on the long reach of a river, albeit we are assured that the passage is a continuation of the ditch which begins in Limon Bay.

The water along which we are now journeying occupies a trench that, not long ago, was a hive of industry. Working in that trench, on dry land, were hundreds of men—Americans, Spaniards, Italians, Negroes, and Hindoos, together with a vast number of steam shovels and drilling machines; these allies had already excavated millions of cubic yards of rock and earth and still had millions more cubic yards of material to remove before the ditch they were making would be sufficiently wide and deep.

We are thinking of near-at-hand days to come, and picturing liners and merchantmen hurrying along this peaceful stretch of water which we now have to ourselves, when suddenly the launch puts in to the shore. Close ahead the passage is blocked by a remnant of land, which has

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been left to serve as a dam until the Gatun Locks are completed. We land, and set forth on a climbing expedition to view the wonders of Gatun.

Over mounds of *débris*, amidst railway sleepers and across plank-bridged gulfs, we pick our way uphill alongside the Gatun Locks. Ears and eyes are assailed by a conflict of claims on intellect and imagination. The wells of the locks are trying to awe us up by their gigantic proportions, great gates of steel and massive walls of concrete are defying us to say what likely accident could possibly wreck them, high over head there are goods-laden cars waving to us to watch them running along the tight-rope of the aerial cableway, all around us men and machines are doing novel things that entice our attention, and in the bowels of the earth there are dwarf-like creatures whose quaint antics bid us speculate on the industrial meaning of their gymnastic exercises. We want to look at all that is going on around, above and below us—we want to imagine that there is water in the wells which form the three tiers of locks, and that a big ship is going upstairs—and we have to be on the alert to keep out of harm's way, and not to get in the way of the workmen.

The locks are in pairs. Each well is 110 feet wide and has a usable length of 1,000 feet. The gates vary in height from 45 feet 7 inches to 79 feet. Ships will be taken through the locks by motor engines, which will be driven by electric power along railway lines that have already been laid down across the towing-paths. Four engines will be attached to each ship, one on either side fore and aft, so as to keep her to the middle of the locks.

The Gatun Dam across the Chagres River is situated at right angles to the locks and at the top of the hill which they climb. It crosses two valleys, which are

## The Panama Canal—Autumn, 1912

separated by a hill of 110 feet in height, now known as Spillway Hill. The Dam has "mended" a break which there was in the basin that Nature formed on the tableland between Gatun and Bas Obispo. The Gatun Dam is an American-made mountain, consisting largely of "dump" from the Culebra Cut; as sightseers who are looking at it in its finished state we can hardly believe that Nature herself did not rear this mighty earthwork at the same time as she piled up the hills to which it is riveted.

The Gatun Lake, which we saw in process of formation when we were journeying by train between Colon and Panama, will have an area of 164 square miles. Fluctuations in the lake due to the floods of the Chagres River in the rainy season will be controlled by the regulating works that are being constructed in Spillway Hill.

### THE CULEBRA CUT.

We travel through the Culebra Cut in an observation car, which is occasionally allowed to be driven over one of the railway tracks which have been laid down for the service of dirt-trains. A train-load of "dump" always takes precedence of the sight-seeing car, which may be held up for several minutes at the points to prevent a dirt-train from losing a couple of seconds on its journey to or from a dumping ground. The "Big Job" has first consideration throughout the Canal Zone. Anyone who is at all inclined to grumble over any little inconvenience caused by his own affairs being treated as matters of minor importance is entirely out of sympathy with the inspiring spirit of the "Big Job," the spirit which induces the navyy, no less than the chief engineer, to feel with pride "I am making the Panama Canal," and which has already brought the American enterprise to the verge of success.

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The Culebra Cut, commonly called the "Big Ditch," is the most difficult problem that has had to be grappled with in connection with the "Big Job."

In the Bas Obispo neighbourhood of the natural basin, which it was decided to subject to the service of the Panama Canal, the tableland gives place to mountain ranges. To reach a point where it would be possible to start dropping the Canal to sea-level, it was necessary to cut a nine-miles long ditch through rocky mountains. To make that passage, land rising to a height of over 300 feet, 400 feet and sometimes over 500 feet above sea-level must be reduced to the 85 foot level of the surface of Gatun Lake, and that level must be further reduced so as to allow the ditch, which must have a bottom width of 300 feet, to hold 45 feet of water, which is the minimum depth of water in the Canal channel through Gatun Lake.

Statistics telling the number of cubic yards of earth that have already been removed in the making of the Culebra Cut are more likely to stifle interest than to kindle enthusiasm—the figures are utterly beyond the comprehension of the most intelligent of ordinary mortals. But as from the depths of the Cut we look up to the summit of its confines, and take a sweeping glance at the surrounding mountains, we begin to realize that the vast ravine through which we are journeying was once solid earth, for the most part rock, and to get some idea of the stupendousness of the transformation task.

The French began to excavate the Culebra Cut. The Americans are following their plan of cutting out shelves, using each shelf as the working platform for widening the opening.

The entrance to the Culebra Cut at Bas Obispo is now





*Photo by Marrine, Panama*

BALBOA, AT THE PACIFIC END OF THE CANAL



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blocked by a dam, a temporary earthwork which has been constructed for the purpose of preventing the rising waters of the Gatun Lake from entering the Cut until such time as it is ready to receive them. When the Cut is finished, the body of the Gatun Lake will not be allowed to connect itself with the Culebra arm thereof by the dramatic, and probably catastrophic, rush of water that would take place were the dam removed whilst the ditch was empty. Water will be siphoned into the Cut from the great supply-basin, and the dam kept in place until the surface of the water in the Culebra Cut and that of the water in the body of the Gatun Lake have been brought on a level with one another.

From Bas Obispo we travel for some little distance on the actual bed of the ditch. But before the observation car has gone very far, we are seeing a specimen of the havoc which Nature is frequently working in the Culebra Cut—the ditch suddenly seems to take on the appearance of a dumping ground, and beneath the débris which obstructs the passage we see mangled remains of a train. Through landslips, caused by vast areas of clay playing at “slides” on the smooth, sloping surfaces of rock, and by poor quality rock breaking under the weight of the mass of material above it, enormous quantities of material frequently topple over, blocking an excavated area, choking up the drainage trenches, tearing up tracks and upsetting machinery.

In the nine miles journey through the Culebra Cut, from Bas Obispo to Pedro Miguel Lock, we see hundreds of men engaged in operations connected with both the excavation of the ditch and the re-excavation of parts that have been choked by landslips. The labourers are of various nationalities; nearly all of them wear blue

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cotton shirts, but their taste in hats and trousers differs considerably. Some of the men are in charge of steam shovels ; some are superintending drilling machines ; some ramming dynamite into the holes that have been bored in the rock ; some driving, or riding on the dirt-trains that are constantly passing us. And more than once our car is held up at a short distance from the scene of blasting operations ; an ear-splitting, as well as rock-splitting, charge goes off, the earth quakes, the smoke rolls away, we are surprised to find ourselves still sitting in the car, and feel that we now have a very good inkling of what it must be like to be in a bombardment.

### THE PACIFIC SECTION.

At Pedro Miguel we see the lock whereby a vessel, in passing through the Panama Canal from the Atlantic to the Pacific, will be lowered in one step from the 85-foot elevation to the little Miraflores Lake, on the  $54\frac{2}{3}$ -foot elevation. And in an observation car we visit the Miraflores Locks, whereby the vessel will be lowered by two steps into the sea-level channel through which she will get to Balboa, and so complete her voyage across the Isthmus. The works from Pedro Miguel to Balboa are very similar to those with which we made acquaintance in travelling from the inland entrance at Colon to Bas Obispo.

The continuation of the Canal from Balboa to deep water in the Pacific is a buoyed channel, similar to that in Limon Bay. We travel along this section in a steamer which is going to take us to the beautiful island of Taboga, otherwise known as "The Pearl of the Pacific," whither we are bound for a bathe in Pacific waters and a

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picnic among the hills. In passing through the buoyed channel we get a very fine view of the breakwater that is being constructed from Balboa to Naos Island—with material from Culebra Cut—to divert the course of silt-bearing currents that would make constant dredging necessary in the channel.

### WHEN THE CANAL IS OPEN.

The Panama Canal will afford an alternative route to that round Cape Horn. The reduction in sea distances by the new route is specially noteworthy as regards the following voyages :

Between ports on the Atlantic and Pacific seabords of the United States—saving, generally speaking, about 8,000 miles.

Between the eastern ports of North America and the western ports of South America.

Between European ports and the west coast of North, Central and South America. For instance, the reduction between Liverpool and American Pacific ports north of Panama is about 6,000 miles.

Between New York and Yokohama, via San Francisco—saving about 3,700 miles. Thus Yokohama is brought nearer to New York than to Liverpool (via Suez) by about 1,800 miles.

Between Sydney, Australia, and New York—saving about 3,800 miles. Thus Sydney is brought nearly 2,400 miles nearer to New York than to Liverpool.

Between Wellington, New Zealand, and New York—saving about 2,500 miles.

It is universally believed that the Panama Canal will revolutionize the shipping of the world and considerably stimulate commerce. But it is generally felt that the

## Panama

amount of traffic it will be able to divert from the longer routes and the amount of new trade to which it may give rise will depend on the tolls charged. Everyone in the commercial world believes that time is money, but before anyone will pay for saving time by using the Panama Canal he will have to feel convinced in his own mind that the shortest way is the cheapest, all things considered. And as the growth of commerce depends largely on freight rates, the possibilities for trade development—in such promising regions as the western coast of South America, for instance—will be powerfully influenced by the tolls charged for the use of the Panama Canal, for they will be an important consideration when shippers are fixing their charges for the transport of merchandise by the new route.

Anyone who has seen the Canal in the making must be tempted, when thinking of its future, to anticipate some of the remarks which will probably be passed by travellers getting their first introduction to the trans-Isthmian waterway as they are taken through it in the ordinary course of a voyage.

When the Canal is open, the bulk of the construction work, and all the destruction work in the way of excavation, will be under water; also, in a comparatively short time the Gatun Lake will be free of rotting vegetation and looking as if it had been in existence from time immemorial. Furthermore, the Canal zone will probably be depopulated when the "Big Job" is finished. Those of us who, having seen the Canal in the making, have the good fortune to travel through the finished waterway, will only have to forget for a moment a past experience to understand why some of our fellow-passengers are exclaiming: "I wonder why it took such a long time to

## The Panama Canal—Autumn, 1912

get this Canal job carried through,” and “I can’t see how the Americans managed to spend so much money in making this Canal,” and “I don’t see that the Americans did anything very wonderful in making this Canal—seems to me all their Biggest Job in the World talk was just Yankee swank.”

It is quite sad to think that there may be people without the necessary experience and knowledge to picture the everyday life of the Colony that once flourished “beneath” the waters and alongside the shores of the Panama Canal.

You may be interested to hear that I have asked several engineers, of different nationalities, whether they consider the Americans are justified in claiming that the Panama Canal is the biggest engineering job that has ever been undertaken. In every case the answer has been to this effect. Yes, nothing *bigger* has ever been undertaken, but several of the smaller jobs that have been accomplished are *more wonderful* engineering feats.

Every possible precaution seems to have been taken to avoid accidents. But I must confess that when I was listening to a very interesting lecture that was being given by an I.C.C. official on the ingenious safety devices, I suddenly found myself thinking of the *Titanic* and the Tower of Babel.

### CHAPTER XVI

#### PANAMANIAN COUNTRY

PANAMA is divided into seven provinces—namely, Bocas del Toro, Chiriqui, Coclé, Colon, Los Santos, Panama, and Veragua.

In the north-western province of Bocas del Toro, the

## Panama

United Fruit Company are cultivating bananas on a large scale. The Company's steamers, engaged in the New York—West Indian Service, are thoroughly well equipped for passenger traffic and maintain a regular weekly service between Colon and the port of Bocas, whence millions of bunches of bananas from the neighbouring plantations are exported annually.

To or near many of the richest and most beautiful parts of the Isthmus go the steamers of the National Navigation Company, a local enterprise which was established for trading purposes, but which is now catering for tourist traffic. Every sightseer should remember, when making inquiries about the facilities afforded by these boats, that any person's criticism of the native ideal of passenger accommodation is bound to be influenced by the individual critic's standard of comfort and convenience, and that there are some people who feel they are paying too dearly for travelling in the wilds if they have not all the luxuries of a first-class hotel at their disposal, whilst others can appreciate and make the best of any opportunity for getting off the beaten track.

At the offices of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company in Panama city, arrangements can be made for an excursion to the island of Taboga. The superintendent of the P.S.N. Co., which is a British enterprise intimately related to the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, can be relied on to organize the trip to Taboga on the lines of a luxurious picnic.

Many isolated centres of industry, together with the undeveloped regions of the Republic, can only be reached through the agency of Shank's pony, a mule, a native canoe, a guide, camping kit, and carriers.

The pearl fisheries, around the Pearl Islands, are among



## Panamanian Country

the Republic's principal sources of income ; but the grounds have been worked for centuries, and now yield a poor harvest of gems compared with the treasures that were wrested from them by the Spaniards. But although hundreds of oysters may only furnish one pearl of value, the shells have their price. Many tons of them are bought annually by the United States and Europe, to be used in the manufacture of buttons, buckles, and various kinds of ornaments. Most of the divers are negroes.

Further, the principal products of the Republic include cattle, which are raised in large numbers in the provinces of Chiriqui and Veragua, corn, beans, rice, cocoa, coffee, cocoa-nuts, and ivory-nuts. Large quantities of ivory-nuts go to Hamburg, whence they are re-exported to Italy to be made into buttons.

The Isthmian forests are richly stocked with many varieties of timber, several of the woods having such excellent qualities as durability and beauty. Tropical forests, more commonly known as "The Bush," are a magnificent tangle of luxurious vegetation ; trees rise from an impassably dense undergrowth, swarms of parasitic plants grow on their trunks and boughs, and the overhead branches of neighbouring giants intertwine, or are linked together by creepers. Numerous varieties of orchids are a feature of the Panamanian Bush.

Gold mines are worked in the rich Darien district, the region which the British tried to colonize towards the close of the seventeenth century, and which is intimately associated with that great financial disaster known as the South Sea Bubble. However, it is a British company, the Darien Gold Mining Company of London, that has obtained much of the wealth that has been redeemed from the Darien region during recent years.

## Panama

The Indians play no insignificant part in the trade of the Isthmus. One of their principal trading stations is at the port of San Carlos, in the south-west of the province of Panama. The most interesting of the Isthmian aborigines are the San Blas Indians, who inhabit a district in the north-east of the province of Colon. For centuries they have kept their race pure. Until recently they would not allow any stranger to set foot on their shores ; even now, anyone who visits their country is closely watched, and is not permitted to stay the night. San Blas Indians frequently go to Colon city for trading purposes. They make the trip there and back, eighty odd miles each way, in cayukas, which carry a cargo of bananas, cocoa-nuts, and ivory-nuts. Cayukas or dug-outs are little one-piece boats, made from the trunk of a tree by cutting and burning operations ; they are all fitted with a sail, and some are very beautifully modelled.

The San Blas Indians are wonderful sailors and swimmers. A story I heard bears witness to their aquatic prowess, for if it is not founded on fact, it is certainly born of fame.

A cayuka, manned by one Indian and loaded with a hundred cocoa-nuts, ran into a gale when on the high sea between the San Blas country and Colon, and was capsized. The Indian reached Colon in that cayuka, with ninety-nine cocoa-nuts for the market.

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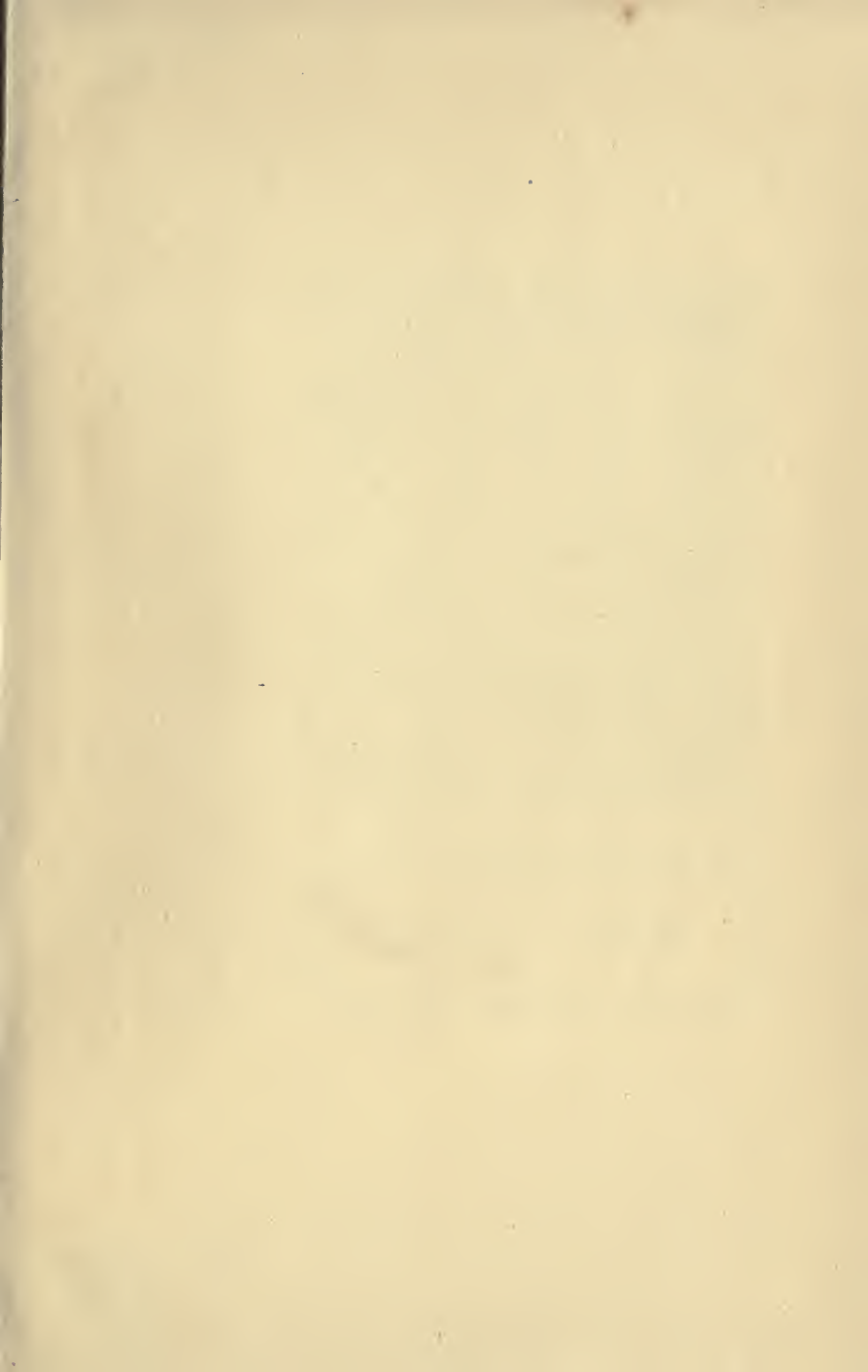
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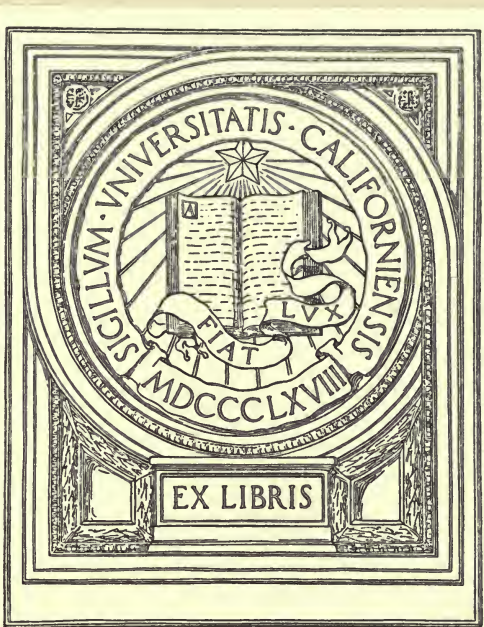
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