

VISITING COLON AND PANAMA, 1893

by

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Original articles archived on nyshistoricnewspapers.org

Edited by Duncan S. Campbell
January 2019

Table of Contents

(1) IN THE STEERAGE TO COLON.....	2
(2) A TROPICAL SHANTY TOWN.....	12
(3) PECULIARITIES OF PANAMA.....	19
(4) ON A LADINO CATTLE BOAT.....	36

(1) IN THE STEERAGE TO COLON.¹

'Tween Deck Life in A Pacific Mail Steamer From New York.

Private Quarters and Cabin Feed to be Had by Tipping the Steward, but the Regular Fare is Not Bad—The People One Meets, and the Charm of Tropical Voyaging.

This is a story of life between decks on a Pacific Mail steamer while *en route* from New York to Colón. I had engaged to obtain such pictures and stories as were to be found among the Ladinos, the interesting race of half-breeds ruling the country between Panama and Paso del Norte²—such views as might be obtained from the main deck of a cattle boat, or the orlop³ deck of a dugout, or the back of an ill-trained mule while hurrying along by any passable road to the west and north with the rainy season in close pursuit. It was a part of the plan of this outing that I should "*experience the discomforts and miseries necessarily incident to a steerage passage in the tropics,*" in order that the readers of THE SUN might be reminded by the tale of how much better off they are than some other people. And so it happened that on the morning of Jan. 30 last I entered the office of the steamship company at the foot of Canal street with what a sailor would call my dunnage rolled up in a canvas hammock or stowed in a small valise. The baggage did not seem very extensive in quantity or expensive in quality; besides, I had left my overcoat at home. I was not surprised, therefore, when the spruce young clerk behind the counter, after a look, went on with the writing on which he was engaged for a minute or two before asking me what I wanted. It is not an uncommon practice for clerks to assume that men who do not wear overcoats in January are in no hurry when they enter business offices.

After a little time, this clerk said to me: "*Well?*"

"*A steerage ticket for Colon,*" said I.

"*You mean a forward cabin. We have no steerage on these ships.*"

"*Very well, I want the cheapest you've got.*"

¹ Published in *New York Sun*, Sunday, October 29, 1893, page 8

² Paso del Norte — Present-day city of El Paso, Texas.

³ Orlop — Lowest deck of a wooden sailing ship (Spears is being ironic)

"Forty dollars."

"What is the price to Panama?"

"Forty-five dollars."

"And to San Francisco?"

"Forty-five dollars: but there aren't any scalpers in Panama."

I wanted to go to Panama direct, but I bought a ticket to Colon, and so saved \$2.50, as will appear at another time.

At the head of the gangway leading from the pier to the deck of the *City of Para* a bright boy in a blue uniform with the word "Cadet" in gold on his cap directed the passengers to their quarters. I found the "forward cabin" on the main deck, say six feet above the water line. It was a room perhaps 12x14 feet large. There were six bunks on each side, and a white-haired Swede, who said he was the steward, in the middle. There were also in the room two Arabs and a metal worker who had not washed himself since leaving the shop three days before. I invited the steward outside, where I could talk to him confidentially.

"I want to experience the discomforts and miseries of steerage passage in the tropics," I said. "That's a part of the plan of my outing, but I wouldn't like to have those chaps in there catch me at it." Here I took out a \$5 bill. "Now, if you have a private room like a chair locker or a _____"

He took the \$5 and led the way instantly to a little door marked "Forward Cabin Pantry." Inside this pantry I found a stack of shelves, two lockers, two deck buckets, and an empty pickle jar. There was neither food nor dish in sight. Behind the shelves was a passageway that led to a space where three bunks stood, one above the other. The space was lighted from a big skylight by day and an electric light by night. There was a rug on the deck, and two camp stools on the rug. It was clean, sweet, and well ventilated.

"How will this suit you as a place to—to—what did you say you wanted to do."

"Experience the discomforts and miseries of a steerage passage in the tropics. It will do very well. Who has the other bunks?"

"There's only one took. I suppose he's another gent down on his luck."

After a while a colored youth in a uniform went up and down the ship ringing a bell and saying something no ordinary person could understand. There was a crowd about the decks at the time, and another on the pier, and everybody was talking to somebody. The bell seemed to disturb an elderly gentleman who was talking to a group on the upper deck, and he asked the boy sharply what all that noise was made for.

"It's for everybody to go ashore what ain't gwine, sah," said the boy.

"Bless my soul, I should have known that," the man said, and after hurried good-byes went over the bridge with a throng that had already started in that way.

When all had gone, the gangway was sent down on the pier, and the ship, with a stunning blast of its whistle, backed slowly into the stream, leaving the people on the pier waving their handkerchiefs energetically and shouting things which those on board had no possible chance of hearing. Out in the stream she stopped, hanging like a sailing ship for a moment in stays till her wheel was started in another direction, and then she began slicing her way to the south through the mushy ice fields that covered the river, and the passengers made haste to seek shelter from the chilly blast that was coming from across the Jersey flats.

Down in the private stateroom, behind the forward cabin pantry, I found the other *"gent down on his luck."* He did not seem to be very far down, for he was a slender young fellow, in good clothes, who said he was a carpenter who had *"shoved a plane from San Francisco to New York by the way of Mexico City,"* and was now bound home again by the way of the isthmus *"just to see the world."*

We got on friendly terms very quickly, and then we went aft to the forward cabin proper to see what we could find. Every bunk there had been taken, and it was an interesting crowd that sat on the row of lockers running around in front of the bunks. One man was an English civil engineer, who had graduated from the best school in his country, and, after practicing his profession in Spain, Egypt and Australia, was bound to California to try his luck. He had come across from London second class, and was bound out in the steerage, *"because ye cawn't tell how long ye'll be lying idle, don't you know,"* and it is a good plan to

have ready money when one is idle in a strange place. Then there was a little German bound for Salvador to enter the business house of a relative. He had had a-plenty of money for a first-class passage, but while stopping over in New York had found the suppers and dinners so good and the companionship of chance acquaintances so enjoyable that he was obliged to go steerage. It was a great trial after the delights of life in the American metropolis, and he was so dolorous that he amused the rest. Then there was a heterogenous gathering that consisted almost exclusively of mechanics bound for California, hoping to improve their chances in life.

On the starboard side of the ship, opposite the steerage, was the forward cabin for women. It had but one occupant, Capt. Gus Durlacher, of whom THE SUN told an interesting story some time ago. He had been a runaway sailor, an officer on Mr. Vanderbilt's yacht *Alva*, a skipper of the New York Central tug *Evertso*, and had just blossomed out as a commercial traveler and was bound to Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Honduras with a thousand dollars in sample watches, jewelry, and other things.

By a process of natural selection, the steerage passengers very quickly divided themselves into sets or cliques. The Arabs had a clique of two—themselves. They were playing a well-contested game of backgammon within an hour from the time of leaving the pier, and in that game and the reading of books, presumably in Arabic, they passed their waking hours during the entire voyage, wholly oblivious, apparently, of their surroundings. They were equally oblivious at night, save on one occasion, when the slats in the bunk above one of them gave way and let a big cook down. The entire steerage then learned that the Arabs could swear fluently in English, Spanish, and French, as well as in their native tongue.

However, that is anticipating. The civil engineer and myself found the ex-tug Captain an entertaining companion, and after a little we gathered in a gangway adjoining the engine room, where we could watch the ice as we steamed down the bay without being exposed to the winter breeze blowing on deck. While here we were made acquainted with another feature of the discomforts and miseries of a steerage passage in the tropics. The steward came to us and said: "*Supper is ready, but if yous gents would like something diffrent, why I can fix it.*"

We decided to see what the regular supper was and walked around to the forward cabin. Swung in the gangway outside the cabin by iron rods from the deck

above was a kind of combined table and trough—a trough ten feet long by three wide and three inches deep. Hanged around this trough were tin plates, tin cups, and iron knives, forks, and spoons. There was a big tin pail full of bread, another full of cold roast beef, a pail of pickles, a jar of mustard, and small pans of salt and pepper. There was also a big pot of tea, that had been sweetened in the pot and a pan of potatoes boiled with their jackets on. The bread was beyond reproach, and the beef a first-class rib roast, well cooked and excellent. No fault could be found with the pickles. The tea was vile and the potatoes disgusting to the eye, but, from the scramble the gang around the trough made for them, I assume that they were pleasing to the taste. No one complained of either the pepper or salt.

While we three looked at the rush for the food, the little German came along from aft. He gave one look at the trough, and then: "*God in heaven!*" he said, clasping his hands to his stomach. "*I am sick.*"

He rushed to the rail instantly. The ship was pitching a trifle. I do not think he or anyone else was seasick before he arrived at the trough, but his example at the rail was followed by a couple more from the trough within a minute.

"*For \$5,*" said the steward in a low voice, "*I can fix it,*" and four of us, including the little German, told him to go ahead. The steerage supper was served at 4½[?]. An hour and a half later the steward came to us in the engine-room gangway and said: "*Dinner is ready, gents.*"

We followed him to the pantry. On top of the lockers, where I had observed only an empty pickle jar, were now found clean, white linen cloths. On these were plates of fine china, with silver knives, forks, and spoons. There was a castor⁴ for pepper, salt, olives, and vinegar. There was a great platter of hot roast chicken and another of hot roast beef. There was an abundance of dressing. A third platter had corned beef. Deep dishes and tureens were heaped up with hot mashed potatoes, turnips, squash, cauliflower, and beans. There was a great dish full of delicious baked macaroni and cheese. There were the best qualities of bread and butter. Following these came cranberry pie and rice pudding, with tea and coffee, served with tinned cream and cut loaf sugar. It was not a conglomeration of leavings from the cabin table, but every dish was hot and clean from the cabin galley.

⁴ Castor — Small container with holes on top, used for sprinkling condiments, sugar etc.

The service was faulty, of course, and the quarters in the pantry a little cramped for four men, but if anyone would like to experience the discomforts and miseries of a steerage passage in the tropics he is recommended to try eating his meals in the pantry at \$5 extra for the passage. That dinner was a fair sample of what we had three times a day all the way down, though we had, of course, fish, steaks, and chops at breakfast and luncheon in place of the roasts.

Among the possibilities of a steerage passage in the tropics is the making of acquaintances among the crew. The cabin passengers see the sailors engaged chiefly as scrub women are in the metropolis—in scrubbing decks and paintwork and cleaning the brass and other fittings. The steerage passenger sees the sailors eating stacks of soft bread, butter, fresh meat, and pickles three times a day, and duff once, not very far from his own feeding place, and he is not unlikely to be taken into their confidence during the smoke that follows a meal. If so, they will tell him that the American liners are "*soft ships for sailors*," and that the "*lime juicers ain't in it*"—lime juicers being a nickname for British ships. The American ships are called soft because the pay is double on the average ([...] \$25 a month), and the food is "*out of sight*" in comparison.

One sees too, what he often hears, that the firemen outnumber the sailors three to one, and that the sailors are mere deck hands and not at all able to handle a marlinspike. One day I said to a fireman as an engineer passed the trough while the firemen ate dinner:

"I've heard that you firemen very often get kicked and thumped by the engineers."

"What, by the likes of him?" asked the fireman nodding toward the engineer.

"An' would you believe it, looking at us two?"

The manner of the man was a sufficient answer. The engineer would not thump him more than once. The Firemen's Benevolent Labor Trust (I believe that is not exactly the name of their union, but that is what it means) has done one good thing, according to this member of the union. It has taught men to forget the old-time sea superstition that resisting the unjust acts of officers is mutiny.

The portion of the crew that would be likely to interest the passenger most was the corps of cadets. There were half a dozen youngsters on the *City of Para*.

Their duty was to steer the ship, stand lookout, and do such other work as would eventually fit them to become officers. They were about all graduates from the St. Mary's school-ship in New York.

"They make very good sailors after three or four years' training. The hardest work we have with 'em is to get the fool notions out of their heads they learn on the school-ship," said one of the mates. The lads get \$20 a month the first year, \$25 the second, and \$30 the third year of service.

For two days the air remained raw and cold. We had passed miles of field ice outside of Sandy Hook,⁵ and we seemed to carry the influence of that ice right along with us until we were well south of Cape Hatteras. But on the third morning it was like waking up on a morning in June after going to sleep in January. The air was soft and balmy, the sea was radiant with curls of foam, while the Portuguese men-o'-war⁶ of gorgeous hues were passed on every hand, and flying fish began to scurry away from the ship's bows as though some hungry dolphins were after them. There was not only no longer any need of seeking the engine room gangway for a loafing place, but all hands in the forward cabin took off their extra underwear and put on flannel shirts suitable for a warmer climate. It was time to look about for the discomforts and miseries incident to a steerage passenger in the tropics.

At the forecastle end of the main deck was a ladder leading to the hurricane deck, up which I climbed. On this upper deck the space for a promenade was broad, while a wide hatch, a couple of spare spars, two anchors, and sundry coils of rope furnished a variety of seats ample for any steerage taste. It seemed an admirable loafing place at first glance. A tin sign on the pilot house, however, told us that *"Forward cabin passengers are not allowed abaft this side."*

The proud spirits of some of the roaming Americans at once rebelled at the thought of being restricted to any part of the ship. I remember that the metal worker, whom I had found in the forward cabin on my first visit, went to the sign. After reading it twice he clinched his unwashed hands and talked profanely about the aristocrats and capitalistic classes. His remarks set some of the rest of the steerage passenger to thinking, but if anyone felt badly over being restricted, the feeling was soon removed because the aristocrats and

⁵ Sandy Hook — Navigation light on the coast of New Jersey

⁶ Portuguese man o' war — Marine invertebrate, capable of a painful sting, found in the Atlantic Ocean

capitalistic classes aft, with few exceptions, abandoned their easy steamer chairs on the quarterdeck to come forward and watch the play of smother and foam under the bows and catch the refreshing breeze that came on board there, untainted by the smells of engine room and galley as the breeze had been tainted aft. These cabin passengers began to talk of the space forward being much more pleasant than their own aft, and so we were all made fairly content with our lot, but to me it was quite discouraging. I had been looking for discomforts and miseries, necessarily incident to a steerage passage, that I might experience them, but in some way everything of the sort had slipped away from me.

After thinking over the matter till next day I went to the metal worker, and taking a seat pretty well to windward of him, asked what he thought about it.

"What do you think is the worst feature of our journey in the steerage?" I said.

"Why, it's the bein' kept here in it," said he.

"Do you mean that it is because we are restricted to the bow of the ship on this deck?"

"That's about the size of it."

"Yes, but you know this is the best part of the ship, especially as the wind blows. We do not feel a tremble of the screw at any time."

Yah-h I know that, but see how them aft there won't look at you."

Here was an idea. The cabin passengers had ignored the steerage passengers. It was quite a relief to have one's attention called to it, and for some hours I had a real discomfort to think about.

However, there were three Catholic priests on board bound to Panama on a vacation, and they did not seem to know anything about social distinctions. They were as courteous and friendly when talking to the swab who washed the paintwork, as they were when talking to the richest or most learned man on board. It is a way with priests often observed by travelers. They made the acquaintance of the steerage passengers as soon as the warm climate brought everybody on deck, and very soon other cabin passengers began talking to some of

those from the steerage. Then, at about 9:30 o'clock on Thursday night (we had sailed on Monday), we sighted the white flash light on San Salvador Island and, in the interest which was excited by seeing the land which Columbus first discovered, everybody talked and asked questions of everybody else, and before we knew what was going on we were all on such friendly relations that the last hope of finding a misery of a steerage passage in the tropics was gone, so far as the trip from New York to Colon was concerned. However, I made further search later on when on the west coast of the Continent, and had such unexpected success that the story will have to be told at another time.

For three days thereafter, we lived the life of which every lazy man dreams and for which he vainly wishes as he plods through his daily task. We had food and drink in plenty. We were utterly free from care. The sun shone down from a sky through which great white cloud masses drifted in glorious indolence. The cool, sweet breeze fanned away the heat. The sea to its tossing beauties of blue and silver added such wonders of floating flora and active fauna as were needed to stir our idle curiosity. Castle Island on the port side, with its tale of the British naval officer who carried some other man's wife there long years ago, and Cuba on the starboard, with its stories of struggles for freedom, took us from our seats to lean on the rail and borrow and lend spyglasses as we gossiped.

On Friday afternoon, after all hands had been notified of what was to happen, the bells rang an alarm of fire. The cadets, the sailors, the waiters, and such firemen as were off duty gathered at the boats and pumps, and, after the hose had been coupled, a great quantity of water was spouted over the ship's side—a diverting show for the passengers and a good opportunity for the grumblers among the crew, who were aching for something about which they could find fault.

For the remainder of the way the voyage was delightfully void of incident. It was restful and soporiferous. A hazy picture of men who slept in the shade and spun yarns in the twilight, and of one who now and then pretended to study Spanish in anticipation of a journey among the Ladinos. It is all that remains in my memory until, very early on Monday morning, the eighth day from New York, everybody was awakened by the rattle and roar and bang incident to bringing a big steamer to the pier in Colon. The voyage was ended. The facts of the voyage as here related are commended to the attention of those who would like to see the world, but are not quite able to afford the expense of cabin passages.

(2) A TROPICAL SHANTY TOWN.⁷

Odd Sights of a Half Day's Sojourn on the Isthmus.

Colon as Rebuilt. After the Incendiary Burning Permitted by Our "Foreign Policy"—Churches, Soldiers, and Canal machinery—Across the Isthmus of Panama

After arriving at Colon at the end of such a voyage from New York to the isthmus as has been described in THE SUN,⁸ the traveler finds himself wide awake for strange sights and novel adventures, but whether his desires in this regard will be satisfied or not depends somewhat on luck and somewhat on the traveler's ability to see. Then one traveler's taste will differ from another, so that the one will be interested where the other will find everything dull. But there are some things the traveler must see at Colon—he cannot escape them. If not easily irritated, he is reasonably certain to be interested in them.

For instance, there is the Jamaica negro. At Colon one is upon the Spanish Main, but one needs to look at the map, or hunt for a policeman, to be assured of the fact, for Colon is a town of negroes. The negroes do the longshore work on the piers. They climb over the ship's rail at sunrise, and take possession of donkey engines and tear off hatches, and start things going in the hold in a way that is not merely astonishing; it is stunning. If there is any one story more frequently told than any other by the travelers to the Spanish Main, it is that of "*the lazy nigger*." I think that, on the whole, this idea of the Jamaica negro is accurately descriptive, but Colon is an exception to other towns. The Yankee ship's first mate and the Yankee pier boss have found the key that will wind up this curious British subject and make him dance, so to speak. When the stevedores began to unload the *City of Para*, the rattle and whirr of the donkey elevators, the bang of boxes, and the chug of spools of barbed wire for fences that were landed and the shouts of those who shoved the goods down the inclined gangway to the piers, combined to deafen the unaccustomed spectator. To the energy of muscle in handling the freight was added an agility of tongue in addressing one another that was remarkable. To shouts they added imprecations, and to imprecations the most ferocious looks. Camera in hand, I approached a group that seemed likely to cover the pier with blood at any moment. It was apparently an opportunity to photograph a deadly conflict, and one not to be missed. But I was

⁷ Published by New York *Sun*, Thursday, November 9, 1893, page 5

⁸ Issue date 29 October 1893

mistaken. I was still twenty-five feet away when the gang discovered me, and to a man gathered around.

"*Say, boss, gimme ten cents,*" said two in a chorus, but they didn't wait for a reply. The colored foreman saw the Yankee pier superintendent coming and the way he sent the beggars flying to their work was a caution to the whole tribe.

At the pier entrance was a watchman whose duty it was to keep the passengers from leaving the pier. Just why they were quarantined nobody around there would tell, but it did not matter much, for a piece of silver rolled through the rule and let the passengers escape when they wanted to see the town.

To my mind the town of Colon is one well worth seeing—as it is now, there are few towns in the world so well worth the attention of an American citizen. It is a town of shanties and smoke-stained brick walls. The walls show where block after block of substantial houses and stores, two and three stories high, once stood, and any grey-headed loafer[?] on the corner will tell the brief story of how the ruin was wrought. An infamous scoundrel in the town determined to start a revolution. He had no more chance of success than the Anarchists had of overturning the American Government at the Chicago riot. An American man-o'-war lay off the Colon pier. The revolutionist chief swore he would burn the town and shoot every American in it. The Americans, finding the scoundrel meant to keep his word, begged for protection, but did not get it. The fire was started. The Captain of a British man-o'-war lying there sent to the American Captain, saying, "*Tell me you need help, and I'll stop this in thirty minutes.*" This British seaman could not act independently because of American treaty rights there. The American did nothing, and Colon, with tens of thousands of dollars' worth of American property, went down. The Captain of the warship failed in grasping the situation, but he should not be blamed half so much as the American people themselves. It is at Colon that one first begins to see what the American foreign policy amounts to on the American continent south of the Rio Grande River. As the American first walks down the bridge from the steamer at Colon, bound on a journey among the Ladinos, he thinks the American eagle is soaring above him, with its wings spread wide enough to cover him to the uttermost parts of the earth. But he won't leave the pier till he will see the bird's neck feathers droop, and after one look at those burned walls, the old falcon will go sneaking away like a fish-hawk, with a kingbird on top of it.

As was said, Colon is a shanty town, but the shanties are not like the shanties of the goat district⁹ of New York. Rarely can one find anywhere in the world more distressful homes than those of the poor of Colon. Huge frame buildings have been erected in the swamp, and it is a swamp that is never dry. I was there early in February, the driest part of the dry season, but slimy pools were everywhere visible about the streets and yards, and pigs, ducks, and chickens, and children no less dirty, roamed about and added to the fever-breeding qualities of the naturally noxious locality. Possibly there are sanitary regulations governing the town, but there is no sanitation. One reads of the deadly Chagres fever¹⁰ that the climate breeds in the isthmus. The climate is bad enough, with its heat and rains, but such a vast hole as Colon would breed a fever as low as the Chagres, though it stood on Manhattan Island.

There is one street not quite so bad. It faces the sea, and when the wind blows the malaria is swept inland, but the wind does not always blow. There are many days when the rain pours down steadily through a motionless air.

"What is the most interesting feature of the place for a stranger to visit?" was asked of a citizen. The answer was typical. It was like all the answers one receives from English-speaking people when trying to find the interesting points of a Ladino-land town:

"Oh, there is but one thing here worth looking at," said the man. *"The chapel up the street is a very handsome structure."*

I went to see the chapel. It was not a bad little church building, and it doubtless cost a lot of money, but it was simply an Episcopal place of worship such as can be found in any city of the United States and any village in England. A man goes 2,000 miles to a foreign land, and when there asks for interesting things to look at. In reply he is directed to a building that has not a single square inch of surface peculiar to the country.

The fact is, the traveler who thinks for himself is likely to be not a little astonished at the interest his people take in churches when they are in a foreign country. In Panama, in San José of Costa Rica, in Managua—in every other great town that I visited between the isthmus and the Rio Grande, at least one

⁹ Goat district — Location not identified

¹⁰ Chagres fever — A form of malarial fever encountered along the Chagres River in Panama.

American said to me within twenty-four hours after my arrival: "*Have you seen the cathedral?*" One may listen to that question from a sincere and devout follower of the Christ with respect, but when it is asked by a sincere and devout follower of the devil the case is different.

Then there is the Colon schoolhouse, with its score of youngsters. Most of these are negroes, and will say, proudly, when asked if they are Colombians:

"*No, sah, I'se a British subjec.*" The schoolhouse is a shanty, built on the model of others that I have seen in the mine camps of the Nevada and California desert. The pupils were droning over their lessons just as country children do in the States, when I stopped in the street to photograph the building, but one saw me and then all necks were craned to see what was doing without. The teacher, an intelligent-looking colored man, was pleased with an invitation to bring out the children that they might be photographed, but modestly remained in the shadow of the porch during the operation.

People who want to see the country types of any region can usually find them in the market places, but at Colon the market is of little interest on a Monday, the day I saw it. The building is simply a huge corrugated iron awning enclosed by a wall of the same material, and Jamaica negroes and Chinamen seemed to control what trade was doing.

There was, in fact, but one distinctively native feature in the town, and that was the company of Colombian soldiers. One who cannot talk the Spanish language fluently must make his study of the Ladino soldiers by proxy, so to speak; but, however it is made, it is well worth the time needed, as will appear in detail at another time. In this land, once called the Spanish Main, one finds soldiers everywhere, and they are not dress parade soldiers only, by any means, for there is never a day or an hour when they can say they are safe from a deadly attack. A regiment of them was once shut up and slaughtered while at worship in the Panama cathedral. One gets only a glimpse of them at Colon—little, swarthy fellows, with uniforms of blue, yellow, and red colors, mixed together in gorgeous fashion. They are quartered near the market, because it is at the market that revolutionists are most likely to congregate.

There is one other point about Colon worth the time of the tourist if he have a liking for mechanics, and that is the region where some of the canal company's plant is stowed. Such rows and ranks of engines and cars, such fleets of tugs and

steamers and dredges and barges are lying there idle as will keep him wondering until he gets started across the Isthmus on the railroad, when he will half-forget about them in his wonder at the other stuff the company left along the route.

On the days when steamers arrive in the morning a special train leaves Colon for Panama at 1:30 in the afternoon. I had purchased a ticket to Colon only, and when I tried to buy one from Colon to Panama I could find no one to sell it to me. However, on the advice of a citizen, I boarded the train in the pier shed and waited till it ran out to the station, and then got off for the ticket. As said in a previous article,¹¹ I saved \$2.50 by buying on the Isthmus instead of from the steamship company in New York. The price of the second-class ticket in New York is \$5 gold: of the first-class, \$10 gold. In Colon the second-class costs \$3.50 Colombian silver, and the first-class \$5[?] gold. A dollar gold sold for \$1.75 when I was there.

There was a difference in the cars. In the second class the seats stand lengthwise of the car, as in the old-style cars on the New York elevated road. In the first class they are like those of ordinary country roads. In all other respects, in dirt and lack of service and accommodations, they are precisely alike. The social distinctions will be found just as they were on the ship, for the train carries but a few local passengers. There is one feature of the journey that is, in the second-class car, worse than in the first. The town has a regular swarm of peddlers of curios—caps made from the bark of the tip of a palm tree, canes from native woods, and so on. These peddlers are not allowed to enter the pier, but once the train leaves the protecting yard fence behind, the ragged, black swarm fills the train, but makes a specialty of the second-class car. The peddlers are arrant swindlers every one. There was one old man who wanted to sell out his last six bark caps to get money to buy a coffin for his dead baby. The caps were 25 cents each, he said, but he would give the six for \$1.25, because of the stress of circumstances. I remember hearing that same story and seeing the same old face before, when boarding the *Colon* for New York after a journey with Mr. Warner Miller's party over the Nicaragua Canal Route.¹² I said:

"Great Scott! Isn't that baby buried yet?"

¹¹ Date October 29, 1893

¹² Nicaragua Canal— See <https://donduncan/spears/jrsnicaragua.pdf>

He looked at me severely for a moment and then asked:

"Whar I done see yo' befo'?"

"One evening when the Colon sailed for New York about two years ago."

"Fo' de Lawd I done forgot ye, shunh." His eyes glanced slyly from side to side a moment and then he added: *"Say, boss, dat 'ar brat was anoder one, shuah."*

Just before the train started he came back having two caps left. He offered the two for a dime, and one of my companions bought one for five cents.

At last the train moves out and Colon is left behind quickly. From a dirty shanty town, the eye turns to a tropical wilderness. On one hand is a lagoon of the Chagres River, its dead-dark water edged with masses of rank vegetation. On the other rises a hill so thickly covered with brush, vines, and trees that the eye cannot penetrate below the green surface. A moment later a tiny clearing, in which a bare-footed negro swings a machete, is seen, and the chances are that half the passengers will wonder (and say so) how he dare work there bare-footed. They will think he is in imminent danger of deadly snakes.

From this clearing to the solid green again, and from that to another clearing, the transit is rapid—too rapid for the tourist, for he would like to linger to gaze on the novelties. Small settlements of shanties, with cactus hedges and idle negroes around them are passed, and a train man will show "Monkey Hill," where so many thousands of the victims of the fever were buried during canal times.

After a little the endless, idle procession of canal machinery is reached, together with hundreds on hundreds of shanties, cottages, and villas, built for the workmen and officials of the canal company. To the eye the machinery seems to be in good order, while only a few of the buildings are tumbling down, in spite of the destroying influence of a hot, moist climate.

In the collections of barracks, colonies of negroes and Chinamen are found. Naked babies are seen playing in the roadway as the train draws up to the stations, and this evidence of a tropical climate is for some reason one of more interest to the ordinary tourist than any other. The parents of the babies have learned to turn this interest of the tourist to account, by holding up the squirming youngsters before the car windows and saying:

"Give him a dime, boss."

But for every beggar there will be found a dozen peddlers of fruits, drinks, and flowers. The bananas are delicious and the flowers are exquisitely beautiful, but one does not need to buy flowers to see them. The isthmus is a land of perpetual bloom. In fact, during the whole journey across, the space occupied in the landscape by trees covered with flowers is remarkably large. To most tourists, the flowers rank next in interest to the naked babies: but a remnant think most of the flowers.

But no matter what the taste of the tourist may be, he can find something to attract him along this little railroad from Panama to Colon. It is doubtful whether any other piece of railroad of the same length can be found with more matters of interest to the stranger along its route. From the impenetrable tangle of vegetation to the barren sand bar, from the intricate dredge to the wooden cane squeezers worked by hand; from the shapely wench dancing while her sweetheart plays the banjo, to the grave with its black cross, is only a step at any point on the road. The eye turns from one remarkable picture to another with such speed that but a few of the whole gallery can be remembered, and then, while yet the train seems only to have started on its journey, Panama is reached, and that is found to be the most interesting point of all.

(3) PECULIARITIES OF PANAMA.¹³

An American Observer in the Isthmian Metropolis.

Invited to See the Improvements—A Colored Bunco Game—Bongoes and their Cargoes—A Gold Placer under the Sea—A Novel Charity—Sports—A British Electric Tramway—An Odd Invitation to go to a Prison—Police Methods—Not so Intolerant as Chicago is—Yellow Fever.

As was said in THE SUN's story¹⁴ of the shanty town on the Isthmus of Panama and the rapid ride across the narrow neck of land, Panama City is the most interesting spot of the whole region. But just what features of the city and of life there will be of most interest to the stranger will naturally depend on the tastes of the stranger. In some points the tastes of all travelers, it is said, seem to agree. Thus, I had been in town a couple of days, when I met an American resident. He said:

"Well, how do you find Panama?"

"Very interesting, indeed."

"I knew you would. No place like it anywhere. Been to the boca, of course?"

"No. What's the boca?"

"Oh, you don't speak Spanish. Boca means mouth—mouth of the canal. Been there?"

"No."

"You haven't? Why, everybody goes there the first thing."

"Indeed? What can be seen there?"

"Why nothing, except the ditch they dug in the swamp."

¹³ Published by New York Sun, Sunday, November 19, 1893, page 8

¹⁴ Issue date 9 November 1893

"Big banks of earth, ruins of a lock, &c.?"

"No: just nothing but a streak of water setting back into the swamp grass. The banks are grown over with vegetation. But the road leads past the canal hospitals, and you can see them, too. Finest hospitals in the world—built on the best French models, that is. Everybody sees them."

"Anything peculiar to the people of this country about them?"

"No: of course not. If that's what you want you'll have to strike out into the country, but the things peculiar to the country are thatched huts made of poles, and naked babies. I don't think they'll interest you much. If you want to write anything about Panama you ought to go to the hospitals, and then go see the electric light plant and some of the other improvements. You've been to Panama Viejo—the old ruined Panama the buccaneers destroyed, I suppose. Nearly everybody goes there, too."

"No, but I'm going there. What will I find?"

"Why, there's not much there either but a lot of old walls grown over with brush and a ruined church tower, but it's all very old. What have you seen, anyhow?"

The conversation seems worth repeating as illustrating the tastes of American travelers on the Isthmus, and because, too, there was a suggestion of the States in the man's words and manner. He wanted me to see and write about the *"improvements."* He was a type of his race to be found in all the Ladino country. The natives may say *"tomorrow"* and *"who knows?"* but the Yankee is out in the early morning to boom the town or some other town, and he stays out with that intent till sundown.

Because electric light plants and hospitals of the best quality in the world can be examined in New York, and because there was no story of an extinct or even half-forgotten race to be sought for in the ruins of the old Spanish city, the traveler who wants to learn some peculiarities of the Isthmian town and people, if his time be brief, should avoid them. One might better go to the market on the easterly waterfront of the city, and then, perhaps, go to the gold placer diggings on the west side. If lucky, he will find matters of interest on both tours outside of the main object of his visit. As it happened, I was lucky.

A BUNCO GAME.¹⁵

I had just started from the hotel toward the market place, when I noticed an elderly darky, standing on the opposite side of the street, looking from one to another of the people going in and out of the various entrances to the hotel. The moment his eye caught mine his face lighted up, and with outstretched hand and a smile he came hurrying across the way.

"Fo' de Lawd, boss, I'se glad to see you. I'se been lookin' for you all dis mawnin'."

There was no refusing such a cordial greeting. I shook hands and said:

"Lookin' for me? I don't know you. How did you happen to be looking for me?"

"How come I look for you? I'se gwine tell you. 'Co'rse you don't know me. I'se gwine tell you 'bout dat, too. I'se been waitin' fo' you because I ain't had er mouthful o' coffee dis bressed mawnin'. I'se on de beach an' I'd jess like ter borry er dime."

It was a clear case of Panama bunco, but there was such a happy expression on his face—he so thoroughly enjoyed his little game and he worked it so well—that there was no refusing him. Besides, he is the most artistic member of a great gang of peculiar negro beggars to be found on the streets of Panama. They are, without exception, from the islands ruled by the British in the West Indies, and they beg only of English-speaking strangers. On every corner, and on several blocks between corners while walking to the market, I met negro men. Without exception, they bowed and touched their hats and said *"Good mawnin', boss. I'se on de beach, sah. A dime, sah, ef yo' please."* *"On the beach"* is equivalent to the American *"On his uppers,"* or *"dead broke."* I watched a number of them at different times, and noticed that residents of the town and people who were apparently of any other race than English or American were not addressed. Neither were residents of the city. Later I learned that, in spite of the hard times in Panama since the work on the canal ceased, there was absolutely no excuse for such begging. Not a single one but lied when he said he needed food, as many did say, and money given to them is invariably spent viciously.

An American, who for the first time starts out to walk alone in a foreign city where he does not understand the language, is likely to feel lonely, and the voice

¹⁵ Bunco — Swindler; confidence trick

of one who addresses him in his native tongue is welcome to the ear. The Panama negroes of both sexes and some of the native or Ladino women understand this very well. The stranger hears the most friendly greetings in his own tongue as he walks through streets near the market. The women there all know enough English to say "Good morning" or "Good evening" and a few other expressions and queries which are not requests for money.

IN THE MARKET.

The market itself is interesting, rather because of its people than its goods. The market itself is a sort of an outline of a building, a roof on posts with a fence around it, partly overhanging the sea, while the vegetables and fruits are not remarkably different from what fast steamers and up-country barges now deliver at the wharves of New York. But the heterogeneous crowd of buyers and sellers, coolies and Caucasians, Kanakas and Jamaicans, English, French, German, and Ladino, but on all sides and in all places the Chinaman. The Chinese run the market, and, if their power continues to increase, they will someday run the town, if one can believe what he is told there. The people of tropical America are natural traders, but in Panama they are beaten by foreigners, while in the market and some other lines the Chinese rule the trade. If one wants to see just how Chinamen live and trade when unrestricted by such sanitary regulations as are enforced in San Francisco, he should go to the Chinese stalls of the Panama market. They are almost as vile as the Italian haunts of Mulberry street in New York just before the periodical visits of the health officers.

Interesting as the market place was with its sample of the population of Panama, the beach adjoining was still more attractive to me. It was cleaner for one thing, and then there was a greater number of natives or Ladinos to be found, while the beach and the water offshore was covered with a native fleet—boats from the islands where the pirates of old used to revel and from the coasts of Panama Bay. To see them lying there with their swarthy, and in some cases fierce-featured crews lolling about, was to make an imaginative person think the days of the buccaneers not so far away as history places them.

NATIVE BOATS.

The native boat is a dugout, and the Ladinos of the isthmus make about the largest dugouts in the world. I measured one that was not the largest of the fleet, and it was 40 feet long by 5 wide and 4 deep. They call these boats bongoes.

They rig them schooner fashion, with sails that seem enormous, when the narrowness of the hull is considered, and the way they "carry on" when the wind blows is enough to make even the skipper of a Newport catboat open his eyes. And yet, singular as it may seem, the skippers never race when out of the bay, if one may believe what he is told on the beach. A most curious study among the Ladinos, as will appear at another time, is in their exhibits of what may be called sporting blood.

In model, the large bongoes show nothing remarkable. There is a slight sheer forward and aft, the bow is round rather than sharp, and the stern a flat wedge. They are steered with a big paddle, and a wide paddle used like an old-fashioned leeboard serves sometimes to keep them from drifting to leeward. They are wall-sided, however, and when loaded make but little leeway. When compared with the big canoe from the Pacific that hangs in the Museum of Natural History in New York City they do not show anything like so good a knowledge of models as it does, while the Eskimo kayak is as much superior to them as a Viking ship to a Dutch galley. That they should stand up under a press of sail in a breeze of wind is due to the fact that they are made of logs that will sink in the water—a very solid, heavy wood. The thickness of wood left at the bottom is from six inches to a foot—sometimes more, and it makes a very good ballast. A bongo sailor told me that they could model and hollow out one in a month "*if enough men worked at it,*" and that a large one all rigged was worth \$150—Colombian silver—perhaps \$90 in gold.

ODD AND EXPENSIVE FUEL.

Because huge dugouts can be found now only in such out-of-the-way corners of the United States as the swamps of North Carolina and Louisiana, and because the bongoes are characteristic of the entire Pacific coast from Panama to California, and are moreover famous under different names in all the writings of South Sea travelers, the tourist can scarcely fail to find them interesting. But even if without interest in seafaring matters, the traveler should visit the beach for a look at the cargoes the bongoes bring. Many of them will be found loaded with novel firewood. The wood is cut into two-foot lengths and the lengths are split into pieces of about a square inch cross section—rather less, if anything, on the average. These pieces are sold at 40 cents Colombian silver per 100. At that rate a full cord of the stuff would cost over \$20 gold, but no bongo captain ever thought of such a thing as selling wood in any other way than by the piece. The usual quantity purchased is twenty-five sticks for 10 cents.

Other bongoes come loaded with charcoal. This is done up in cylindrical baskets, and is sold at about forty cents silver a bushel. Men with baskets of charcoal and bundles of the kindling-like wood can be seen going up and down the streets of the city looking for customers and finding a-plenty of them, but many people come themselves or send their servants to the beach to buy the fuel direct from the bongoes, because it is from 10 to 20 per cent. cheaper there.

The stranger soon begins to wonder, as he stands on the beach, at the number of customers coming for what seems to be only kindling, but if the bongo sailors be questioned about the matter, it is learned that no other fuel is burned in the houses of Panama. More curious still, 200 sticks of wood or a couple of baskets of charcoal is a very large quantity for any purchaser to buy at one time. The cooks of Panama do not want their kitchens lumbered up with fuel—there is, indeed, as will appear at another time, no room in Ladino houses for quantities of fuel. People from other countries have often tried to introduce stoves and ranges for kitchen use to Panama, but the cooks will not have them. They say the heat of the stove "*makes the stomach sick.*" Steaks are fried and stews boiled over little fires of charcoal or of splinters, made on the kitchen dirt floor or on an elevated bench made of tiles and covered with sand. The pan or the pot is supported on three stones or three bricks, or on a ring of iron that has three or four iron legs. When the mess[?] is cooked, the charcoal fire is wet down or the splinters of wood, the ends only of which have been burning, are withdrawn and the fire is out. For the Panama climate these fires are about the best conceivable, unless gas were cheap.

I found the fruits interesting on the beach because of the great quantities, but I fancy most people would fail to become enthusiastic over the stuff, even though it be of superior quality. The men who handle the cargoes, and the bongoes where the stuff is found, are all dirty. Bananas and plantains, both green and ripe, are brought to Panama by the ton and bongo load every day. The bananas are generally ripe, because many of them are eaten raw as they are eaten in the States, but the plantains are almost invariably green, and are boiled or fried as potatoes are. Yams are brought in bongo loads, too, but there are fewer cargoes than of the fruit of the plantain stalk family. A yam looks something like a big, rough, eyeless potato—a potato from a foot to eighteen inches long and from three to six inches thick. When cooked they are white and dry within, but not mealy, and are rather tasteless. They are sold at from 40 to 60 cents a dozen

according to size, "*very cheap filling*," as a Jamaica negro said of them as we looked at a bongo load.

GOLD THAT IS UNDER THE SEA.

When one recalls to mind the stories of Spanish enterprise and endurance in the search for gold places and ledges—how even the terrors of the deserts and of implacable Apaches but stimulated their ardor—the assertion that a ledge of gold, yielding the metal in a quantity to support a number of men, can be seen in this old Spanish city seems absolutely incredible. However, this is what anyone can see and hear. Choose the time when the tide is running out, and then go through the street running west from the main plaza to the beach. The street ends on a long sea wall that rises above the beach about fifteen feet, but at the southerly end of the wall there is a natural wall or precipice of rock. The beach at the foot of this wall has a little sand in the hollows, but it is, on the whole, a flat bed of rock that shelves off gradually to the south. It is a dark brown volcanic rock, but right where the artificial wall is joined to the precipice is a reddish vein running out to sea and back in under the streets and houses of the city, in a direction approximately northeast and southwest.

When the tide has first laid bare these rocks anyone can see, as I did, a few men and boys clamber down to the vicinity of the red vein, carrying with them bowls and pans, chiefly earthen and gourd bowls. Going to the cavities of the rock they scoop up the sand and wash it out, for the most part in an awkward fashion. I saw one man, a native, with a regular gold-washer's pan. These placer diggers said they got nothing, but when asked why they came there at every tide, they replied that they did sometimes find a trifle.

The truth is, as one can learn on inquiry among the neighbors after following one of the best-equipped men home, they get something—a Panama day's wages—every day, but after a storm, when the waves have pounded and broken down the reef, they get a quantity worth considering. I asked the editor of the *Panama Star and Herald*, whose windows overlook the reef so that he can see the men at work, about the matter. He thought it of little interest, because "*if there is anything in it, men would have worked it long ago. There was a jewelry factory here once, and I guess the gold is the waste from that.*"

On the other hand, Mr. George Bryson, who was once a reporter on the evening edition of THE SUN, and is well known to many New York people, says that this

vein of reddish rock runs for a quarter of a mile through the city, and it is well known that after heavy rains tiny nuggets of gold have been found in the crop-pings throughout its length.

The publisher of the *Star and Herald* said that the gold found on the beach probably came from the river that empties into the bay a half mile away. "*Every stream on the Isthmus carries some gold,*" he said, "*and this one, meeting this tide of the bay, deposits its gold in those hollows of the rocks.*"

To an amateur in mining matters the reddish vein looks like a good free-milling deposit. An assay of a few specimens would tell the story, but no one has the assay made because it seems incredible that a valuable deposit should have been left there unworked. Meantime a half dozen families get a good part of their living from the washings of the rock and have done so for years.

PANAMA'S NEWSPAPER.

The *Star and Herald's* office is worth the attention of one who goes to see the placer diggings. In New York the typesetters on the daily papers work on the top floors of the buildings where the papers are issued, but in Panama they work on the ground floor, with the presses right at hand. The paper is a daily, and the only one printed south of Mexico worth mention as a newspaper. It prints its news, &c., in Spanish, French, and English, a sufficient proof of the cosmopolitan character of the people of Panama. During the boom days of the canal it yielded profits of \$100,000 a year.

Some distance up the waterfront from the placer is one "modern improvement" worth a glance from the traveler, not for itself, for it is only a steel shed with a cement floor with pulleys for hoisting up carcasses of beef—an abattoir—but because of the immense flocks of buzzards that gather around it. One can see these birds at the back door of his hotel, but they are found there singly or by twos or threes. The huge flocks of them at the abattoir will interest where the mists in the back yard might be offensive. The abattoir proprietors have a monopoly of the business of slaughtering cattle in the city. They get \$4 a head for killing cattle.

A SUCCESSFUL CHARITY.

Moreover, a visit to the vicinity of the abattoir is worthwhile, because within a block of it is found a charitable institution well-nigh unique. A number of years ago, and just following the breakdown of the canal work, the number of beggars on the streets of Panama became intolerable. The worst feature of the trouble was that nearly all of the beggars were worthy of some kind of assistance. It is said that some willing to work starved to death. To prevent such misery the Bolivar Asylum was established. A building erected as a residence for a man of means, that is, a two-story house, occupying perhaps 100 feet front on a street, and having an ample yard within and interior buildings for servants and store houses, was secured. One great room was filled with shallow troughs of wood in which men could sleep. Another had cots for women. There was a room for a superintendent and his assistants. A room with apparatus and an instructor for the making of pita fiber or Panama hats were provided. The matron was able to instruct girls and women in household arts. Then the needy were told, when they made known their wants, where the Bolivar Asylum stood, for the name of the great liberator was given to the institution.

The management of this asylum would not please the professional charity givers of New York, for no man is kept starving while a committee investigates him in leisurely fashion. Any man, woman, or child can go to the table of the Bolivar Asylum and eat till satisfied. Anyone is free to lie on its sleeping places.

Singular, incredible as it may seem in a town like Panama, in any town to which the overflow of the West India negroes had drifted, this institution not only does not become a harbor for the vicious, but remains a most beneficent institution. Here is the record of inmates for six months ending with January, 1893 (I visited the place early in February): August, 163; September, 180; October 184; November, 164; December, 113; January, 115.

The inmates get three meals a day, according to the Ladino custom; that is, coffee and bread for the first meal, with what would be called in the States a plain square meal of bread, meat, and vegetables at noon and night. Nor is the charity limited to absolute necessities in all cases. The sick and the cripples get tobacco. Here is a part of the list of expenses of the asylum for January: Sugar, \$12.40; rice, \$76.70; coffee, \$12.40; meat, \$187; spices, \$9.30; soap, \$9.30; kerosene, \$4.65; bread, \$39.55; tobacco, \$6.20; medicine, \$36.30; salary of superintendent, \$80; of boss hat maker, \$40; of boss cook (a woman), \$14. The total for

the month was \$444.38. Toward this sum the Panama Lottery Company pays \$100 a month, the Government of the department \$50, and the city Government \$50. The rent is paid by residents of the town to a committee of whom Col. Sevilla, Consul-General from Ecuador, is Chairman.

"How do you keep the worthless from imposing on you?" was asked of Superintendent Alcalá.

"When an inmate is found refusing work that is offered to him, which he is able to do, he is punished as a vagrant. The men who impose on us must clean the streets in the chain gang. But it is true that we are rarely harboring one who is so unworthy."

FIGHTING COCKS AND OTHER SPORTS.

While walking on the southwest waterfront of the city, near the gold diggings, I happened on a shady little yard that was well-nigh full of fighting cocks. The birds were tethered to stakes and bushes all over the yard, but no one of them could get within several feet of any other. Some were in cages. They were all seemingly very well contented and on the best terms with each other, but that was because they knew they were isolated, as appeared a little later. What surprised me was the fact that when I stopped to look at them there was not a soul in sight to guard them, and yet, as prices run there—from \$25 to \$50 per bird—the lot was worth several hundred dollars. But I had scarcely leaned over the fence for a better look at them when a smiling Ladino, dressed in hat, shirt, and trousers only, was beside me. He had been watching the yard, probably from the house across the street. He was greatly pleased with my interest in his sporting outfit, and told me how one of them had won \$100 for him on the preceding Sunday, another \$40, and others smaller sums. It had been a great day for him; he had lost but one bird and a small bet. Just to show me how the birds fought he called a friend from the corner, and two were set fighting, while a crowd gathered on a near-by balcony. But there was no long fight, the birds being too valuable to waste.

So far as my observation went, cock fighting and pin pool¹⁶ were the only sporting events of the town, but I heard stories of poker with a sky limit at the gringo (foreigners') club, wherein natives played a stiff game. A lot of young foreigners

¹⁶ Pin pool — Variety of billiards

go out and play baseball, cricket, tennis, &c., in a field rented for the purpose, but I never heard of a Ladino taking a hand in. When I asked one of them if there was any kind of sport in which his people took a hearty interest outside of cock fighting, he replied instantly, and with emphasis:

"Yes, sir: revolution."

One hears tales of the days when Colombians in Panama had something to think of besides revolution—the days when the loafers in the saloons drank to the toast *"Here's to the canal! May it always be building and never finished!"*

The French ruled the Isthmus in those days. There were French engineers and French contractors, and contractors and speculators from every civilized nation. The capital of the French nation was flung out with the hand of folly. Ostentatious displays of wealth were a necessary adjunct to official dignity. Panama had sports in those days, but their blood had the Latin and not the Anglo-Saxon tinge. They loved wine and women and song only. They gambled, of course, but the blood who spends a night in luxurious revelry and the next day flings himself into some wild race, or, gun in hand, defies the terrors of the jungle, the sturdy rake whom men fear and women worship, was not there. The tales of Panama are tales of men in fine raiment, of beauty in gorgeous apparel, of equipages resplendent with gold and silver, of boudoirs with hangings of silk and downy couches and tinkling music and the whisperings of love.

A BRITISH TRAM.

There was one improvement, so-called, in Panama, which the tourist was bound to see, and, if a Yankee, to laugh at. That was the electric street car line. And yet the story of it was not a laughing matter, because it brings out an unpleasant fact. A company of Americans had offered to put in an efficient electric outfit, one of the best sort, but had failed to get the concession because the Ladinos will not give an American anything that any other nation will accept. For reasons that will appear at another time, Americans have not made themselves popular among the Ladinos.

However, a Colombian who had no capital got the concession and started exploiting it by sending a dry goods clerk to England to negotiate for the construction of the line. A firm of contractors was found there to furnish and build, and when papers had been signed the contractors came on in good faith to do the

work. When they arrived with their material they should have received \$10,000 in gold at once, but they found that the man with whom they had dealt had a piece of parchment—a concession only. To return was to waste their time and money so far invested. The stock of the proposed road could not be sold at any price, but after a long delay the contractors took stock for pay, hoping to sell out when the road was running.

Still more ill fortune awaited them. Their engineers laid out curves and planned grades that were ridiculous. Their motors were of from six to eight horsepower—less than one-third of that used on American lines. The rails were small and the roadbed wretched. The wire was not strung tight enough to take the kinks out of it. However, they essayed a trial on a certain day. A bobtail car was run out, a darky climbed on top to hold a copper triangle at the end of a pole against the wire in place of the usual trolley, and the invited guests got on board. The motorman turned on the current, and with a whir away she went till the first curve was reached. Then, with a crash, away she went again—on a new tack over the cobblestones.

The passengers got off, and to give the machine another trial got it back on the track and pushed it around the curve. It was all right apparently till a grade was reached, and then nothing would do but to get off and push some more. The trial was a flat failure.

The British engineer who had charge had been quite indignant when the American engineer in charge of the electric light plant had criticized the motors as well as curves and grades, but he had to bow to the logic of facts. He returned home for better materials by the way of the United States, and afterward had the grace to acknowledge that there were no street car plants in the world equal to what he saw in Boston.

A recent issue of the *Star and Herald* announces the opening of the line, if not its success. It urges people to patronize the cars, and says that "*the green flashes so frequently seen above the cars are but innocent manifestations of electrical energy, and that no danger exists.*" Moreover, "*the service will be improved as rapidly as possible.*"

INVITED TO A PRISON.

Mention has been made of the custom women living in streets leading to the market have of speaking to a stranger in his native language. They are the most remarkable women in that they are at least the most impudent to be found on the continent. No stranger can expect to be free from their attentions when alone on the streets at night, and but rarely in the daytime. They even walk past the hotel entrances to get the chance to address a stranger. One night as I sat in a chair beside one of my hotel doors, a woman stopped in the shadow just without and said:

"You are an American, no? All Americans have good hearts. For God's sake, come with me to the police station and speak to the Captain, so that he will let my friend go. It is only to say a word, and my friend will go to court in the morning."

It was such a singular request that I looked at the woman. She had the face of a gypsy, but she asked me if I could speak French, saying she was from Paris. She had most evil eyes, but was otherwise not very bad looking. I knew the direct route to the police station, and so, after a while, went with her. As we walked along she talked rapidly. Her friend was a beautiful girl and had the sweetest disposition, but that afternoon another girl had become, without any cause, jealous of her, and there had been a fight. Both had been arrested. If I would but "*speak to the Captain*" her friend could go home. She meant that the Captain would accept my word in place of a bail bond that the girl would appear in court. It was such a frightful thing to remain in the police prison all night, the woman said, that both she and her friend would be eternally grateful if I would save her from that fate.

After ten minutes of such talk we entered a two-story stone building, of which the front door was guarded by men with guns and bayonets. Two or three men with guns sat in the long hall within, and at the head of the hall, in an easy chair behind a little desk, sat a man in the blue uniform. with shoulder straps. Before I could say a word, the woman told him I had come to secure the release of a friend.

The Captain, for it was he, bowed politely, and said in a matter-of-fact way:

"Of course, you wish to see her first," and called an attendant. *"The gentleman wishes to see Anita,"* he said. Then I was able to explain that I had come merely

to see how prisoners were kept in Panama police stations. I did not want to see them on a false pretense, but would be greatly obliged for a night view of the quarters of the men, as well as of the women. I did not know either this woman or her friend and had promised nothing to either, but I intended giving the woman a dollar for suggesting the idea of the visit and as a consolation for any disappointment she might feel over my refusal to go bail for her friend.

The Captain smiled at that.

"You shall [see] the prison, but you may want to release the girl after you have seen her," he said.

The attendant, a man in a soldier's garb, led the way down into the cellar. The stairway was about four feet wide and had a turn in it. At the foot was a room, say twelve feet square, in which sat two turnkeys under a smoky lamp on the wall. One side of the room was a heavy barred grating, very much like the open side of the tiger cages in Central Park, except that the bars were two-inch poles of wood. Beyond those bars in a badly lighted room were two score of men, the day's accumulation of prisoners. Old and young, blacks and reds and mixed, ragged and well dressed, dirty and bloody and clean, there they were, all together. It was a cellar room, and a tenth of its space was full of men; it was ventilated by the way of the stairway and the long hall to the front door, and in no other way that I could see. And that, too, in the heart of the torrid zone.

The men came crowding to the bars as we reached the floor, and a dozen of them shouted to the woman. The effect of their greetings was electrical. She danced and clapped her hands and laughed aloud.

"Ha! ha! I am queen here. Is it not so, comrades?" she cried in a mixture of French and Spanish. *"Do you love me, comrades? See me,"* and she rose on her left toe and waved her right high in the air, as a ballet dancer might have done, while the men cried *"Yes! yes! Good! good!"* and applauded with a roar. In an instant she was on her feet with a sober face before the turnkey.

"My friend! my friend!" she said imploringly, at which the prisoners applauded again, apparently because they thought she had simulated sorrow cleverly. The turnkey smiled.

"Do you wish to see the girl?" he said to me.

"Yes."

He opened a door on one side of his den and revealed a room, tile-floored and like the others, save that cots could be seen along the further wall in place of the elevated platform that was in the men's department. A dozen women, negroes and Ladinos, and nearly all young, sat in a ring on the floor in the middle of the room. There was a great bowl full of a steaming stew with a big basket of white bread before it, within the ring, and the women were just reaching for the bread as the door opened.

So much I saw and then my pilot sprang, literally jumped, in front of me and halfway through the door. Partly turning her head there, she said:

"They have meat, there is plenty, farewell."

The turnkey bowed, smiled and closed the door, and I saw no more of the woman or any inmate of the woman's prison. Some charitable person, the turnkey said, had sent a good stew to the women prisoners, and a hearty feed within the prison was more tempting than any possible prospect without.

THE SAILOR GOT HIS MONEY BACK.

Police methods in Panama had an illustration in a story related by the second mate of the steamship *Barracouta*, that plies along the coast. This seaman was onshore one night, and at the hotel kept by an old '49er drank a little too much good liquor. The waiters put him in a hack and started him toward the boat landing. On the way he stopped at a barber shop, and that was the last he remembered until he awoke on the beach robbed clean. He went to the police, and they at once arrested every one of the forty hackmen who could have been in the district where the sailor was put in the hack. Then, at the barber shop, a negro was found who could remember the sailor and the hackman who brought him to the shop. This negro picked out the hackman from the forty. Then, before any of them was released, the mistress of the hackman and everything in the apartments occupied by the couple was brought to the station. In the rubbish was found the watch, the money, and other valuables of the sailor. The hackman was sent to the prison and thence to the chain gang, while the woman was imprisoned also.

THE ISTHMIAN BOOMER.

As was said before, the American resident in a Ladino city is ever ready to boom the town. To an American in Panama I said that one needed to keep his back toward the Chinese cooks at my hotel, and that the closets and other places not constantly under the eyes of the public were too vile to describe. He at once said that every place I called vile was scrubbed once a day, and that in few towns could I get five good courses and a bottle of claret served at each of the two principal meals of the day at so small a price for board as \$1.50 silver, or say 90 cents gold per diem.

"But your streets are dirty and the water that is peddled about town in carts comes from the cisterns under the hospitals, where yellow fever patients are kept. Some of the water comes from wells contaminated by cemeteries," said I.

"Oh, yes, I suppose so: but you should boil the water you drink in any city. Croton¹⁷ water is not free from sewage. Besides, I've been here four years now, and never saw a sick day," he replied.

A man was sick with the yellow fever in the house opposite the *Star and Herald* office. There is never a day in the year, I learned, when someone is not sick with it in Panama. No matter: *"One can live as long in Panama as elsewhere."*

When by chance I mentioned the Nicaragua Canal route the effect was amusing. To the citizen of Panama, no scheme in engineering quite so ridiculous as the Nicaragua Canal was ever dreamed of. Why, the earthquakes of Nicaragua would shake down the lock walls faster than 40,000 men could build them.

"I suppose the isthmus is free from such troubles, then," said I.

"You may say that, for practical purposes, it is entirely so."

However, if anyone goes from the cathedral to the waterfront, where the men work in the placer diggings, he will see the ruins of a church, the thick walls of which were tumbled over by an earthquake not long ago. No one doubts, after a look over the Panama route, that an interoceanic canal would now be

¹⁷ Croton — An above-ground reservoir in Manhattan, supplied by aqueduct from the Croton River; inaugurated in 1842, it was demolished in the 1890s

successfully operating there, but for the innate dishonesty of the French; but to mention Nicaragua in Panama is to excite suspicion, while to venture even a word in its favor is to incur ostracism.

One naturally resents this intolerance. Its manifestations in Panama are only a little less offensive there than the same spirit is in Chicago. Indeed, Panama resembles Chicago in another respect. It is very dirty. In a few weeks, Chicago will resemble Panama in one respect. Chicago will show everywhere the effect of a departed flurry. In Panama there are rows of buildings empty and gloomy and spotted with the signs of decay. But like Chicago, Panama is the trade center of a great district, geographically speaking, and the value of its merchandize sales and of certain kinds of manufacturing, cigarettes, for instance, is considerable. The value of the trade is very likely increasing, though this would not appear to the casual observer because of the overshadowing gloom of deserted houses.

Of the missionaries sent to Panama by well-meaning Protestants and what have they done there; of certain representatives of the American people sent to the Isthmus by the American government—representatives who were selected with the idea that Panama had a deadly climate firm in the mind of the appointing power—and of some other matters of interest to every American reader, stories will be told at another time. I could remain in Panama less than a week where, as it seems to me, a traveler could find enough matters of interest there to warrant at least a month's careful study. That anyone can spend that time or a year or more in Panama with but little danger of the fever seemed clear to me. The city is not so bad as its reputation in such matters. The ordinary traveler begins to take quinine the moment he sees the palm trees at Colon, and sometimes dies of fear within a week. If a man will drink no water that has not been boiled, and will avoid liquor and dissipation, and will use a proper disinfectant in the water in which he bathes himself and in which his clothing is washed, and will, above all, take enough exercise to keep his system from stagnation, he may live long and enjoy life in Panama or any other tropical city.

(4) ON A LADINO CATTLE BOAT.¹⁸

Novel Experiences in Sailing on Panama Bay.

The Sailors Mewl like Congo Monkeys and have such Good Times as Might Make all other Sailors Envious—Cleaned out by Gamblers—Distinguishing between the First and Second-Class Passengers.

Note has already been made in *THE SUN* of a remarkable resemblance between the people of Panama and those of Chicago and other Western towns. The people of Panama are intolerant of criticism on their interoceanic canal scheme just as wild-west Americans are intolerant of criticism on their peculiar localities. Smooth the hair and the people of Panama and Podunk¹⁹ purr like kittens; do but turn a single hair to expose a hidden flea and the beasts yowl and scratch like a cornered bay lynx. I think I discovered also a noteworthy resemblance between the people of Panama and the average Easterner. The Panama man knows as little of the States of Veraguas and Chiriquí as the Boston man knows of the valleys of the Río Grande and the Missouri, the Colorado and the Snake.

After two days of diligent but unsuccessful inquiry about my route, I went to the office of the *Star and Herald* newspaper, and there found men who know something about the region through which I wished to go. Until I met them, no one could tell me anything definite about either Veraguas or Chiriquí, though everybody knew that they lay just west somewhere, and that Chorrera was in the road to them. Everybody knows Chorrera, because it is Panama's country resort in the right season. At the newspaper office I learned that a mule trail led west from Panama through a flat, wooded country that lies between the Cordilleras and the Bay of Panama. For some twenty miles the road ran on the white sand of the beach, where the glare is blinding and the heat deadly. Eighty or ninety miles out on the road—the distance had not been determined—lay Aguadulce, a town of considerable importance, because it was a port to which the traffic of about the whole State of Veraguas came *en route* to Panama. Between Panama and Aguadulce were two or three hamlets of thatched huts.

¹⁸ Published by *New York Sun*, Sunday, December 17, 1893, page 4

¹⁹ Podunk — Insignificant or fictitious American town

There was neither stage or any other regular conveyance because people but rarely travelled through that country. When going to any place they took a boat to the nearest port. However, the Government sent a mail carrier from Panama over the trail, and he left the city every Saturday. I could hire or buy mules and follow him. An ordinary mule could be bought for \$200, or I could hire one to ride for \$3 a day, and the mail carrier would lead them back to Panama for a consideration. The mail carrier traveled as far as Santiago, the capital of Veraguas. It was a journey of seven days out and seven back. At \$9 a day for hired mules the ride would be somewhat expensive, while the cost of buying two of my own would be \$400, not to mention saddles and the cost of keeping them *en route*.

"How is the walking?" said I.

"It is not as good as sailing in a native coaster to Aguadulce and hiring mules there to take you to Santiago," said the editor. *"Santiago is only a day's sail from Aguadulce. Besides you will find a coaster a novelty."*

With Superintendent Mansfield of the Panama Electric Light Company, who was well acquainted with the boatmen, as a guide, I went down to the market beach. A boy with a dugout said a vessel was just in from Aguadulce and he would take us out to her. A half-mile away, anchored in shoal water, was a little two-masted schooner, like those which ply between New York and various Long Island Sound ports. Her deck forward of the cabin house was covered with fat steers that were lashed with their heads to a monkey rail²⁰ made of saplings. They were bawling for a drink. In the hold one could hear other steers bellowing for water. Aft the cabin were three men and two women, passengers, getting bundles and boxes over the rail into a dugout canoe in which they were going ashore. The sailors were getting a tackle ready for hoisting out the cattle. The vessel had been two days coming from Aguadulce. Judging from appearances, neither the passengers nor the crew had been washed during the passage. It is certain that the deck had not been cleaned since she left port. It was in vile condition.

"Do you want to go first class or a deck passage?" asked the Captain, when told why I had come to the schooner.

²⁰ Monkey rail — A second and lighter rail raised about six inches above the quarter rail of a ship.

"Does anyone ever go third class on your ship?" asked Mansfield.

"No, sir. We cannot afford to carry anyone third class," he replied, not noticing the drift of the question: "*but the second class is very cheap: only \$2, and it may take up three days.*"

"And if my friend goes first class?"

"It is \$5, but he shall have an elegant berth and supremely good food."

A passage of three days on a cattle boat in the torrid zone would certainly be a novelty, as the editor of the *Star and Herald* had said, and the elegant berth was secured.

On arriving by rail in Panama the hotel runner who put me in a cab at the station told me the price of the drive to the hotel was by law 30 cents. I had the driver go a little out of the usual route that I might see the market, and for this I gave him 10 cents extra—in all 40 cents. At the hotel he showed the runner how much he got, and thereat the runner followed me into the sitting room and asked for 20 cents for handling my baggage. In the meantime, I had learned that the lawful price of a cab was but 20 cents. I called the runner's attention to the lie he had told, whereat he smiled graciously and said:

"Ah, yes, but you are very rich."

I had my revenge when I got ready to leave the hotel for the schooner. I got another hotel employee to carry my luggage to the beach. The runner said nothing until I was wholly outside of the hotel limits, and then he cursed the porter whom I had employed in four languages, to the great vexation of the porter and the delight of a half dozen small boys who gathered to hear him.

It was on the evening of Saturday, Feb. 11, 1893, that I climbed over the rail of the schooner *Mary Hall*, bound for Aguadulce on the Bay of Panama. It was just dark when I arrived on board. There were two passengers already there—men bound from the capital to Sonar, a small country hamlet, and traveling second class, as I learned afterward. They were gambling with the crew, the whole crowd sitting in a ring on a black tarpaulin on the deck under the faint light of the schooner's anchor lamp. A gentle breeze made the lamp sway on its lanyard,

throwing the shadows of the men hither and yon across the cloth, and obscuring at times the tiny dice with which they played, so that all were kept bobbing about to open a passage for the light or stooping to see what faces of the dice were up.

At intervals someone would grab, with whoops and yells, the silver coins piled in the center of the ring, while the rest grumbled and growled and chipped in again. The pot grew larger as I watched, until about \$3 in small coin were in the heap. Then one of the travelers nudged the other, who changed the dice when his turn to throw came, and so won, and the game ended by the crew leaving the tarpaulin in a body. The two travelers had cleaned out the sailors.

Then the elder of the two passengers, a man of perhaps 25 years, got acquainted with me. Finding by questions that I understood a little Spanish, he wanted me to teach him the English of a number of expressions which he repeated to me, saying he had urgent need of learning that much English. His expressions meant "*Good evening, miss,*" "*Good day, miss.*" "*You are extremely beautiful this evening.*" "*I hope to learn English that I may talk to you.*" "*I love you extremely much.*" These and a few others having been repeated to him two more three times each, he asked if I had seen "*the great Edison who made the electric lights in Panama.*" I said I had seen Mr. Edison.

"*Good! Is he married? Has he a beautiful wife? Has he many sweethearts?*" he asked in rapid succession.

The Captain came, meanwhile, and the crew got up the anchor by hitching a deck tackle to the chain in lieu of a windlass. I had seen a variety of sailors at work in my time—sailors in the American navy and on foreign warships, on the merchant ships of the Atlantic coast, and the hayseed sailors²¹ that swarm on the shipping of the Great Lakes. I had heard them with varying emotions sing, chant, and yell in unison as they walked way or pulled in place or "swiggered off" on a rope; I thought I knew all about sailor chanties and songs, but I did not. Luckily, I had also heard Congo monkeys howl in the forests of Nicaragua—luckily, because I should otherwise have been at a loss for something with which to compare the cries of this Ladino crew as they got up the anchor of the *Mary Hall*.

²¹ Hayseed sailor — simple, unsophisticated person; country bumpkin

"*Ah-h, Oo-o-o! Ah-h, Oo-o-o! Ah, Oo-o-o-o-o-o!*" over and again, the first sound a deep guttural, the second a shuddering scream that rose and ended abruptly for two repetitions, and in the third rose high to die away in a prolonged wail. It is said that some of Morgan's buccaneers became renegades among the Indians in what is now the State of Veraguas. I have no doubt they did so, and that their descendants have inherited some of the ancestral traits. Every history of the buccaneers tells how the yells of the pirates struck terror into the hearts of the feminine-natured Spaniards who then lived on the Pacific coast.

But whether the sailors of Panama coasters learned their baleful cry from their ancestors or from the Congo monkey, it is a most remarkable sound. Moreover, it is peculiar to the Isthmus, though not to the Bay of Panama. In my journey of 250 miles, or thereabouts, through the prairies and forests west of the bay, I heard it used everywhere by the guides and other natives. In New York the coming guest presses a button and rings an electric bell that the maid may come to open the door. In the mountains of Kentucky and the Ozarks of Missouri he shouts from afar off. "*Who-o-ee!*" as a notice to the settler to chain up the dogs. On the plains of No Man's Land²² and among the wilds about the Teton range he shouts "*Hell-o-o-o! The house!*" that the rancher within may not think it is a surprise party coming and grab a Winchester. But when riding along the narrow trail in the woods of Veraguas and Chiriquí or along the mountainside or across some barren mesa, the guide, without any reason that I could give, would begin to cry:

"*Ah-h- Oo-o-o! Ah-h Oo-o-o! Ah Oo-o-o-o!*"

And then abruptly from a hut in a nearby thicket or like a wail from a home on a distant mountainside would come the answering cry, sound for sound, as he had made it. Heard by day it was weird, but when traveling in the wilds by night and without warning it came screaming out of the darkness, as several times happened when I was belated, it was nerve-destroying.

With the cable well in, the crew set the mainsail and jib, and then, heaving the anchor clear of the vessel, began to drift away with the zephyr that came wafting across the Isthmus from the Caribbean Sea and beyond. The clustered lights of the city streets and houses seemed to be sinking into the black ovals of the

²² No Man's Land — 170-mile strip of public land, also known as the Panhandle, ceded by Texas in 1850 and subsequently assigned to Oklahoma Territory in 1890

hills behind them. The bow of the vessel turned a tiny roll of fire on either side, while the main sheet dragging in the dark water scooped up living flames. The phosphorescence of the Bay of Panama, and indeed of the water along the whole Pacific coast of Central America is worth a journey thither to see. Fish that would have remained unseen by day darted about the vessel in weird streaks of light, and when one was overtaken by another and much larger one, the death struggle in the midst of a wavering mass of phosphorescent flames made a marvelous picture.

I had come on board expecting to find the schooner vile and the passage novel only in its tediousness and geographical location. I found that she had been cleaned until, at worst, no more offensive than the ordinary Herkimer county²³ barn, and there was so much matter of interest as to make the passage one of the most pleasing trips I had ever taken.

About 9 o'clock, having everything on the schooner to his liking, the Captain came to ask me if I would like to select my bunk, and I followed him into the little cabin. There were two bunks on each side, one above the other, the cabin being just long enough for an ordinary bunk. There was a blanket, a mattress, and a pillow in each of these. I could have either one and the Captain and his brother, the mate, would take the other two. They were not so very dirty, but cockroaches from one and three-quarter to two and one-quarter inches long were playing tag or something like it all over the bedding, and there was no ventilation save by way of the entrance. That is, the cabin was ventilated about as a woodchuck hole is. On deck the soft breeze fanned across it, cool and refreshing, while the gurgle and lap of the water on the schooner's hull was like the music of mermaids to lull the soul to forgetfulness. I said the bunk was extremely much good, but I preferred to sleep where I could see the stars every time I awoke. He was astonished at that, but more so when he saw my bed. Because the bed was a novelty and an admirable contrivance, and moreover might be used by some reader bound on a similar journey, it is worth describing.

Before leaving New York, I went to Sailmaker Jack Sawyer and told him I wanted a hammock that would keep me dry in a tropical rainstorm. He thereupon made a common man-o'-war hammock of No. 6 canvas. Then he made a waterproof tarpaulin a half wider and two feet longer than the hammock for a cover, and stitched it to the hammock in such a way as to make a bag of the two

²³ Herkimer County is located in upper New York State.

for two-thirds of the length of the hammock and leave a great flap that could be pulled up over the head when one was in it, or the flap could be turned down, leaving one's head and shoulders uncovered.

When I opened that hammock, everybody gathered about to see it, and with many exclamations of approval watched each motion as I spread it on the deck, turned back the flap, and got into it as into a sleeping-bag using my extra underwear and shirts, wrapped in a long piece of cotton, for a pillow.

A hammock is the easiest bed in the world, and one is particularly desirable for a traveler in such a region as Central America, where beds are not to be hired save in the cities. Moreover, one can roll up no end of spare clothing in it and use it as a valise by day. If made of waterproof canvas, as mine was, it will serve as a shelter tent in a rainstorm, or as a tarpaulin to shield the back on the cargo mule from the elements while on the road. I slept in mine suspended between trees in the forest, between the posts of verandas and of thatched huts, and from hook to hook in the homes of the well-to-do. One night in Honduras I slept suspended in a small hut, where seventeen men, women, and children lay sprawling about beneath me on the floor. But I never passed an uncomfortable hour in it. The first time I used it was on the schooner's deck, but then it was as a sleeping bag. People not accustomed to traveling would have found one thickness of No. 6 canvas too thin a mattress on a deck, but I was used to traveling.

If there are any sailors in the world who live an ideal sailor's life, they are found on the Ladino coasters in the South Sea. The *Mary Hall*, small as she was, had a crew of nine—a Captain, a mate, a cook, and six men before the mast; that is, the men were nominally before the mast. Most of the time they lounged on the quarterdeck, where they were as familiar with passengers and officers as a high-line fisherman with the skipper of a Gloucester smack. When I awoke early in the morning after my night on the deck, I found just one man awake, the man at the tiller. When the anchor had to be raised or the sails set or the deck scrubbed, all hands save the man at the tiller turned to. They chattered and laughed and howled continually. At meal-time—but of that later on. They carried a homemade guitar strung with high-key strings, and they made it jingle and twang at once as they sang love songs to absent sweethearts. They danced and slapped one another on the back in their exuberant joy over the memories of love scenes of which each reminded the others. Nor were these antics the only evidence I saw of their rakish prowess, for when they afterward swaggered about the streets of Agudulce, few houses were passed where some

dusky, round-limbed maiden did not peek from behind doorpost or corner to smile on these nautical satyrs.

When the man at the wheel saw that I was awake he roused the cook, a boy of 16, and by the time I had finished a luxurious salt-water bath on deck the lad had prepared coffee, which he brought to me in a graniteware cup, with a graniteware plate of excellent hard biscuit. The coffee was delicious, even though sweetened with the dark-brown sugar made in the interior. It was, indeed, surprisingly good, as any American is sure to find coffee to be everywhere between Panama and Tehuantepec.

Then I had leisure to examine the galley of this schooner. It consisted of two dry goods packing cases only. One was used as a locker to hold dishes and food. The other was, say, three feet large on every side. The top was covered with an A roof that could be removed. One side opened as a door, and the bottom was covered with tiles that were built up a foot high on all sides. The tiles were covered with sand, and on that the boy built little open fires of wood and cooked the food.

Beef, cut in strings for soup, hung from lines stretched above the galley, just as pumpkins are cut in strings and hung to dry on lines in a New England kitchen. In New York one's fresh meat must be put in ice boxes and guarded with care, as it quickly spoils, but I examined strings of uncured beef that had been hanging during hot and rather humid weather for a week in the rigging of the *Mary Hall*, and it was still sweet. I ate it there and of the same kind elsewhere throughout the region visited, and never found a tainted morsel. But I should not, on that account, advise the people of New York to cut their beef into strings and hang it on their fire escapes. It might cure all right, but it might also attract the Board of Health.

The galley of the *Mary Hall* stood beside the cabin at the break of the quarter-deck. A coop of chickens stood on the other side. After serving coffee the boy killed some chickens from the coop and thereafter until 10 o'clock he spread a neat white napkin over the end of a soap box which he placed in the shade of the mainsail. Another box without a napkin was placed alongside. Then he piled four graniteware plates on the napkin, put pepper and salt and a bottle of claret with a glass beside the plates and filled the top plate with a very good beef stew. Would I come to breakfast? I would. I sat on one soapbox and ate from the other the supremely good food promised me.

After the stew he served onions and rice fried together, a very good dish; also boiled black beans. Next, I had boiled chicken with potatoes on the side, and after that fried bananas, with a good black coffee last of all. Clean silver-plated knives, forks, and spoons were served with each course.

When I had reached coffee and cigarettes the lad stacked up plates for the second-class passengers on the corner of the cabin roof, in the sunshine. They had no soapbox to sit on, no wine, no tablecloth, and no napkins. But they got the same food that I did, though the boy was rather careless in serving them. They observed that I did not drink my wine, and so had their eyes on the boy when he carried the bottle away after serving the soup.

"Give us the wine," said one.

"There is no wine for the second class," said the boy.

"Yes, good. But that bottle is his," said the man, nodding his head toward me. So, the boy took the bottle to them. They had no glasses, but they were not proud. They drank out of the bottle, holding it up toward me, bowing, and saying *"health, sir!"* before the first drink.

After a little these passengers got to coffee and cigarettes, and then the boy began to yell:

"Ah-h, Oo-o-o! Ah-h, Oo-o-o! Ah-h, Oo-o-o!"

The crew answered enthusiastically in chorus. It was a startling but effective call to breakfast, for so the midday meal is named in that country. The crew all gathered aft and sat on the rail, the cabin roof, and the deck. Then the boy gave to each a big plate of stew and another big plate heaped high with all the varieties of food the passengers had had. They had the silver-plated knives, forks, and spoons to eat with, too. Captain and foremast hand sat side by side, and all fed with equal gusto and lack of ceremony. I have never seen sailors who got better food than was served to these Ladinos, nor any who enjoyed their eating more. I do not believe that any sailor Jack of the world is quite so well off—certainly none is so well contented—as the *Juanito marinero* of the Ladino coaster.

Until 4:30 in the afternoon we drifted along almost steadily. The northerly breeze failed us before 9 o'clock, but one from the sea came a little later. In the early hours another schooner was to be seen two or three miles astern. We left her steadily, but no one noticed her besides myself. The sailors had no thought of a race. We idly gazed at the brush-covered lowlands near the sea; the mountains, for the most part barren, further inland; the dark rain squalls that hung about the mountain peaks all day long; the islands in whose shoals "*the shellfish gather the flame of sunlight, and wave crest, and by magic turn them into jewels—pearls—for crown and necklace and armlet.*"

And then a sand bar was found lying across our bows, and with shifting sails we sped through a tortuous channel, where fish in shoals leaped from the water on either side, until a dead water path opened through the solid green forest of the swamp before us, and we entered in—into the mouth of the Aguadulce River. For a half hour we had our way, seeing a fisherman's thatched huts and a brush wolf here and there, and unoccupied savannas further on. White and gray herons and gray and black hawks watched us curiously from mud banks and the dead limbs of trees, or flew screaming away, as if frightened. Unfamiliar notes of birds were heard in the depth of the forest, and now and then a strange fish leaped from the dead water.

After a little the wind failed and we anchored between a sandy, grassy savanna and a dense forest growing from a black muck. A dinner, much like the breakfast, was served, and then the sailors went hunting iguanas and iguana eggs on the savanna and found them in abundance. They let those on the ship know of their success with ecstatic yowls, to which the natives on board replied no less ecstatically. They came on board with a dozen of the ugly lizards and a half peck of eggs, which they at once broiled on the coals and boiled in a pot. There was not enough for a taste all round, but the second-class passengers from the capital could not bear the sight of the reptiles, not to mention eating them. Having no qualms, I tried both flesh and eggs and found them good, the eggs tasting exactly like the yolk of a hen's egg.

Then night came, and no fair wind arising with it, the crew got out the sweeps, poles fifteen feet long, with pieces of board cut in the outline of a spear, two feet long, nailed to the end. Hoisting the anchor, they began to row the schooner up the stream, yowling at every stroke, and carrying her along as their ancestors, the buccaneers, may have swept the long, low craft of ancient days, laden with

ill-gotten wealth, up that same stream on their way to meet the brown sweet-hearts of the Veraguas.

After many twists and turns we drew in at last under an overhanging bank of earth. The sailors clambered up a plank with the ends of ropes, which they made fast to tree trunks to secure the schooner in place. Then, with the second-class passengers, all but the cook went to town and left me to pass the night comfortably on the deck, and awake next morning to study another novel feature of Ladino life.

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