

GLIMPSES OF EL SALVADOR (1895)
Text by John Randolph Spears

Newspaper article published by the *New York Sun*
December 16, 1895

Over the course of several years, Spears published reports from all of the Central American republics. His visit to El Salvador was apparently a brief one. This text is enlivened with evidence of the relaxed approach to life, as well as unusual activities, both human (active commerce in live iguanas) and mechanical (transporting the horses of first-class rail passengers on the principle of "ride on, ride off".) He is critical of local corruption and tyrannical rule.

VARIOUS IMPRESSIONS MADE UPON AN INTERESTED TRAVELER.

Getting Ashore Through the Surf—A Burst of Yankee Profanity—An Official Editorial—By Horse Car to the Capital—A City of Soldiers and Martial Noise—A Beer Monopoly—The Flogging of a Sailor—Oddities of a Good Government.

For startling interest and variety, the journey from the port of Acajutla, Salvador, to San Salvador, the capital of the nation, is probably unequalled by that made over any other route of equal length in the world, and the startling features of the trip meet the traveler "*butt end on*," as a log driver would say, his first experience being the most startling of all.

Acajutla is the chief port of Salvador, although it is but an open roadstead and no port at all. The village is only a tiny collection of houses built on a volcanic bluff overlooking the sea. There is not even a good beach on which to land a small boat, and there are treacherous reefs offshore on which more than one good ship has come to ruin. Still there is an anchorage, and one of the offshore reefs will break the waves when the wind is in one particular point of the compass. And then when the waves do not come from the right point to break themselves, the Captain of a ship can get up anchor and steam out to sea. So, Acajutla has been considered by the authorities as a good enough port for Salvador. In consequence, a concession was given to a company to build a pier there, on which cargoes might be landed, and a slender steel structure that looks very frail, but is probably sufficient for the purpose, has been extended from the bluff out a hundred feet or so into water deep enough to accommodate

ten-ton lighters. At the outer end, to which the lighters come, the floor of the pier is about forty feet above high water.

The traveler comes to Acajutla on a steamship. If fortunate enough to arrive in the night he may see Salvador's live volcano constantly pouring out flame, smoke, and some lava. It stands a long way back from the port, but it is everywhere known in the region as the lighthouse, and it does in fact enable the navigator to find the anchorage as a lighthouse would do.

The ship having come to an anchor, a lighter manned by natives comes alongside. It is somewhat like a huge whaleboat—sharp at both ends, broad, clean-lined for a barge, and strong. It is handled by means of oars that seem enormously long and heavy for the size of the boatmen and so, in fact, I guess they are, for I have never seen boatmen take shorter or less effective strokes than those of Acajutla. The great sweep of the oars which the boatmen of Amapala¹ gave to their oars when rowing barges to the beach furnishes a comparison which, if odious, will be at least interesting and instructive to the traveler.

However, in spite of their piddling motions, the crew get the boat to the ship's side and there it is partly filled with boxes and bales of merchandise, after which a double chair, in shape very much like the double seats of a Coney Island Ferris wheel, is hoisted out of the ship by a crane, the passenger gets into it with hand baggage, and is swayed out and lowered to the lighter.

The first thing I noticed after reaching the lighter was the fact that there was a deal more of a swell on than I had supposed. While on the deck of the big steamer the seas from the Pacific had handled the ship so majestically that I had forgotten them. But once I was in the barge the motion became greatly exaggerated, because I could not only see the big ship roll to and fro, but the barge rose and sank and plunged about in a way that was painful. As we shoved clear of the ship and pulled away, the plunge of the barge increased rapidly. The water was shoaler,² and the long rollers were snubbed and shortened and piled up higher and higher as they travelled on. Though somewhat experienced in seafaring matters, there was no repressing a feeling of apprehension that deepened into a well-defined dread as I saw that we were heading straight toward the black, overhanging bluffs that rose right out of the booming surf.

¹ Amapala — Port on the Pacific coast of Honduras (Gulf of Fonseca)

² Shoaler — Shallower

The end of the pier did, indeed, project beyond the smoother of the breakers, but as we neared the place I saw that each roller hurried us on at a rate the plodding oarsmen could not control. Then, just as the first of a series of three waves much larger than usual overtook us, the men took in all the oars but two used in steering the boat, and all but these two men with oars gathered in a group in the middle of the barge to grasp a rope that we could see hanging from a crane that projected from the side of the outer end of the pier. They were all talking together and gesticulating to each other and to the Captain in the stern, who in his turn was getting red in the face with his gesticulating and shouting. And so, the first big wave came and carried us shouting and gesticulating and swaying about until within two boat lengths of the pier. For a moment we wallowed there low down in the slack water, and then came the second great wave.

Pitching the stern high up on its crest and burying the bow until the rail was almost awash, the wave drove us literally a-whooping toward the black bluffs. A moment later we were under the rope, the crew made one wild grab together, a man on a thwart slipped and fell headlong among the rest, the rope dragged uncaught across the struggling mass, and on we rushed right into the roaring smother under the cliff.

As said, the startling experiences of a journey from a ship to the capital of Salvador meet a traveler, but on rushing helplessly in a heavily loaded barge on the crest of a big wave into the pounding surf at the foot of an overhanging cliff was one of the most stirring experiences of my life. And, yet, as a matter of fact, I was in no danger at all—not even in danger of a wetting, save as some of the foam of the dancing breakers splashed over the rail. The bargemen there very often fail to catch the rope that hangs for them, but their boat never, or at worst rarely, reaches the rocks. The cliff beside the pier extends down below the water perpendicularly. So, the boat, although carried in most fearsome fashion straight toward the rocks, is met by the rebounding water and driven back by what may be called the "overtow." That was what happened to my barge, and we actually floated out a length beyond the pier. Then we came back in with another wave, and this time the boatmen caught the rope and got a turn around the thwart with it. We were all right then, but we were swaying to and fro, pendulum fashion, and that was not pleasing to the unaccustomed. They had a steam crane with a chair attached, which was used for hoisting passengers from the barges up to the pier, but I thought I wouldn't wait. There was a substantial steel ladder from the water up to the pier floor, and it was a climb of only forty

feet. I was absolutely sure the ladder wouldn't break, but I did not have the same confidence in the rope that seemed to hold the boat off the rocks. So, I climbed the ladder.

As I reached the floor of the pier a pleasant-faced man with a brass badge on his hat met me and said: "*Two dollars.*"

"*What for?*" said I.

"*It is the charge for landing.*"

I guess there was a swindle amounting to \$1.50 in that charge. According to the charter of the company, they are to collect 50 cents only from each passenger who passes over their pier. I did not know then what the legal fee was, but (and this is worth telling, because it illustrates the ways of the region), if I had known the correct price it would have done no good to protest. The officials, so far as I have observed, never pay any attention to the protests of a traveler. Very likely this official pocketed the \$1.50. According to published reports, the pier pays 20 per cent. every six months in dividends on the capital stock.

Just why a pier should have been made opposite the huge black bluff is an unanswerable question. One mile west of the pier is a [fine?] beach, and off this beach is a better anchorage than off the present pier. Back of this beach one can find in the woods the remains of an old town—a convent's walls, paved streets, ruins of house walls, a plaza, and so on. Probably this town was overthrown by an earthquake, and the people were induced by real estate speculators to rebuild at the present site of Acajutla.

There has always been some talk about removing the port back to the old site, but I do not think it will ever amount to anything. The pier owners, who pocket 40 per cent. annual dividends, will object. Moreover, the Government has let a contract for a new Custom House near the pier to cost \$200,000. The foundations, 210x153 feet large, were completed when I was there.

From Acajutla a railroad runs north *en route* to the capital. There are two trains a day each way over the line. The station is peculiar in that it is much like some terminal stations in the United States. It is a great shed with a shingle roof, and I cannot remember seeing any other shingle roof in Central America. A train was found made up ready for the morning's trip to Sonsonate, a run of two

hours, and a distance of perhaps twenty miles. The train had a first-class car, a second-class car, two freight cars, and a slat-walled cattle car, all of American build. This train seemed in no way novel until just before 8 o'clock, when the passengers began to arrive. Then I observed that the stock car was for the accommodation of first-class passengers. These come to the station in almost every instance riding either horses or mules. Reaching the platform, they dismounted and then, instead of sending their animals to a stable, as would have been done in the United States, they led them into the stock car, where they were secured by halters. Those who were to make a through passage put their animals as near the ends of the car as possible, and those for intermediate stations near the door. In Salvador there are no cabmen waiting at the stations to shout "*Hev a cab?*" The passengers, on reaching their destinations, merely lead their animals from the stock car, as a Yankee would get a valise from a baggage car, and, mounting, they ride away.

The majority of the second-class passengers were women bound to the market at Sonsonate. They came on foot to the station, each one carrying a big basket or bundle of something for sale on her back, where it was supported by a strap that was passed across the forehead. I did not see anyone carrying bundles in that fashion between the Isthmus of Panama and Acajutla. But that was not the most remarkable thing about these market women. At least twenty of them came bringing baskets, and, of course, I looked into them. The first sight was startling. Every basket seemed to be two-thirds full of live, fat, gorgeous-colored snakes, wriggling and twisting about continually. A closer inspection showed, however, that the baskets held iguanas, the lizards that form an important part of the food of the region. They were from eighteen inches to two feet long, and were rather thicker in proportion to the length than Yankee lizards. It may make the reader shudder to think of it, but roast iguana and iguana soup are both very palatable dishes, after one has overcome prejudice. The poor beasts in the baskets were treated very cruelly. Their legs were lashed across their bellies by tying two claws or toes together, and, in order to get a sufficient length of toe to hold the lashing well, the feet were split, and the strings were tied around the bleeding flesh and bones. Besides that, their mouths were sewed shut, and then they were piled in one on top of another, until they were at least eight or ten deep in every basket. The practice was quite as cruel as that of the Yankee dealer in chickens, who puts them alive in such a shallow coop that they beat their heads against the slats above till the skin is worn off, and then leaves them without water for a day at a stretch.

We pulled out at 8 o'clock sharp. I observed that a large percentage of the passengers in the first-class car paid fare in cash, also that the conductor was the best dressed, at least the most expensively dressed, man I saw in the country. He wore a profusion of gold jewelry. His watch chain, for instance, was made of gold coins, and was long enough to reach across the breast.

Perhaps here is as good a place as any to say that the railroad is fifty-three miles long, and that the Government bought it of the builders for \$1,460,000, and that by the latest report at hand it yielded a profit of \$52,082—say 3½ per cent. However, when I was over the line the road had not been paid for, and there was nothing to indicate that it ever would be paid for. Moreover, the permanent way and the rolling stock were badly run down.

The country along the route to Sonsonate was all cultivated, cane and corn, as I remember, being the chief products. A plough was seen in one field, and that was the first plough that I had seen during the journey from Panama. However, it was not very much of a plough. It was made from a forked tree. One fork had been cut to a length of fourteen feet and the other to a length of, say, twenty inches. The end of the long part was lashed to the yoke of a pair of oxen. The short end was rooting through the loam as the oxen walked across the field, while a barefooted native controlled the course of the rooting by means of a three-foot bent stick lashed to the crotch of the fork. But if the people do not plough in Yankee fashion, they know how to make and use irrigating ditches. The fields were everywhere moistened (it was the dry season) by water taken from the many streams of the region.

At 10 o'clock we arrived at Sonsonate. People who object to the custom of stopping twenty minutes only for meals along the roads of the United States ought to go to Salvador. We stopped three hours for breakfast at Sonsonate. This may seem almost incredible, but that is the custom. I left my baggage in the depot and walked to the Pitters House because people had told me that it was an American hotel. I found it was owned by a Greek with a Salvador wife, and that not a soul about the house could talk English. However, it was a clean place, and a breakfast of half a dozen courses, well served, made up for the lack of Yankees. The passengers devoted about half an hour to preparing for the breakfast and an hour and a half to eating it, and a half hour to getting on the train again. The only railway passengers on the American continent who are served with meals in a more comfortable manner than this are those who travel on vestibule trains in the United States and eat in dining cars.

Between Sonsonate and La Ceiba, the end of the railroad, there was but one incident of the journey worth mention, and that seemed to interest no one on the train very much except the engineer, the fireman, and myself. A switch had been left open at a crossroad siding and our engine ran off the rails. We stopped very suddenly, and most of the passengers looked out of the window casually. Some few got out and walked about, as if for exercise, while half a dozen of us went to the engine. We found the engineer standing on the ground beside his machine swearing aloud in the Yankee dialect. No one should in any way approve profane language, but after one has traveled for weeks in Spanish America, he will not reprove an engineer who after a disaster relieves his mind in the American idiom of profanity. Indeed, I rather enjoyed it. It was emphatic and soulful—different from the "*Carambas*" and expletives of the natives there.

Having freed his mind, the engineer turned to the fireman, a native, who was impassively looking down from the tender, and said: "*Throw down the chunks.*"

Thereat, the fireman threw down a lot of billets of wood, all of a size, that looked as if they had been carried for the purpose, and with these the engineer made a plank road, so to speak, leading back to the rails. This done, he climbed back on the machine, threw the throttle wide open, and after a bit of snorting the locomotive backed up on the rails. Then the switch was set properly and away we went. The delay due to the accident was just fifteen minutes.

There were from three to ten soldiers on every railway station platform. They all carried muskets, and people told me the muskets were kept loaded with ball cartridges. The soldiers did nothing but lounge about with muskets in hand. When I asked a man if the soldiers were kept on guard to protect the property from thieves he was indignant. He said the people of Salvador had less thieves in proportion to the populations than the United States. I have no doubt he told the truth. He said further that the soldiers were kept on guard "*to support the Government.*" I guess that was true also.

Ceiba is the name of a tree that grows to an enormous size, and forms a very picturesque feature in Central American landscapes. At La Ceiba, the end of the railroad, enough of these trees are found standing among the houses to lead one to suppose the trees gave the town its name. Except for the trees, the town is a scraggly sort of place, not likely to interest the traveler very much. As fast as the travelers left the train there, they hurried across a street to a long shed

where some dozens of mules, ready saddled, were standing. Two big stages, much like those in use in the mining regions of the United States, to each of which five mules were hitched, were in front of the shed. Passengers bound to the capital had to choose between the mules and the stages, for the part of the road lying between La Ceiba and Santa Tecla, a distance of eight miles. Finding a seat beside one of the stage drivers unsold, I engaged it, and pretty soon, the seats inside having been filled, a lanky native, for all the world like a Yankee stage driver in looks and bearing, climbed up beside me, gave the mail under his feet a kick, picked up the lines, threw a kiss at a brown-skinned, barefooted girl who was watching him from a saloon door at the end of the shed, and then, with a crack of a long whip and a chirrup to the mules, started the outfit up the road.

For a quarter of a mile it was a tame road. The grade was steep, and the dust was deep, but the driver was by no means worried by that. Neither were the passengers worried. The driver was cheerful, and even hilarious. He shouted to men and women in the houses along the way, he geyed a lone woman on horseback who had a small boy servant trotting along afoot, and hanging on to the horse's tail to help him up the hill. He flicked stray dogs with the lash of his whip, and when other sorts of amusement failed told short stories to the passengers which set everybody laughing.

After a little we got over the crest of a ridge and found a long down grade before us. The driver got the brake under his foot and chirruped at the mules, who pricked up their ears and began to trot gently. This threw the dust up about us in suffocating fashion. A story the driver was telling was stopped short by a violent fit of coughing, and a moment later he lashed the mules into a gallop, and away we went, swaying and bumping down the grade and throwing a rolling cloud of dust away behind us like the aerial smoke trail of an overburdened locomotive. The drivers on the old Cripple Creek stages could not have made a braver show.

Then when we reached the foot of the next up grade we found another novelty. It was a steep grade, and the coach was heavy and full. The five mules were sleek, but lazy, so a yoke of oxen had to be provided to help tow the outfit to the top of the ridge. An indolent, barefooted native swung the ox team into the road as the stage approached. A long rope from the yoke was made fast to the stage. This done, we loitered up the hill, while our driver let his lines hang slack and devoted all his attention to telling stories.

There was one noticeable architectural feature about the houses along the railroad outside of Sonsonate and along the stage route. Almost without exception they had the kitchen in front, facing the street, instead of behind. This was not a little remarkable, for elsewhere in Central America the women all seemed rather shy than otherwise when doing housework. Central American kitchens are usually sections of an unwallled verandah. All those seen along this route were of that kind. Everywhere women could be seen at work on the front porch, grinding hominy into dough for tortillas, boiling rice and beans, and doing all sorts of kitchen work common to the region, talking the while in animated fashion to people passing along the street, to their neighbors in adjoining houses, and shouting to other neighbors across the highway. On no country road of Central America did I see so much life and stir among the people. The Indians of this part of Salvador, from whom the inhabitants are descended, were very likely of different habits from ordinary American red men, who are invariably shy in the presence of strangers. However, this habit of cooking on the front porch is not without advantages. It promotes sociability at least.

At one spot along the stage route some hundreds of men were cutting a bed for a railroad in the side of a mountain. The Government was preparing to extend the railroad from La Ceiba to Santa Tecla. The laborers were the most deliberate workmen I saw in Central America. In fact, they were merely loafing over their tasks just as Yankees do when working out road tax. This was so noticeable that I took pains to ask a well-informed man in San Salvador about it, and he told me what the work was for and how the Government secured its men. Then he showed me a newspaper edited by a Spaniard in the employ of the Government. On the editorial page was an article referring to this piece of work, saying that 1,000 patriotic volunteers were engaged in grading this, the most difficult part of the unfinished route of the railroad, all for the good of the nation. The cheerfulness and the self-abnegation of the workmen were praised, and the article ended in two phrases which may be liberally translated as follows: "*Happy is the Government that is supported by the good will of its people! Happy are the people whose rulers are solely interested in their welfare!*"

At the suggestion of this friend I then made the acquaintance of the editor of the paper. I found him entirely free to talk about both the workmen and the editorial.

"*Are the men really volunteers, as we understand that word in the United States?*" said I.

"*They are volunteers with a rope,*" said he with a smile.

"*Then I guess you did not write that editorial about their cheerfulness and so on.*"

"*No: Don Antonio Ezeta, the Vice-President, writes all such things for the paper.*"

The men were miserable conscripts working sorely against their will. And this is worth telling because it illustrates Government methods in Central America.

My stage ride ended at Santa Tecla, a town that was founded to take the place of San Salvador as the capital when that city had been destroyed for the tenth time by an earthquake. The building of the new city was, in fact, a real estate speculation, although not so recorded, I believe, in history; but the town site boomers failed to get the national seat removed after all. The San Salvador people went to work on their ruins, and rebuilt so well that they were able to hold the Government. I remember that it had a barren plaza in which a few women had erected mat-enclosed shelters where they sold country produce. There was also a very handsome park enclosed with a substantial wall. I was admiring this park by moonlight at 9 o'clock at night, when a policeman came along and put me out. They lock the gates at 9. Perhaps the most noticeable feature of the town was a cottage built somewhat according to Yankee ideas. That is to say, there was a flower garden laid out around the house, instead of a house built around a flower garden, as the regular Central American houses are built. This house owner was willing that all the town should see his beautiful garden, and he didn't make a blank-walled fort when he designed his home. The house was two stories high, and had large windows and doors and annexes and gables. But so long as changes of government can be effected there only by force of firearms, the two-foot windowless adobe wall is likely to remain the more popular style in house building.

A horse-car railroad connects Santa Tecla with the capital. Here is what Bulletin No. 38 of the Bureau of American Republics, Washington, says about this road:

The city of San Salvador has for some years been connected with the city of new San Salvador, or Santa Tecla, by a horse railroad ten miles in length, which is now being converted into a locomotive road, by whom it was purchased from the company which constructed it.

The cars on this road had stopped running for the day, when, soon after 6 o'clock, I reached Santa Tecla. The next morning at 7 o'clock I found three Yankee bobtailed cars, with four mules attached to each, ready to make the first trip to the capital. The cars were all well loaded with people, baggage, and garden truck, when, at 7:30, all three started together. The fare for the ten-mile run was 50 cents, with nothing extra for so much baggage as man could carry. Some of the market women had bundles which occupied more floor space than they did, and the weight of some of the bundles must have been from 50 to 70 pounds. An American electrician told me the horse-car road was to be replaced by a trolley line and that he had the work well advanced.

There were many coffee plantations along the route, but these were not all pleasing to the eye. The rows of trees were so close together that the tree tops interlaced—they did not exceed seven feet apart. In Costa Rica, twelve feet apart or more is now the rule. Moreover, not a single plantation was clean. On the other hand, the sugar cane fields were about the best kept of any seen anywhere in Central America.

San. Salvador, as a city, is one of the best capitals in Spanish America as a home for a foreigner, for the reason that it is supplied with an abundance of good water and because it is built on a tableland 2,100 feet above the sea. It is a typical Central American town, with its central plaza full of flowers and its markets full to overflowing with vendors and buyers, and its rectangular blocks of one-story houses that face the street with blank walls. But there are drawbacks to the town as a place of residence for a Yankee. It is subject to daily earthquakes of slight moment, and no longer ago than 1874 it was shaken well-nigh to pieces. Worse yet, it is full of soldiers, and the infernal blare of the bugle is heard at all hours. Of course, it has a statue of Morazán.³ One might enjoy life there for a long time, however, if he could have his home out in the suburbs in a park of his own designing.

A feature of the town, suggestive of the volcanic energy of the region, is the large assortment of bath houses where various kinds of water at various temperatures are run into the tubs by direct connection with natural springs.

Another feature of the city is the National Theatre. An Italian opera company was in town when I was there. It had received a grant of \$40,000 from the

³ Francisco Morazán (1792-1842) — Honduran-born soldier and politician; leader of the Federal Republic of Central America from 1830 to 1839.

Government. It is supported by the Government on the theory that a theater serves to educate the nation. As a matter of fact, it serves merely to amuse the Government officials and their friends. It is worth noting here, perhaps, that all Central American Governments are conducted by what the Goo Goos⁴ of New York would call the best people. The Juanitos and the Miguelitos—the Johnnies and the Mikes—the scruff aren't in it, so to speak.

The Ezetas were the rulers of Salvador when I was there. I saw the President and his wife on the street. They were guarded by a Colonel in full uniform. I think the Señora was the handsomest woman I saw in Salvador, and the President himself was a man who showed intelligence and force of character. People told me he killed his predecessor in order to obtain office, and very likely he did so, since that is the course of politics in the region. They say he established himself in power by torturing his opponents, and a variety of other devilish devices, and I did not doubt the stories. But none of these things left a trace on his countenance. I should have supposed him entirely serene in mind if he had not kept a stalwart soldier handy by as a bodyguard.

San Salvador "has a well-organized police force," says the bulletin already quoted, and that is true. I saw a good deal of the policemen. No one can avoid seeing them, because they are everywhere present. Every one of them carries a revolver of the largest size and American make. I spoke to one of the policemen about the beauty of the butt of his revolver, because he had inlaid it with bits of silver. Thereat he handed the weapon to me. It was of the heaviest caliber and fully loaded. I asked him if he was skillful, and he replied that he had never fired it at anything, but he was confident he could hit a man with it two blocks away.

One of the interesting features of the city's commerce was the influence of Chinamen. There seemed to be no prejudice against the Chinese merchants, and they had monopolized the trade in silk and some other things as well. Their sales of silk at low prices had enabled them to destroy the trade of all other merchants handling such goods, and had hurt the native producers of silk goods, except in shawls and *rebosas*, or scarfs, which the women there wear over their heads. The tariff on these articles was prohibitory. After seeing some of the hand-woven native *rebosas*, I guess that even the theorists who favor universal free trade would have said this particular tariff was justified. There was a savage mingling of colors with a purity and solidity of fiber about the

⁴ Goo Goos — Middle-class urban reformers seeking "good government" regardless of party

native *rebosas* that made them superior to any silk product I saw in Spanish America. It would have been a great pity to drive the weavers of San Salvador from their old wooden looms to the cane fields and coffee plantations, substituting for their products the weighted and unartistic fabrics of the Chinese. Moreover, the Salvador silk-making was a home industry in every sense. It was carried on by families who attended to the product from the worms on the mulberry tree growing in the back yard to the weaving in the hand loom on the front veranda. So far as I observed, the silk weavers of Salvador were the only manufacturers in the region enjoying a protective tariff.

However, while speaking of tariffs, it should be said that quite a number of brewers in various countries of Central America were in a sense protected. These brewers had obtained concessions for the exclusive right to manufacture beer for various periods. The tariff, I believe, was in no case raised in their behalf, but it was already high enough to enable them to produce beer at a profit when sold at a less price than the imported article. One Antonio Fink and another had a concession in Salvador. It was to run ten years free of tax, and five years on a monthly tax of \$15. All materials were imported free from San Francisco, but, *"My partner, he don't know how to make beer. I don't know how, and our brewer, he don't know how, either. There is plenty of margin at 25 cents a bottle, but we don't make any money. I guess I will have to get a new brewer."* So said Fink about the brewing business. The man who had the concession in Honduras talked of his business in precisely the same way, while in Guatemala the breweries had been shut down for a long time when I arrived, on account of a slight tax that the Government had imposed. Imported beer sold at 50 cents a bottle everywhere.

Although, aside from the subject of tariff, it may as well be said here that the favorite drink of the rich people of Salvador was brandy, which sold for \$6 a bottle. Among the poor, the favorite—in fact, then only drink worth mention—was native rum, into which various fruits, such as pineapples and oranges and limes, were usually chopped. To the taste of a Yankee reporter, the poor folks had far and away the best and most wholesome drink, but it is a pity that the Spanish wine merchants in the old days of Spanish rule should have been able to throttle the beginnings of grape culture in all the regions of America that the Spaniards controlled. Chile and Argentina have outgrown the blight, and are now producing excellent wine, but in Central America grapes are almost entirely neglected.

While in Santa Tecla I met a man who had been in New York city long enough to learn our language perfectly. He was a civil engineer, and he told me he had taken a thorough course in his profession. So, I asked him what had impressed him most on his arrival in New York. He replied:

"I remember very well. The first day I was there I called on an old friend who had an office in a tall building near the Produce Exchange, and he took me to lunch. We sat down at a table, and he ordered some things to eat and beer to drink. Pretty soon the mozo brought the order, including two glasses of beer, each of which held as much as a bottle does here. It was the best beer I had ever tasted, and I asked him what a glass cost. He said: 'Five cents,' and nothing I saw or heard in New York astonished me as much as that."

The people of Salvador, and, in fact, nearly all the people of Central America, can be called hard drinkers, but not drunkards. They stop drinking when they feel themselves becoming intoxicated, but the number of glasses of brandy that it takes to produce the symptoms is something to astound the Yankee traveler. Still, some people do get drunk there. An average daily report of the arrests made by the police of San Salvador was copied from the *Official Gazette*, as follows:

There were arrested and put at the disposition of the respective authorities 16 men: 9 for scandalous drunkenness, 2 for complicity in an assassination, 2 for theft, 1 for carrying forbidden arms, 1 as a suspect, 1 for striking a lady, and 5 women: 1 for fraud, 1 for selling food in bad order, 1 for buying stolen property, 2 for disobedience to the police.

San Salvador has a population of 30,000.

On returning to Acajutla I saw a public exhibit of the administration of justice. A sailor, a Mexican by birth, who had shipped in a company of seamen employed by the Government, had gone into a house in the suburbs while drunk and had beaten a woman with a club. One blow, it was said, broke her jaw. The offence was acknowledged when the sailor was taken before Gen. J. Salazar, who was then in command in Acajutla. Gen. Salazar was very indignant. There was no form of trial. All the soldiers in the command (26 by count) were ordered out of the barracks and formed in line at a principal street corner. The sailor was told to stand with his face toward the corner and his arms around the wooden post that supported the corner of the piazza of a house there. A soldier then brought thirty whips—limbs of trees four feet long on the average, and as thick at the butt as a man's thumb. All being now ready, a Captain called a soldier

from the line and ordered him to hit the sailor ten blows with a whip. The soldier did it in a perfunctory fashion. A second soldier then hit ten more blows in like fashion. The sailor did not even wiggle under the blows. Just then the General came from his office, and when a third soldier began to strike, the sailor wiggled. The General looked on until ten had been given and then ordered a Lieutenant to examine the sailor's clothing. It was found he had dressed for the occasion. He had on three shirt-like jackets and two pairs of trousers. He was at once stripped to one thickness of cotton. This very plainly appealed to the sympathy of the soldiers, and the fourth man to wield a whip began to lay it on in mild fashion. "*Hit harder,*" said the General.

The next blow was a little, but only a little, harder.

"*Caramba!*" said the General to the Captain. "*Hit him to show him how,*" meaning that the Captain should hit the soldier. The Captain obeyed orders with a will. He fetched the soldier a whack with the flat of his sword that lifted the fellow, yelling, off the ground.

"*Hit so,*" said the Captain, and this time the soldier obeyed the spirit of the order. The sailor writhed and yelled with each stroke, and thereafter the General had no cause of complaint. Soldier after soldier stepped from the ranks as ordered, bared his arm, and with a fresh whip, struck ten resounding blows, until 230, all told, had been given to the sailor. Then they ran the sailor over to the barracks and made him get into a tub full of water used for watering horses. The man hesitated about lying down in it as he was ordered to do, but a soldier hit him across the back with an iron ramrod from a musket, and then he ducked under with a groan. This done, he was taken into the barracks. Gen. Salazar told me he should send the sailor to the national penitentiary on an island in the Gulf of Fonseca for a year as soon as the wounds of the whipping were healed. He had the power to do it, and I have no doubt it was done.

Article 19 of the Constitution of Salvador contains the following paragraph:

Penalties for life, flogging, and all kinds of torture are forbidden.

If further comment on the Government as administered there is needed, it will be found in the following:

When I was getting ready to leave San Salvador a crippled little teacher of languages came to me on what he told the servant at the hotel was very important business. Entering my room, he apologized for offering any suggestions as to what I should say in THE SUN about my visit to Salvador. He said: *"Ah, if some of the people here have said anything against the Government, and some of them have very likely done so, they are so indiscreet—don't print it. Don't believe what they say. The President is really a very good man. Say all the pleasant things you can about the Government. It will make it easier for us to live here—ah—much easier than if you told the—ah—what others have probably told you."*

Last of all, when ready to take passage for Guatemala, I went to the agent of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company and bought a ticket. *"You will have to get a permit from Gen. Salazar before you can go on board,"* said the agent.

"Are all passengers obliged to do so?" said I.

"Certainly."

Article 13 of the Constitution provides:

All persons have the right to stay in whatever place they may deem advisable, to travel freely, to emigrate from the country, and to return to it without a passport, except in a case of a final judicial sentence.

Having read that I went to the General and got the pass. Then I said: *"General, must every passenger get a pass from you, or only foreigners?"*

"Every one. Our Constitution and our laws know no favoritism."

"General, your Constitution says that all persons have the right to emigrate and return without a passport. Why am I required to come to you for this pass?"

The General looked hurt, as it seemed to me, but he held out his hand to shake mine, and said: *"I am very sorry someone has been telling you evil things about our Government. Do not believe them. I shall be very sorry to learn that you have gone away with the prejudices against us that other foreigners have shown."*