

HONDURAS AT PEACE AND WAR (1895)
Text by John Randolph Spears

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(1) RICH MINES IN HONDURAS.¹

GREAT WEALTH IN GOLD AND SILVER NOW LYING DORMANT.

Women who Support their Families by Gold Washing for a Few Hours Each Week—Effect of American Mining Methods—Why Some Mining Enterprises Have Failed—A National Park Paved with Silver—Magnificent Opals Found Also.

All things considered, about the most remarkable statement in *THE SUN*'s recent description of the women of Spanish America² related to those who earn a living by washing gold from the sands of certain streams in the eastern part of Honduras. That gold should be found in sufficient quantities to enable 235 women to support themselves and their families, including their husbands—found in such quantities and under such conditions that crude wooden and gourd bowls suffice for washing it from the sand; that the women should continue this work from year to year without the men taking it in hand also; that this fact should be well known throughout Honduras, and even appear in a census report printed at the Government's expense—all this forms a remarkable feature, not only of the story of Spanish-American women, but of the story of the mines of the Americas as well. It was a statement that almost passes belief when one remembers what the old-time Spaniards did in their thirst for gold, and yet it was literally true, and, what is more, the half of the story was not then told.

It is the purpose of this article to describe the mines of Honduras. The facts were gathered during a journey in the country by means of interviews with people who were familiar with the condition of affairs of the kind, and who were in nearly every case disinterested; they had no mines to sell. They were as a rule people working in mines for good wages, and were rather bears than bulls on the mine market, because they were watching for good chances to buy-in where small capital would avail.

To begin, then, with the placer diggings. The reader will get a better idea of the lay of the land if he will procure any modern map of Central America for examination in connection with what is here said. The maps sold at the bookstores

¹ Published by *New York Sun*, Sunday, March 17, 1895, page 3

² See <https://donduncan.org/spears/jrssenoritas.pdf>

for a dollar each, though not accurate, will serve. On the map of Honduras will be found a river called the Patuca—on some maps the Patook—emptying into the Caribbean Sea on the northeast corner of Honduras. A little more than half-way up this river is a branch called the Guayambre, whose head is near the Nicaraguan border. Still further up, near a city called Juticalpa, the river divides into three streams, of which the two principal ones are called the Guayape and the Jalan. The latter is a pretty large stream, whose head is away over toward the Pacific.

Within the region drained by the Guayape, the Jalan, and the Guayambre lie the best-known placer diggings of Honduras, and it is here that one may find the 235 women who, according to the census report, earn their living by washing gold from the sandbars of the streams.

It is a remarkably interesting region aside from its product of the yellow metal. It is a land of lofty plateaus and terraces, and of steep mountains and narrow valleys as well. There are great forests of pine and mahogany. Because of its elevation and of the trade winds that sweep in from the Atlantic, it is one of the coolest and most healthful parts of tropical America. So far as health is concerned, there is no part of North America with a better situation. It is a land where cattle thrive so well that they are famous throughout Central America for their size and other good qualities. Corn and wheat, as well as other temperate-zone products, bring large returns, and yet rice and sugarcane, coffee, and other tropical produce can be had in any quantity by simply scratching the soil. In fact, Nature is so bountiful here that she ruins the majority of people who enter the region. It is so easy to live comfortably that everybody settles down to enjoy life as cats lie down to sleep on soft rugs before an open fire. The men do plant a little grain and a little sugarcane in the season, but the system of cultivation is like that among the Indians of the Indian Territory.³ They know when they have enough, and with them enough is as good as a feast.

It is a fact that the men of this region look upon gold washing as proper work for women only: they despise it. I know that the reader will very likely doubt this statement, but it should be remembered that the people are for the most part descendants of the enslaved Indians, who had to work the mines under cruel Spanish taskmasters in the days of Spanish control. When freedom came

³ Indian Territory — Lands set aside by the US Government in 19th century for resettlement of Native Americans; located in present-day state of Oklahoma

to them they hated the tasks they had done under the lash, and that feeling still survives. There are men still living who were slave miners under Spanish rule, while the children have naturally grown up with the prejudices of the parents.

It appears that only the sandbars in the streams have been worked so far. These yield enough, and there is no effort to go outside of them. However, there are places where the streams, in running across the alluvial plains, have shifted their beds from time to time, so that entire valleys may be found that are made up of the detritus brought down by freshets. The sandbars are worked in these valleys as elsewhere, but the very little prospecting done so far shows that every yard of the soil, clear across these valleys, carries the precious metal. A pan taken at random will show from three to fifteen colors, coarse enough to be saved by an ordinary rocker or sluice without mercury. The depth to bedrock runs anywhere from seven to fifteen feet, according to the prospectors, and the colors begin to appear on an average of three feet from the surface. One man who had prospected the Guayambre Valley said:

"I found gold on most all the bars and on the bank of the upper river, there called Opali, or Conchagua River, on account of two small settlements of those names. I also found it in the valleys of all small tributary streams rising in the Conchagua Mountains. I sank several holes along the river to try and strike bedrock, but was unable to do so because of the water. I got down eight feet on some holes. They prospected well after getting down three feet. The first three feet of gravel is very loose generally, and, of course, does not prospect well. I estimate the bedrock to be on the average fifteen feet from the surface along the main river."

Of the value of the dirt in this region, there can be found in Tegucigalpa a manuscript report made by a civil and mining engineer, very well known in New York, Mr. A. T. Byrne, who constructed the Troy water works and was at one time connected with the Canadian Pacific Railroad. Speaking from what he saw along the Guayape and the Jalan rivers, he says:

"It is a region of great value in a practically undeveloped condition, needing only capital, energy, and technical skill for its profitable exploitation. The topography and the character of the material are particularly adapted to the application of the hydraulic method of mining. An abundant supply of water can be obtained at a moderate outlay for damming and ditching, and there is an abundance of pine and other timber, needing only a portable sawmill to cut it into lumber. Under the hydraulic system, properly managed, the product will equal, if not exceed, that of

the best placers of California and Australia. Labor is cheap, but untrustworthy and inexperienced; nevertheless, when under proper management, as is shown at San Juancito, where upward of 300 natives are employed, it can be made to serve and to develop a fair skill. The quantity of material which can be mined may be, without exaggeration, termed inexhaustible. The capital required to put the works in operation is remarkably small. The climate is salubrious and permits working the year round. The food supplies of the country are abundant and cheap."

After reading that report, I asked for statements of work actually done, and got enough to satisfy anyone. The poorest yield was that obtained by two natives, who were working a bar on the Guayambre. They were taking out but one dollar a day in dust. On the Jalan and the Guayape the women worked only on Sunday morning, as a rule, between sunrise and breakfast (11 o'clock A. M.), and in that time secured enough to support their families in idleness during the week. That they did not work more than five hours was said by so many different people, under different circumstances, that I fully believed the statement; but it must be remembered that a silver dollar of the country goes further with these people than a five dollar gold piece with a family in New York.

Of unusual finds there were stories a-plenty. One man had seen dust to the value of \$1.50 taken from a single pan—a sort of hash bowl that held, say, two gallons. One had seen a nugget weighing an ounce avoirdupois in a store in Al-uran, a small settlement of the region. Another saw a woman strike a pocket from which she took eight ounces in one morning's work, and still another pocket was mentioned from which a group of women, the number of whom was not counted, took five pounds avoirdupois of the yellow stuff in a day.

But the most remarkable story of work in the region was told by a Louisianian, living in Honduras for his health. In 1890 a company of Englishmen, after obtaining a concession on the Guayape, near a small village called Retiro, sent out workmen, who set up a sawmill, cut lumber, erected a dam, and built a flume sixteen feet wide and 1,080 feet long, with which to work a bar that had prospected very well. They hired natives to dig the gravel and wheel it up inclines to dump it into the flume. Pretty soon after starting work, they got down to bed-rock, and then found that they were working over sand which had been handled once by the Spaniards in the old days. The prospecting had been but superficial, or they would have learned this before starting; nevertheless, as the pans showed 60 cents per cubic yard of dirt, they kept on. In all, about 300 natives

were employed on the work, with pick, shovel, and wheelbarrow. After a month or so, it was found on examination that a large percentage of the gold which a pan revealed was washing over the ripples in the flume, and the clean-ups did not show enough metal to pay dividends.

At this there was a change of management, and a Yankee took the place of the English manager. The Yankee built a number of undershot waterwheels, which he placed at intervals in the big flume, and connected each of these with an elevator like those used in lifting grain from the hulls of canal boats up to the top floors of Brooklyn grain warehouses. These elevators were worked from the gravel pits, and all the manual labor needed was for digging out the material and shoveling it into the bottom of each elevator. In this way eighteen men were able to deliver as much gravel into the flume as 300 had formerly done. The expense of handling the gravel was reduced to fifteen cents a cubic yard, and there was now a very liberal margin of profit in the gold saved.

When the work of the elevators first began, the digging was, as said, in sand that had been worked once in former days; but as soon as the elevators were found to be practical labor savers, a system of crosscuts was begun that showed very much coarser gold, and, therefore, correspondingly increased profits. Enormous success seemed fairly in hand, when a rainstorm came—one of the fierce storms known to mountains almost everywhere. The Guayape rose ten feet in a few hours and the dam and the flume and the undershot wheels and the elevators and the hopes of the manager went floating in dismal wreckage down toward the Caribbean Sea. The flume had been built in the bed of the river.

However, the company had got enough dust out of its few days' work with the elevators to awaken courage for another try. The sawmill remained and it was moved up near the village of Concordia, a place that is entirely sustained by the women who wash for gold. Here a bedrock flume and dam were built. But, notwithstanding the disaster at Retiro, they built these works in the bed of the stream, as before. They got their flume going nicely, and for four days ran with great success. The gold was coarser here, and more of it was found in a yard of sand. Fortune was again in hand when another flood came and distributed dam and flume for some miles along the flats below, and that ended the attempts of capitalists to get the gold from the sands of the Guayape. The losses amounted to about \$250,000 in all.

Meantime, another company had done in the Jalan River just what was done in the Guayape; they had built works in the bed of the stream and the storm that destroyed the one also destroyed the other.

"Was there no place for building flumes and sluices on the bank above high water?" I asked.

"Yes, there was a plenty of room and a good head of water, but it would have necessitated longer flumes. Then, too, it was the dry season, and no one was looking for such floods. They could have found enough pay dirt above high water to keep them going twenty years, but they were not wise enough to take advantage of it. What is needed in that region is the application of the hydraulic system, familiar to California miners. I am confident that if the people in the mining regions of the States were not afraid of fevers and revolutions—if they knew that the region was really healthful and that life and property were as safe there as in any mining country of the world—there would be a rush to Olancho that would equal the rush to California in former years."

"But have not all the best parts of the diggings been gobbled up by people who got the concessions mentioned?"

"No. They have obtained many square leagues of the best land, but some of them would be glad to get capitalists to take hold of their concessions at about as cheap rates as prospecting for virgin land can be done. Still, no one need worry about the amount of land that has been taken. There are untold leagues waiting for the man of energy and nerve. It is a fact that ninety per cent. of that region has never been prospected at all, not even walked over by a prospector."

The Patuca is not the only stream carrying golden sands. All of the streams of the northeast part of Honduras show about the same returns to the prospector, and similar stories are told of the land just over the line in Nicaragua. The Segovia district of Nicaragua is in the same mountain system, and but a few leagues south. The streams immediately south and southeast of Trujillo are said to be well worth the attention of prospectors, though the coast there is not recommended by anyone but natives. The unacclimated prospector will suffer from malaria on the coast.

Of the concessions made by the Government of placer land along the tributaries of the Patuca, a word should be said, because it shows what can be obtained by

a bright man in these Spanish-American countries. A company of which John A. Morris of Westchester county and New Orleans is the backer now owns claims as follows:

- Ninety miles in length and 1,000 yards in width along the Jalan, including bed, bars, and banks.
- One hundred miles in length and 1,000 yards on each side of the Guayambre River, and also all the ground on the creeks and brooks that flow into it.
- Seven hundred and fifteen square miles, all told, of claims in the mountains between the streams that unite to form the Patuca.

These enormous concessions were granted in return for certain flour and grist mills, complete, and threshing machines, which were delivered at the capital of the nation, and for a complete equipment for an industrial school that was erected also in Tegucigalpa. The school was in working condition when I was there, and it was very properly the pride of the nation. It was modelled on the school which can be found uptown in New York on the East Side, and the work done by the Honduras young men was quite as good as that turned out by the Yankee boys. The milling machinery, however, was lying unused. The officials did not require the claim taker to build their mill for them, and they never could find time to build it themselves. So that part of the price of the concessions was of no use to the nation. In addition to this, however, the claim owner agreed to pay the Government a royalty. As soon as the returns yield more than a net profit of ten per cent. on the investment, he will pay 2½ per cent. of the surplus profit to the Government during a period of ten years, and after ten years he will pay five per cent. of the surplus profit.

These concessions were originally granted to the Louisianian already mentioned. With his papers in hand he went to London, and among the mining men there created a company that agreed to take his concessions and pay him £800,000 for them; but, just before the cash was paid over, the revolutionists in Salvador headed by the Ezetas killed President Menéndez⁴ and turned over the Government. Then Sánchez in Honduras revolted against Bográn,⁵ and the news of these two disturbances entirely destroyed the confidence of the London people. So, he came back again, and then John A. Morris was secured as a backer.

⁴ Francisco Menéndez — Overthrown by Carlos Ezeta on June 22, 1890, and died that day

⁵ Longino Sánchez — Attempted coup d'état on November 8, 1890

No prospecting worth consideration has ever been done in the Olancho region for veins of mineral. A few men have tramped, or gone on muleback over the trails which lead from settlement to settlement. They found croppings and veins and knocked off chunks of the stuff, which were assayed and yielded gold and silver, but such work as sinking shafts or driving tunnels to show what the veins really contained has not been done, save in two or three instances. An American company put up a mill of five stamps⁶ on a concession that covered a square league on the Guayape River, and worked away with moderate success until down 150 feet, when the ore changed from free milling to sulfurous. So, a change of outfit was necessary. In the Murcielago mine there is a pay streak averaging five feet wide, of which three feet yields 200 ounces of silver and the rest seventy-five ounces to the ton, and the whole streak runs an ounce of gold. That, at least, is the reported yield on 150 tons of material taken out. Another company put up a fine stamp mill on a vein from which the returns gave at different times \$10, \$12, and \$15 of gold a ton, but the capital of the company was all used in getting the mill set up and there was nothing left for sinking shafts, drifting⁷ on the veins, or stoping⁸ out the material. They got a mill up, but had absolutely nothing to run through it. Then, because it was in Central America, no more money was forthcoming, and the mill can now be seen in ruins.

There are many such ruins to be found elsewhere in Honduras. The manager, they say, in most cases used up all his capital in getting the mill started. And generally, he did this dishonestly. He stole the money and charged it to expenses which he never incurred. In the few cases—less than a handful—where mines have been worked with a profit by foreigners, the manager had a big dump of assorted ore on the site before he laid the foundations of the mill.

The largest mining settlement in Honduras when I was there was Yuscarán,⁹ a town in the watershed of the Choluteca River, which runs south to the Pacific in the east end of Honduras. It is twelve leagues from the Nicaragua line. It is one of the old-time camps, and the records say that the Spaniards with their slave labor got out large quantities of metals, of which silver was the chief.

⁶ Stamp mill — Type of milling machine that crushes ore by pounding rather than grinding; usually installed in multiples of five stamps

⁷ Drifting — Method of underground mining where the access tunnel follows a near-horizontal seam or vein

⁸ Stopping — The extraction of desired mineral from an underground mine

⁹ Yuscarán — Declared a National Monument in 1979; many Spanish Colonial homes remain

There are a host of properties here, one hill, Monserrat, being seamed with veins. One of the best known locally is the Guayabillas group. It was one of the old Spanish properties that was abandoned when they got down to water. Even in these later years, when an Englishman named Bennett took hold of it, the flood of water proved too much for him. Then, early in the nineties a new company was organized, John A. Morris, already mentioned, being a stockholder. They put in a twenty-stamp Frazer & Chalmers¹⁰ mill before they provided a dump of ore to work on, and when they came to seek ore they found that their pumps were inadequate, and a shut-down was necessary. The mill was idle when I was there. However, as they had in their exploring work struck a vein that showed an assay, from matter taken at random all over its face, of four ounces of fine milling gold to the ton, it is likely that this is now one of the most valuable mines.

Another group was owned by the Zurcher company, of which the Krupps in Germany were the backers, while the Prince of Wales was a stockholder to a considerable extent. They had started up with a little five-stamp mill, but were putting in a ball crusher, a Swiss invention, said to be better than stamps, and a large concentrating plant when I was there. Their development work was well ahead of the requirements of the mills, and the shipments of bullion amounted to about \$15,000 a month at the price then ruling for silver.

George S. Scott, a New York banker, was the backer of another company operating at Yuscarán. Their veins cropped out all the way up Monserrat. One of these had been worked by tunnels driven in on the vein, so that very little dead work had been necessary. The vein ran from eighteen inches to three feet wide and it had a number of feeders. The material milled from \$40 to \$60 a ton, while a chimney of ore reached by the lowest drift returned \$6,000 from ten tons of ore. From 18 to 20 per cent. of these values was in gold ore, free milling. The lowest tunnel was 1,450 feet below the crest of the vein, but it was possible to drive tunnels as far as 900 feet down below that ore, so that in developing the mine the material could all be stoped out and dropped down to be loaded on cars that would run out to the dump by their own weight. There were five veins in all on this property, and they all stood nearly vertical in the mountain and could, therefore, be worked like the one described. The mill and equipment complete stand three miles from the mouth of the lower tunnel, and therein was a defect in the property that was serious when I was there.

¹⁰ Frazer and Chalmers — Mining equipment works, founded in Chicago in 1847

It was in the days of Policarpo Bonilla's first revolution. The ore was carried from the mine to the mill by natives who owned mules and took contracts for delivering the stuff by the ton. When Bonilla entered Honduras with his forces *en route* to the capital, he had to pass near Yuscarán. So, knowing that the soldiers would confiscate the mules and impress every citizen into the service, the whole gang of muleteers, about 300 in number, fled to the woods. Of course, the whole business came to a standstill to await peace. A wire tram has since been put in to carry the ore to the mill.

The interruption was particularly exasperating to the mine owners for the reason that they had only just started new machinery and found everything to their satisfaction. The output of bullion was about 1,000 ounces a day, and this, with the considerable percentage of gold found in the silver, was yielding a handsome profit.

After the revolution, the work went on again for about a year, when Bonilla, who was defeated in 1893, entered the country again, and this time triumphed. This was in February, 1894. The mine work was again interrupted, but only temporarily, and the profits have been steady since then, though small, on account of the low price of silver.

A very pretty camp in Honduras is known as Valley of the Angels.¹¹ The valley is simply a great natural park, and it is paved with silver, so to speak. That is to say, one may find no end of silver ore of a rather low grade. The ore has been worked in a small way, the bullion product going to the National Mint in Tegucigalpa. There was a profit in the output, but not enough to make anyone particularly envious of the proprietors.

Last of all we come to the one mine that has been worked in a business fashion for any length of time and has yielded profits continually, the New York and Honduras Rosario Mining Company of San Juancito, a village a few leagues from Tegucigalpa. This is a New York City corporation, J. J. Marvin being the President; S. Jacoby, Treasurer, and Ernest Schernikov, Secretary. The property was one of the old abandoned Spanish mines, of which some scores can be found in Honduras. An engineer who had worked on the Sutro Tunnel, in Nevada, examined the old workings and found plenty of good ore, and on his

¹¹ Valle de Angeles — Adjacent to Parque Nacional La Tigra

recommendation the present owners took hold. It required several years to get the mine into a shape where profit could be made, but as long ago as 1888 the bullion received in New York City from the mine amounted to 534,540 ounces of silver and 10,886 ounces of gold. This sold for \$716,384, and that was about the annual product until 1894.

In 1894 the company milled 20,783 tons of ore, producing 336 bars of bullion, containing 456,281 ounces of silver and 5,650 ounces of gold. This sold for \$396,605. Because of the low price of silver, 1894 was a pretty lean year for the stockholders. A dividend of \$37,500 only was declared on the one and a half million dollars of stock. In a talk with the officials the other day they said a lot of dead work had been done on the mine during the last year, to provide better facilities for getting out the ore in future, and to remedy certain defects made in former workings of the mine; but in doing this they had had the luck to open up deposits of ore that made everyone connected with the mine very comfortable. Additional concentrators had also been put in, and they were now making profits in spite of the low price of silver.

The property includes one of the many mountains of low-grade ore to be found in Honduras; that is to say, the mountain is seamed with ore veins which run through and through it, cropping out plainly on opposite sides. The veins lie, or rather stand, so that they may be worked by driving tunnels in the pay streaks, scooping out the ore above and letting it fall down into waiting cars, which run out to the dump of their own weight. From the dump a wire tram carries the ore to the mill, where it is ground under thirty-five stamps. The pulp is treated by amalgamation.

People who think the Spanish-American peon is the laziest being in the world should go to San Juancito. It is a regular mine camp in style, and the population is not much short of 3,000. The number of men employed in various ways in connection with the mine is about 375, but, large as that number is, the company has no difficulty in keeping its corps full.

Quite as interesting, though by no means as profitable, are the opal mines in the Department of Gracias. When I was in Tegucigalpa, I went into the one jewelry store the town contained and asked to see some of the native opals. The jeweler unrolled a length of soft cloth and displayed a hundred or more of various grades. Among the lot was one of a pear shape that was of very good colors and just about right for a scarf pin. So, I casually asked the price.

"That will cost you a dollar," he said, "on account of its colors. There are larger ones here for less money, if you like."

I took the jewel at a dollar, the Honduras dollar being then worth sixty-eight cents gold. In New York the jewel was plainly mounted by Tiffany and then sent to my address in the Adirondacks. Now, as it happened, the railroad station burned down on the day of the pin's arrival, and all the express goods were destroyed; so, in order to file a just claim with the express company for the loss, application was made to Tiffany's for an estimate of the value of the opal. They replied that they could not furnish its equal for less than \$20.

I do not mean to say by this that \$20 opals can be purchased every day in Tegucigalpa for 68 cents each, but I do believe that if one knows a good opal when he sees it, and knows how to win the goodwill of the natives there, he would have no difficulty in picking up several thousand dollars' worth of jewels at a very low price—say, at from one tenth to one twentieth of their saleable value. In times of peace the native miners bring the jewels to the city. It is no uncommon thing to see a barefooted Indian with a pocketful of gems, the majority of which are very common things; but if one will ask the man to have a cup of coffee and a bite to eat, or, better yet, invite him to a square meal, saying nothing of gems until it is over, he will then see opals whose flames will fairly seem hot enough to burn the hand.

When I was in Acajutla, Salvador, I met a Yankee carpenter who had once gone riding through the opal district to see the country. One night he stopped with an old Indian who was trying to mend some simple article of furniture in the house, but was not succeeding very well. So, the Yankee took hold and made a good job of it. The next morning the old Indian brought out some opals to show, and, as the Yankee thought, to offer them for sale. The Yankee saw one as big as the end of his thumb that was of better color than the rest and asked the price.

"It is not for sale," said the Indian. Then the old fellow picked up a shot bag in which the Yankee carried his silver money, and, emptying the money on the floor, disappeared. When he came back five minutes later the bag was half-full of exquisitely beautiful opals, which he gave to the Yankee with the big one already mentioned.

"Well, that was great luck," said I, when the carpenter related the adventure. "How much did you get for them?"

"Get for them? Luck, was it? That was the worst luck I ever did have. I hadn't carried the devilish things three days till I lost all my money, and spent a day hunting before I found where I dropped it. The next day my mule slipped over a precipice, and but that I caught an overhanging limb of a tree, I'd gone to smash with him. Footing it on to the nearest place where I could buy another mule, I got caught in a freshet in one of those mountain streams. How I ever got out is more than I know, but I didn't take any opals after that. I'd had enough." He threw away the whole lot and would not so much as look at an opal.

As the mines are described, there is a bed of claylike earth, very hard, but yet soft enough to be chipped away with a stout knife. The natives work out a chunk of this earth and then gradually cut it to pieces. The opals, ready polished, are found lying in this stuff.

Whether there be other gems in Honduras or not I cannot say. I met one man who said rubies and emeralds existed, but I had no proof of the statement. Of the existence of tremendous bodies of low-grade silver ore, carrying gold, I have no doubt. There are scores of old workings scattered through the eastern part of the nation. There were no steam pumps in the days of Spanish rule in Honduras. When the miners got down to where water came in, the slaves were put at work carrying the water out with leather bags or earthen jars. When the work failed to keep the mine free of water, they abandoned it.

In every case where a competent examination has been made of these abandoned mines, large bodies of good ore have been found in sight. There are a number of mines that carry enough gold to make them profitable, even at the present low price of silver, always provided that a capable superintendent could be found to work the mine and to work it honestly. I am satisfied that nine-tenths of the failures of mining enterprises in Spanish America of which one hears were due to the dishonesty of the managers. To this evil must be added one other, and that is the increased expenses due to revolutions. The cost of everything done in the country doubles, at least in wartime. As THE SUN has told, a casting weighing a little over two tons, sent from Amapala to San Juancito in wartime, cost for freight \$700 silver. In peace \$300 would have paid the bill. San Juancito has not lost any workmen by conscription in recent years, but other mine camps have been less fortunate. Under the government of Policarpo

Bonilla, Honduras is likely to enjoy peace for several years. Bonilla is a statesman, and the leader of the progressive element of the nation. But Vásquez, who was driven out by Bonilla, will not rest until he raises another army in the hope of overturning Bonilla. If Mexico could absorb all Central America, and extend her southern railroad to San José de Costa Rica, peace would thereafter prevail, but that is something as little likely to happen as that Uncle Sam should cease his dog-in-the-manger policy, and help the little fellows south of his big farm to the development of which they are capable. Honduras's mining laws are liberal enough, and when a foreigner has obtained property of any kind there, according to law, no-one will think of trying to confiscate it. I suppose there is less prejudice against foreigners in Honduras than in any Central American nation; but, in spite of all this, the miserable squabbles called revolutions injure all kinds of business so much as to well-nigh destroy all hope of any development of the natural riches of the nation. On the whole, Honduras is probably the richest mining region of North America, but until the nation becomes a part of either Mexico or the United States, the wealth will lie dormant.

(2) CORINTO TO SAN LORENZO.¹²

A JOURNEY TO HONDURAS DURING A REVOLUTION.

A Tale of Smuggling in Nicaragua—Wealth in the Steerage—The English Once Wanted the Gulf of Fonseca—War Levies on Foreign Consular Agents—Amapala and Its Parks—A Religious Procession—Buying Stamped Paper—Off in a Bongo.

Amapala, Honduras, as seen from the bar on which it stands, is in one respect the most remarkable town on the coast of Central America, and the more the traveler knows about the Spanish Main the more singular the town will appear to him. It is to the eye as if a bright new shingle or shanty town had been picked out of the saw-mill region of Michigan and carried down there to find a resting place at the foot of a verdure-covered peak, rising from the surface of a tropical sea. A long row of wooden houses faces the bay; there are shorter rows back of the front row, and every house in every row has a bright yellowish roof that reflects the sunlight almost exactly as would a new pine shingle roof. With the green of the tropical forest behind and the green of the water in front, there is an appearance of newness about the place that, to one accustomed to the ancient look of all other Central American towns, is almost startling. However, Amapala is not new. The new look is due entirely to the character of the clay from which the roof tiles are made. These tiles commonly burn to a shade about like that of Milwaukee brick, but some of them show a pink and others a flesh color that are very pleasing to the eye.

I traveled from Corinto, Nicaragua, to Amapala on the Yankee steamer *Costa Rica*. She came into the harbor of Corinto in the morning, and at 10 o'clock passengers were told to go on board. No boats were provided by the ship, but the beach was lined with vociferous aquatic cabmen. The first one of these to whom I spoke wanted \$1 for carrying me off. Another immediately interrupted him to offer a passage for 80 cents, and while these two were discussing violently the propriety of thus reducing the tariff in favor of a foreigner, a third stepped up, and, in a low voice, said the regular rate was 20 cents, and he would be glad to accommodate me at that. So, I went with him, and found an excellent boat and oarsman.

¹² Published by New York Sun, November 10, 1895, page 4.

The passengers on the *Costa Rica* were not a very interesting lot except in the steerage, where I found a curious group of French people. There was a handsome, well-groomed white man with a fat negro wife, whose sole redeeming quality seemed to be an expansive and gleaming smile. With these were a pretty French girl and a red-headed, blear-eyed youth who looked like a victim of Paris. These four persons were dressed expensively and had much jewelry that seemed to be genuine. They all displayed considerable money at times, and yet they sat on a hatch and on coils of tarry rope and cheerfully ate the beef, boiled potatoes, and hard tack which were served as the only food of steerage passengers.

I found on the *Costa Rica* a novelty in smuggling. All the servants and cooks were Chinamen, and every one was a dealer in goods likely to attract Central American customers, including jewelry, perfumery, and fancy clothing for men and women. Throngs of natives came off to the ship in their dug-out canoes and swarmed up to the lower deck. Often, they were greeted by the Chinamen as old acquaintances. The trading was done in the staterooms occupied by the Chinamen. Having purchased the goods the natives in most cases rowed boldly ashore, carrying their stuff in baskets which sometimes had been used to bring fruit to the ship and sometimes not. Jewelry and small bottles of perfumery were concealed sometimes in their braids of hair by the women, but commonly were dropped into the loose bosoms of their chemise-like waists. A few carried their purchases ashore openly and laughed and chatted with the soldiers lounging along the beach. It was plain that the soldier who was not guarding a lighter load of goods did not think his duty required him to report smuggling along the beach.

The run from Corinto to Amapala required an afternoon. The passengers had an excellent view of the low, ragged volcano of Cosegüina, that now shows no signs of life, but in 1835 threw ashes and sand so high into the air that some were carried 700 or 800 miles away. Even the Island of Jamaica received a portion of the dust. The amount of lava thrown out was so prodigious as to alter materially the shore line of the sea and of the Gulf of Fonseca in its neighborhood. The appearance of the mountain is exceedingly desolate and forbidding, in spite of narrow splashes of verdure that are seen in some of the gulches. The Gulf of Fonseca is one of the most beautiful in the world. It is a huge bay

surrounded by evergreen mountains and dotted with evergreen mountainous islands. As a harbor it is so excellent that the British Government once tried to steal a part of it. They effected a landing at Amapala, but eventually withdrew voluntarily. I think that the fact that they withdrew ought to be emphasized. When a nation that will rob an orphan asylum, as the English did when they throttled and robbed the republic of Liberia, withdraws from a place it has stolen without a fight, history should make special mention of the bright fact lest it be lost in the prevailing murk.

We arrived off Amapala just after sunset, and so were detained on board over night to await the customs and health officials. As far as anyone could see from the ship, Amapala in spite of the revolution in the interior, was not only peaceful, but joyful. A long procession of men, women, and children could be seen marching to and fro behind a brass band that woke the echoes from the mountain behind it. I went to sleep that night listening to the strains of a waltz, and when I awoke in the morning it was to the sound of the same waltz. It was on a Saturday night that I arrived, and the following day was Palm Sunday. The festivities were all incident to church observances. When I went ashore, however, I began to find indications of a condition of affairs not peaceful. There was no trouble about landing or passing the customs line. Every official was entirely courteous. But when I asked one about transportation to the interior, he shrugged his shoulders and said there was none.

On leaving the Custom House I saw a great American flag floating over the largest of the business houses. Going to the place I found that Mr. Theodore Kohncke was acting as the agent of the Yankee Government and a number of exporting houses of Germany at the same time. Mr. Kohncke was not in at the time. While I waited I saw that a table was piled full of pamphlets and circulars which American merchants and manufacturers had sent to him. Every one of these advertisements was in its original wrapper. A number of German advertisements on another table had been opened carefully and placed so as to attract attention. The walls of the place contained conspicuous advertisements of German goods, but not of American goods. This fact is not mentioned as a criticism of Mr. Kohncke. No one should blame an agent for serving his principals to the exclusion of all others, but it seems a little remarkable that Uncle Sam should lend his flag to merchants who are doing everything they can to discredit

his business interests. When Mr. Kohncke came he told me two things—that the war in the interior had stopped about all communications and business transactions, and that every merchant in town was compelled to contribute a stipulated amount in cash every day for the support of the Government.

"Do you mean to say that foreigners as well as citizens are forced to contribute money to the Government?"

"Yes. The Colonel who commands the troops on the island here has no money to pay expenses. He came to us and said: 'You know the soldiers will become desperate and do much damage to property if they are not paid. I cannot control them if they are desperate. In order to preserve your property, you should furnish the money for them.' "

"That was very much like blackmail, eh?"

"Yes."

"How much do you contribute?"

"Twenty-five dollars a day."

"The American flag could not save you?"

Mr. Kohncke merely smiled at this question in a way that would have exasperated any Yankee patriot.

"And the English Consul, does he contribute the same amount?"

"Certainly."

This seems to me to be particularly interesting, not only because it illustrates Central American methods in war time, but because it is supposed commonly that foreign officials, and especially officials, are entirely exempt from such annoyances down there. I have even seen it stated in one of the most trustworthy of the American magazines that they are not molested in that way. It is worth explaining that these contributions are usually loans only. The foreigners must

advance the cash, but, if he is at all adroit in business matters, he can get either the money or an equivalent in concessions with interest at a high rate.

When I inquired about transportation to the interior I learned that in ordinary times a little steamer was to be hired for \$15 to carry passengers from Amapala, which stands on an island called Tigre, to the nearest town on the mainland called San Lorenzo, a distance of fifteen miles, but since the beginning of the revolution the steamer had made no trips. The Captain said the boiler was out of order, and in all probability no repairs would be effected until after peace was established, because there was no money in trips made either for the Government or for the revolutionists at the point of a bayonet. However, I would be able to reach the mainland, Mr. Kohncke thought, because an English millwright from a mining town called Yuscarán had come to Amapala for some mining supplies and on his return, he probably would carry me[?] with him. The millwright's name was Smith, and Smith was in one respect the most remarkable man I saw in Central America. No sooner had we become acquainted than he began to ask questions about various cities, and about mine camps as well, in the United States, showing a knowledge of them that impressed me with the belief that he had traveled a deal more in my country than I had. Creede and Cripple Creek, Col.; the camps on the Carson and Colorado Railroad; the older camps as well as the later developments of California and Montana; the leading cities from Chicago westward, all were at his tongue's end, and yet he had never been in the United States. He was simply a reader and a student of maps, with a memory particularly well adapted to retain geographical facts. Eventually he anticipated the request I was going to make for a passage to the mainland by saying:

"You are here to see something of our revolution, of course. Do me the favor to go ashore with me in the bongo. It will not be a comfortable trip with all the dunnage we'll have, but I will consider it a favor if you will go."

This was the more pleasing from the fact that Englishmen in Central America are commonly self-contained and distant toward fellow travelers, if not positively arrogant or impertinent. I was therefore probably the most comfortable man in Amapala when I reached the hotel.

The hotel, like most of the other houses of the town, was of wood with a yellow tile roof. There were broad verandas front and rear, and dark, cool-looking rooms for guests. When I entered the dining room, a handsome man, who looked like a native, introduced himself as M. L. Aguilera of Mamaroneck, a citizen of New York city to all intents and purposes. He had arrived in Amapala en route to the capital of the country, not having heard of the revolution before his arrival. Finding that the telegraph line to the interior had been cut and the carrying of the mail suspended indefinitely, he decided to await more peaceful times before going inland to look after mining property he owned there, "claims that show more carbonates than Leadville ever saw," he said. He advised me not to go to the mainland, and said:

"The soldiers will not trouble you on either side, for they can see that you are a foreigner; but you will find in such times as these plenty of bandits. It is not that the people are naturally robbers, but they cannot attend to their crops or any regular labor. They must either fight on one side or the other or take to the woods, and if they take to the woods they must very often steal or starve. The risk is too great."

I asked Mr. Smith, the millwright, and Consul Kohncke about the chance of meeting robbers, and both said it was possible to do so, but neither had heard of such a case during the war.

Having now the leisure I started out to see the town, A trail led away from the row of business houses to a little park on a breezy slope that overlooked the bay to the south. There was a two-story band stand in the center of this, with a promenade 100 feet in diameter round it. There were four marble statues—female figures—graces or saints, I forgot to learn which. There were also a lot of flower beds edged with beer bottles put into the ground bottom up. Smith said the bottles were used so that visitors would find not only a fine scenery and good music, but something to excite pleasant recollections as well. On returning he found another place of recreation built on a black lava point running into the bay. This was a tile platform about forty feet square, with an iron railing that was ornamented with gorgeously painted cast-iron toucans, while standing in the center was a marble statue of Gen. Morazán, the George Washington of Central America. Perhaps the comparison will be shocking to the patriots of

the region, but one who has seen this statue and that of Juan Santa María in the city of Alajuela in Costa Rica, already described in *THE SUN*,¹³ cannot help considering the two together. Gen. Morazán is posed in uniform with his left foot slightly advanced, his arms folded, his lips pouting, and his wavy, flowing side whiskers groomed in elegant fashion. The rugged, virile statue of Juan Santa María is that of a man. The marble effigy of Morazán is that of the typical parlor knight of Central America posing for the admiration of the women, trying to look stern, but wholly unable to do so, because curly side whiskers and sternness are incompatible. I do not think the statue of Morazán represents the man the people wished to honor, but the prevailing idea of a warrior of the region. But the cast-iron toucans are very good.

During the afternoon there was a street procession. A brass band was at the head. Next came four charming little girls of about twelve years, dressed in crimson skirts and white waists. Behind them was a meek donkey on which was a saddle ornamented with tinfoil, and on the saddle a big doll with a paper face, representing a man that had a black moustache painted on his face. Four men carried a big red palanquin to shade the doll. A black-robed priest with a black cap on his head followed. After him came seventy-five bare-headed men, and behind them a host of bare-headed women. There was none of the aristocratic class in the procession except the priest. The music was joyous. I asked an intelligent native what criticism, if any, I ought to write about that kind of a religious observance, and he replied:

"Your New England ancestors were always ready to fight for freedom to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. Are you not willing to grant Central Americans the same privilege?"

On Monday morning I went to the Colonel commanding the troops on the island. I found him in the second story of a two-story wooden building near the beach, that was about the most comfortable home for soldiers that I saw in Central America. It was defended by a breastwork that seemed remarkably queer in that locality, for it was a fence, breast high, made of iron T-rails and I-beams. It was said that the rails were brought there for a company that proposed building

¹³ 7 April 1895

a railroad from San Lorenzo back into the country a few leagues. When I asked for a pass to go into the interior and mentioned San Juancito, a mining camp just beyond the capital, as my destination, the Colonel asked me a host of questions about my business point of departure, experiences in the journey so far, and what I expected to find in Honduras to interest Yankee readers. The he told me to go and get a half sheet of stamped paper. He also directed me to the merchant who had it for sale. The use of stamped paper in all business transactions is made compulsory in order to create a revenue for the Government. At the merchant's house I found a very pretty girl sitting in the parlor with a pile of half sheets of legal cap on a small table beside her. The Honduras coat of arms had been printed on the paper with a rubber stamp. The impression on the paper seemed so fresh that had any one but a pretty girl been in charge I would have guessed that the paper had been printed right there instead of in the stamp department at the capital, and that revenue from the sale of the paper did not benefit the Government very much. A half sheet cost 50 cents. The Colonel wrote on the half sheet I bought that I was a Yankee journalist, and it was the will of the supreme Government that I be permitted to go anywhere in the interior that I pleased, and more especially to the mine camp and the capital. Having that to introduce me to any Government troops I might meet, I went to the Consul Kohncke and, after showing him my American credentials, asked for a letter in Spanish that I could show to any revolutionists I might find along the road to convince them that I was in the country simply as a spectator. This he declined to do, and he refused to tell why he declined to do so. However, Smith said it was all right, for the revolutionists were sure to welcome a man who wanted the real facts about the war.

On returning to the hotel for my baggage, I found a native (one of the shoe-wearing class) waiting for me He said his wife and children were in Tegucigalpa and that he had not been able to send a letter to them in six weeks. Would I be so good as to carry one to his wife? Of course, I said I would. After the man had gone, leaving the letter with me, Smith said the letter was probably a contraband communication for the insurgents, and that carrying mail in war time was dangerous. I do not know anything about the facts in this case, but if I carried a secret communication for the insurgents I evened the matter up by serving a Government official in a like capacity on my return. We went to the end of the long, slender pier that was built out from the beach for the benefit of passengers

only, and embarked for San Lorenzo. Our ship was one of the interesting dug-outs of the Pacific coast, a canoe that was 40 feet long, 6½ feet wide, and 4 feet deep, hollowed from a single log. There were two slender masts with an old square sail, 12x18 feet large, for each, but when the crew of five tried to set the foresail, the ten-knot breeze that was scuffing across the bay simply tore it out of the bolt ropes. So, the crew got up the mainsail, which was newer, in its place, and away we went with a roaring mass of foam curling from the bluff bows, and a bubbling wake dragging along in the rear.

It was 4 o'clock on a beautiful day that we left the pier, and for two hours we drove across a succession of inland seas, bordered by verdure-covered mountains, and then we came in sight of a low alluvial coast. Here the wind failed us absolutely, and four of the crew got out sweeps—long poles with a triangular board on the blade end of each. I had observed before this that the thwarts were about five feet apart and that a stairway made of a notched log led from the bottom of the boat up to the forward side of each thwart. A stairway may seem a queer substitute for the sliding seat of a racing shell, but it served the purpose admirably. With the oar handle in a firm grasp the sailor climbed the notched log until one foot rested on the thwart, and then, with the blade end of the oar in the water, he threw his weight on his end and swept the huge hulk along. They pulled together like the crew of a man-of-war cutter, and they made excellent time. Occasionally one would stop to light a cigarette, and then the others would rest a minute until he was ready, but very little time was wasted.

Two rocky islands were passed that had been chosen as roosting places by hosts of the graceful frigate birds that by day are seen floating high above the bay. The scraggly trees on these reefs and the rocks beneath were covered over with the birds, while other islands, but far away, that were exactly like the ones occupied, as far as I could see, had not a single bird on them. We passed, too, the telegraph line from Amapala to the interior—passed under it, in fact, for it is carried on poles that stand in holes drilled into the bottom of the bay, along a lava ridge that connects some islands forming a chain from Tigre Island to the mainland. At nightfall a squall of rain came from the mountains. The passengers spread the sail over two thwarts and camped under it, but we got as wet from perspiration in the confined quarters as we would have got from the rain outside. The crew, being wiser, kept on with their work, but they said the rain

would bring a fever on them unless a liberal drink of rum was given them, and Smith straightway produced a fat bottle of their favorite fever preventive. After each man had had a drink the Captain suggested that, as the Captain, he ought to drink once more to bring luck. Smith nodded assent to this, but when the Captain, still holding the fat bottle, wanted to join the passengers one at a time in drinking still further to the success of the trip, Smith drew the line by treating the remark as a joke and stowing away the bottle.

It is fifteen miles from Amapala to San Lorenzo. The channel is nowhere very deep, but if ever a railroad be built across Honduras the terminus will be located on an island called Zacate Grande, instead of at Amapala, because there is a first-class anchorage off this island and the expense of a lot of bridging to reach Tigre would be saved. We covered the fifteen miles in about five hours and landed on the bank of a lagoon.

Not far away was a large one-story warehouse of American build for storing the property of an American mining company, and near that the homes of some natives—three or four dwellings in all. San Lorenzo was not much of a town, but it stood at one end of a road that led to Tegucigalpa, thirty leagues away, and I was glad to find myself there. I was still more pleased when I found myself back there after spending two weeks learning how Honduras people conduct a revolution.

(3) HONDURAS IN WAR TIME.¹⁴

A JOURNEY TO THE CAPITAL DURING A RECENT REVOLUTION.

Disappearance of the Inhabitants Upon Sight of Soldiers on Either Side—A Hold-up on the Road by Revolutionists Satisfied with the Modest Plunder—Advantages of Traveling with a Wise Mule.

The traveler who delights in journeys out of the way will find in North America few more interesting roads for examination than that which leads from San Lorenzo, on the Gulf of Fonseca, Honduras, to Tegucigalpa, the capital of the country. For consider that Honduras is much the largest of all the Central American nations; that while its population, numbering, say 350,000, is chiefly centered on the tablelands about the heads of the Choluteca and Ulna rivers, there are considerable towns scattered all over the country; that Honduras is preeminently a land of mines of precious metals, and that some few of these mines are worked continuously, while many were extremely productive during the Spanish rule; and yet, for all the towns and all the mines, there is but one highway wide enough for wheeled carts leading from the interior to any part, and that highway is the road seventy-five miles long, leading from Tegucigalpa to the hamlet of San Lorenzo on the Gulf of Fonseca. There is, indeed, a miserable little railroad leading from Puerto Cortez on the north coast, part way across the flat lands there to a town called San Pedro Sula; and from the end of this railroad a mule trail, a mere bridle path, leads over the mountains to Tegucigalpa. Of course, there is no freight traffic over this trail worth mention. To Amapala, on the Gulf of Fonseca, comes practically all of the commerce of the nation, simply because the only cart road to the sea leads down to the shore of that gulf.

To see this road with its engineering peculiarities, the scenery of the route, the towns, the houses and the people—all this is well worth a journey to Honduras, even by the roundabout route through Panama. But if one should have the luck to make the trip alone during a revolution, as I did, it is not unlikely that the memory of the journey would be more pleasant than the actual experience was. I rode over this road at the time that Policarpo Bonilla, the present enlightened

¹⁴ Published by New York *Sun*, Monday, November 18, 1895, page 4

President of Honduras, was making his first attempt to overthrow the relict, so to speak, of the Bográn¹⁵ dynasty.

The first day's journey was altogether pleasant. After landing at San Lorenzo I found that my good friend, the millwright, who had brought me there from Amapala, had also secured a mule to carry me to Pespire, six leagues back from the coast, the first village reached in the journey to the capital. We were to travel that far together, and then he was to go away from the cart road to follow a mountain trail to Yuscarán. For four leagues from San Lorenzo the trail led across a flat, alluvial country, the detritus of ages, brought from the mountains of the interior by the Nacaome River. Part of the way the soil was deep as well as black, as the banks of the smaller stream showed, and there the brush and trees were thick and tall, but elsewhere the flats were composed of detritus from undecomposed rocks, and this gave a number of barren red and yellow plains, where the vegetation was as scarce as on a United States desert.

An immense number of fine-looking cattle were seen along the route, although no grass was visible even on the black soil. But the most interesting feature of life there was the iguana—the edible lizard of the tropics. In no place between Panama and Paso del Norte did I see so many iguanas together, or any of such large size and of such gorgeous colors. Many of them were from 24 to 36 inches long, thick and fat, and colored on the back like huge diamond rattlers, only the colors were more brilliant than the snake's. Then, too, there were thousands of doves, in shape and color like the mourning doves of the States. They were of three distinct sizes. One was as large as a tame pigeon, perhaps a little larger, and another was but a little larger than a common English sparrow. The third was like the Yankee dove. Naturally hawks and buzzards were abundant, the white-necked hawk and the bright-plumaged king buzzard and the black hawk being more numerous there than in any other part of the country that I visited.

Eventually the road got among the foothills, gray, red, and yellowish in color, and then the abundance of life dwindled to almost nothing instantly. At Pespire we found a merchant who kept a house for the use of travelers. As a hotel this was interesting, for it consisted of one large room, which had to serve every purpose of bedroom, sitting room, dining room, &c., and a small room for the servants. The kitchen work was done in one corner of the interior veranda, while the court was appropriated to horses, pigs, and chickens. The pigs and

¹⁵ Luis Bográn Barahona (1849-1895) — Two-term President of Honduras

chickens were not content with such confined quarters, however, and continually passed through the guests' room *en route* between the court and the street. There was a rear gate, through which the horses were sometimes conducted, but the rule was to take them through the guests' room also.

We arrived here at about midday and remained overnight. We had passed a few small houses along the road from San Lorenzo, finding the people engaged as usual around them, and in Pespire a normal condition of affairs prevailed so far as a casual observation showed. But, in talking with the people, the only subject of which they seemed able to think was the war. There was a detachment of Government troops at the village of Nacaome, they said, and everybody wanted to know if we had seen them, and pretty soon I observed that the people met were heartily in favor of Bonilla, the revolutionary leader, and bitterly against the Government. The mining men who had come with me were also in sympathy with the revolutionists, and that was a right lucky thing for me, for the townspeople, finding me with their friends, became friendly with me at once. A merchant named Ynez Galo offered to lend me a mule for my journey to Tegucigalpa and back without any other security than my word that I would bring it back, and promised that it should be ready for me next morning at 7 o'clock. So, although I could not expect the mule before 8 o'clock, I turned into my hammock very well content that night.

Next morning, I got my first taste of a Central American war. On turning out I found coffee and bread awaiting me on the veranda, but something had plainly excited the servant greatly. It was some time before I could learn what was the matter, but eventually he said: "*The soldiers are here.*" I made haste to get on the street, then, and, going to the plaza, I found a number of horses near the church, and a number of armed men near them who wore red bands around their hats, the mark of the Government troops, but they were dressed as ordinary laborers in other respects. Their arms were Remington rifles. A number of the soldiers, in groups of two or three, were going hither and yon about the side streets. They did not pay any attention to me when I first walked about to look at them. Aside from these soldiers not a soul was to be seen, save at one merchant's house facing the square. This house was open, and the family could be seen about the door. All the rest of the houses were closed tight.

After a little I went to the house of Señor Galo, who was to lend me his mule, and knocked at the door. No one answered, nor could I find anything to indicate that the house was inhabited. I observed then that the soldiers in the plaza were

watching me closely while I was trying to get in the house, and so I went back to the hotel. Meantime the millwright had been out looking about town, and because he was acquainted there he had been able to find some of the inhabitants.

"They are all hid out," he said. "Our mules are all right, because the soldiers were told they belonged to us, but you will have to wait until the soldiers leave town before you can get yours. The troops are after Galo and another man named Medina, who are known to favor the revolution. If either one is caught, he will have to put up \$4,000 or suffer the consequences—a sound beating with thick rods. It is not impossible that both will be shot if caught, though Medina, because he is agent for our mining company, would hardly suffer that far. It is lucky that some sympathizer was able to warn the town before the troops got here—lucky for the town—not so lucky for you, though, for if these men had been captured you would have had something to write about, such as you never saw."

The troops went prowling about town, making inquiries and poking into backyards until 10 o'clock, when they mounted and rode out of town. A half-hour later the houses were open and people going about in the comfortable fashion common to the place, save that the little groups on the verandas were talking in most animated fashion. Breakfast was served at the hotel the moment the troops left. At 11 o'clock I went around to Señor Galo's and found my mule saddled for the journey. Galo himself was still in the brush, but his son, a lad of perhaps fourteen years, did the honors of the house as gravely as his father would have done, and was profuse in thanks when I congratulated him on his father's escape.

After this I got my baggage across the mule's back, bade the mining outfit and everybody else in sight goodbye, and then went out of town on the run, for so the mules of the region are trained to start. For two or three hours I enjoyed the ride very much. It was rather warm, but the trail led along one side of a range of mountainous hills that grew higher as I traveled, and so the landscape was increasingly beautiful. Then I began to notice without giving thought to the fact that no one had been over the dusty trail recently. A small hamlet on a grassy little plain in the valley on the left was passed and not a soul was to be seen about the place. That seemed a little strange. So, when I came to a house near the trail, some distance beyond, and found it closed, although plainly occupied recently, I began to wonder about the matter. After a while the trail led down to a river, the Moromulea, a branch of the Nacaome. Just as I started down the

incline I looked away to the further side of the valley and saw a number of men with guns and machetes in their hands sneaking through the brush. They heard the tread of my mule and stopped to look at me for a time, but pretty soon went on again. These men had white bands on their hats and were therefore revolutionists. I concluded that they understood from my looks that I was a foreigner and therefore not of importance to them; but, while I was thinking of this, I remembered what the New Yorker whom I had met at Amapala had said about people driven from their homes by the revolution turning highway robbers. I had several hundred dollars in gold in a belt, and that belt began to feel very heavy. I noticed its weight with every jog of the mule thereafter.

Pretty soon I got down to the bank of the river and found that the trail crossed it. There were houses on both banks, but not a human being in sight. The ford was wide and shallow. The banks were shaded by big, thick-topped trees. It was a most pleasant place to stop for a rest, as I remember the place now, and there were abundant traces of travelers who had stopped there before me. The mule seemed to have been there before. He wanted to stop under one of the thickest of the trees, but I didn't want to do anything of the kind. I wanted to travel faster instead, and a good deal faster at that. So, the mule and I had an argument, in which I prevailed so far that he crossed the ford, but thereafter he did not travel as fast as he had done.

From that time on I found that trail the most lonesome I ever followed in my life. It was an uphill trail and some of the grades were so steep that I got down and walked to relieve the mule. I suppose the scenery was very beautiful, but I did not see it. I could see nothing but the houses, here and there where level places were found, with nobody near them. Once I came to a bend in the road where a little hut stood on a bench that, in its surroundings, was so nearly like a house I had seen in Costa Rica that I instantly thought of the other place. In Costa Rica two bright-eyed boys were playing in the yard as I passed, and when I nodded to them and said "*Good day, boys,*" they replied "*Vaya Con Dios,*" which literally translated means "*God be with you.*" But in Honduras not a soul could be seen, and the closed hut, by contrast, seemed repellent. I began to wonder whether I shouldn't find somebody with a gun behind the next house waiting for a lone foreigner to come along and renew the supply of ready cash in that neighborhood, whether he wanted to do so or not. I think I was somewhat nervous over the condition of affairs. Very likely a Gatling gun¹⁶ with a good crew of

¹⁶ Gatling gun — Early rapid-fire machine gun, patented 1862

Yankees to man it would have relieved the strain; but I had only a single-barreled target pistol and there was nobody worth mention to man that.

At last La Venta, a mountain town most beautifully located (I observed the beauty of its location after I had arrived) was seen a short distance ahead within an hour after passing the hut, and smoke was rising from one or two houses. The millwright had told me that a very fine young man kept a saloon there and that he would take care of me royally for the night. I was right glad to see La Venta, especially as there was a sign of life about it. My comforting anticipations were not at all in vain. I asked the first man I saw which house the saloon was in. He immediately went far enough with me to point it out, and showed manifest regret when he said he couldn't go far enough to get a drink. The proprietor of the saloon, an athlete apparently, came to the door as I rode up and told me that the house was mine. He did not mean that, of course, but he meant that I was welcome, and he made me so in fact, as well as in word. There was a big stack of corn leaves for the mule, and an appetizing odor coming from a kitchen adjoining the saloon. There were hooks for my hammock. A man was called from the kitchen to rub down the mule when I undertook that necessary work myself, and he did the work well. Then I got into the hammock to await supper.

While I was waiting, a dozen men came in a group and gathered at a table, where they talked with the host in a low voice, looking toward me the while. Pretty soon one came over to the hammock and said "*Good evening.*" I asked him to sit down with me, and then, on glancing at his hat, saw that it had a white band. The crowd was composed of revolutionist soldiers. A minute later I was telling as well as a limited knowledge of the language would permit about the doings at Pespire. They all shouted when I told how the Government troops had gone back to Nacaome empty-handed. Then I learned that the cordiality of my welcome was due to the fact that my mule had been recognized as the property of a revolutionist. If Señor Ynez Galo would lend his mule to me, I must be a friend of the revolutionists, they said, and I was careful not to disturb their faith in the matter.

Thereafter I saw them measuring out gunpowder and distributing it among several who had cheap muzzle-loading shotguns. They also cast some bullets by an open fire and overhauled their guns. I asked about the effectiveness of the cheap shotgun, and got an answer that was like the Roman soldier's remark about the short sword. It was a right good weapon if one got close enough to

the enemy. Then they pointed to a big pile of deerskins in one corner of the room, and said that if deer could be killed with the cheap gun, why not men?

I had a novel experience in weather that night, for in spite of the fact that the house was tight enough to exclude the wind I was chilly half the night. In the morning I had a novel experience of another kind. The saloon keeper was willing to accept ten cents for the fodder the mule had eaten, but for my own keeping he would take not a cent. He would not accept money from a friend of the revolutionists.

From La Venta the road wound up among the mountains for several miles. That land did not look at all productive, and it was for the most part covered with the long-leaved pine, such as has brought so much money to North Carolina landowners. But there were many houses along the route. Eventually a divide was crossed, and thereafter I saw people at nearly all the houses. Four leagues from La Venta the village of Sabana Grande was reached. I could see no warlike indications about it, though it was rather quiet, considering that this was a holiday season. I had heard that a lot of old mines could be seen in that neighborhood—silver mines that had been worked down until water was reached and then for the most part abandoned, but I did not stop to hunt for them. I wanted to reach what was known as the Trinidad ranch, four leagues beyond the town and but eight leagues from the capital. My ride thither was devoid of incident: in fact, from the time I left La Venta I saw nothing to excite even a lone Yankee in a strange land. But as night came on I found two or three ranches had been abandoned, and so, when the Trinidad was reached, I was very glad to find a dozen men, women, and children—chiefly women and children—about the house.

That was a curious road house, if it may be called so, seeing that it was the favorite stopping place of the miners who traveled the road. There was a single room, with five cots arranged around the wall and a lot of hooks for hammocks in the wall. There was a notched log in lieu of a ladder leading to a loft used as a granary, and a big fork-and-pole bench on one side of the room that was used for the same purpose. I swung my hammock after a supper of eggs, tortillas, and dried corn, and rolled into it. A young man who had been recently married and his wife retired to one of the cots that had been curtained for their especial use. Other married folks made use of the cots without curtains, and then the children and three or four servants spread dried ox hides on the floor and curled down on them. I remember being very comfortable over the thought that my

hammock was made of excellent material, and was therefore not likely to break down: a break would have been disastrous to at least three of those sleeping on the floor, and of the three I should have been extremely sorry to hurt one, because she was a charming young lady, 4 years of age, sleeping beside her mother.

The next morning, I was off early. Tegucigalpa was but eight leagues away, and I was especially anxious to have that part of the road behind me, because the country immediately around the capital was said to be constantly overrun by marauding bands from both armies, who robbed every plantation they came to of both food and clothing. Moreover, my host of the night said he believed there would be no danger for a foreigner, but, so far as he was concerned, he would not go with me if I would give him my mule for the day's work as a guide. So, I rode away with that in mind, and straightway came across house after house closed tight. A little later the trail through the woods became somewhat indistinct, and then the telegraph line branched away from the cart route to follow a mule trail. The millwright had told me that this line followed the road all the way to the city—all I needed to do was to keep my eye on the wire and I would not get lost. On thinking of this I was tempted to follow the narrow trail, but the mule wouldn't have it so. I turned him toward it twice, each time releasing the bridle as soon as he was headed toward it, and each time he turned back to follow the ruts, so I let him have his way. A Central American mule that has been used a few times over a route can always be trusted to follow it, and yet I was dubious about the route. I was thinking all the time that I might be going off to Yuscarán or to Comayagua or some other place than Tegucigalpa. Having something to worry about, I was the more depressed by the closed houses I found along the route. If I could have found someone to ask about the road and the last visit of the troops and so on, it would have been a relief.

Finally, I came to a place where the road had been cut in long zig-zags up the steep side of a high ridge, and when I had surmounted this I found a wide plain, with a little hut near the trail, and in it a little black, decrepit old Indian cowering over a few coals just inside. I asked him to do me the favor of accepting a cigarette, which he did. Then I asked about the road, but he shook his head and said he did not understand me. I tried the question on different forms with no better success, and then, as I was regretting my ignorance of the language more than ever, his face brightened and he pointed off across the plain. Turning around I saw an adobe house that stood at the foot of a knoll rising like a volcanic peak fifty feet above the general level. A half-dozen men could be seen

near the house, and at least fifty more were hurrying toward it from two directions. I should have known better, but when I looked at the crowd I thought it was a lot of countrymen gathering for a picnic, and so away I went to interview them about the trail. Reining in the mule a few feet from the group, I saw, but did not especially note, that half of the men had guns, and then I said:

"Good-day, friends."

Instantly every one of them touched his hat, and replied, *"Good day, sir."*

"Have the goodness to tell me if I am in the road to Tegucigalpa," I continued.

"Certainly," replied one who carried both a rifle and a revolver, and was plainly a leader. *"It is the royal road to the capital."*

Thereat I took a bunch of cigarettes from my pocket and asked him to take them. He did this and asked me to make him the favor of smoking one of them myself. I took one, and the rest were distributed as far as they would go. Then I struck fire with a flint and steel and cotton rope, commonly in use there, and we all put the fire to the tobacco. I stowed away the apparatus, shook hands with the leader, nodded to the rest, and said:

"Adios! Adios!"

"Adios. That you may go well!" replied the assembly, and turning the mule I started him toward the cart ruts. The next moment three men shouted at once.

"Señor, look here!"

I looked in a hurry and found myself staring into the muzzle of the revolver that the leader carried. I could see, although the muzzle was obscuringly large, that the weapon was both cocked and loaded. So, I turned the mule around.

"What do you want?" said I.

"Will you make us the favor to wait a minute?" said the leader.

"Why not?" said I. So, he uncocked the revolver in a way that made me shiver as badly as the first view of it had done, for he held it pointed at me as he let the

hammer down. Then he called to a man who had been standing on top of the knoll all this time, and the man came down on the run. I found the newcomer was an officer and an educated man, who could talk English plainly.

"I am extremely sorry they stopped you," he said, "but they are very poor, and they think you ought to give them some money. I cannot help it, I must ask you."

"Certainly," said I. "Tell them I am very glad to contribute to the glorious cause of liberty."

He translated that and everybody smiled—including myself. Then the officer took me around the corner of the hut.

"They need not see what you have. How much do you want to give?" he said.

"I have just five silver dollars," said I. "I will be glad to give you two of them."

"Thank you," he said. "It is a-plenty."

So, I handed the coins to him, shook hands and rode away. As I think of that ride now, I remember that the mule's feet seemed to strike the ground like piledrivers, and that the muscles of my back kept twitching at frequent intervals until the road dipped down into a gully two miles or more from the knoll where I left the troop.

I should like to ride over that route once more, but in a time of assured peace. The place where I was held up was known as the Hill of Rubber. From there on I found picturesque vistas, oak forests covered with long gray mosses, black gulches, and, of the work of man, miles of great stone fences. That much I remember, although I was chiefly on the lookout for groups of men with white bands on their hats, and I kept the mule jogging on wherever the road grade would permit. Eventually, when riding through a patch of woods, I thought I saw what I was looking for but hoping not to see—another squad of men—but in an instant the supposed squad dwindled to a lone Indian, who was about to run into the brush, apparently as frightened as I was, when I waved my hand and shouted.

"Wait a moment, friend."

He stopped at that, and I rode up and asked if he had traveled far in the road.

"From Tegucigalpa," he replied.

"Good. Have you seen many people?"

"Not one. Do you go to Tegucigalpa?"

"Yes. Is it a good road?"

"It is a cart road, but there is much danger at the city. The revolutionists are there, and there is fighting day and night."

That was the only man I saw until close to the city. But as I passed a suburban house a squad of men clothed in blue drilling came out of an adobe hut and pointed Remington rifles at me. But because they were plainly Government soldiers their attitude did not frighten me at all. I told them I was glad to see them, and so I was, for I had expected to find a line of revolutionists first and to have trouble getting through it to the city. I asked if there were any revolutionists around. In reply the sergeant in charge pointed to a mountain that overlooks the city.

"Plenty there," he said. "Tomorrow we will go up and get them."

An hour later I was sitting in a neat bedroom, opening on a clean court, in the only hotel then open in Tegucigalpa. I had seen my mule well cared for and had had a bath. I could hear rifle shots a-plenty up on the mountainside, but I had observed that the adobe walls were a foot and a half thick. Besides that, the landlord had told me the city was full of Government troops, among whom I would find a number of my own countrymen, who would be right glad to see me. What with the prospect of a battle next day and an opportunity of seeing it from a safe distance, and the reasonable certainty of finding a number of men of my own kind to tell of their personal experiences and otherwise help me complete the details of the story, I was that night in the most comfortable frame of mind that I had enjoyed since starting on the journey.

(4) WAR SCENES IN HONDURAS.¹⁷

A CLOSE VIEW OF THE COUNTRY'S REVOLUTIONARY CROP.

Soldiers Who Were Careful Not to Injure the Women in the Town—Story of a Charge up a Hill—Marksmanship in Honduras—Effect of a Story of a Military Execution—Fate of a Captured Courier

"You have arrived just in time to see the most important product of our country in the harvest season."

So said Gen. R. Agüero, nominally President of Honduras, referring to the revolution that was destroying the country while I was there. I called on the President the day after I reached the capital, Tegucigalpa. He asked why THE SUN had sent me to Central America, and I replied that it was time to learn what there was in the people and products of the region that could interest Yankee readers.

Certainly, if the most important product of the country was revolution, then the harvest season did seem to be at hand at that moment. We were in a parlor on the second floor of the national palace, or capitol. A three-foot telescope standing just before us was pointed at the crest of Picacho Mountain, a precipitous hill that rises 1,000 feet above the city, and commands every foot of both the town and its suburbs. Looking through the telescope, I had seen the officers, men, and mules of a detachment of the insurgent army on guard where they could have easily have fired rifle bullets through the window out of which we were gazing. The room about us was half-full of officers and guards. A little flower garden under the window was full of mules and horses that had trampled the life out of both grass and flowers. The streets were everywhere crowded with soldiers, and the stores, with rare exceptions, were closed and barricaded. The market was empty. The hospital and the penitentiary were full. In an adjoining room, Gen. Domingo Vásquez was planning an attack on the insurgents, who, had they taken the notion to fire on the palace, might have stopped the planning by killing the General, because he was sitting before an open window facing the top of the hill.

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I was out as soon as the doors of the hotel were opened on that, my first morning in this beleaguered city. Right across from the hotel stood a large one-story building that had been erected in connection with the national industrial school. It had been devoted to the uses of the troops since the war began, and served as a combined stable, slaughterhouse, and commissary department. On my way into the city I had seen a squad of men going out carrying lassoes as well as rifles. I had supposed they were going after "volunteers," as they are called, for the army—the usual way of recruiting there being to catch the men, and then offer them the choice between volunteering and something worse. But as I left the hotel I saw the squad going to this slaughterhouse with a fat cow, led by a rope. An hour later the hide of the cow was stretched on the ground where the buzzards could clean the flesh from it. This seems to be worth telling, chiefly because this slaughterhouse was directly opposite the only hotel of the city, where the chief officers of the army came for their meals. There was no floor to the slaughterhouse, and the ground that served as a floor was soaked with the blood of enough cattle every day to supply several thousand soldiers with meat. And that was in the torrid zone. It was not a pleasant place for beginning an inspection of the city.

Tegucigalpa is divided by a river, and there is a fine stone bridge connecting the two parts. There were squads of troops at both ends of the bridge, but they did not impede travel over it. The hotel was on the site of the stream called Comaygüela and, finding the bridge free, I went across to Tegucigalpa proper. Near the bridge stood the capitol, with its little park full of mules and soldiers, and adjoining the palace was a two-story school building, which was in use as barracks. It seemed right curious to see the troops straggling about the town. They were usually chewing at pieces of sugarcane, and in all cases were in no way concerned about the presence of the enemy up on Picacho Mountain.

After learning the lay of the principal streets, I returned to the hotel for breakfast and found that my arrival had been announced to the American colony of the town. The American Consul, J. J. Peterson, had called to offer his services to THE SUN, and Louis Bier of New Orleans gave an invitation to go to the colony's headquarters, at the home of Capt. Frank Imboden, a former New Yorker, came around. Johnnie was gorgeous. He wore a white yachting cap, a blue flannel blouse, flaming red trousers, white duck leggings, and a 44-caliber Yankee pistol. He was a Captain in the army, and was serving aide to Gen. Vázquez. I was particularly glad to meet a member of the General's staff, because the guard at the city limits had said, the night before, that the insurgents were to be attacked

this morning. I at once asked Capt. Hase to get me a permit to accompany the troops. He laughed when I made the request.

"There is plenty of time," he said. "We will not attack them today, nor tomorrow, for that matter. You do not understand the Central American soldier. He does not move as quickly as that."

So, after breakfast, I went to the Yankee headquarters. I found there, Major E. A. Burke of New Orleans; Capt. Imboden, Col. Patrick P. Brannon, formerly of Scranton, later a Colonel in the Salvador army, and at last an exile, because the Government he had served had been overthrown; also Col. D. C. Conkling, formerly of Union Hill, N. J., who had gained his title by serving President Bográn in the Sánchez revolution of 1890. Quite as interesting as any of them, from a reporter's point of view, was Col. Manuel E. Garfias of the Mexican army, who had come to Honduras just for the sake of being in a war. He was a type of a very large class of men who are professional soldiers for the sake of the excitement and glory that war brings. There were a lot of men of that class in the Government army, and others with the insurgents.

I sat down with these men, but had to tell them my experiences coming in before they would tell me what I was anxious to learn. But when they had properly guyed me for getting scared when traveling over the lonesome road, Major Burke carried me away to his own private home so that we could talk undisturbed. This house stood on the edge of the town nearest the mountain, and I could see the insurgents on top and some Government troops who were half-way up shooting at each other. It seemed to me that the insurgents were shooting at an angle that would drop the bullets pretty close to our destination, and I suggested to the Major that, for a man as valuable to the country as he was, to go into danger was just like tempting Providence. I wanted him to think I was entirely concerned in his safety, but for some reason he thought I was interested in my own only, and so I had to keep on with him. Eventually he explained why there was no danger.

We had passed one of the handsomest gray-haired ladies standing in a doorway looking up the mountain. The Major bowed with profound respect as we passed and she returned the salutation with queenly grace. *"You saw that she was looking up the mountain?"* said the Major.

"Yes."

"She stands there until ready to fall from fatigue every day. She has a son with Bonilla up there. And more than half the women of this town are looking up there at this moment, because they have relatives or sweethearts with the revolutionists. You need not fear that any bullet from Bonilla's camp will strike inside the city during an hour when women are out of bed."

There had been a skirmish inside the city early one morning, but no woman was about at that hour. The houses showed bullet marks in places, and the business sign of the Bank of Honduras, the only bank in the country, had been bored through.

At the Major's house, I sat down and took his story of the revolution. It was a candid story—I am sure the Major intended to deal fairly—but he was strongly in favor of the Government. He believed that the success of the revolution would end all sorts of enterprises conducted by foreigners in the country because, as he said, the Liberal party was bitterly prejudiced against all foreigners. His story, somewhat modified by what I learned from the friends of the revolutionists, has appeared in *THE SUN*, together with the principal events of the war, and it [...] not be repeated now, further than to recall the fact that Bonilla evacuated Picacho Mountain before Vásquez got ready to attack him, and was obliged to get out of the country. He returned, however, a year or so later, and this time succeeded in driving Vásquez and his Yankee followers from the land.

With Capt. Imboden as guide, I went to a little bench¹⁸ about 300[?] feet up the side of Picacho Mountain to look over the ground where a bit of fighting had been done. There was one adobe house on the bench, and a garden patch had been walled in with stone. Here, too, was a stone-lined reservoir from which the city was supplied with water, the reservoir itself being supplied from a great spring located, curiously enough, on top of the mountain. A shallow pile of dirt in the gutter on one side of the road was pointed out as the grave of two soldiers killed in the fight. A splash of blood was seen where a man had fallen. There were scratches on the smooth rocks, that bullets had made. On the bench itself, I could tell where men had taken shelter behind rocks and the stone walls of the garden. A little heap of empty brass cartridge shells lay at the post of each man. The house on the bench had been used as a fort. Its thick adobe walls were pierced with loopholes. The outer side of the walls were pitted with holes

¹⁸ Bench — Terrace

where bullets had struck when the Government troops came up to drive the insurgents from the bench. Capt. Imboden said that, judging from the localities where the bullets struck the wall, the troops had aimed at the loopholes. There was not a bullet mark within three feet of any of them.

It was plain to see that adobe walls make a perfect protection against rifle fire, for not a bullet had penetrated the dried clay more than four inches. It is likely that even the modern nickel-clad bullet would fail to pierce an ordinary adobe wall. Inside the house was a scene of disorder. Furniture and trunks had been destroyed and every portable thing of value carried away. Not far away from the house were a lot of smoking embers and hot coals, the remains of a large wood fire. Nearby lay a number of pieces of charred blue cotton cloth, like that used for uniforms by the soldiers. There was blood on the ground and a smell of burnt flesh arose from the fire. An attempt had been made to burn the corpse of one of the men killed in the fight, but there was not enough wood at hand wholly to consume the body, so what was left of it had been carried down and buried in the grave I had passed by the roadside.

Down at the Yankee headquarters, I asked Col. Garfias, who had led the detachment that cleared the insurgents from the bench, to tell me about the fight.

"I was not in command," he replied. "I merely helped the men to do the fighting. We numbered eighty men, and so we had a General in command. He said to me, 'Colonel, charge up there and drive them away.' Of course, he was valuable to his country, and it was not proper for him to expose himself, and we left him among the adobes. We could not go up the road—it was too well guarded. We climbed the hill where it was steepest—so steep that we had to pull ourselves up with our hands for half the distance. You think that was a hard charge? No. It was easy. The hill was so steep the enemy fired over our heads. Look at my hands. They are badly scratched and hurt. No? It is better to be hurt so than with bullets. When we got to the top, there were but sixteen men to form the line, but that was enough. One was enough, because the enemy had fled."

"Colonel, your men were brave to charge up there, but they could not shoot straight when they arrived," said I.

"Shoot? No? What do you want? Did you not see that they hit the house? We were not so brave—we were afraid—but we had more pride than fear. How could they shoot straight when fear held the gun while pride pulled the trigger?"

On my way to the hotel, after passing the day with the Yankees, I learned that eight prisoners had been taken to a plaza and shot to death on the steps of a church. The Yankees had known that the prisoners were to be shot, but had simply forgotten to mention the matter to me. At least, that is what they said afterward, and I believed them. Shooting prisoners was a matter that, under the circumstances, was not likely to impress them very deeply. However, they agreed to let me know next time, and Major Burke took enough interest in the matter to speak to Gen. Vásquez about it. He told the General that it would be a favor to THE SUN if I were allowed to describe a military execution in Honduras. The General was not only willing that I should see the next execution, but said he would order out all the troops and having the shooting done in style, instead of having it done privately, as theretofore. Accordingly, on the next afternoon, when I met the General, he said:

"Now you shall have your wish. Tomorrow at 8:30, in the plaza of Comayagüela, you shall see a military execution."

How this was done—how nine men were marched to the plaza and there compelled to stand against the church wall; how they shouted "Hurrah for liberty!" as the soldiers were ordered to shoot; how they fell and died under a ragged, murderous fire—has been detailed and illustrated with accurate sketches from photographs. I have heard since then that Gen. Vásquez laid his subsequent downfall to THE SUN's story of the war. He believed that the story of this military execution, together with other cruel facts relating to the war, created a sentiment in the adjoining republics which enabled Bonilla to raise supplies for another and successful invasion of Honduras. But, of course, the deeds, and not the publication, stirred up the sentiment that led to his overthrow. He sought to establish peace by an iron rule. He and his friends told me that that was the only policy that could preserve peace among the people of Honduras. People who believe in republican institutions will be glad to know that he was entirely mistaken. The characteristics of the people of Central America are full of contradictions, but I do not know one more interesting than the fact that, although they have never known a free government—have always lived under military despotisms—they invariably rebel, sooner or later, against the rule of the tyrant.

As a matter of fact, I did not make much of a study of either Honduras or its capital from a commercial point of view, or any other point than that of a

reporter seeking after a tiny war. I saw that it had a plaza with a bronze statue of Gen. Morazán—a statue about as bad as some of the Washington statues in the United States. There were some marble statues—graves or something—I have forgotten, scattered about. But neither the bronze warrior nor the stone ladies were as interesting as the gangs of Indian soldiers that strolled up and down the streets. There were some schools, one an industrial school where trades were taught, and on the river bank some grist mill machinery that was going to ruin. I learned that the Government, to whom it belonged, had no time to put it in operation, but I had no time to look after such matters in detail because of the pressing deeds connected with the war. There were the unfinished walls of a grand theater, on an island in the river, and the remains of a suspension bridge built in imitation of the Brooklyn Bridge. Someone had started to make a beautiful resort there and failed, but further than that I know nothing of the enterprise, because I was more interested in the regiment of Col. Garfias, which was quartered there—a regiment that numbered eighty men, all told, and did not have a man in it of rank below Second Lieutenant. There were so many officers in the Honduras Government army that no sort of places could be arranged for all, so they had made a fighting corps of the surplus, and had put a professional fighter at the head to see that no one flunked.

I saw the market, but it was merely a collection of roofs shading bare pavements. No one dared come there to sell. But I learned that flour sold at \$40 a barrel during Bonilla's presence, the ordinary price being \$10. Every other kind of food product brought equally high prices, and yet the rate charged me at the hotel was but \$2 a day. I forgot to ask the landlord if he was getting rich. I saw some churches. One of them had served Sánchez, the rebel leader of 1890, as headquarters. I was so much interested in the bullet marks on the walls that I forgot to look for works of art inside. And the story of the death of Sánchez, who, finding himself headed off as he fled from the country, entered a thatched hut and shot himself to death, seemed more interesting at the time than the history of the old church. In short, the war and the warriors were about all that attracted me, and so this article contains little besides war facts.

The foreigners in the service of the Government were quartered in an unoccupied hotel, where they received the most liberal supplies of food and some rum, because, as has been told, they were all skillful with the rifle. One of the most interesting of the gang, outside of the Yankees who have been described already, was a German sailor boy, who came from no-one knew where. He had no notion, apparently, of what the word fear represented, for he was forever

leaving camp to forage. On one occasion he went out and brought in a pair of new shoes. There was a standing order that any soldier robbing a house of such things should be shot, but Charley was a valuable man for a scout, and they told him that if he would take the shoes back to the house they would forgive the theft. Charley promised to do this and not to rob any more. After a while he came back carrying three fine large turkeys hanging to his saddle. The foreign gang welcomed him vociferously, and, when the turkeys had been properly cooked, Charley carried a large platter full of the roast to the General-in-Chief. The General ate with pleasure and then said:

"Well, Charley, that is good. Tell me where you got these turkeys."

Charley at once assumed an indignant air. *"I beg pardon, sir, but you think I stole these turkeys, don't you?"*

The General smiled in assent.

"No, sir, I didn't. When I went to the farm where I got the shoes, I saw the turkeys, and so just traded. I gave the señora her shoes in exchange for the turkeys."

Captains in the Honduras army did not get much money. Their pay was \$1.30 a day in depreciated silver. But every man of them enjoyed the happy-go-lucky life they all led. The national hospital was a one-story building occupying an entire block. It was a succession of rectangular rooms that faced on a lovely little park-like court within. I went to the place, having heard that it was overcrowded and the scene of much suffering. I found it overcrowded, but it was perfectly clean and sweet, and the wounded were treated according to the latest rules of surgical science. Carbolic acid and Iodoform¹⁹ were used by the pound. There were four surgeons and five female nurses caring for the 163[?] inmates, nearly all of whom were wounded. A few had fevers. It illustrates the character of the women of the country to say that the nurses were all of the shoe-wearing class—from families of wealth and education—and they were all volunteers, serving day and night without pay. In fact, there was strong competition among the ladies of the city for the places, and so only those who had influence with the Government could gain the privilege of serving the

¹⁹ Iodoform — Antimicrobial compound formerly used as a healing and antiseptic dressing for wounds and sores

unfortunates. I observed that the ragged privates from the Indian regiments were as tenderly cared for as were the few of better social position.

Policarpo Bonilla took possession of the top of Picacho Mountain on Tuesday morning, and thereafter, until Saturday, Gen. Vásquez made plans, and nothing else, to oust him. On Saturday night Bonilla marched away unmolested.

After he had gone, the Government troops occupied the hill for a time. A number of revolutionist couriers came into the camp by mistake, the Government troops having been disguised with the white hatband to deceive them. I saw three brought down the hill, all tied to one rope. I heard afterward that they were shot to death at the penitentiary. The first who came into the camp was not brought down. He was received as a friend by the commander, who asked for and received the dispatches. Then, as the story was told to me, the commander, pointing to a stone nearby, said politely: "*You are tired. Sit down. and I will order some refreshment.*"

The courier sat down with thanks. The commander whispered an order to an aide, who went away and returned with five men carrying loaded rifles. As the courier saw these men range before him his face blanched for an instant, and he half rose from his seat. Then he sat down again and smiled: "*What does it matter?*" he said, turning to the commander. "*It is for liberty.*" They shot him to death then and there.

Having learned the story of the war, and further, that Bonilla had decided to give up the fight for the time being, something that the Government did not then know, I determined to hasten back to Amapala and get out of the country to a port where I could put my manuscript on a Yankee steamer bound for an American port. When I announced this at the Yankee headquarters, Major Burke asked me if I would do the Government a favor, and I naturally said I would. Then he told me the Government was going to send Gen. J. M. Aguirre on a delicate mission to Costa Rica. The General wanted to ride down to Amapala with me, and the Government and Gen. Aguirre and Major Burke personally would all be very much obliged if I would carry the General's private papers. "*Why do you want me to carry them?*" said I.

"*Well,*" said Burke, "*you may meet some of the insurgents going out. If they should search Aguirre and find the documents on him, they would shoot him.*"

"What would they do if they searched me and found them on me?"

"They won't search you. The Consul's pass will save you from that. Besides, they wouldn't shoot an American."

I thought the Government was crowding the mourners, so to speak, in asking me to carry papers that their own agent was afraid to carry, but everybody had been extremely kind to me, and I consented. I was right sorry for it next day, for a detachment of insurgents mistook me for a Government courier as I rode down the trail alone; and, coming out of the brush with well-sharpened machetes, they held me up. But, in the end, it proved one of the most fortunate investments of good nature that I ever made.

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(5) IN AND OUT OF HONDURAS.²⁰

FROM TEGUCIGALPA TO AMAPALA IN TIME OF REVOLUTION.

Remarkable Conduct of Revolutionists Who Thought They Had a Government Courier—When Central Americans Will Steal—An Abandoned Town—A Colonel Not to be Disturbed on a Light Pretext.

It took me five days to make the journey from Amapala, in the Gulf of Fonseca, to Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras; but when I came out, I covered the distance in three days. There were several reasons for this increased speed, and the story of the journey will very well illustrate some phases of life in a Central American republic in war time. Thus, the news received from down the road on the day before I started was not of a character to give peace of mind to a traveler, but rather to urge him to unseemly speed. The Government had sent out a regiment "to open the road"—clear it of insurgents—and a courier who had come in reported that the regiment was returning after having marched over the route to Pespire unobstructed. Gen. Vásquez assured me that there was therefore no reason to suppose I would see a single "rebel" anywhere along the road. But, in the meantime, I had seen a Captain with a squad of men come into the city with eight prisoners, who, he said, had been captured on the hill where I had been held up when on my way in, and he added that they had killed an American miner and two straggling soldiers from the command who had gone out to clear the road. Then, too, this command had burned a town (Santa Ana) a short distance away from the cart road, hanging several of the inhabitants who had been unable to escape, and driving the rest to the woods. Just a short time before that, a squad of men sent out to repair the telegraph line had been attacked in the same neighborhood, and all but two killed or carried off as prisoners. So the stories ran.

While I was considering these matters, Robert Atkinson, an employee of the San Juancito Mining Company, came to the capital from below, and told me that when crossing the hill, he found a line of insurgents with guns cocked, fair across the trail as he rose above the crest.

²⁰ Published by the New York *Sun*, Sunday, December 8, 1895, page 7; edited by Duncan S. Campbell, February-2019

"But I happened to be acquainted with the Captain," he added, "and that settled it."

"Supposing he had been a stranger?" said I.

"Oh, I guess I could have palavered him into a peaceful frame of mind. I should have tried hard, you may be sure."

As told in THE SUN, I had agreed to ride out of the country with Gen. J. M. Aguirre and carry his credentials for him. When I heard just how the road had been opened, I concluded that I would better risk getting through alone than with a Government emissary. Fortunately, in promising him that I would carry his credentials, I had said he must not expect me to wait a minute for him, at the start or anywhere along the road. So, I sent word that I would be off at 6:30 the next morning, and that I would be unable to wait a minute beyond that hour. It is the custom with most people in that country to start early on long journeys a-mule back, but the General liked to take his coffee comfortably in the morning, and would have none of it. So, when I straddled the mule next morning he was just rolling out of his hammock, and I very gladly rode off without him. Major Burke, who, as the representative of the Yankee element, had shown me many courtesies, came around and rode out of town with me.

In the course of my journey from Panama to Paso del Norte, I saw many fine mornings from the back of a mule, but the delight and novelty never wore off. And as I remember this morning, it was one of the most delightful. We rode along that morning for about four miles in a most cheerful frame of mind, and then we saw a gang of natives near the road, all carrying machetes. They looked like revolutionists, and the Major after a time became confident of it. I remonstrated with him, then, for going on. He had been seen with the Yankee boys in the Government camp so often that he was reasonably sure to find trouble once he got among the revolutionists; but he was not at all afraid, and kept on. That made me sorry, because, if the men attacked him, they were certain to include me, in spite of my peaceful mission. However, while I was still arguing the matter, the men turned off to go to work in a field, and that ended the episode. It was particularly consoling just then to see men doing farm work. It looked like the return of peace, and it was the first work of the kind I had seen in Honduras.

Once I was alone, I felt able to meet and, with the aid of a pass from the American Consul, conquer the prejudices of any revolutionists that might happen

along. Half way up the Cerro de Hule range, I overtook a country cart bound to the coast. That was an indication of peace, too, and when I found that the cartmen had with them a man just in from the coast, and that he had seen no one in fighting trim except the Colonel in command of the Government detachment (it was Col. Garfias of the Mexican army, already described in THE SUN), I rode on very comfortably. The houses were still empty along the route, but they did not seem so lonesome as when I passed them on the way in. Reaching the top of the hill where the revolutionists had held me up, I saw two men only on the flat. They were off in a field, and as I rode along one came to me and begged for some money "*for the love of God.*" The soldiers had carried off everything. He was grateful for a dollar, and I went on with the feeling that the most dangerous part of the road was behind me. Going down the zigzag road on the side of the ridge, I could see some empty houses in the valley, but they gave me no concern, and when I reached the bottom I dismounted for a drink and to allow the mule to breathe a bit. The brook wound along between the highway and a thick bit of tropical woods for some distance beyond, as I remembered, and I smiled as I thought of having been too nervous to stop there for a drink on my way in.

And then came the surprise of a lifetime, when, as THE SUN has told, a squad of revolutionists, fresh from the village of Santa Ana with its burned houses and its dead, came from the woods and surrounded me, supposing that I was one of the hated foreigners in the Government employ, carrying dispatches to the troops who had ruined the town. There is no reason for retelling the story here, but it is worth mention, because it shows a most interesting characteristic of the people. These men were smarting under what seemed to them to be an outrage, and they had in their power one whom they supposed to be of the troops responsible for that outrage. Their own friends had been shot and hanged without even a drum-head trial; but these men, instead of searching me for documents (and I must say that the bundle of the General's credentials seemed to be a very large package just then), asked in polite words if I had any; and then, when I had exhibited to them a pass from the American Consul, they showed little disappointment, and permitted me to ride on without further question.

A mile or so beyond this picket of revolutionists, I saw that a big country house which had been standing there empty when I was going in, had been burned by the Government troops. The ruins were still smoking. An open pine forest bordered the road nearby, and here a handsome little gray fox was playing like a puppy, and appeared wholly careless of the presence of a man when I rode past him. An hour later, I met Garfias himself and his command. The troops were

straggling along the road, confident that no one was near to attack them. I could hear them talking and laughing several minutes before we met, and when I came around a bend and unexpectedly confronted them, a dozen of them jumped for cover instantly. They said they thought I was the advance scout of Bonilla's entire force, it being a common thing for commanders in that country to use foreigners for scouts. Col. Garfias said he had been carrying out the General's policy of terrorizing the people, and that I would not find another revolutionist along the route. This proved to be literally true.

I was about two leagues from the village of Sabana Grande when I met Garfias. His men were scattered along the trail behind the main body for a mile. I saw that some of them had robbed the stores in the village. They had a variety of goods, but had fancied umbrellas more than any other thing, apparently, for three men had at least fifty among them. Bright-colored prints and ribbons had found favor also. I guess, as a matter of fact, that the most dangerous men in Honduras at that moment were the thieving stragglers of the regular army, but they did not even look at me as I rode down the trail. I remained in Sabana Grande that night. It was twelve leagues out from the capital and was garrisoned when I arrived, but was evacuated at sunset. No sooner had the troops gone than many of the inhabitants appeared on the street, talking loudly in favor of the revolutionary leader and telling what they were going to do. Several men flourished revolvers in the air as they talked, and these were applauded by their neighbors. No one seemed to think that this sort of talk after the enemy had gone was at all ridiculous.

Gen. Aguirre arrived in town after I did. He had not been disturbed in his day's journey. I found him at once a charming companion and an encyclopedia of facts relating to Central America. I hardly know in which respect he was most interesting, but I could not help paying most attention to his personal characteristics. In some respects, he was a typical Central American. For instance, he did not want to start early next morning, but he did it to oblige me. Then, on the route, he was continually in a cheerful frame of mind. He noted and stopped to admire almost every beautiful prospect which the vantage points of the road afforded. He stopped at about every fruit tree along the route to gather and eat. He stopped at various houses to try to buy lemons, but failed every time, save once, either because the people were not at home, or because the melons had all been plucked by the soldiers. He stopped at a ranch where the people had not been frightened away and ordered our noonday meal. While it was cooking, he stood by the fire and directed the woman who was doing the work, greatly

to the advantage of the meal, I am bound to say. Meantime, he chaffed the children, praised and petted a couple of grown-up daughters, talked politics with the father, and kept an eye on the hired man, who was shelling sugarcane seed from dried tassels for the mules. And every minute or two he would turn to me to tell me what some member of the family had said about one or the other of us. We got a fowl, eggs, rice, tortillas, fried plantains, and fresh cheese, with coffee to close the repast. We all ate on such seats as logs and saddles afforded, save the host and hostess, who sat on the edge of the bed, and we ate off good plates, using slices of fried plantains in lieu of knife, fork, and spoon. We ate our spoons, so to speak. The house had no table cutlery. It was an interesting as well as a delicious meal. The family showed that they felt themselves greatly honored by the presence of the General, and all urged him to remain until the next day. The General was inclined to do so, but I said I must hurry on to send my story of the war to New York. The young women refused to speak to me after the General said he must go on with me.

At La Venta, where I had been hospitably entertained by the saloon keeper when on my way in, there was not a soul to be found. We rode around to every house in the village, and found them all unlocked, but there was no sign of anyone having lived there for several days. The furniture and household goods had not been disturbed anywhere. That seemed a little remarkable, especially as Sabana Grande stores had been robbed by the soldiers, but the General explained the matter by saying:

"The people of this country are not robbers. They are by nature as honest as Indians, but if you put before a man of Indian blood something for personal adornment or use that will distinguish him—raise him above his neighbors—he will take it quickly. Those soldiers who stole the umbrellas were Gracias Indians, and in Gracias an umbrella is never seen, save in the hands of the few men of wealth."

The saloon where I had slept was barren of liquids. The proprietor had probably concealed them before taking to the woods. The entire town favored Bonilla, and so had been entirely abandoned when the Government troops approached.

On reaching Pespire at night, we found the detachment of troops I had seen there before. The Colonel and my companion were old friends, and ample provision for our entertainment at night was soon made. When I returned my mule to the house of its owner, the youth whom I had seen there received me sadly. He had not seen his father, and he believed, he said, that the mule I had been

riding would now be taken from him by the troops. While I was still talking to him, I saw a servant leading the animal through an alley that ended in a field overgrown with high brush. I guess the mule escaped.

It was only six leagues to the coast, and the road was level, but it took us nearly all the next day to reach San Lorenzo. We had to get mules from the Government troops to take us through, and the Government had not been very lucky in gathering mules around Pespire. Everything worth using had been hidden in the brush, because the people were opposed to the Government. So the weakest, in fact, the only miserable mule I had in my Central American experience, was the one I got next day. However, by taking a long rest in the heat of the day, we managed to keep the mule on its feet, and when at last we reached the port, the trouble was over. Because the General was a Government official, a long, clean-lined ship's cutter had been sent over from Amapala for him, and, of course, I was carried along. There were six men at the oars and three of us in the stern sheets. The boat was well balanced, and the men hearty and strong. With a stroke as well measured as that of Yankee naval seamen, they drove the boat through the water. It was a moonless night, and every dip of the oars spooned up great masses of silver-white phosphorescent fire and scatted hordes of diamond-like drops over the dead black water. The shores of the lagoon from which we started, and the mountains in the bay beyond, loomed up to a fabulous height. There was something in the scene that stilled even the Central American, and scarce a word was spoken by anyone in the boat, until at midnight the lights of Amapala were seen. Even at the landing, there was no more talk than was necessary in passing the sentries. One reads in every book of travel in the tropics about the *dolce far niente* that is natural to the climate; but I guess that one can scarcely understand just what is meant by the term until he has lounged in the stern of a well-handled boat as it floats across a tropical sea on a moonless night.

That was my last night in Honduras. A German steamer, the *Valeria*,²¹ Capt. Pieper, of the line that runs from Hamburg through the Strait of Magellan and up the west coast of the Americas as far as Mexico, was in port, bound north. American Consul Koncke said that the German ship would be much more comfortable than her Yankee rival, due a few days later, a fact worth noting only because he was American Consul. Because I was in a hurry to get where I could write my story of the war unmolested by Honduras officials, I bought the ticket. Then I

²¹ Valeria — Steamship of the Kosmos Line, built 1888, lost 1900

had a prolonged argument with the guard at the soldier headquarters. He would not let me go to the commander for a pass to leave the country, because it was the commander's hour for taking a siesta. I pointed to the steamer that would sail in an hour, and had her last boat at the pier, but the soldier said blandly: "*It is of no importance. There are other steamers,*" and but for the timely arrival of one of Mr. Kohncke's clerks, who had special influence inside, I should have been obliged to wait for the other steamer. However, I got the pass and the steamer, and as the only passenger on a first-class ship, sailed away comfortably.

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