

# COLON OR ASPINWALL.

The Great French Ditch as it Looks Today.

Special Correspondence.

Colon, Colombia, March 7, 1903.—This noted town is one of the many to whose attractions "distance lends enchantment"—and the greater the distance the better your opinion will remain. Viewed from the harbor, as most visitors approach it, you see little but a foreground of immense, ugly sheds, of wood and corrugated iron, belonging to the Isthmian Railway company, backed by ragged looking cocoa trees and a few towering royal palms, the perspective ending in a dim wilderness of tropical verdure. This is the celebrated harbor which Columbus discovered on his third voyage, and hence the ancient name of its port—Christoval Colon, according to the Spanish rendering of the word. It was not much of a discovery after all, so far as a valuable harbor is concerned, being exposed to every wind that blows, and its dangerously shallow water barely covering the scattered coral reefs.

To bring a vessel up to the dock at Colon is a slow and serious matter, accomplished by a gang of negroes, running around and around a big wooden wheel, whose revolutions shorten the cable, inch by inch. The wharf is more than a thousand feet long, resting upon a solid foundation of coral reef. All its piles that touch the water are covered with copper to resist the ravages of that destructive little creature, the "ship worm," through whose insidious agency thousands of human lives and millions of dollars have been lost.

COLON HARBOR AND DOCKS.

In most of the so-called harbors of Central and South America, steamers are compelled to anchor a mile or two from port and send passengers and cargo ashore in rowboats and lighters, but at Colon, after carefully feeling their way among the reefs, they come bumping up against the dock and you walk ashore over a gang-plank. Passing over the long covered wharf, with its chaos of bales and boxes and its wide cracks in the floor through which you get glimpses of coral snags below, pounded by surf and encrusted with strange forms of marine life, animal and vegetable, you emerge into the main street of the town. The first step finds you over shoe in the mud. If after the rainy season, or ankle deep in sand at other times of the year. In either case your feet are instantly beset by a crowd of darkeys, with rickety carriages and horses in various stages of decrepitude, clamoring to "show you round." Having selected the vehicle that looks most likely to hold together another half-hour, drawn by the horse or mule that harrows your feelings least by displaying the fewest festering sores, you proceed to haggle with its driver. At first he will demand not less

than \$5 an hour; may be more, if you look unusually unsophisticated, but when he discovers that you are not so verdant as appearances may indicate, he comes down with celerity to \$1, which is the recognized tariff.

BUILT ON AN ISLAND.

As all the world is aware, Colon occupies the small island of Manzanillo, only three miles long by a mile wide, the northeastern side washed by "Navy Bay." It lies about midway between Porto Bello and Chagres—the former town famous in the days of the buccannery as the great emporium of the American trade, and the latter, at the mouth of the river of the same name, as the place of disembarkation before the rise of Colon. Both are now almost deserted, wretched beyond description, the lairs of leprosy and fever. Until looted by the Colombian government to the Panama Railway company, in 1854, Manzanillo island was nothing but a series of mud flats and salt marshes. The railroad managers forthwith hatched a plan to the main land of the Isthmus, near Pox river, and on a considerable portion of the mud flats established their headquarters at either end. They embellished the rest of the island to capitalists for building purposes and a mushroom town at once sprang up. Being constructed with total disregard for all sanitary regulations, malignant diseases soon gave it a most unenviable but deserved reputation. Commerce flourished, notwithstanding death's harvest, and Colon became a popular resort for fortune-seekers, especially when the opening of the canal work cut millions of dollars into circulation and gave a mighty impetus to Isthmian trade. The Colombian revolution of 1885 was a turning point in the history of the town. In March of that year it was invested by Gen. Prestan, and was finally destroyed by fire. No sooner was order restored (Prestan being executed in August of the same year) than the rebuilding of Colon began. The location was the same, but an immense improvement was made over the old town, some of the streets being macadamized and pavements of plank and concrete occupying the swampy highways that before reeked with filth and decayed animal and vegetable matter. One long street, with wooden houses facing the sea, today comprises nearly the whole of Colon, but it is

DIVIDED INTO "QUARTERS."

almost as distinct from one another as if they were separate towns. That the nearest to the wharf, where North Americans mostly congregate, is locally called "Aspinwall," in honor of Mr. W. Aspinwall of New York, one of the early promoters of the railway. It is decidedly cosmopolitan in its character, and the brightest spot in it is the office of the Pacific Mail Steam Navigation company and the beautiful garden adjoining.

The same long street presently merges



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into a beautiful avenue of palms, leading to the French quarter, which is universally known as Colon. This end of the island was built up entirely by Frenchmen, who own and occupy it. Among its handsome residences, which are all of wood and mostly painted brown, the two largest and handsomest are those that were erected for M. de Lesseps and his son. It is said that a bill for \$2,000 apiece was rendered and paid for these houses—though \$10,000 each probably exceeds their actual cost. But in those flush days of the beginning of the French canal, money—other people's money—was literally "no object" to anybody, but the few who were who lined their pockets. The de Lesseps houses were occupied only for a short time; then for years they remained empty, and long ago passed into other hands. Near them stands the colonial bronze statue of Colon, wearing the French coat of arms (the Colombes), with the figure of a beautiful Indian girl crouching beside him—a gift to the town from Empress Eugenie. There is a very large and well appointed hospital here, and also another in the American quarter. The latter has also its bronze statue, representing Mr. Aspinwall, the New Yorker.

IN THE NATIVE QUARTER.

The portion known as the "native" quarter is most interesting to travel-

ers from the Land of Uncle Samuel. Such a heterogeneous collection of nationalities as swarm here would be hard to duplicate—especially since the high tide of prosperity has ebbed, leaving behind a driftwood of human degradation. It is estimated that fully 50,000 people remain on the tiny island, with a large portion of them are blacks, from Jamaica and Santo Domingo—tall, powerfully built men and women, with the flattest noses, thickest lips and woolliest wool that ever grew on human craniums. The circumscribed space wherein they swarm and breed, like a miniature comparison, I hope, to any other of like dimensions under the sun. The one street and the several narrow alleys that intersect it are at all times crowded with negroes—bold, flaunting creatures, many of them in dresses of white lace or embroidery, with beautiful white silk shawls, bare feet thrust into high-heeled French slippers and kinky hair half covered with bright handkerchiefs, coquettishly knotted into double bow sort of turbans, set far back on the head so as not to interfere with the exaggerated "bang," which every one of them affects. There was a time when the large negro element became extremely dangerous; and that was immediately after the collapse of the French canal scheme, when thousands of these people were suddenly

thrown out of work and famine stared them in the face. Those who had flocked here from the English West Indies, lured by fabulous wages, were cared for by the government and supplied with daily rations, until money was furnished to pay their passage home. In spite of present poverty, these happy-go-lucky children of Ham seem perfectly contented, singing, laughing and dancing the careless hours away. Just now they are greatly elated at the prospect of an American canal and are building extravagant hopes on the return of flush times.

A MODERN BABEL.

The roofs of Colon are mostly tiled, the upper half of each house projecting far over the sidewalks, with awning-shaded verandas, above. A large share of the home-life goes on in these verandas, regardless of the "public eye." Some certain flowers blooming in boxes, bird cages, women sewing, children romping and maids pursuing their household vocations; others are piled with tubs, pots and refuse of all sorts. In some of them washings are going on and the clothes flapping in the breeze; or ironing is in progress and skirts and chemises spread out to air;—all these making a queer study of the city's principal street. There is a conseil municipal, or town hall, a large iron market house, a calaboose (always full), a tolerable theater, electric lights and several churches—Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Methodist and Jewish. A newspaper called "The Isthmus," is published three times a week in the three languages most spoken in this modern Babel. There are secret societies without number, Masons, Odd Fellows, Foresters, K. P.'s and organizations of darker secrets of African origin. There are half a dozen hotels, no end of boarding houses and fonditas; and shops, saloons and restaurants are all turned out of doors during the day on account of the excessive heat. I notice with amusement that some of the drinking places have no other advertisement than a number of little round tables set on the pavement outside, each table appropriately painted with a sight of swallows. Beggars, of course, abound, and disease, deformity, vice and filth in every form. Leprosy walks abroad unhindered and it is not uncommon to receive your change, your mail, even your food, from a scaly hand that ought to be in a lepers' asylum.

You must not miss a drive all around the island, via the Paseo Coral, or "Coral Promenade," as it is called. Part of it borders the tropical forest, whose exuberant vegetation springs out of the dense, serpent-infested, pestilential swamp which surrounds Colon on three sides. The drive is worth taking, even at \$5 an hour in a springless coach that threatens every minute to go to pieces, like the deacon's one-horse chaise,—for the occasional long stretches of beautiful shell-strewn beach, with the ocean dashing its spray upon it and glimpses of the hills that form the backbone of the Isthmus and the verdant swamps that show a series of small islands between Manzanillo and the main land.

ENTRANCE TO THE CANAL.

You must also see the Atlantic entrance to the celebrated French canal, upon which work was commenced just 23 years ago. You find it on the mainland, behind the island upon which Colon is situated; but the island has been so built out in this direction that if the great ditch is ever completed, Colon will be on its eastern terminus. In the same way that Suez is the Red Sea terminus of that canal. There are acres and acres of warehouses and workshops and cottages for the laborers and houses for the officers, all made of wood, long deserted and mostly in ruins—like the city of the Hazy company, which knew itself to be no fraudulent bubble but a permanent fixture and therefore built in the beginning substantial structures of brick and iron. Oh, the pity of it! The proceeds of \$50,000,000 of dollars in bonds, the hard-earned savings of the thirty poor of France, sunk in this great useless mud-hole! The most astonishing stories are yet told concerning the methods of robbery practised by the canal company's officials. Everybody seems to have stolen prodigiously, except perhaps, the father of the whole scheme, M. Ferdinand de Lesseps, who must have been blind as a bat—culpably blind—not to have had more intimate knowledge of the methods of his managers. His son, M. Herbert de Lesseps, is known here as the Prince of Thieves, who must have gone away with at least 20,000,000 francs of other people's money. Meanwhile the death rate along the narrow neck of land, among those employed in digging the canal, was simply appalling—far worse, as those who survive declare, than the world was ever permitted to hear of. The company's hospitals containing a thousand beds, were constantly filled, and only those who were able to travel were sent there—not a fraction of the number that perished miserably by the wayside. Of the 50 sisters of charity sent from France for service in these hospitals, all but three died of "chagres fever," and in less than five years 80 of the hospital doctors joined them in the land of Shad-dows. In sober truth, the whole Isthmus is one vast graveyard. Besides the many cemeteries, "fields of acres," are innumerable trenches filled to the brim with mouldering bones, and thousands of isolated graves scattered all over the beautiful wilderness. Most of the victims were young men, hundreds from college, filled with high hopes and eager aspirations. Pray heaven that the gruesome history may not be repeated if America undertakes to finish the canal.

FANNIE B. WARD.

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## WHAT TO EAT.

Valuable Suggestions for the Kitchen and Dining Room.

This matter will be found to be entirely different from and superior to the usual run of food articles, in that every item is a nugget of culinary wisdom and eminently practical. Conducted by Katherine Kurtz, Marquette Building, Chicago, to whom all inquiries should be addressed. All rights reserved by Banning Co., Chicago.

Menus for Next Three Days.

SUNDAY.		
BREAKFAST.		
Cereal.	Fruit.	Cream.
Fried Sausages.	Baked Potatoes.	Coffee.
Corn-meal Muffins.		
DINNER.		
Bouillon.	Roast Veal.	
Stewed Tomatoes.	Mashed Potatoes.	
Apple and Celery Salad.		
Cheese Balls.		
Banana Fritters.	Wine Sauce.	
Coffee.		
SUPPER.		
Creamed Shrimps.		
Bread and Butter Sandwiches.		
Preserved Quince.	Cake.	
Tea.		
MONDAY.		
BREAKFAST.		
Cereal.	Fruit.	Cream.
Lamb Chops.	Baked Potatoes.	
Buttered Toast.		
Coffee.		
LUNCHEON.		
Minced Meat on Toast.		
Egg Biscuits.		
Stewed Dried Peaches.	Buns.	
Cocoa.		
DINNER.		
Cream of Rice Soup.		
Meat Pie.		
Creamed Cauliflower.		
Tomato Sauce.	Cheese Wafers.	
Cabinet Pudding.		
Coffee.		
TUESDAY.		
BREAKFAST.		
Steamed Figs and Cereal with Cream.		
Breaded Veal Cutlets.		
Creamed Potatoes.		
Raised Bread Biscuit.		
Coffee.		

THE DAINTY FILLET. They May be of Fish, Flesh or Good Red Herring.

In culinary parlance a fillet is a strip of meat without bone, a piece of meat made up of muscles. A fillet of fish is made from the boneless sides of the American representative, the flounder, or its European equivalent, the sole. It is best adapted in their structure to the peculiar manner of serving as they lay readily be rolled or folded to suit the cook's purpose. However thin fillets cut lengthwise and free from bone, may be used successfully.

Fillet of fowl are the choicest and most delicate. They consist of the breast meat in two parts. A natural division separates the larger, outside part from the dainty little portion known as the "fillet" which clings to the backbone. Both are included in a general term, although they are often separated even when used in the same dish. These fillets are flat, and may be easily rolled if desired. Fillet of beef, although consisting of a boneless, tender muscle, is a very different proposition. This is the beef tenderloin, the long strip or roll of meat, the underbelly of the sirloin, which lies between the kidney fat and backbone. This may be served whole or cut into thick slices or steaks called "minion fillets." When the fillet is taken out, the steaks are not so desirable and consequently do not bring such good prices; this accounts for the extravagant price asked for fillet.

Fillet of mutton are seldom named and that of pork is used in form of little steaks known as pork tenderloin. Fillet of veal, however, is very frequently seen on menus. This is the round, fleshy part of the leg, boned, stuffed, often larded and skewered up in round shape. The meaty parts of the back and legs of harel rabbit are flattened out and served as fillets.

The cook who toys with small variations in order to present greater novelty, and display the versatility of her skill will go so far as to produce fillets of vegetables. These serve well enough for a garnish but add little of value to culinary lore.

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