

A MIGHTY PORT.

WHAT PANAMA CITY WILL BE WHEN OUR CANAL IS COMPLETED.

The World's Half-Way Station and Its Enormous Canal Traffic—A Free Port for the World's Exchanges—Plan of Chief Engineer Wallace for a New City—Old Panama and the Buccaneers—The Panama of 1905—Its Cave-Like Homes and House Industries—Pawnbrokers Who Sell Pearls and Gold Chains—Will Earthquakes Ruin the Canal?

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PANAMA, May 25.—When the canal is completed Panama will probably become one of the great cities of the world. This is the opinion of Chief Engineer Wallace and other experts who understand the methods by which the interoceanic trade will be carried on. They say that Panama will probably be a free port and that steamers from all parts of the world will meet here to take on and put off goods. It will be cheaper to carry freight through the canal and over the seas on big vessels, and ships of 10,000 tons, 25,000 tons, and even larger, will load here for their long haul across the Atlantic and the Pacific. There will be lines of smaller steamers traveling up and down the coasts of North and South America, acting for the great ships as the feeders do to a railroad. Vessels of 2,500, 4,500 and 5,000 tons will come here from different parts of the Pacific, and transfer their goods to the larger ships, taking in return other goods to carry back home.

The chief steamship lines will have a combination of large and small vessels, and I understand that such plans are already making. John Barrett, tell me that the manager of the Nippon Yusen Kaisha, the great steamship company of Japan which now has vessels from that country to all parts of Asia and to Europe, says his company will have six big steamers running from Japan to England through the Panama canal, and that it will add 15 small steamers to sail up and down the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of our hemisphere, gathering goods for the larger ships, to be transferred at Panama.

TWO MIGHTY PORTS.

It may be that Colon, at the Atlantic end of the canal, will also be made a free port, and if so Colon and Panama will grow as Bremen and Hamburg have grown through the free port facilities which have been offered there. Hamburg with its suburbs has already 2,000,000 people and Bremen is rapidly increasing in population and wealth. Hongkong, the English free port off the coast of China, is another instance of how cities grow through such advantages, and the same may be said of Singapore, that other half-way station around the world lying between the Pacific and Indian oceans.

NOT LIKE PORT SAID.

A comparison is often made of the Panama canal with that of Suez, and the prophecy added that the towns of Panama and Colon will be as dead as Port Said and Suez when the canal is done. The engineers say that the conditions here are far different from those of Suez, that Suez is a close neighbor to the great commercial centers of Europe, and as such it offers no inducement to trade. They aver that Panama will be the half-way station on the long trip from one side of the Atlantic to the other side of the Pacific, and that it is so situated that it cannot but be one of the great trading places of the nations, surpassing Singapore, Hongkong or any similar station on the highways of commerce.

Panama will grow also through its enormous coal business, becoming one of the chief coaling stations of the world. The biggest fleet that sails the Pacific today is the coaling fleet. Vessels are always moving here and there across that vast system of water-ways from Australia, Japan, Chile and even England to supply the different steamship companies with coal. When the canal is finished the greater part of the coal used in the Pacific will come from our southern ports. It is probable, so the chief engineer thinks, that it can be then taken to Panama and sold for \$5 per ton, including the 11 per cent toll on the canal. The coal which we now get here from Australia brings \$5 and \$6 a ton, while our Virginia coal is selling for more than \$7, largely owing to the freight charges of the Pan-



PUTTING IN SEWERS.

ama railroad, which have already been reduced under the new regime.

THE NEW PANAMA.

But is there room at Panama for a large city? The town today is crowded together upon a little rocky peninsula, shaped like a frying pan, which juts out into the sea, the handle of the pan connecting it to the mainland. The peninsula, when the tide is in, has the ocean washing the walls which surround it, but when the tide goes out a great expanse of dirty brown coral rock is to be seen, and this coral rock runs for several miles along the north shore above Panama to La Boca, at the Pacific mouth of the canal. It extends out from the land into the ocean along the line where the canal will be dredged to the deep waters of Panama bay.

As it is today there is no room whatever for city expansion, and it would be better if half of the city buildings were cut out for widening the streets. Mr. Wallace, however, has a plan to build a retaining wall about the edge of this great coral reef, taking in an area several times as large as the present Panama city and extending the wall along the edge of the canal to the wharves at La Boca. Inside this wall a part of the vast excavations which must be made at the Culebra cut could be dumped. There will be 100,000,000 cubic yards which must be disposed of, and this is about 100 times more than is necessary to fill such an area. Indeed, the disposal of the earth and rocks is one of the problems of the canal construction. Not more than 1,000,000 cubic yards can be put into the valleys of the immediate vicinity. The remainder must be carried far away or thrown into the Pacific. By this plan an excellent site can be made for the new city. The earth and rock of Culebra is perfectly clean and sanitary, and it would make an excellent foundation. The land when prepared could be divided up into wide boulevards, leaving plenty of places for parks and all modern city conveniences. Enough might be sold to pay the cost of remodeling the present city, taking out every alternate block and making the streets wide and healthful. I understand that the French had a similar plan, but that it has never been presented to the public.

OLD PANAMA.

The Panama of today is one of the oldest towns of the hemisphere, being

loaded with silver and gold crossed the ocean to the isthmus. Early in the seventeenth century Panama was noted through out the world for its wealth and splendor, and it was in 1671 that the English buccaneer, Sir Henry Morgan, landed at the mouth of the Chagres and crossed the isthmus. He besieged Panama and burned it to the ground, carrying away 150 horses and mule loads of silver, gold and other loot, and in addition 600 prisoners. At that time Panama contained eight monasteries, two churches and a hospital. It had 200 warehouses, 2,000 houses of more or less stately build. Morgan captured the people to make them tell where their treasures were hidden, sparing not even the women.

He was no respecter of religion, and the churches and monasteries were looted and burned. Today there is nothing but ruins on that site of the once famous city, only the tower standing as a monument of the glories of its past.

THE PANAMA OF TODAY.

The Panama of today was begun shortly after Morgan's butcheries. The people chose this rock, almost surrounded by the sea, for the site of a new town. They built a wall 30 feet high about its edges and constructed their houses inside that. A great part of this wall still stands. It is double in places, and on one side of the city it forms a promenade, where the grown-ups walk of an evening, the children fly about on roller skates and play games, and where the canal employees go out for their daily airing.

In other places there was a moat between the two walls. This moat has grown up with trees, and in it remain many squatters. In some parts of the town houses have been built on top of the wall, and in others warehouses are to be found inside it, the two walls serving as parts of the buildings.

EVERY HOUSE A FORT.

Panama itself looks like a fortification. Every house seems to have been put up to withstand the raids of pirates and revolutionists. The walls are often three feet thick and the doors are heavy and ironed with little port holes through which the owner can peep out before opening the door. There are but few windows on the ground floor, and those which have been made are often covered with iron bars.

The houses are built close to the street. They are usually of one and two stories, and occasionally three. Along the second and third stories run iron balconies which shade the street below. These balconies are the evening sitting places of the family, and it is in them that the Panamanian Juliet sits and receives the love glances of her Romeo, who stands on the street below. Romeo makes goo-goo eyes for weeks at Juliet before he dares open his mouth, and he never thinks of climbing up.

The well-to-do people of Panama live on the second and third floors. Very few of them have a house to themselves. I knew men worth a hundred thousand dollars whose families live above cheap tenements or stores. One winds his way through dark and devious passages to get to their apartments, after which he finds himself in well furnished and comfortable quarters.

A CITY OF CAVES.

The ground floors of Panama make one think of a city of caves. This is especially so in the out-of-the-way parts of the town. The streets are narrow with cobblestone roadways, and lean sidewalks made of flags about six or eight inches higher up. They wind this way and that, making one think of a walled canyon with rectangular holes in the sides. These holes are the doors, which are opened during the daytime, but at night so tightly closed that they seem to be hermetically sealed.

Looking in through the doors one sees rooms 10 or 12 feet square with other rooms behind them. There are no windows facing the street, and the door, only, gives the light. Often one room will be the home of a family, six or eight people sleeping in it, and the elder ones working there in the daytime. Sometimes the room is a store during the day and a sleeping place at night. There are no sanitary improvements. The water comes from a cart or barrel on wheels which is dragged through the streets, or from a well in a court nearby. When the new waterworks are completed this will be bettered. Indeed, many of the streets are now dug up for the sewers, and the water will soon be flowing from far up in the mountains into the Ancon reservoir, whence it will come into the city.

A TOWN OF HOUSE INDUSTRIES. The idea prevails in the United States that the Panamanians are lazy. I do not



THE NARROW SIDEWALKS.

find it so. In a walk through the city one sees some kind of industry going on in every home. Here shoemakers are pounding away, there women are making lace, while farther on are carpenters, cigarmakers and blacksmiths. The work goes on out in the street when the sun moves about so that the sidewalks are shaded. Then the tailors bring their chairs out to the roadway, and one sees women sewing on the edge of the street. Nearly every other building contains a store, and many of the stores are workshops as well. The most common place is the petty saloon. Drinks are sold everywhere and there are scores of little grocery and fruit stores.

AMONG THE PAWNBROKERS.

Panama has several banks which do business in the large. The richest perhaps is that of the Elymans, the descendants of Henry Elyman, who died here some years ago worth about a million dollars, and next to them, perhaps, the Brandons, who were bankers to the old Colombian government and who still do business with the Panama republic. In addition to this many of the merchants lend money, and there are also pawn brokers who give advances on watches and other valuables at 5 per cent a month. The pawn brokers have no balls over their doors as at home, and they are not such shylocks as our dear uncles of Chatham street and the Bowery. I have been to many of these pawn brokers' shops not to borrow, but to see if I could pick up something in old plate or jewelry as a souvenir of my trip. They have but few antiques of value, but now and then one finds a fine pearl or a gold chain with flat links of curious shape. Such chains were once made by the native jewelers and they are now in great demand among American ladies, who visit the isthmus.

When Mrs. Secretary Taft was here she bought a splendid one for less than \$55, and the wife of the chief engineer has another which would cause any American belle to break the tenth commandment. The larger of these chains are big enough to go around the neck and full to the waist. They end in a cross of solid gold, which has, I doubt not, been blessed by the priest, as all Panamanian women are good Catholics. At one pawn shop I was shown a chain of woven gold with a medallion as a pendant. The medallion had a score of

fine pearls, the whole being topped by a pearl as big around as the end of an ordinary lead pencil. The price of this chain was \$100 in silver. It would certainly be worth at least four times that in the United States.

THE CANAL VS EARTHQUAKES.

One of the objections urged against the building of the Panama canal has been that an earthquake might occur which might ruin the work after it is completed. There is an evidence against this theory in one of the old churches of Panama. The chief engineer, Mr. Wallace, pointed it out to me the other day. It consists of what is probably the widest and lowest arch known to architecture. The arch must be 50 or 60 feet wide and it is almost horizontal, consisting of one span without any support except at the two ends. It is part of a church built about 200 years ago and now in ruins. There are trees growing inside the church and grass and bushes have sprouted out of the windows high above the street. The arch was planned by a monk architect, and the true believers say that it was able to construct this arch only by faith and prayer. He had planned his building and had put up the arch, only to find that it fell down again and again. At last in despair he spent a night fasting and praying to the Virgin. In his prayer he said he was doing his work for the glory of God, and it begged her to help him. He said that he would put up the arch once more, and that she should cause it to stand, even though the ground should shake and the church might crumble to pieces. He did build it, and it stood. The rest of the church was built over it; the roof was put on, and then a fire occurred which reduced the building to ruins. The arch, however, bolstered up by these prayers, remained erect, and so it is to this day. The chief engineer says that no such arch could withstand the severe shock of a great earthquake, and that its existence is an evidence that no earthquakes have occurred here within the past 200 years which could possibly affect such a construction as that planned for the Panama canal.

Panama, by the way, has many old churches and monasteries here which are crumbling to pieces or have been burned to the ground. Within a stone's throw of the canal administration building lie the remains of what once was a great convent or monastery. The ruins cover almost a city square, and I understand are for sale at a reasonable figure. FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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National Educational Conventions.

On account of the convention of the National Educational Association at Asbury Park, July 2nd to 7th, the Washburn Railroad has put into effect a rate of one fare for the round trip to New York, plus \$1.35 from there. This ticket will be good either direct or via New York City, and it is optional with the passenger to use rail or boat line between Detroit and Buffalo and between Albany and New York. All tickets, routed via Washburn R. R., will be good for stopovers in either or both directions at Detroit and Niagara Falls and at New York on the return. Tickets reading via Washburn R. R. will also be good between New York and Asbury Park on steamers of the Sandy Hook Line, which arrangement will add little cost to the trip. These tickets will be on sale from June 25th to July 1st, inclusive, and will be good for return till AUGUST 1st. Mr. Phil P. Hinchey, G. A. P. D. of the Washburn R. R. at Denver, states that he will be pleased to answer all questions and mail literature pertaining to the trip on request.

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