

wicker seats, like those of some of our smoking cars. The second-class are built like long street cars, with the seats running lengthwise under the windows. I rode for some time second class to see the people. Half of the passengers were Jamaica negroes, one-third was made up of Chinese and the rest were natives Colombians. The Chinese were the best dressed of the lot, and the neatest. As the American conductor came in I asked him as to his health, and was told that he had been traveling over the road for seven years and had not been sick a day.

All wages of Americans are paid in gold, and those of the common laborers in silver. Engineers get \$157 a month, conductors \$148 a month and telegraph operators from \$75 to \$100. The brakemen are natives, and they receive \$1.75 a day in silver. Common laborers get from 35 to 75 cents a day, and most of those who work on the tracks are Jamaica negroes. They put in ten hours a day beginning at 6 a. m. and working until 11. Most of them bring their first meal of coffee and bread to the track and eat it there. At eleven they stop for breakfast, which is usually made up of rice and a bit of dried meat, and at 1 go to work again and work until 6, when they go home for dinner.

Most of the Americans here are well-educated men, and many of them have traveled all over North and South America. Some have literary ability, and I have been much interested in a little volume of poems by an American named Gilbert. Here is one which will be appreciated by any man who has spent much time in the tropics. It describes the isthmus and might be entitled

"Where the longitude's mean and the latitude's low,

Where the hot winds of summer perpetually blow,

Where the mercury chokes the thermometer's throat

And the dust is as thick as the hair on a goat;

Where one's mouth is dry as mummy accout.

There lieth the land of perpetual thirst.

The following is more glowing by far than the reality. The Chagres is really a beautiful stream, and not half so bad as painted. The terrible miasma was at its worst years ago, when the swamps were dug up for the canal and railroad. Today the isthmus is comparatively healthy:

Beyond the Chagres river  
Are paths that lead to death;

To fever's deadly breezes—  
To malaria's poisonous breath!

Beyond the tropic foliage,  
Where the alligator waits,

Is the palace of the devil—  
His original estates.

Beyond the Chagres river  
Are paths forever unknown,

With a spider 'neath each pebble,  
A scorpion 'neath each stone!

'Tis here the boa constrictor  
His fatal banquet holds,

And to his slimy bosom  
His hapless victim folds.

Beyond the Chagres river  
Lurks the panther in his lair,

And ten hundred thousand dangers  
Are in the noxious air.

Behind the trembling leaflets,  
Beneath the fallen reeds,

Are the ever-present perils  
Of a million different breeds.

Beyond the Chagres river,  
'Tis said—the story's old—

Are paths that lead to mountains  
Of purest virgin gold;

But 'tis my firm conviction,  
Whatever tales they tell,

That beyond the Chagres river  
All paths lead straight to hell!

We crossed the Chagres and about a hundred other waterways during the trip and saw women with little or

nothing on them washing their clothes in the streams. All washing here is done with cold water, and my towels at the hotel are frequently ornamented with burs caught from being dried upon the bushes and weeds.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

## OUR CUBAN LETTER.

Habana, Cuba, March 9, 1898.

Since the Red Cross has now become an important factor in the affairs of this unhappy island, my readers may like to learn more about it. Everybody has heard of the beneficent organization in a general way, but comparatively few know anything about its history and methods. I have the honor of being temporarily a member of the Red Cross family, (though not of the Society) domiciled in a beautiful villa in the suburbs of Habana, which has been rented for the occupancy of Miss Clara Barton and her staff during her stay in Cuba; and from the honorable president himself, and from an excellent article in "The Literature of Philanthropy," by Laura M. Doolittle, I have gained most of the following information:

Properly speaking, the Red Cross is not a society, as it holds no regular meetings and has no election of officers; it is rather a confederation of the relief societies of all countries. Its general aim is to ameliorate the condition of the sick and wounded soldiers in time of war; but the special object of the American branch is to relieve suffering wherever found, among people of whatever nationality or calling. Though the Red Cross order is only 34 years old, its operations already extend over most of the civilized world, and forty nations, enrolled under its banner, have pledged themselves to carry out its humane precepts. To understand its spirit, one must glance back into history. From the barbarous ages of antiquity, down almost to our own time, the maintaining of nationalities and governments depended upon the incessant maiming and slaughtering of men in war; yet nowhere was there any system supported by the state for the relief of sufferers from the calamities of battle. Even during the Napoleonic wars, when Europe's bravest and best were being slain by thousands, no medical and sanitary service of armies were known. The common soldier was a mere machine, and the most that kings and councils were willing to grant him was the glory of dying in the service of his country. The great change for the better is primarily due to the newspapers. When the English army set out for the Crimea a few war correspondents went with them. The climate was deadly, the struggle mighty and desperate. After the first scene in that frenzied carnival of blood, the correspondent poured upon Britain the awful story of the suffering of her troops. One regiment was quickly reduced from 1,100 men to 20; another had only 10 able men for duty. Wounded soldiers lay where they chanced to be dropped by their comrades when dragged from the front, untended; unfed, suffering untold agony from festering wounds. Pestilence had its way unhindered, for the overcrowded hospitals were little better than dens of death. All these horrors set forth by the newspaper correspondents, stirred the heart of England to its depths. Then, for the first time in the world's history, a system was inaugurated of voluntary civil care of the sick and wounded, to supplement that of the military. Lord Sydney Herbert, her gracious majesty's minister of war, wrote to Florence Nightingale, who was then in charge of a London hospital, asking for aid. A letter from her to Lord Sydney, begging permission to help, was already on its way. The world is familiar with the story, of this brave woman

and her 300 female companions in the Crimea. They trod a pathless field; but hope and returning health to thousands followed closely in their footsteps. They brought order out of chaos in the wretched hospitals, and men, snatched from death, lifted their feeble hands in blessing of their benefactress and kissed her shadow as she passed. Perhaps Florence Nightingale's greatest service to humanity was in proving, in the face of an enormous weight of ancient military precedent and prejudice, that the sufferings resulting from war are in large measures preventable, and that the military power alone cannot possibly keep an adequate medical service in operation through a long and severe campaign. This splendid object-lesson was the beginning of the movement which has since grown to a system which reduced the miseries of soldiers in the field to the lowest possible degree.

To Henri Dunant, of Switzerland, first occurred the idea of the Red Cross—that is, of forming permanent societies among all nations, to be bound together by solemn agreement, for the prevention of unnecessary suffering during future military campaigns. He was traveling Italy in '59, when the battle of Solferino occurred, and taking part in the care of the wounded, was profoundly impressed with the lack of facilities. Shortly afterwards he published a little book, called "A Souvenir of Solferino," describing the scenes he had witnessed. The battles of the Italian campaign were fresh in the minds of the people, and his vivid pictures of the horrors of war, translated into several languages, produced a wide spread sensation. The International convention at Geneva, in the summer of '64, was the direct result. Sixteen nations, including all the great European powers, except Russia, were represented, and the celebrated "Treaty of Geneva" was born. The century has produced nothing more beneficent, for its code marks the beginning of the end of war. Never again will the forces of an enlightened country set out to encounter battle and disease with the accompaniment of a civil sanitary service as complete as money can supply. Never again will wounded soldiers be left, as a matter of course, to suffer untended—to starve, die and decay on the field where they fell; nor amateur surgeons saw off limbs without anesthetics. Never more will the fallen lie in heat, or wet or frozen to the earth, for lack of the flag of truce which would make safe the relief corps going to their rescue; nor will an ambulance, picking its way among the dead and dying, risk being fired on by the victors who hold the field.

In the first place, the treaty neutralizes all parts in their efforts at relief, and hires to the aid of the medical and hospital departments of armies the direct, organized and protected help of the people. By its international code, all military hospitals under its flag can neither be attacked nor captured, and all the sick and wounded within them remain absolutely unmolested. Surgeons, nurses, chaplains, attendants, and all non-combatants at a field, wearing the insignia of the Red Cross, are protected from capture or interference with their work. Wounded prisoners, lying on a captured field, are delivered to their own army, if desired. All supplies designed for the sick or wounded of either army and bearing the sign of the Red Cross, are protected and held sacred to their use. Convoys of wounded, or prisoners in exchange, are safely protected in transit, and cannot be harmed without the breaking of an international treaty and all the serious consequences that would follow. Another of its provisions is that persons residing in the vicinity of battle about to take place shall be notified by the generals commanding both armies and