

[From the New York Times, March 17.]

RAILROAD EXCURSION.

SCENES AND INCIDENTS.

Thursday, the 15th of February 1855, at or about 10 o'clock in the morning, we came up to the Atlantic Mail Steamship Company's wharf, at the city of Aspinwall, on the Island of Manzanilla. But the Spaniard does not say Aspinwall, he says Colon. Debarked we marched along the wharf, through the Cocoonut Grove at its extremity, cocoanuts towering up branches, with their stately coronal of glistening leaves shading the clustering fruit. On through this new Yankee village, chucked suddenly by steam power into the midst of a tropical forest, we went wondering. For the City Hotel is backed by huge manzanilla trees, and peccarys run about its courts; the Saint Nicholas stands in the shadow of palms, and monkeys and green parrots are in its porch. Behind the house stretches the marsh with its rank vegetation, its superlative creeping vines, its wild flowers which are trees. The streets are one vast gathering of noisy Jamaica niggers, mixed natives, and riotous Californians, among whom stands John Chinaman, with dilapidated pig-tail, or stalks the dark, handsome, smileless Cooly, from Madras. Every house that is not a bar-room is a store or shop. Yams, sea-shells, plantations, varnished leather boots, oranges, ring-tailed monkeys, and "very pretty patterns for a veskit," salt cod and pine-apples, cocoanuts and seagrass hats to fit them, pig iron and watermelons, ship's stores, &c., invite the passer-by to pause and purchase.

Naked native babies ride astraddle on the left hip of parents and guardians; natives cook in calabashes in front of their bamboo, palm thatched huts, next door the white-washed frame provision store that came from Maine or Georgia, and we go on through all to the neat banana shaded mess-room of the railway officers, and there Col. Totten and Mr. Center, and Mr. Baldwin, and Mr. Keyser welcome us to the hospitalities of Aspinwall. The mess-room looks out Northward over the Atlantic, whose waves rush foaming forever over the coral reef that forms the nucleus of the island. There the cool breeze seldom sleeps, but driving shorewards rattles the cocoanut leaves or waves the graceful stately foliage of the banana and plantain. On the left are Col. Totten's quarters; and around the neighborhood are the dwellings and mess-rooms of the men, the spacious machine shop, the hospital, &c.

The Northern shore of the island is a coral reef, washed constantly by breakers and covered regularly by the tide. There you find fifty varieties, all beautiful, of that wondrous insect manufacturer; the shore strewn with the blanched shells of echini or sea eggs; queer, black and crimson cockles, little conchs, and quaintly convolute spiral shells; beautiful water-lilies fringe the beach just out of reach of the tide, and odd pods and polished seeds, and plump little cocoanut buds lie amid the broken coral, and countless crabs crawl clattering among all. When you have crossed the reef inlandwards, you perceive that the Island of Manzanilla is composed of alluvial deposit mixed with vegetable decay. It is low, marshy and covered with vegetation of wonderful luxuriance; principally the Manzanilla, god-father of the island, the taller mangroves, cocoanuts, castor oil plant, something that looks like the wild banana and quantities of flower and fruit bearing creepers. But the oddest fellow is the shore mangrove who grows and does business on the coral reef.

He makes his first appearance coming out of a little hole in the rock, once probably the abode of a meditative crab, or a retired cocle, and waxes upward about a foot, being then an inch or so in diameter; he then goes on to treehood and a thickness of four or five inches, and in due time is blessed by branches. But the branch, once safely through its infancy, sows its wild oats in the air for a while, and then turns his attention to business; he swings down over the coral until he spies a convenient hole, when he immediately plunges into it, strikes out roots for himself, and goes into partnership with his father, catching and accumulating oysters, limpets and barnacles. It soon becomes a hard matter to recognize the parent, where every trunk is a branch, and every branch a trunk, with roots and duties of his own. No squirrels run up the mangrove's bark, but oysters do! the birds of the mangrove boughs are purple-backed, red-clawed crabs. It struck your correspondent as comical, when he first saw a crab climb a tree.

The chief animal products of the island are goats, prawns, turkey buzzards and pot-bellied babies.

We got into the carriages of the Panama Railway Company, our locomotive gave a yell, the engineer boiled us up into a gallop, and away we went with a cheer out of Aspinwall.

Off the Manzanilla Island, which measures a mile by three-quarters of a mile, southward, through swampy land, two miles to Monkey Hill whence came the earth to fill up the island swamps and lay sleepers on. Thence, five miles further to Gatun, upon the banks of the Chagres river, the windings of which we follow for some sixteen miles, and then, crossing it at Barbacon by a magnificent bridge 600 feet in length, we rattle on joyously some seven miles further, until we pause at Matachin.

Here we found a beautiful conical hill perhaps a hundred feet in height, green with perpetual verdure, and its base touching the track. A valley moist with springs runs round its foot; its sides are girded by majestic oil-nut palms; its grass is thickly interspersed with globular golden blossoms and delicate foliage of the sensitive plant. All round are other hills with stretches of tropical, thick forest visible between them. This hill we mounted, and listened to an eloquent speech by Judge Bowlin, United States Minister to New Grenada, and then we laid upon the very summit, the corner stone of a monument which shall record a tribute to the memory of John L. Ste-

phens, and to the enterprise, zeal and triumph of the other two original grantees of the road—Wm. H. Aspinwall and Henry Chauncy.

Returned to the cars, and we spun on seven miles, to culebra, and then roared past the railroad summit, then onward down the slope to the gay walls and mother-of-pearl-covered spires of Panama the Beautiful.

With all our stoppages, corner-stone laying and orations, flower gatherings, purchases of oranges, pine apples, sugar cane, cocoanut candy, etc., we children of the Atlantic stood on the shores of the Pacific, within five hours from our time of starting. Now the mighty sea lay before us, studded a few miles out with lovely islands—Perico, and Lleano, and Flamingo, and Taboga, and Taboguilla, the "Paradise of Gardens." Then eastward, rolling past the Sandwich Isles, it stretched ten thousand miles away to cinnamon-scented Malabar.

Old Panama, some nine miles down the beach, was built in 1514 by Vasco Nunez de Balboa, the gallant Spaniard, the same who, first of white men, clomb the steep sides of Cerro Gigante and saw both oceans washing the Isthmian shores. A splendid paved road led from the city to the river Chagres; fine walls encompassed it. "The houses," I quote from the lives of the Buccaneers, "were built of cedar very curious and magnificent, and richly adorned, especially with hangings and paintings. There were eight convents, two stately churches, and a hospital. The churches and convents notably adorned with other precious things. There were 2,000 houses of magnificent building, and 5,000 more. The neighboring fields were full of fertile plantations and pleasant gardens."

This, when your correspondent saw it, was gone. One glorious tower stood amid massive trees, stalwart and tall, overhung by creeping vines, the dwelling place of the lizard, the centipede, and the scorpion. The ruins of the cloisters and chapels lay around. The cactus grew where the altar used to stand, and the delicate tracery of the windows is replaced by interlacing branches, with green, loathsome iguanas stretched sluggishly upon them.

For Henry Morgan, the Buccaneer, sacked and set fire to old Panama, on the 28 of August, 1670.

The next year the survivors built New Panama, on the point between the bay of that name and the baylet calle Play Prieta. They surrounded it with high powerful walls, and adorned it with magnificent churches and convents. At present, most of these are in ruins, for the people are neither industrious nor piously disposed, and for majority of the clergy, the less said about them the better—for them. Meantime one of the finest ruins known anywhere, to your correspondent, is the Conventual Church and Cloisters of San Francisco. The Cathedral, now in use, has a fine front, and is not unattractive as a building, but it is wretchedly mean and poor within. The walls were once mounted with one hundred and eight long thirty-twos, magnificent Spanish guns, most of which were melted up for money at the revolution, leaving a minority asleep in the sun upon the ramparts. The garrison consists of eleven natives and a nigger, who wear dirty blue coats with dirty red stripes, go barefooted and, can't scare anybody. They do not put you in mind of Napoleon's "Old Guard."

The population is an agreeable mixture of Spanish Americans, Indians and niggers. The better class lives well and sometimes elegantly. The others live lazily, but well in their way. Jerked beef, yam and yuca, bananas, plantains and oranges are abundant and excellent; caimito, a delicious purple fruit; nispero, a russet, better one; pine apple which would make a man deny his ancestors, to be fed on; guayava, which is as big as a pine apple, and deliciously acid; chiramoya, which your correspondent could not get hold of; the mamei apple, which is liked by the natives, and loathed by your correspondent, pomegranates and tamarinds, and guava and a long bean full of vanilla cream, and watermelons and limes, and a lot of jolly things besides, prevent these people from knowing either hunger or thirst. Yet the water is brought from the highlands in four five-gallon kegs slung upon the back of a mule or jackass and corked with a bunch of green leaves. Then chicha is made of any of these fruits or of corn, and a most delicious drink it is, and may be translated by the word sherbei or sorbet. I am told that the best way of preparing it, is to chew the fruit and get at the juice in that way. But if you don't like it, you take your machete, chop the head off a cocoanut, and therein find a cool delicious pint of flavorful fluid.

NOTE.—When you go to the Isthmus, if you tire of quenching your thirst by fruits, stick to malt liquors, which are excellent and abundant.

Why should they work? Nature feeds them—they have roofs to shelter them. They cook in the streets and the children bathe in the gutters thereof. The women wear a very beautiful dress, white or white and spotted muslin flounced at the bottom; with a flounced cape also at top. Quite high up on the bust it is cut very low on the back, and the fine, smooth bronze or black shoulders are picturesquely relieved by the snowy dress. The proper dress of a laborer is a hat and pair of trousers. The habillament of the children till the age of ten is their skins; the pious add a scappular, the more luxurious a hat or a necklace. In the country you will see a fellow riding with nothing on him but a hat and a pair of enormous spurs. Some of the women are very handsome; nearly all have beautiful hair and eyes. But,

On the 17th we all went off to Taboga, an island twelve miles from Panama, just one huge garden of delights. Watered by pleasant and abundant streams which flow over rocky beds through the imperishable forests, scented by mighty orange groves and farms of pine-apples—its forests trees the caimito, and nispero, and mamei and delicious mango, its glades of tamarinds and guava and abounding limes, its fields of corn, and sugar cane and watermelons, yams and yucas and breadfruits; cocoanuts, and plantains and

bananas, with bamboo to build your houses and palm leaves to thatch it, and calabash trees to shade it and grow pots and pans for you, with a glorious harbor where the fall and rise of the tide is two-and-twenty perpendicular feet, with shores full of exquisite shells, with lots of black-eyed, white-teethed native girls in muslin, and children in nothing at all—if you can't spend a week here pleasantly, you had better go to Newport or Saratoga and see how you like that. * *

Behold us next, on Thursday evening, uplifted over the surf by the natives, dumped into row-boats and rowed to the fine steamer Panama—Fifty miles down the Pacific the famed Pearl Islands waited for our coming. We had brought two divers with us, a black one and a yellow one, who were to show us how the pearls are caught. We slept most comfortably, and waked to a delicious breakfast and a view of our destination. That remarkable bird, the booby, flew round us in numbers, and settling upon the fore-top-mast-stay, looked down upon us with much serenity. At last, a sailor going out upon the bowsprit, captured one, and we all gathered round him to admire his stupidity. All the old salts had been telling us that if he were set on deck he would not rise, being too boobyish to comprehend his situation. So he was set in the midst of our circle, his wings pressed down to his sides, and the exhibitor's hands removed, whereupon he immediately walked to the side of the boat and flew away.

But Isla del Rey, with its native town of San Miguel, was reached at last, and we cast anchor. In a few minutes canoes, hewn from a single tree trunk, came out, paddled by naked natives; and some brought fish, and others little boxes full of pearls. The boats were lowered and we went ashore. Picking up shells, we walked along the shore to San Miguel, a town of 1,300 population—its houses chiefly built of bamboo, thatched with palm. We entered one, and sent for the Lord Mayor, who came. He was a youthful nigger, with a black frock coat and trousers, varnished leather boots, and no shirt. He received us with much courtesy; shook hands, grinned and vanished. When the Panama fired her anchoring gun, many of the inhabitants took their valuables and rushed off to hide themselves in the woods; but, on being assured that the United States was not just then at war with Pearl Islands, they returned. Here in dirt-floored bamboo huts, we found women with necklaces of gold coin, worth hundreds, and lots of pearls worth from two hundred to thirty thousand dollars.

And thus it happened that I spent a day or two in Panama. Not in the streets, where the Padres, with shovel hats and cigars in their mouths, stalk slowly; where the water carrier with his four little barrels sits perched upon the top of his mule; where Dolores shows her brown shoulders as she shuffles along; and Juanito paddles naked in the gutter; not there, but out in the tangled forest, along the beach, on the plains, amid sulphurets of mercury, agates, chalcedonies, blood-stones and gold promising quartz; whereof I have brought a peck or so back with me to Gotham.

A pair of days at Aspinwall—had better be given to look at the railway. It is the accomplishment of the grandest idea yet conceived by commercial enterprise, the union of the two great oceans. Though the road be scarce fifty miles long, though there is but one track, yet is it the most wonderful railway in the world, not only because its termini are the Atlantic and Pacific, but because of the difficulties met and overcome. In leaving Aspinwall we have a few hundred yards of crushed corals, solid as the everlasting hills, but then comes swamps, dismal, spongy, rank with vegetation, filled up with earth from Monkey Hill, two miles away? then, soft friable earth, which must be beaten and pounded into solidity; then queer rock passes, in one place horizontal basalt, in another agglomerate boulders, finally the quicksilverous, auriferous earth of the Pacific slope from the summit to the Panama. This may all be found on other roads, but this is the country of gullies, of wet seasons, of fierce sudden torrents that tear the earth along with them, surface and deep heart together. This fifty miles of railway crosses more than one hundred and thirty bridges from six feet in length to six hundred, and wherever there is a possibility of a swellable stream, there is a culvert; and all those bridges are, or are to be, of iron.

Now this road was cut through swamps, full of the tangled roots of water lilies, wild plantains, bamboos, covered with four-inch thorns, six inches in diameter and thirty, forty, fifty feet in height; through cedar trees, each trunk of which makes a canoe to hold from two to thirty people, through all the sorts of palm, cocoanut milk, oil-nut, thatching palm, cabbage palm, palma real, the kingling. Through twisted mangrove clusters; through groves of poisonous manzanilla, to sleep under which is death; the smoke of its burning wood destroying the eyesight. Through more than five thousand varieties of noticeable plants the patient engineer, cut his way, knowing as he knows to-day, that if the track were left unwatched one year, it would be utterly covered up and hidden by vegetation twenty, thirty feet in height.

But thanks to the energy of the late John L. Stephens, of Mr. W. H. Aspinwall and his colleagues, made practical by Totten and Baldwin, and the rest of those brave engineers, the great work has been accomplished. * * * * M.

Our Cousin.

Our cousin was a dashing young boy of sixteen, who had come into the country to sacrifice a week or two among the rural population. It was a gay morning in June, when we sat together under a maple tree, we in our homespun, and she in full dress, giving a thrilling account of an unfortunate breach which some country girls had made the night before on the rule of etiquette. At length, the tale being ended, "Come, cousin," said we, "supposed we go into the garden and

inhale the odoriferous breezes arising from the cucumber vines." "Ah, Monsieur, with pleasure," said she, at the same time throwing herself on our arm with all the freedom in the world.

After sweeping up and down the alleys for a while, "Cousin," said we gravely, "what do you call the distant verdure twining about you poles, and hanging from the top in graceful festoons?" "That," said she, "must be a species of evergreen. I think it is the polyanthus." "Pole-beans, you mean, rather," said we, composedly; the beans grow in those flat things called pods, and which in their green state may be eaten, beans and all; in that case they are called string-beans."

"And what are those green, round things, stuck up on sticks," asked she, innocently. "Those are called cabbages," we replied; "a term not unfrequently associated with pork, and which, when cooked together, constitute a most excellent dish. And those round, bulbous roots with green, tubular stalks, how would you characterize those?" continued we. "I think they are called turnips," she replied, "are they not?" "They bear a resemblance to them," we answered, "thought they are usually called onions, we believe. They sometimes emit an unpleasant odor, and should never be eaten before going into young ladies' society." "They never are in New York," said she; "indeed, they are never eaten there at all." "Ah!" we replied.

Having gone through the vegetable and floral kingdoms, in the latter of which a poppy and hollyhock were pronounced respectively a snow drop and primrose, we strolled up to an enormous bunch of fennel, standing in the corner of the garden. "Here," began we emphatically, "is one of the most beautiful plants in the whole herbivorous kingdom. Observe the stalks, how round and regular! and the leaves, how exquisitely delicate! and all terminating in these delicious little seeds so prevalent in tea-cakes!"

At this, she caught hold of a bunch, and in her effort to pull it off, shook down a huge fennel worm upon her brocade. "Why, cousin," said we admiringly, "what a beautiful little creature is crawling on your dress." "What is it?" said she, looking about. "A charming little fennel worm." "A what! a worm? murder? where is it? get it off!" She began shaking her dress, and backing across some carrot-beds, and finally tripped in a row of bush-beans, and fell into a huge gooseberry-bush. "Sir!" said she, energetically, "I shall never forgive you for this—never!" "Becalm yourself, cousin," said we quietly. "Suffer not passion to preside over reason. Let not the innocent suffer for the sins of the guilty, for then the rule of justice is made null. Let us seek rather to rescue you from this perilous position without doing violence to your flounces. In that case, however, they shall be converted into kite tails, where, you must acknowledge, they will serve an equally useful and ornamental purpose." "Oh, you mean thing," exclaimed she impatiently, "do be still." At last, with some difficulty, the dress was disentangled without harm, except a rent of about a yard in the fifth tier of this superfluous foliage, which, we suggested, could be easily repaired by cutting a strip from the bottom.

"And now, dear cousin," said we, "let us go into the kitchen and regale ourselves with a dish of cold ham, and when you feel disposed to ridicule country girls again, call to mind the young lady who mistook pole-beans for polyanthus, and who, through fear of a fennel-worm, trampled down three carrot-beds, and fell into a gooseberry-bush."

SELF-GOVERNMENT IN CHILDREN.—We know nothing more touching than the effects of self-government of which little children are capable, when the best part of their natures are growing vigorously under the light and warmth of paternal love. How beautiful the self-control of the little creature who stifles his sobs of pain because his mother's pitying eyes are upon him in tender sorrow! or that of the babe who abstains from play, and sits quietly on the floor, because somebody is ill. We have known a very young child slip over to the cold side of the bed on a winter's night, that a grown up sister might find a warm one.—We have known a little girl submit spontaneously to hours of irksome restraint and disagreeable employment, merely because it was right. Such wills as these—so strong and yet so humble, so patient and yet so dignified—were never impaired by fear, but flourished thus under the influence of love, with its sweet excitement and holy support.

Mr. Gillette, United States Senator from Connecticut, sits near to Senator Toombs of Georgia, and they frequently pass a good humored joke. A few mornings ago, just before the Senate was called to order, while several of the members were standing near, Toombs said to Gillette: "They say, Gillette, that you abolitionists are mad with the Almighty for making the niggers black." "Your informant is slightly mistaken," replied Gillette; "we are only mad with you slaveholders for making them white." This allusion to the bleaching process that is going on among the colored population of the South was at once understood by all, and Toombs joined with much good humor in the general laugh.

THE NEWSPAPER.—How lonesome is the fire-side where there is no newspaper! Ask the man who has a family paper to read, with the latest news, the good of stories, the useful lessons and the witty sayings of the newspaper—ask him its value. Let him be deprived of it for a few weeks, and then ask him to put an estimate upon it. It will have risen above all price.—[Ex.]

The dashing 93 Highlanders, the pride of the English army, left Constantinople 800 strong, and after their arrival in the Crimea received an addition of 150 men. The gallant regiment has recently returned to Constantinople, reduced to fourteen men and five officers, though still bearing with them their glorious and unquelled banner.