

# ACROSS THE ZONE

BY ISABEL ANDERSON

(Mrs. Larz Anderson)

## I

*It's the old, old road and the old, old quest  
Of the cut-throat sons of Cain,  
South by west and a quarter west,  
And hey for the Spanish Main.\**

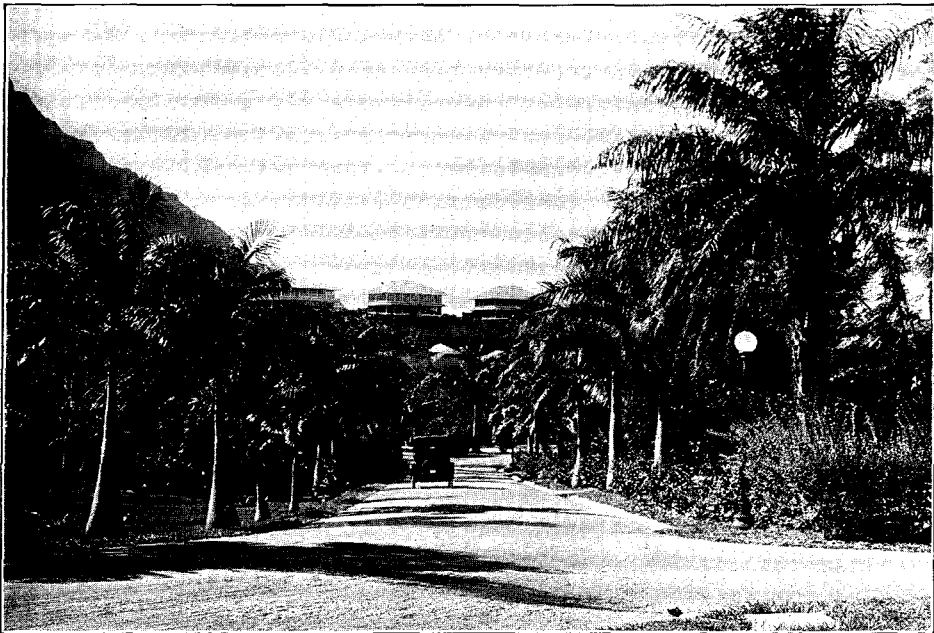
OUR course was over the great Spanish Main, which could tell us tales hard to picture to ourselves in these modern days. Leaving behind Cape San Antonio, on the western end of Cuba, opposite Yucatan, we passed into the Caribbean Sea.

The stories of the early explorers are thrilling. Columbus, after his stop at San Domingo on his fourth voyage, sailed over to the Isthmus. Balboa crossed the Isthmus, where the canal is

\*Masfield.

now, in 1513, and discovered the Pacific Ocean. Magellan, too, searched in these parts for a western passage. Of the other Spanish explorers, Davalos and Ponce de Leon went as far north as St. Augustine, Florida. It was with real delight that I read of Drake, Morgan and Kidd, of galleons, privateers and treasure ships.

Although the Spaniards looked upon the New World as their possession by virtue of the Pope's decree dividing all the newly discovered lands between Spain and Portugal, many French, English and Dutch ships defied the Spanish law and ventured to trade with the smaller settlements that were not garrisoned. The settlers were not too loyal to buy goods of these traders and thus



BALBOA HEIGHTS ROAD, LINED WITH ROYAL PALMS

avoid the payment of duties. In this way a smuggling trade grew up which had its headquarters on the coast of Hispaniola, where their ships could be safely moored and the crews could obtain meat by killing the wild boars and cattle that roamed through the interior. They cured this meat as they had learned to do from the Carib Indians. It was dried on a grating, called a barbecue, raised on poles two or three feet above a camp-fire. Only green wood was used for the fire, which was thus kept low, and on it were thrown at intervals the hide and bones of the animal. The meat cured in this way was called "boucanned," from the Indian word boucan, meaning dried meat and camp-fire, so these smugglers, who prepared it, came to be known as buccaneers.

But the buccaneers were not simply smugglers. They were on the Spanish Main "maugre the King of Spain's beard." The Spanish Government considered them "interlopers," and gave them short shrift. It was war to the knife between them and the Spanish ships. Gradually, more and more adventurers and desperadoes came to the shores of Hispaniola, and a colony was formed of these outlaws of the sea. After Sir Francis Drake's successful raid on San Domingo and Cartagena, great numbers of privateers followed and established a base on the small island of Tortuga. They soon made themselves feared by their raids. By degrees the French buccaneers got possession of Tortuga, while the English made Jamaica their headquarters. In time of war French and English governors commissioned them as privateers, and thus a sort of governmental sanction was lent to them.

Masefield has caught the spirit of the buccaneers in these dashing lines:

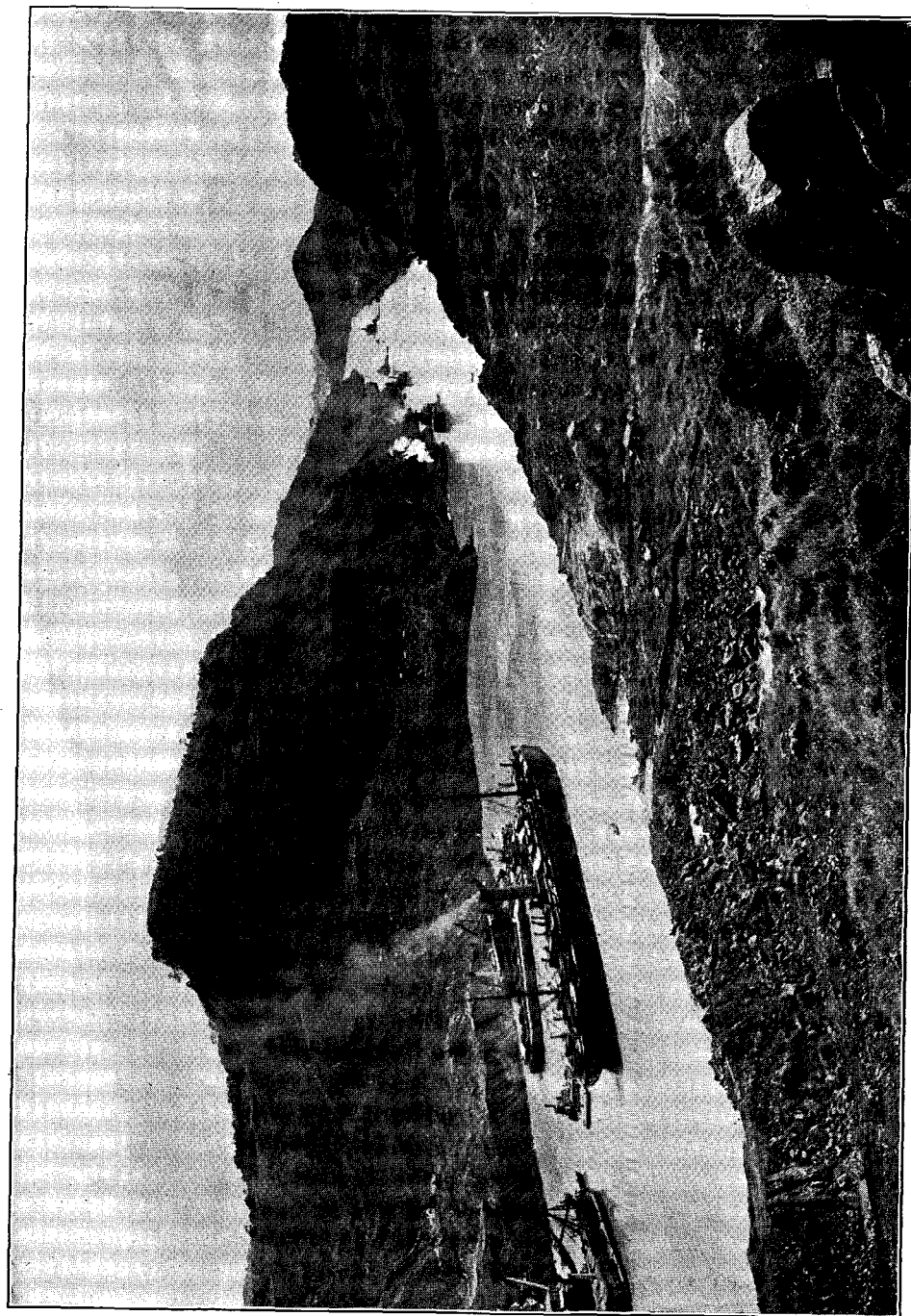
I'm going to be a pirate with a bright brass  
pivot gun,  
And an island in the Spanish Main beyond  
the setting sun,  
And a silver flagon full of red wine to drink  
when work is done,  
Like a fine old salt-sea scavenger, like a  
tarry Buccaneer.

With a spy-glass tucked beneath my arm and  
a cocked hat cocked askew,  
And a long, low, rakish schooner a-cutting  
of the waves in two  
And a flag of skull and cross-bones the wick-  
edest that ever flew,  
Like a fine old salt-sea scavenger, like a  
tarry Buccaneer.

Sir Francis Drake, greatest of the English captains, who perhaps had more than a dash of the pirate in him, came to his death in these waters, and the famous Dampier, who sailed three times round the world in the seventeenth century, is also associated with the Spanish Main. But Morgan is the best known, for among his exploits he sacked Old Panama, and was rewarded with the rank of admiral in the British navy and also with the office of deputy governor of Jamaica.

We were sailing in these waters near five countries that are commonly described as 'on the Isthmus.' Close to the narrow strip that actually joins the two continents are Colombia on the south and "happy Costa Rica" on the north. Costa Rica has been prosperous and peaceful until very lately, when they had a bloodless revolution. Its capital, San Jose, contains some very handsome buildings. Honduras is supposed to be the most out-at-heels, but has the distinction of having an honest president, by the name of Davila. Salvador is the only one of the Central American states that borders on the Pacific alone, not extending across to the Caribbean Sea. It is densely populated and has some fine mountain scenery. Only recently it has experienced a very severe earthquake. Guatemala is the oldest of these countries and at one time reached a high stage of civilisation, but now shares with Nicaragua the reputation of being the most troublesome.

It was our good fortune to have a narrow escape from a violent hurricane. A few months before, a steamer of this line had gone down in a storm, and not a soul or a vestige of the ship had ever been seen again. But as we approached Swan Island the wind died out and that night



CULEBRA CUT, LOOKING SOUTH FROM THE WEST BANK



the sky was ablaze with stars and the Southern Cross was above the horizon—always a disappointment, however, for it is a poor galaxy and little suggests a cross. This island is a bit of American coral named for an old freebooter, upon which the United Fruit Company maintains a wireless station and a lighthouse, as they do on many other dangerous points on this coast, where governments refuse to do their duty. It was pleasant to reflect that this was the result of Boston enterprise. We moved slowly toward the light, for it was dark on the water, until we made out the dim outline of the little reef and saw the twinkling lanterns of small boats that came out to meet us and transfer food and fuel for the island. Only once every three weeks does a ship stop here to deliver supplies and mail, yet the men on the lonely reef know everything that goes on in the world through their wireless.

It is one hundred miles from New Orleans down the river to the Gulf of Mexico and fourteen hundred to the Isthmus of Panama. It was something of a revelation to appreciate where the Canal Zone, which is a strip across the Isthmus, is situated in relation to other places. The canal runs northwest and southeast, and, strangely enough, its Pacific end is farther east than the Atlantic end.

The light off Colon-Cristobol was at last sighted, and a torrential tropical storm came up also to make us realise that the steamer was nearing land. She slowed up for a while, but soon passed in behind the great breakwater that encloses the harbour entrance. The rows of lights twinkling along the shore made one feel it must be a second New York rather than Colon-Cristobol. Colon is the old Panamanian town, which is gradually losing its grip, while Cristobol is the American town, where the new docks and terminals and offices are being built.

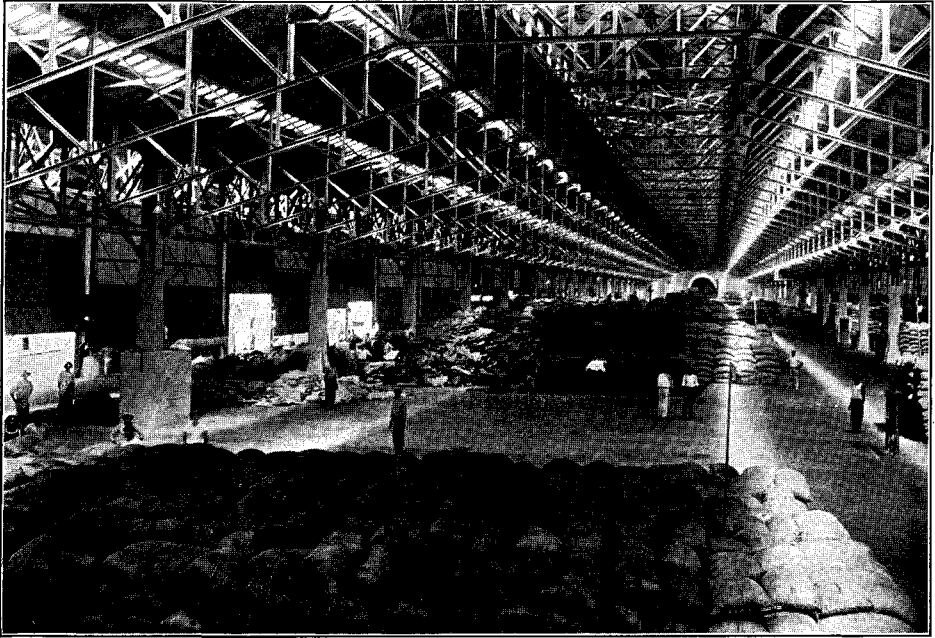
With the rising sun the doctor appeared and made a strict examination of all the passengers, for that is the only way to keep the Zone free from scourge.

He vaccinated almost every one on board. The pilot took our boat in to the wrong side of the dock, so that she had to back out and come in again, but at last she tied up and we were able to telephone to General Edwards—now in command of the northeastern department, with headquarters in Boston—whose guests we were to be. We learned that his “trolley” was on the way over for us, and in the meantime resolved to see the sleepy, sad little town. I say sad because most of it was burned down the year before.

It was picturesque, however, with its motley crowds of people, its porticoed houses and small shops, its plazas full of foliage and flowers, rather scraggly but glowing with colour.

Such a mixture of costumes as we saw! There were East Indians with embroidered caps and turbans, and Chinese and, queerest of all, the San Blas Indians, who were very amusing in baby derby hats. Years ago an enterprising American sold this kind to them, and now they will wear nothing else. They marry only with their own kind, and they will not let a white man pass a night in their village. The women wear nose rings and bead anklets, which are put on them in childhood and deform the legs as they grow larger. America really needs, and should arrange to acquire, their land in order to protect the eastern end of the canal. We stopped at the post-office in the Panamanian town. Not a soul was there to sell stamps, and we decided our letters might never get off, so took them over to be mailed in the Washington Hotel—quite the best in these parts—in the American town. The hotel was built in Spanish style, with terrace and balustrade facing the ocean, and a big tank by the sea wall for bathing.

General Edwards, at that time commanding on the Isthmus, sent his aide, a handsome young officer, to meet us in his private track motor. This was General Edwards’s own conveyance, really a miniature railway car, which travelled over the track in the guise of a special train. The chauffeur was an orderly



ATLANTIC TERMINALS, INTERIOR OF PIER NO. 7

sergeant; it appeared that the labour unions had considered the position of such importance that they had protested to the President that a soldier ought not to interfere with the possible work of one of their members! We started off in this little car, backing and filling through the traffic in the town, and so began a strange trip along the marvellous and much talked of canal across the Isthmus.

Travelling in this curious motor was rather exciting, as the car did not run very well and the gasoline gave out, and we had to flag real trains and sidetrack—for there was tremendous traffic on the Panama Railroad, especially at that time, when the canal was closed by the great slide. We ran out into the country and jungle over fifty miles, past the great Gatun Locks, along the flooded lakeside, where villages and the wide valley were submerged by the waters of the dam and spillway at Gatun, past the Pedro Miguel Locks and the Miraflores and the Pacific approach, to Balboa, Ancon and the town of Panama, the

three communities at the Pacific end of the Zone.

The railway followed the canal part of the way, and part of the way wandered off through the jungle between the mountains, where there were fine bits of forest, and beautiful trees whose tops were all a mass of blue blossoms, and caiba and ylang-ylang, like flames, ablaze with yellow and red. Tangles of rank undergrowth darkened the ravines that led up between the ridges, and there were orchids in profusion hanging from the trees, and huge-leaved plants and trailing foliage and vines. Further back in the forest there were monkeys and paroquets, and in the streams many alligators. Where the railway ran beside the canal everything looked green, for the luxuriant tropical growth had obliterated the scars of the work of a few years ago.

The motor whizzed by villages in which canal workmen lived—"gold and silver workmen," as they are called. The "gold" are the white men, who get high

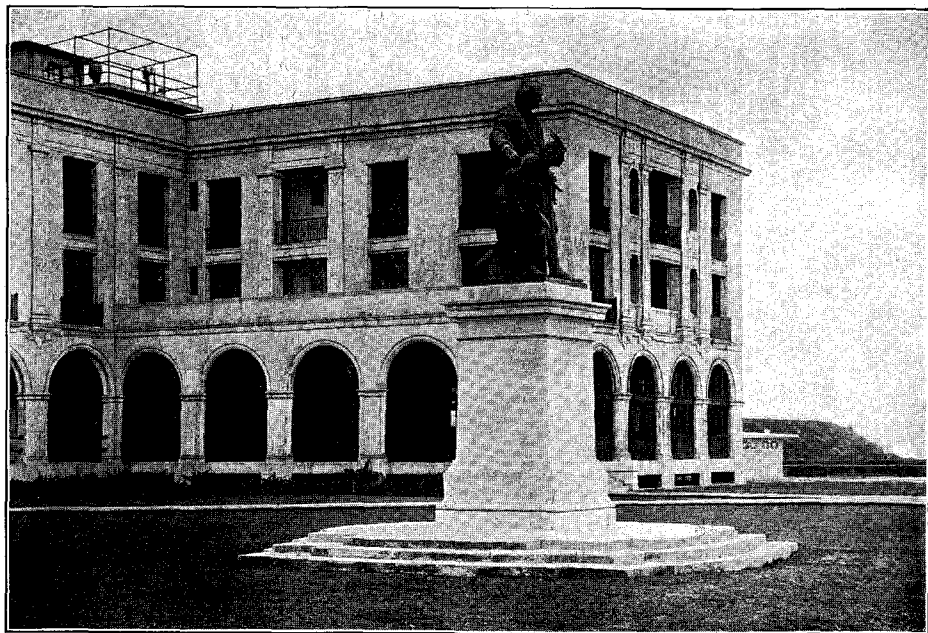
wages, the "silver" are the blacks. All these villages have been built by the Americans. Most of the houses are on stilts—on account of the rainy season and the tropical insects and snakes—and many have broad, screened piazzas surrounding them completely, so that no glass is needed in the windows. Some of the houses were made from old freight cars, yet decorated with beautiful orchids. For pets the people had black and white monkeys, small deer and parrots.

At last we reached Balboa, and here took a real motor to the General's house, half-way up on the ridge of high Ancon Hill, where it commanded magnificent views. It had wide windows and verandas, and cool rooms with fine baths, and we were made very comfortable. The servants were a black cook from Jamaica, who was very good, although she smoked cigarettes all the time she was cooking, a chambermaid from Martinique, and a butler, who was a well-trained Panamanian. The place was

clean and attractive and I never saw a mosquito all the time I was there. I had a visit from a spider, a water bug and a firefly in my bedroom, but that was all, though I heard that a boa-constrictor had been found under the house a few months before. Big lizards, however, crept round the gardens, for they especially like to eat the flower buds.

The cool, airy veranda was screened, so that the bright tropical sunlight was modified, and far below it extended one of the most interesting views in the world. We looked up the valley to the Miraflores Locks of the canal and the lake which they retain. On the other side was the bay, which makes in from the Pacific Ocean, broken by the high, steep islands that cover the entrance to the canal. Off toward the sea could be seen Fort Grant with its rows of red-roofed quarters. Far below us were the workshops and the marvellous new dry dock.

The town of Ancon, which was started by the French, is a veritable hanging gar-



STATUE OF COLUMBUS, WASHINGTON HOTEL

den creeping up the slope, its perfect roads winding zigzag up the sides of the mountain, with rows of tall palms along terraces and richly foliated hedges of cotton and hibiscus. There are great shading trees—the mango, the rain tree, and the poinciana all aglow with red flowers—and the houses with verandas are smothered under masses of bougainvillea in different glorious shades, poinsettia and the pink “chain of love.” In these lovely surroundings are the detached cottages of the hospital and the home of former Governor Goethals.

Beyond Ancon, on the other side toward the sea, is Panama “City,” the Panamanian town which still remains to Panama, and which is a typical Central American city in flavour and appearance—except that it is cleaner and more wholesome. Here we had the unique experience of being able to visit, just by crossing a street (for Ancon and Panama join), a Central American city, a hotbed of sedition and revolution and bad government and dramatic incident, and yet were able to leave it by crossing back over the street into a well-governed American community—much better governed than communities at home.

An afternoon was spent in Panama City wandering about its picturesque streets with overhanging balconies hung with awnings and gay with flowers. Indians and Panamanians were living their lives out in the open, the women walking along with that splendid swing that comes from carrying loads on their heads, and señoritas smiling or demure, and lazy, ogling men in front of the cafés. There are more mixed colours there than can be imagined—blacks, browns and yellows—for there are many Chinese—hardly a really white family. We looked into rooms that were half bedroom, half shop. Again we went by plazas full of flowering trees, and strolled down by the sea, where terraces led along and boats were drawn up below on the rocks, past the president's house, with its guard of honour of loafing soldiers, and past the Opera House,

an ambitious building all streaked with tropical rain and heat, to the parapet of the old fort which juts out into the ocean. Here more armed soldiers sat about and spat about. The cathedral and several churches were interesting outside from their rich baroque façades, but inside their altars were covered with Lenten veils.

A rather curious social condition exists even to-day. In old times when the people revolted against Mother Spain and the Spaniards were driven out, some of the slaves became generals and bandit rulers. Revolutions still take place every four years at election time. The president in office when we were there was not a particularly good one. A Dr. Cherry was running to succeed him, who was supported by the better class of the people. He was not elected, however. Everybody of any prominence here seemed to be a doctor.

Panama was originally a part of Colombia. This northern bit revolted and seceded during Roosevelt's administration, and was sustained by the United States Government. Some people go so far as to say that the United States practically seized the Canal Zone, but our government offered to pay a large sum to Colombia, which sum that state is still haggling over. At one time Colombia boasted of her professors and poets; to-day she is going to pieces. There are even many lepers at large, one town in particular being filled with them—a town from which guava paste is shipped. What a pleasant thought!

Next to the canal itself the most interesting part of the Isthmus was the ruins of Old Panama, six or eight miles south of the present city. This Panama of the Conquistadores, the oldest European settlement on the western coast of America, dates from 1519. Here the treasures of Peru and the Philippines were landed, to be carried across the Isthmus by the Royal Way to Porto Bello on the other side and thence in galleons to Spain. It was more important than any other Spanish settlement in



America except Cartagena. Old Panama was on the shore of the Pacific, looking toward that Eldorado of the Spaniards, the empire of Peru. "Its situation on that beautiful blue bay, with the Andes snowy in the distance, and the islands, like great green gems, to seaward, is lovely beyond words." The site was not selected for its beauty, however, but for the practical consideration that on account of the mussel beds nearby the settlers would be in no danger of starvation. It took the name of Panama, meaning "the place where many fish are found," from an Indian village on the same spot.

Here, on the borders of the New World, was a bit of old Spain that was described by writers of the time as the peer of Venice. It probably had a population of about thirty thousand, and was "the greatest mart for gold and silver in the whole world. . . . There were pearl fisheries up and down the bay, yielding the finest of pearls." The merchants who amassed fortunes here built fine houses of stone in Moorish style or richly carved dwellings of native cedar, in which were paintings by Spanish masters and all the luxuries of Europe and the Orient. They erected convents and monasteries and a beautiful cathedral, whose tower is still a landmark to sailors. Nothing of all this is to be seen to-day but heaps of stones rising out of a tangle of tropical growth, the almost perfect shell of the cathedral tower, and the flat arch of the ruined church of Santo Domingo, which "is one of the wonders of architecture, continuing to stand in defiance of the laws of gravity and the trembling of earthquakes."

All this wealth and magnificence were protected by sea and marshes on three sides, and on the fourth was a causeway, in which was the stone bridge still standing. Thus surrounded by water, not anticipating attack from the Pacific, and believing the dangers of the Isthmus would protect them from the pirates of the Main, the Spaniards thought themselves safe. But in January, 1671, the redoubtable Henry Morgan, chief of the

buccaneers, landed at the mouth of the Chagres River, took the Castle of San Lorenzo, and advanced across the Isthmus. Instead of strengthening their fortifications and awaiting the enemy behind stone walls, the Spaniards marched in procession to the cathedral, where Masses were said for their success and gifts were laid upon the altar, and then took up their position on the plain outside the city. They numbered four hundred fine horsemen, twenty-four hundred footmen, and some Indians and negroes who were to drive two thousand wild bulls into the English ranks.

Morgan's ragged, hungry band of over a thousand men were exhausted from the long march, on which they had been forced to eat even the leather bags found in a deserted Spanish camp. It is said that "few or none there were but wished themselves at home." But they fought desperately, picking off the horsemen and charging the foot till the Spaniards fled in utter rout. After a rest Morgan marched upon the town, silenced the batteries, and soon was in possession of Old Panama.

While the pirates were revelling in the rich booty, it was discovered that the place was on fire, and in spite of all their efforts the great houses of the merchants disappeared in the flames; the warehouses, however, were saved. When Captain Morgan left the site of the city in February, "he carried with him one hundred and seventy-five beasts of carriage, laden with silver, gold and other precious things, besides six hundred prisoners more or less, between men, women, children and slaves." The Incas were avenged!

What a contrast! As we were looking at the ruins, along the trail road came a company of the Signal Corps of American soldiers, who were about to start in on manœuvres, with pack mules and equipage and in campaign uniform, and they turned in under the old tower and began to make camp. It was strange and novel to find these most modern of troops settling themselves un-



der the grey ruins of the sack of so long ago. A tropical storm came up and pelted down rain in sheets for a few moments, but neither men nor mules seemed to mind and soon the sun was out again.

We motored by some haciendas on the

trip out, which was over a rolling country with some plantations but chiefly grazing land. The cattle looked better than any I have ever seen before in the tropics. Along the way were some native houses, merely huts thatched with palm leaves.

*(To be concluded)*

## SNAP-SHOTS OF AMERICAN AUTHORS

HOWELLS

BY RICHARD BUTLER GLAENZER

OPEN-EYED, open-hearted, open-souled!  
So, sun, moon and stars  
Have flooded you with their light  
And their light's vision.

These states stand united  
Through wisdom like yours:  
Wisdom of the open-eyed  
Allowing for blindness;  
Wisdom of the open-hearted  
Allowing for meanness;  
Wisdom of the open-souled  
Allowing for self-deceit.