

HOLIDAYS IN COSTA RICA.

BY THOMAS FRANCIS MEAGHER.



FOREST, WITH COFFEE-CARTS.

I.—PUNTA ARENAS TO SAN JOSÉ.

THE principal entrance at present into Costa Rica is from the Pacific, at Punta Arenas, in the Gulf of Nicoya. The *Columbus*, a deliberate old barque through which a screw has been thrust, brought us, early in March, 1858, from Panama to Punta Arenas in less than three days.

The trip was delightful. The coast-range

of Veragua, the northernmost province of New Granada, was within sight—often within stone's-throw—the whole of the way. There were the mountains of the promontory of Azuero, glowing through the blue haze all day long. There were the rocks of *Los Frailes*—gray rocks belted with sparkling breakers, in and out, and wide over the spray of which thousands of sea-birds sported—flashing in the sunset. There were the stars when the sun was gone—the white beach gleaming beyond the line of purpled waters—and here and there the fire of some lone hut in the forest high above the coast. At all times the sea was smooth—smooth as a lake in summer in the midst of warm wooded hills—and at noon it was wondrously beautiful and luminous; so luminous that, looking down into its depths, one might have been wooed to fancy it had a floor of diamonds, and that the pink and yellow sea-flowers, loosened and floating upward from it, bubbling as they rose, were made of the finest gold.

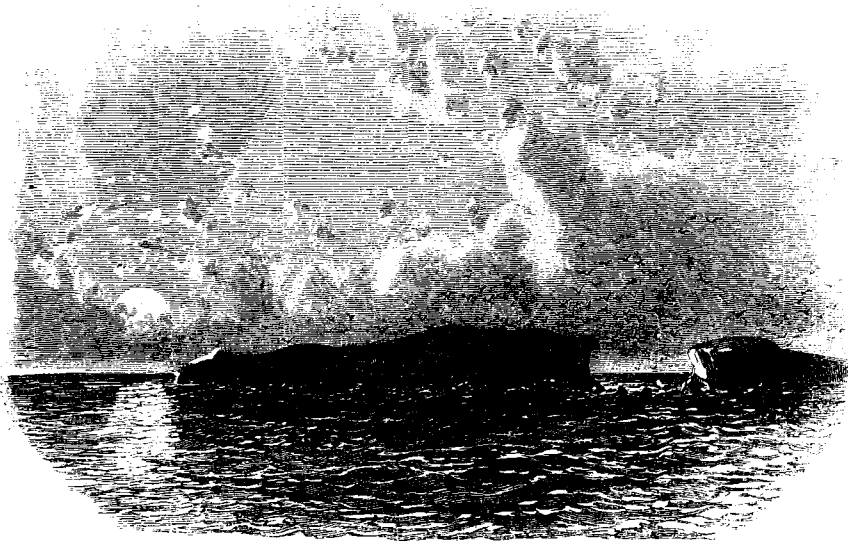
As for the company on board, ever so many nationalities, professions, phases of life and destinies, were comprehended in it. St. George had his champion in Mr. Perry—an affable, intelligent, high-spirited young Englishman, who had just been gazetted to the British Vice-Consulate at Realejo, Nicaragua, and was on his way to Guatemala to receive his instructions from Mr. Wyke, the Consul-General. The Eagles of Napoleon were sentinelled by a vehement Frenchman—a short, hardy, wiry, flexible, swarthy fellow, in nankeen trousers, glazed pumps and Panama hat—who kept perpetually gliding up and down the deck, emphasizing his opinions on music, politics, and commerce to a lanky German with a pale mustache, who, as though he were condemned to it, limped the planks beside him.

This Frenchman was singularly active, ad-

venturous, daring. He began life as a fisherman. From his cradle on one of the terraces of Brest, he was cast adrift into the fogs of Newfoundland, and there blossomed into manhood on grog and cod-fish. Slipping away from the Banks, he took to the world at large. He had been every where—been to the Antipodes—been to the Poles. With frogs and crocodiles, snake-charmers and ballet-girls, icebergs and palm-groves, he was equally familiar. Five years ago he found himself in the town of David, in the province of Veragua, two hundred miles above Panama; and there, falling in love with a radiant Indian girl, whom he married at sight, concluded to settle. Since then it has fared well with him.

His was, in truth, a golden wedding. It brought him herds, plantations, ships, vast plains and forests. Some will have it that he is in secret possession of certain gold mines—a veritable *El Dorado*—in the mountains of the Isthmus. The day previous to our leaving it he arrived in Panama, fresh and lithe, after a ride from David of eighteen days through the wildest region. Raging rivers, too deep to ford, oftentimes broke his path. Into these, his clothes bundled up in a turban on his head, he had to plunge, and, battling across them, take his mule in tow. He was bound for San José, the capital of Costa Rica, as we ourselves were.

Venezuela was somewhat disparagingly represented by a tough and squalid merchant doing business in Panama. Importing silk-stuffs and wines, sardines and prunes, he is largely concerned in the pearl-fisheries of the Isla del Rey, and the other islands off the coast. His heart is as close as an oyster, and his face as expressionless and coarse as the shell. Guatemala was more fortunate. Señor Larraonda appeared for her. His figure and complexion do injustice to his liberality and



LOS FRAILES.



PUNTA ARENAS FROM THE GULF OF NICOYA.

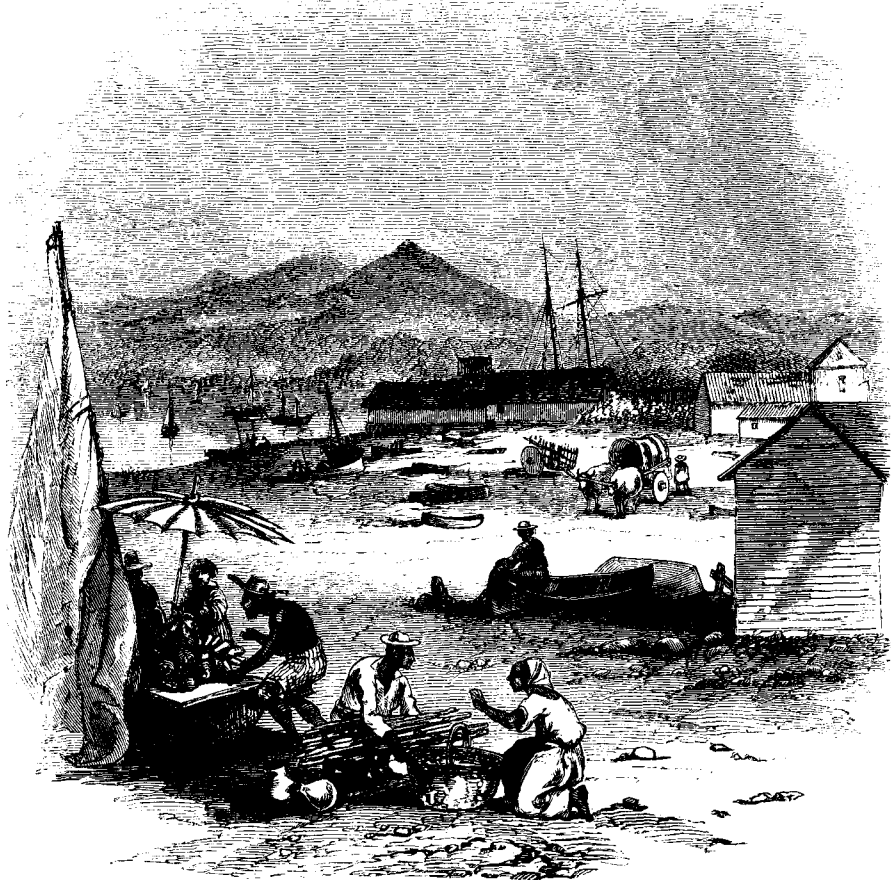
graciousness. He is a tall, parched, fallow-faced gentleman, with a patch of gray whisker under each ear, and the fingers of a skeleton; but those fingers have clutched many a broad doubloon. A sugar planter on the princeliest scale, his estate has yielded him \$200,000 every season for the last four years.

Close to the wheel-house, immediately after breakfast every morning, two priests invariably took their seats. Both were from Spain. The one was a Catalanian, the other an Arragonese. The Catalanian was a Capuchin. The Arragonese was a Jesuit. The Jesuit was the more remarkable of the two.

He had a freckled face, a blood-shot eye, red beard and whiskers, a faded velvet skull cap, thread-bare *soutaine*, and plain steel buckles in his sprawling shoes. But underneath that threadbare gown we were told there throbbed a zealous heart. Underneath that faded velvet skull-cap there glowed a fertile brain. The Jesuit was learned, eloquent, and pious. A profound Divine, a commanding Orator, an adventurous Soldier of the Cross, he, too, had seen most of the world. He had been to China, the Philippine Islands, Paraguay, Brazil. There was more than one on board whom his history had reached. His labors, his sacred rhetoric, his heroism in all those lands, had made him famous.

The morning of the third day out from Panama, the Gulf of Nicoya opened to admit us. Away to the left, Cape Blanco, the eastern pier of this great gate-way glimmered through the mist. Away to the right, the volcano of Herradura, with the brown island of Cano sleeping in its shadow, stood as a watch-tower at the entrance. Farther up the Gulf, as the mist thinned off, the loftier mountains came forth and shone above the waters. There was the dome of San Pablo, with masses of white cloud resting on it. There was the peak of the Aguacate quivering in the sun. Beyond, and high above them all, were the mountains of Dota, blending—as though they were vapors only—with the deepening glory of the sky. All along the opposite shore, clusters of little islands—the Nigrites, San Lucas, and Pan Sucre—scrubby, barren islands, the roots of which are rich in pearls—one by one peeped out and twinkled. In the mean while the breeze freshened and grew warm; and the sea, broken into little hillocks, lisped and throbbed around us. At noon it was thronged and bustling. We were at our destination.

Straggling up and down a long low bank of sand which gleamed across the Gulf, there was Punta Arenas, with its red-tiled roofs, whitewashed frame-houses, church-towers, flag-staffs, and dusky huts thatched with plantain leaves. Dotting



PUNTA ARENAS.—THE INNER HARBOR.

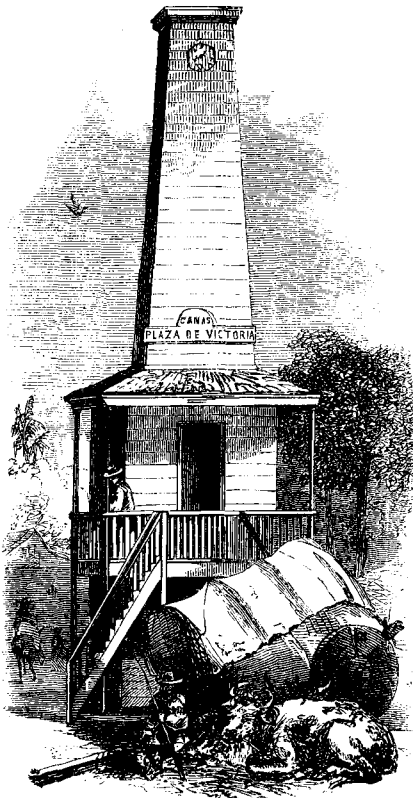
the glaring picture at different points, and shading it a little, there was the indigo-tree, the poisonous *manzanilla*, and the palm. Right before us on the beach was a wooden light-house, built and daubed in the fashion of a pagoda. Off there, in the roadstead, was the French flag drooping at the mizen-peak of a brig, from the quarter-deck of which a shining telescope had been leveled at us. Nearer to us a Dutch barque, with an awning stretched from stem to stern, and her broadside hung with matting to keep the timbers from the sun, lay dead upon the tide. All about us were swarms of smaller craft—boats, *piraguas*, scows, *bongos*—taking freight to the ships, or taking it away. All round us were the mountains and the forest, girdling the eager and glowing scene with solid grandeur and overlooking it in silence; while the church bells suddenly rang out, announcing that the good Jesuit had arrived and was hastening to the pulpit of San Rafael.

Beautiful as Punta Arenas looks from the glowing Gulf of Nicoya, it is somewhat behind the age. It has no pier, no wharf, no new or old

slip—nothing of the kind. You go ashore in a boat, a *bongo* or a scow, just as the fancy strikes you or your purse permits. A boat will cost a dollar. Should the tide be out, the last fifty yards or so of the journey to town, being through the slimiest mud, have to be got over on the back of a native, whose knees, as I can vouch, are none of the steadiest when put to the test of 200 pounds of Irish flesh and blood, a double-barreled fowling-piece and riding-boots included.

There is an inner and an outer harbor. The latter—admitting vessels of considerable draught—is safe, capacious, and easy of access. Vessels, however, drawing more than seven feet of water, have to anchor a league from the landing-place, where their cargoes are broken, and thence are brought ashore in scows or lighters. This, of course, is a tedious and wasteful operation, entails expense, and incurs no inconsiderable risk. The inner harbor—formed by the main land and the sandy promontory or spit over which the town is scattered—is accessible to coasting-sloops, *piraguas*, and small schooners only.

Half an hour ashore familiarizes the stranger with all that is to be seen in Punta Arenas. Close by the landing, ten to one, he comes upon a team of unyoked oxen, munching the green tops of the sugar-cane and cooling themselves in the shade of the *guanacaste*, the roots of which lie deep in the blistering sand. Trudging with aching ankles through this sand he reaches the Plaza, in the centre of which stands a wooden obelisk—a sentry-box of raw workmanship and gaunt proportions—commemorative of the services of General José María Cañas, who fought so bravely, and with such magnanimity demeaned himself in the war against the Filibusters. General Cañas is a native of Punta Arenas, and to his generous encouragement and public spirit the prosperity it enjoys is chiefly owing. There is nothing—nothing whatever—of the *militaire* about the General. His features, manner, walk and style of conversation, are those of a very ordinary civilian. This, however, is owing to his extreme modesty and reserve. These verge on an awkward timidity. But after a little—when one has been a few minutes in conversation with him—his countenance lights up, and you see through his clear calm eye, his firm thin lip, and the opinions he concisely enunciates, that he is a man of inflexible purpose, judgment, and bravery. He is most courteous too, kind, chivalrous, and gentle.



TESTIMONIAL TO GENERAL CAÑAS.

The market-place lies a little off the main street, a short distance from the Plaza. It was a bustling place the evening we visited it. The coffee was coming down from the interior—several carts laden with it had already reached the Port—and all the booths and stores were crowded. So were the cob-webbed verandas and arcades, shading three sides of the buzzing scene. Pyramids of cocoa-nuts and oranges, rags and garters of dried beef, snowy skirts and rainbow-colored shawls, straw hats and sandals of raw leather, *machetes* and clanking spurs, the greenest vegetables, parrots, prepared fruits, musical instruments, cheese and pickles, salt-fish and gaudily-printed cotton-goods, black pigs, stewed beans and monkeys, the choicest and the strangest novelties were piled up, spread out, and jumbled there.

Here, in the coolest corner of the square, was a galaxy of mules, radiating from a post to which they had been brought up short and tethered by the nose. All about—lying down or patiently bearing their ponderous yokes erect—were the ox-teams that had supplied the market with its choicest goods. At every point—wherever it seemed a stake could be driven home—a fighting-cock was held to bail, and, spite of it, kept the public peace disturbed. The bells of San Rafael, where the good Jesuit was to preach at sundown, rattled their shrill tongues all the while. Every now and then the trumpet at the gate of the *cuartel* flourished in and swelled the riot, while, at steady intervals, the thunders of the Dutch barque in the roadstead opened, for the Consul-General of the Hanseatic Towns was paying her an official visit, and in his honor fire-works and bunting were the order of the day.

In the midst of all this dust, glare and uproar, in the back-room of a *posada*, close to the market-place, a blind man sat, and, with his dark eyes vaguely following his busy hands, played on the *marimba*, to the delight of a breathless circle that had deepened round him.

Shrouded in the *mantilla*, there was in that quiet circle more than one bright face bent on Miguel Cruz, of Nicaragua, as he touched the keys of his rude instrument, and made them vocal with his memories of Indian and Spanish song. He was accompanied on the guitar by a speckled native of Massaya.

The performance over, the sun gone down, the market-place deserted, we retired to the *American Hotel*—a dismal dusty barn kept by a Galician dwarf with a broken nose—where we lay awake on leather-bottomed stretchers in the supper-room, sweltering and writhing in the midst of the sauciest cock-crowing all night long, and in the morning washed ourselves out of a yellow pic-dish in a back piazza, on the steps of the kitchen.

Punta Arenas is the principal port of Costa Rica. For the present, indeed, it may be said to be the only one. It is the only one, at all events, of any commercial consequence. The Bay of Salinas is unfrequented—so is the Gulf of



MARKETING IN PUNTA ARENAS.

Dolce. Both of them await in their solitary grandeur the invasion of the wilderness which for miles and miles surround them. On the Atlantic, the port of Matina affords anchorage for craft of the lightest draught only, and is too shallow and exposed to admit of an improvement. Between the Boca del Toro and the interior there is no road whatever. A noble harbor—one of the noblest in the world—Costa Rica concedes the Boca in a treaty, bearing date the 11th of June, 1856, to New Granada, who, by virtue of a chart, published at Madrid in 1805, demands it as a portion of her ancient jurisdiction. It is useless to both of them. For any practical advantage it promises to either, it might as well be a *mirage* of Sahara. The new road, contemplated to the Serapiquí, will render the port of San Juan del Norte supremely serviceable to Costa Rica. But as it is, Punta Arenas monopolizes the commerce of the country.

It is a free port, moreover, having been privileged as such in 1847 by an Act of the Costa Rican Congress, seven years after the deadly port of Caldera, three miles lower down the coast, had been abandoned. All articles of merchandise, with the exception of brandy and other distilled liquors, tobacco and gunpowder, are exempt from every kind of restriction. The excepted articles, being Government monopolies, are deposited in the Public Stores, and can not be sent into nor out of the country without a special *permit*. Munitions of war and fire-arms are subject to a like restraint. Otherwise the fullest liberty is guaranteed to commerce. Ships too may pass in and out, and remain as long as they

like, without the slightest annoyance. There is neither tonnage nor pilotage, nor *souvenirs* to Custom-house Inspectors, nor anchorage, nor perquisites to Health Officers, nor any other leeching incurred. Lighterage is the only expense. A wharf or causeway to the anchorage in the outer harbor, would do away with this.

The Custom-house stands sixty miles off in the interior, at the Garita del Río Grande, low down on the slope of a black ravine. It is there the duties on foreign goods are levied, as it is from that point alone such goods find their way to the towns and villages and the other inhabited portions of the country. Between that point and Punta Arenas a vast wilderness intervenes. The villages of Esparza, San Mateo, and Atenas do not disturb the solitude. They are lost in it. At all events, it is not until the Custom-house at the Garita disappears behind him, in the gorge of the Río Grande, that the importer finds any market worth talking of. There is Alajuela for him then, and Heredia further on, and San José beyond that again, and Cartago, with her aris-

toocracy and ruins, the inveterate rival of San José, away behind the Cordilleras.

In addition to its being a free port, Punta Arenas is a bathing-place of fashionable resort. It is the Newport of Costa Rica. The season opens in January and closes in March. The first families of the country have their bathing-boxes, oyster stews, private cottages, picnics and *fundangos* there. The Gulf of Nicoya abounds in oysters of a delicious flavor, abounds in shrimps and lobsters, abounds in fish of several varieties, all of the best description. The pearl oyster of the Gulf is famous for its size and beauty. It was strikingly referred to by General Morazan in the splendid defiance he launched in 1839 against the *serviles* of Guatemala—*Ni las perlas del Golfo de Nicoya, ni el oro del Río Guayaspe, volverán á adornar la corona del Marques de Aice-nina, este simbolo horroroso de la Aristocracia.**

Punta Arenas is also noted for its excellent water, which bubbles up from the bottom of wells a few feet deep. The climate too is wholesome notwithstanding the heat, the prevailing intensity of which may be inferred from the fact, that the day we arrived the thermometer stood 90° in the shade. Mr. Squier, in his sketch of Costa Rica, quoting the opinion of Captain Lapelin, of the French navy, seems unwilling to concede to Punta Arenas any higher degree of salubrity than that which prevents its being positively fatal to human life. Señor Felipe Molina, however, maintains that Punta Arenas is distinguished for its healthfulness, the purity of its atmosphere and its perfect exemption from miasmatic influences, circumstances arising, as he justly insists, from its peninsular position and the nature of its soil. The general opinion of the country confirms the more favorable impression, and in this opinion the foreign residents of Costa Rica unhesitatingly concur.

But this is not all. Punta Arenas boasts of something else. There is a railroad running through it to the left bank of the Barranca. It is a railroad nine miles long. Built by a party of English speculators, at an expense of \$80,000, under the delusion that it would take, to and from the Barranca, all the merchandise passing to and from the interior and capital, they awoke, the day it was finished, to the fact that, for the speculation to pay, a quintal of coffee would have to be charged for the nine miles by railroad, about as much as it cost, or would cost, the whole of the journey, seventy-five miles and upward, by ox-cart or mule-back. Hence it is a losing, if it be not by this time an irretrievably lost, concern. No one uses it save the lame, the lazy, the sick and the blind. The locomotive is an abject mule; and it is mournful indeed to behold the meek creature hauling a bleak house, with two dozen windows in it, after his hoofs, for nine miles through the sand, at the rate of two miles an hour.

* Neither the pearls of the Gulf of Nicoya, nor the gold of the River Guayaspe, shall ever again adorn that hated symbol of Aristocracy, the coronet of the Marquis of Aice-nina.

The evening of the day following our arrival from Panama we set out for the mountains. An hour of brisk galloping, along the beach which connects the town of Punta Arenas with the main land, brought us to Chacarita, an outpost of the Custom-house at the Garita. It is here that all foreign goods, destined for any point between the port and the Garita, are subjected to inspection, are weighed, and paid for. The outpost consists of a spacious hut, built of bamboo and wild sugar-cane, a banana-patch, and a poultry-yard. In the smoky interior of the hut, as we rode up to it, an Inspector of Customs, with the stump of a *puro* between his placid lips, serenely oscillated in his shirt-sleeves in his hammock of *agave* straw. Having satisfied him that the blue California blankets strapped to our saddles contained a change of linen only, the calm Inspector, without rising from his hammock, with a gentle wave of his discolored hand, signified that we were at liberty to proceed. A moment after we were in the heart of the forest.

Here, in all its varieties, we had the palm—the prince of the vegetable kingdom as Linnæus has called it—ever waving those plume-like branches which recall so many scenes of Scriptural beauty, festivity and triumph—so many scenes of hopefulness and succor in the desert, and of life in the midst of death—and which, as many a carving and vivid painting on sacred walls attest, grew to be, in the red epochs of Christianity, the emblem of Martyrdom for the Faith. Here was the *ceiba*, or the silk-cotton tree, the shaft of which swells to such a girth that the largest canoes are hewn out of it, while Sir Amyas Leigh, the romantic buccaneer, likens it to a light-house, so smooth and round and towering is it. Myriads of singing-birds build their nests in it, while from the topmost branches, to which they have climbed in search of light and air, the rose and yellow and red *big-nonius* in luxuriant tresses and festoons uncoil themselves. Here was the *matapalo*, or wild fig-tree, spreading out its long, tender, flexible stems over the surrounding trees in quest of some temporary support, and having found it, and grown strong enough to sustain itself, turning upon and killing its protector in its serpent-like embraces. Here, too, were several species of the *acacia*, such as the *guanacaste* and *saman*, the delicate feathery foliage of which was interwoven and blended with the orange blossoms and the large lanceolated leaves of the *cincona*. And then we had the parasitical *cactuses* in endless varieties, with their pink and violet and cream-colored flowers, clustering the moss-covered columns of the forest, and flooding the golden air with the richest fragrance. A deep, solemn, beauteous, yet majestic, forest—one of the vast cathedrals of Nature—one fashioned of materials, living, efflorescent, fruitful, imperishable—imperishable since they perpetually renew themselves—to which the gold of the Sacramento is but as the dust of the road, and the marbles of Carrara are but the types of death—one down through the complex aisles of which, as through no stained window however

wonderful its magic, the light of Heaven, colored with a thousand intermediate hues, by day and by night, and for all time, with an ever-varying infinitude of splendor, plays—one studded with pillars, spanned with arches, such as neither Zwirner of Cologne nor Angelo of Rome, with all their genius, with all their power, with all the resources of which, with the patronage of kings and pontiffs, they were the masters, could rear, elaborate, nor so much as in their divinest dreams devise!

In the midst of all this—winding through the mazes of this superb labyrinth—hundreds of carts, in the months of February and March, move down. The noble oxen have their foreheads shaded with the broad shining leaves of the *pa-vel*. They come from Cartago, from San José, from the great plantation of Pacifica, in the valley of the Tiribi, in the shadow of the mountains of San Miguel—from the *plateaux* beyond the ruins of Ujarras, and overlooking the cataracts of the wild Berbis—descend four thousand feet into this forest, and so wend their way to Punta Arenas, at which port—with the exception of a few bags which find their way to the Serapiqui, and thence to the Atlantic—the entire coffee-crop of Costa Rica is shipped to Europe and the United States.

The carts are clumsy structures. A pole projects from an oblong frame, to which an axle is bolted underneath. The ends of the axle protrude through discs or solid wheels of cedar, the latter being four inches across the tire, and from four to five feet in diameter. Within the wheels we have some open cane-work, and this supports an awning of untanned ox-hide. A cart got up in this style costs from \$25 to \$30. The team itself generally costs from \$75 to \$80. The coffee lies upon the platform or bottom of the cart, sown up in bags of coarse white cotton. One of these carts will carry from 800 to 1000 pounds of coffee. The freight is a trifle less than 75 cents for every 100 pounds. Over the bags another hide is fastened with leather thongs, while an iron pot, a calabash for holding water, and other utensils of use along the road, dangle on the outside. Peering out from underneath the ox-hide covering, one may oftentimes surprise the black lustrous eyes and ruby lips of some bronzed daughter of the mountains.

For the wives and children of the *carreteros*, in most instances, attend the coffee to the port. In the long journey—it is a journey of six days at least—they are companionable and most useful. They grind the corn for the *tortillas*, boil the *frijoles*, slice and fry the plantains, ply the thread and needle, tend the oxen with water and *sacate*, and in various other ways prove themselves the kindest handmaids and ministers of comfort to the honest fellows who trudge along on foot, and with the *chuzo*—their slender steel-spiked wand—direct the docile teams.

These *carreteros*, with a wonderful endurance, flexibility of limb and spirit, go through the hardest work. From the start to the close of their journey—barefooted, in their draggled linen, at

the mercy of the shifting weather—at one time sweltering and bending in the full blaze of the sun, at another soaking in the rain, or shuddering with the dense dampness which, be it night, or be it noontide, or be it sunset, the lowlands and deep forests gather round them—light-limbed, patient, sinewy, active, fearless, gracious in manner, faithful to their trust—in every vicissitude of the Heavens, against all odds, they resolutely pursue their way. Behold the industry of freedom! Of honest industry behold the inoffensive heroism! No trumpets to proclaim it—no triumphal arches to mark its progress, save those with which the hand of God has spanned the pathways of the forest—the consciousness of doing what is right, of rendering to the homestead and the nation the service that is due to them, vivifies and suffuses it with lustre, and the Angels, who watched over the shepherds tending their flocks in the green solitudes of Bethlehem, are the invisible witnesses and the chroniclers of its glory!

Night closed upon this scene. The rain fell heavily. Through the deep murmuring of the Barranca, as we forded it, following in the wake of three carts on their way up the mountains—through the pattering and splashing of the rain, and the doleful music of the branches, swaying to and fro, and the quivering of their leaves—there came the chorus of the howling monkeys, the *araguatos*, whose deep guttural tones, echoing for miles through the forest, predict the inevitable storm, and, when it comes, swell the vocal tribulations of the hour.

The extraordinary development of the *larynx* in this monkey imparts to its voice a depth and volume equal to that of the largest quadruped, that of the lion, perhaps, alone excepted. Every morning and evening, and whenever it threatens rain, crowds of these *araguatos* assemble in the tops of the highest trees, in the loneliest and wildest forests, and, enthroned there, rend the air with their dismal utterances. One of them invariably assumes the leadership of the choir, chanting out in an undertone the first notes of the chorus as it were, after which all the rest follow in a *crescendo* movement, and with voices of a higher pitch, until the monstrous music seems to subside from sheer exhaustion. On a clear bright morning the howling of the *araguatos* can be heard very distinctly two miles off, and Humboldt is of opinion it can be heard fully a third of this distance further during the night, especially when the weather is cloudy, hot, and humid.

Nor night, however, nor wild rivers which we had to ford in the wake of returning carts, nor splashing rain, nor monkeys with unearthly howlings, nor mules, economically fed by their shrewd owners, giving out, breaking down, and forcing us finally to lead them, knee-deep in mud—nothing of the sort—and there was enough to vex the tamest saint—prevented us reaching, at a reasonable hour, the city or village of Esparza.

The yelping of dogs—the crowing of cocks—small panes of glass glimmering through the

blackness of the night—the tinkling of a guitar at an open door-way, and a row of greenish bottles shining along a shelf against the whitewashed wall opposite the door-way—the coarse round pavement, full of holes and hillocks, all dry and hard, over which, smartly striking it as though they felt their footing sure, the mules went nimbly, though with an occasional jerk and slide—women, with bare heads, bare necks and arms, seated on door-steps, mildly fumigating the narrow street with their *cigarillos*, and ejaculating their surprise and surmises as we rode by them—a belfry, for all the world like a water-tank on a double pair of gawky stilts, flanking a capacious church, the face of which, whitewashed as all the houses were, looked corpse-like in the sickly sniling of the moon—and then a shelterless broad space, fringed with orange-trees, which our guide, Anselmo, told us was the Plaza—these were the sounds and sights which pleasantly assured us we had reached our encampment for the night.

Riding across the Plaza, we dismounted at the gate-way of a yard in which there was a crowd of mules, coffee-carts, oxen, curs and *carreteros*. All the sweet voices with which our approach to Esparza had been greeted, and which accompanied us through the town, seemed to have concentrated in this yard. It was the *caballeriza* of the best tavern in the place. Anselmo knocked with a stone against the gate, and called out, lustily—*Abra la puerta, somos amigos, Señor!* The proprietor of the establishment appeared. A tranquil gentleman, noiseless and leisurely in his movements, he welcomed us with a drawl, and invited us to enter.

Following him in the dark—leaving Anselmo to take care of the mules—we found ourselves in a lofty room without a ceiling, in which, in the middle of a cedar table, in the socket of a tin candlestick, in a morsel of fat, a wick smothered in snuff was burning. The yellow light seemed to be wandering dismally over the room in search of something it could play upon. The walls were whitewashed—in Costa Rica every wall has this attention paid it—and the light might have amused itself with them, but it was too feeble to reach so far. There was a slim book-case, painted red, with glass doors, standing in one corner. A ray from the tin candlestick would have improved its appearance. As it was, it stood there as though it were a coffin paneled with crystal, and the light appeared to shrink from it, lest, by touching it, extinction might ensue. In the opposite corner there was a prickly



THE BELLES OF ESPARZA.

sofa, the stuffing of which protruded at the elbows, and the crimson moreen covering of which, blotched and torn, was peeling off. The lofty room, thus lighted and embellished, was the reception-room, ladies' parlor, gambling-saloon, supper and dining hall of the principal *posada* of Esparza. A glass of excellent *aguardiente*, the assurance of a warm supper, and the cheerful advent of another candle, reconciled us in a few seconds to it. In less than twenty minutes we felt perfectly at home. Within an hour, under the brightening influences of the feast, the blank walls grew florid, the book-case glittered as though it were full of jewels, the sofa became plump and clothed with velvet, and from the *caballeriza*, instead of a racking discord, there flowed in the most soothing harmonies, with the sweetest perfumes.

The host joined us at the supper-table. He was a native of Rivas, Nicaragua, and held the commission of a Lieutenant-Colonel in the army of that Republic during the Filibuster war. Demure as he at first appeared to be, Lieutenant-Colonel José Guerrero grew communicative enough before long. His information and views respecting Esparza were freely though quietly given. There was no garrison; all the military and civil functions of the *pueblo* were vested in one man, and that one man was the Alcalde; the Alcalde was active, progressive, honest; the people of Esparza, however, were sinfully lazy; they were peaceable and harmless, to be sure, but that was owing to their being so dull; there was hardly life enough in them to go to Mass, mix a cup of *tisté*, or smoke a *puro*.

"There was but one citizen from Esparza,"

he added, "who volunteered to the war in Nicaragua—one only—and he came back without having had a fight, or seen one even."

Midnight came before we moved to bed. Midnight waned before the golden tapestry of the supper-room, the velvet-mantled sofa, the crystal case of jewelry, and all the enchantment vanished. Midnight was a full hour buried when we found ourselves in the dormitory of José Guerrero's inn, in the middle of the room, laid out on stretchers made of ox-hide, our eyes fixed intently on the bare black rafters, the tiles, the holes, and cobwebs of the roof. From the time we laid down, until we got up, four hours of aches and agonies elapsed. A double chastisement befell us. Underneath us was the gridiron of St. Lawrence—all about us were the vexations, without the temptations, of St. Anthony.

It seemed as though all the plagues of the Tropics had been summoned, by some witch as viperous as Alecto, to Esparza on that night. Clouds of mosquitoes, fleas by the million, mango-smitten curs galled with hunger, fighting-cocks on tiptoe every where, and for miles round challenging the world to put them down, *carreteros* with their uncouth carts rumbling into town, or rumbling out, shouting as though there was a fire on hand, or the Filibusters had broken in—these were some few of the tortures which, stretched on the ox-hide, we had with the keenest sensibility to endure.

But Esparza, after all, deserves to be more reverently mentioned. It is one of the oldest cities of Spanish America. Christopher Columbus entered the Boca del Toro in the month of October, 1502. Twelve years after, the foundations of this city, dedicated to the Holy Spirit of Hope, were laid in the midst of the orange-groves

and the wine-yielding palms shadowing the first plateau we come to in our ascent to the valley of San José. In 1670 it was seized and sacked by a band of French marauders. In 1685 it was dealt a deadlier blow by a gang of English robbers, who, under the command of a cut-throat named Sharpe, pounced upon the beautiful little city, set fire to it, plundered it right and left, and then decamped, taking with them several prisoners, men and women, whom they subsequently released on a ransom of a thousand *pesos*. From this it appears never to have recovered. Many of its inhabitants fled to the plains of Bagaces, in the province of Guanacaste, while others, it is conjectured, crossed the mountains to the North, and descended into the mysterious valley of the Frio.

It has, indeed, the look of a deserted village. Not, however, of a village that had been violently depopulated, but of one that had quietly died out. No ruins tell the story of its misfortune. No footprint is discovered, stamped in blood, upon its pavement. Nature, in these climes, soon heals the wounds which the sword and torch inflict. The scarred waste to-day will be the blooming garden of the morrow. Thus it has been with Esparza, and thus it is. She is beautiful at this moment, despite of all that she has suffered, and of all that she has lost. She has her fragrant orange-groves; her *potreros* stocked with cattle; her rows of neat white houses; within her walls, *huertas* full of various fruits and flowers and shrubs; beyond them, the richest lands conceivable, open as well as wooded, all capable of yielding cacao, sugar, indigo, and cotton in lavish quantities. These lands, however, are far from being cultivated as they should be. The sugar-cane raised upon them, in a few



PLEASANT NIGHT AT ESPARZA



OUR GUIDE IN THE REAR.

patches here and there, is used for *sacâte* or fodder only, while the other productions named are neglected altogether. On the whole, appearances justify the statement which José Guerrero, the Nicaraguan soldier, made us at the supper-table concerning the inertness of the people of Esparza. If this be true, they differ widely from the rest of the Costa Rican population. Industry, activity, prompt intelligence, the desire to be in independent circumstances, and the honest arts through which the consummation of this desire is reached—these, at every point, struck us as the grand characteristics of the country.

An hour after dawn we were in our saddles, on the high road to San José once more.

Having passed the *Puente de las Damas*—a bridge of massive masonry, spanning with a single arch, at an aching height, the black waters of the Jesus Maria, which here reel on through a chasm, from the crevices in the mighty walls of which the glossiest laurels and other shrubs spring forth in sparkling clusters—and having ambled or galloped all the morning through the forest, we came at last to the *venta*, or road-side inn, of San Mateo. Anselmo, our guide, was there before us, for we had loitered at the farm

of Las Ramadas to have a chat with a gipsy group at breakfast under a magnificent *guapinol*, the thickly-leaved limbs of which on every side extended full forty feet above the camping-ground.

Anselmo was a silent boy of Indian blood. His broad face, deeply punctuated with the small-pox, was the color of a ripe walnut, while the expression of it was meditative and morose. He wore white check trowsers, a brown *scapular*, and a pink check shirt. His bare heels displayed a pair of spurs, the rowels of which were the size and shape of star-fish. Sauntering along—equally insensible to the dust, the beauty, the red mud, or the straining steepness of the road—with one of our fowling-pieces slung behind him, and some few necessary articles of toilet tied up in a coffee-bag before him—Anselmo, dispensing with stockings, held on with his toes to the stirrups. The most of the way he kept in the rear. The pilot of the party, he sat in the stern and steered from behind. It is the custom of the country. The guide is seldom in advance—often out of sight—never within hail.

Under the dome-like *mangos*—under the coolest and darkest of them—Anselmo relieved the mules of their girths and cruppers, and gave

them water, corn, and *sacate*. The room in which we breakfasted, floored with baked clay—clay done to a brittle crust—was wainscoted with cedar. This sounds fine. But cedar is cheap in Costa Rica, and in such houses as the *venta* of San Mateo displays no polish. The breakfast consisted of fresh eggs, fresh bullock's tongue, a cup of sour coffee, a saucerful of *jacotes* or hog-plums, and the usual amount of *tortillas*, the ubiquitous slap-jacks of South and Central America. We were joined at table by an officer of the Costa Rican army. He was on his way from Nicaragua to San José with dispatches to his Government, the *San Carlos*—one of the steamboats taken from the Filibusters, and flying the Costa Rican flag on Lake Nicaragua—having thumped ashore and there stuck fast. He had come by the Guanacaste road, and to this point had been eight days in the saddle. He was a modest, intelligent, delicately-whiskered, mild, fair-faced gentleman. Eminently gallant, too, for he had fought at Rivas, at Masaya, at San Jorge—all through the war in Nicaragua—and at its close had been honored with the command of the troops on board the steamboat which had just been wrecked. Over his right shoulder was slung a broad green worsted belt. To this a tin canteen was hooked. Underneath the belt was his blue frock-coat. The coat stood in need of a good scouring. His sword, jingling in a steel scabbard at his heels, would have been all the brighter for a little sweet oil and brick-dust. Having hastened with his breakfast and lit his *puro*, he mounted his white mule with the gay grandeur of a cavalier, gracefully lifted his drab *sombrero*, dashed through the gate-way, and disappeared up the mountain. Up the mountain! For the shadow of the Aguacate was upon us. High as we were amidst the *mangos* on the ridge of San Mateo, this noble mountain stood, four thousand feet erect, between us and the sun.

Haughty, opulent, superb—ravines and valleys, two thousand feet in depth, are, to its glowing, but dim crevices at its foot, while the forest we have spoken of—that between Chacarita and the Barranca—seems no more than a quiet shrubbery, blossoming and sleeping in a silvered mist! Haughty, opulent, superb—it is an enormous mass of gold and silver—"the very dust which our horses spurned with their hoofs," so John L. Stephens writes, "contains that treasure for which man forsakes kindred, home, and country." It has made the fortune of more than one bold speculator; has made *millionaires* of such men as Espinac of Cartago, and Montealegre of San José; still, still invites the capitalists of this and other countries; and to the invincible hand of science knocking at its portals, and with the infallible torch, that has already divulged so many of the mysteries of nature, penetrating its recesses, promises an exhaustless issue of incalculable worth! Haughty, opulent, superb—from base to summit it is an aggregation of most of the riches, the wonders, the terrors, the sweetness and the glory of the earth!

The tropical summer and the spring of the temperate zone equally divide the imperial mountain, and reign there perpetually—the one below, the other above. Each has its attendant flowers, trees, birds, reptiles; each its own wild offspring; each its appropriate harmonies and treasures. The white eagle makes it his home; the wild coffee fills it with its soft exquisite perfume; the cedars crowning it vibrate with the merry peal of the bell-bird; monkeys in legions swing themselves down upon the wild cacao to which its warmer slopes give birth; serpents, such as the *sabanera* twenty and thirty feet in length, glisten through the gloom of its thickets; the sleek tiger enjoys the dumb security its vine-woven fastnesses afford; humming-birds in millions—"those fragments of the rainbow" as Audubon has called them—flash and whirl through the foliage; while the King of the Vultures, with his gorgeous black and orange-colored crest—an acknowledged chief among the greediest pirates of the dead—owns his oaken palace there, and soars above them all!

Midway up this mountain, at a point called *Desmonte*, looking suddenly back over the road we had come, there broke upon us a vision of indescribable peacefulness and grandeur. The Gulf of Nicoya—a silver cord stretched along the horizon—seemed to pulsate with an unheard melody; while the ships we had left at Punta Arenas looked as though they were sea-birds clinging to it. Between the Gulf and the promontory of Nicoya, a white unbroken range of clouds extended. Beyond this range were the dark purple mountains of the promontory. It was the funeral procession overlooking the bridal train. To the left, the mountains, which up to this had walled in the road, suddenly gave way, and a vast ravine abruptly opened. Across the head of this ravine rose a wall of yellowish-brown barren hills; and beyond and far above them again, flinging off the white clouds which floated between it and the sun—the crown of glory it aspired to—at a height of 11,500 feet above the sea, towered the volcano of San Pablo!

This noble feature was never absent from the scene. As we entered the Gulf of Nicoya at the dawn of day, there it was, hailing us in tones of thunder, a Cyclopean warder at the gate. All day long, ankle-deep in blistering sand, or gasping in some rude veranda, we looked up to it from Punta Arenas—that stifled city of a burning plain—and we sighed for the winds and the rain that have long since cooled its fiery head, for it is an extinct volcano. Hardly had we left the red-tiled roofs, the little orange-groves, the palm-trees and sweet *huertas* of Esparza a mile behind, when, out of the mist of the morning, there came forth that ever-wakeful sentinel of the night, beautiful and mighty as when the darkness closed around him. All along the road to San Mateo, and far beyond it, we turned from the fences of *erithryna*, interlaced with *cactus* and wild pine-apple, and the sugar-fields and pasture grounds they inclose, and from the several incidents and varying features of the road;

from ox-teams burdened with coffee, as we had seen them in the forest the evening previous; from spacious farm-houses with whitewashed walls and broad piazzas; from loving couples snugly seated on the one tough saddle, the *caballero* holding the *señorita* before him on the pommel, a far pleasanter arrangement than that prevailing in older countries when the *pillion* was in fashion; from droves of drowsy mules, laden with cacao in ox-hide bags, coming up from Nicaragua, whisking their tails and jingling their bells as they plodded before their masters, whose salute, as we rode past them, was gracious and most winning; from black-eyed groups at breakfast under some lofty *carob*, the black iron



CABALLERO AND SEÑORITA.

pot sending up its fragrant steam of boiling beans, the unyoked oxen munching the tops of sugar-canes outside the domestic circle, and scurvy dogs, at detached posts beyond the camp, showing their teeth, and snarling at the foreigners as they rode by; from the tall rustic cross, planted on the spot where some deed of blood had been done, some criminal had been shot, or some one had suddenly dropped dead; from these, the several incidents, and these, the varying features of the road, many and many a time, all along to San Mateo and far beyond it, we turned to gaze upon San Pablo. And here at this point called Desmonte—from this commanding height—with this vast ravine below us, in which the Catskill might be buried, and with the intermediate range of lowlier mountains opening wide, so as to disclose it in its magnitude and the absolutism of its glory, San Pablo—the eternal sentinel of the Republic—overwhelmed all rivalry, and with a supreme sublimity usurped the conquered scene!

We had left Desmonte little more than two leagues behind, when a black, heavy shower broke full upon us. Luckily there was a house close at hand—one of those erected by the Government, at different points between Punta Arenas and San José, for the accommodation of the men employed in keeping the road in order—and in this we took shelter, if one can be said to take shelter under an umbrella which has nothing but the stick and a few bare ribs left it to keep off the rain. An old, wan, grizzled man, his naked feet

sinking in the soft clay with which the house was floored, was shaping a *tortilla* as we entered; while a sprightly, handsome little boy—the Iulus of this woe-begone Æneas—stood defiantly between the corn and the predatory fowl with which the staff of life was menaced. All along the road we were greatly struck with the quick intelligence, activity, hardihood, bright looks, and gracefulness of the Costa Rican boys. Many of them were guiding the coffee-carts, tripping gayly beside the burly oxen, it mattered not how rough or slippery the road might be, and with the dexterity of practiced *carreteros* working the team through the ugliest straits, down the steepest pinches, round the sharpest elbows, conquering with an expert and brave sagacity all the difficulties of the journey. They gallantly relieved the old men at times, the latter leisurely following the carts on foot or mule-back, or lying asleep upon the coffee-bags inside, while the little fellows held the *chuzo*—the sceptre of the road! Nor was it along this road, nor at this exacting work alone, they shone out so brightly. Every where throughout the country, in the field, at market, in the forest, in the busiest crowd, in the bleakest solitude, every where they were still the same bright boys, prompt, fearless, indefatigable. They are a fountain of health-giving waters and a crown of priceless jewels to the land.

Still toiling up the Aguacate—every turn of the winding road deceiving us into the belief, as we approached it, that it would be the last, and

then, as we gained it, showing us a new one further on, and this tantalizing game lasting an hour and more, and at every turn becoming more and more vexatious, until at last we grew almost giddy with the torture—still toiling up the Aguacate, having oftentimes to draw in close to the impending rock to let a train of coffee-carts roll by, the night came on. From that out we traveled through the clouds.

Emerging from the clouds, we found ourselves in the city of Athens, or Atenas, away beyond the Aguacate. It is a city of the strictest republican simplicity—a thin sprinkling of modest huts—wherein, if the diviner attributes of Minerva be not perceptible, it is evident that the grave tranquillity of her favorite bird prevails.

In Athens we stopped at a *posada*, to which, with a due appreciation of its resources and refinement, we gave the name of Pericles. The House of Pericles had an amazingly high-peaked roof thatched with plantain-leaves and corn-husks, the interior being furnished with three canvas-back stretchers to sleep on, a flame-colored wood-cut of St. Francis of Assisium, a spendthrift candle stuck in the neck of a

bottle, three naked children, and fleas by the million.

Pericles himself, the proprietor of the *posada*, was the smoothest of rogues. Not in appearance, indeed, for his face was dappled all over with something like mustard, his head was shaped like a cocoa-nut, and his teeth, deficient in number, had lost their enamel. But in voice, in walk, in sentiment, in every thing that distinguishes the scholar, the hotel-keeper, the citizen and the gentleman, no one could have been smoother. He was the Pericles of Plutarch. Nay, by the golden grasshoppers of sweet Attica, he was more than this! For, at the very outset, he urged so considerate an argument against giving his guests a bottle of brandy, alleging it was altogether too dear, an objection seldom, if ever, advanced by one of his trade in New York or any where else—he was so frank in acknowledging we might be troubled with fleas during the night, and that the pigs, who had the run of the bedroom as well as the kitchen, encouraged *jiggers* and bugs to the house—and then, when we had stretched ourselves the full length of the stretchers, and had pulled the green and



VOLCANO OF SAN PABLO.



THE HOUSE OF PERICLES.

red blankets about us, he let down the skimpy dimity curtains so tenderly, and so sweetly wished us good-night, that he seemed to unite—and Don Ramon said so next morning—the gracefulness of Alcibiades, and the goodness of Socrates, with the princely resources of Pericles.

But it was a night of ineffable torture. It was worse, infinitely worse, than the one we spent in Esparza. The fleas carried the house with a stinging majority. The minority of two, Don Ramon and Don Francisco, had to give in, give up, and go out. Stretchers, chairs, the family hammock of blue-and-white striped cotton swinging across the room, the supper-table to which we retreated with our blankets for a time, the house itself had to be abandoned. An overwhelming siege, it was an unconditional surrender. Nisus and Euryalus, smoking cigars, spent the rest of the night in their *ponchos* and boots in the yard.

There, in the silver light of the stars, with his rugged face sparkling like granite, lay Anselmo, our guide, with his toes sticking out and straight up, as stiff and compressed as a mummy. Over there, against a cart-wheel, two stumpy

black pigs lay all-of-a-heap, and snored as though the world were at an end, or no one was in it but themselves. Behind a pile of musty ox-hides, three raw-boned swarthy *arrieros*, fast asleep, with a profound emphasis responded to this resounding couple; while an uneasy dog with a sneaking tail, very tawny, very scrofulous and very thin, kept prowling about the yard, darting out at times under the creaking gate, as a cart rumbled past, or some traveler astride of a mule, keeping late hours, went dismally by.

This night's entertainment at Athens cost us five dollars. Pericles was the sharpest, as well as the smoothest, of rogues. We were off before he had time to afflict us with breakfast.

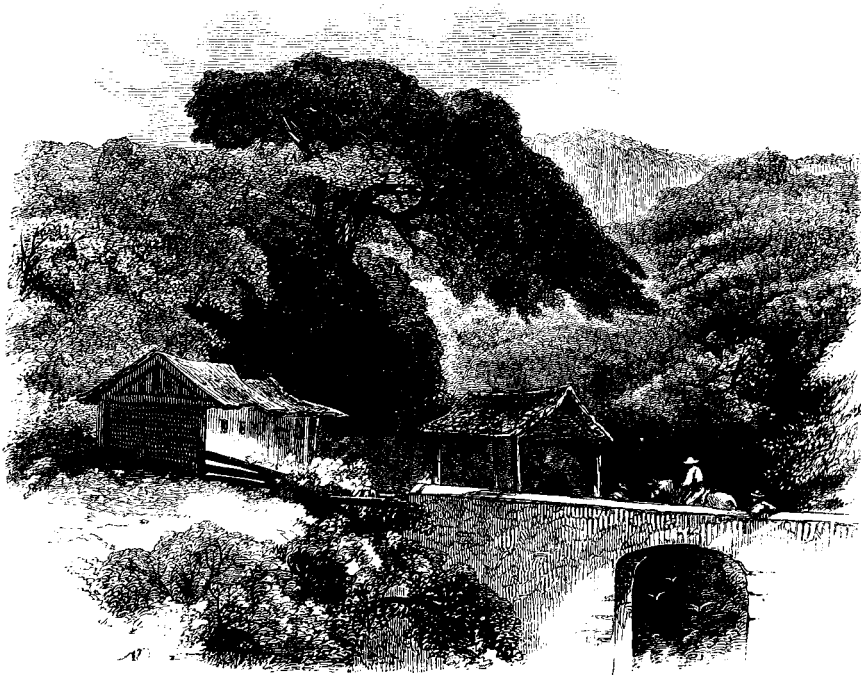
A league beyond Athens we came to the brink of the *quebrada*, which at this point strikes the Rio Grande. Three hundred feet below—filling the chasm with its wild and broken voice, fiercely striking and leaping the black rocks which rose against it—the river rushed, tumbled, and with a swollen tide swept on. The opposite wall of the chasm stood several feet higher than that down which, along a zigzag road, solidly constructed, though utterly unprotected on the

side which overlooked the precipice, we leisurely walked our mules. Clusters of beautiful pink *bignonias*, clinging to the face of this stupendous wall, gave it the appearance of a cliff of granite colored with a rosy sunset. Masses of *guajini-quil* and wild grape-vine, also, darkening the upper line of the walls, and entangled here and there with the *bignonias*, overhung the waters. On a broad ledge, further down the chasm, stood a gorgeous grove of cacao-trees, upward of a hundred years old, so one of the *guardas* of the Garita told us; and in the shadow of this grove, the waters, and the steep black channel through which they rushed, seemed to deepen before our very eyes and grow darker still. In a straight line, right under us, a stone bridge of one bold arch, with a gate and covered causeway, linked the roads descending to it on both sides of the ravine. It was the bridge of the Garita—the bridge of the Custom-house—and across that bridge all wayfarers bound for the interior are compelled to pass. Any attempt to cross the river, above or below that bridge, is punishable with ten years' imprisonment. This has been already mentioned. But where so grievous a penalty is attached to so venial an offense, it is no harm to renew the warning which the information conveys. Beyond the bridge there is a wooden building, very long and low, and roughly put together, with a roof of red tiles projecting five or six feet beyond the front wall to a row of half a dozen discolored square posts of cedar; and this is the Custom-house.

It is here that barrels are tapped, and boxes have their nails drawn, and bales are ripped

open, and trunks are turned inside out, and the revenue of the Republic is for the most part collected.

The letters of introduction we brought to the President, the Bishop of San José, the Minister of State, and other notable citizens of Costa Rica, obtained an unmolested passage for our luggage. It was on the road, miles behind us, jolting and smashing along in the rear of two ponderous bullocks; but whenever it arrived, the Commandant at the Garita in the pleasantest accents assured us the formality of an inspection would be dispensed with. It was due to literature and science, he said, that the luggage of gentlemen devoted to the pursuit of knowledge should be exempt from the formalities to which Westphalian hams and such gross articles were subject. Moreover it was due to the son of the illustrious General Paez. This he added with the most gallant courtesy, lifting his hat and bowing, his cavalry sword sliding away in the dust behind him as he did so. He did more. He was hospitable as he was gallant. Stepping into the Custom-house he brought out a bottle of cogniac, a tumbler, and a cork-screw. Without dismounting, we drank his health and prosperity to Costa Rica. Then it was his turn, and he drank ours, ejaculating a sentiment in honor of Venezuela. Two or three minutes more of pleasant gossip with him; about the game in the neighborhood of the Garita, for he was a sporting character; about the Filibusters, for he fought in Rivas, the 11th of April, 1856, and thought it glorious fun; about his fighting-cocks, for he had an army of them; two or three minutes



THE GARITA ON THE RIO GRANDE.

more of this *tête-à-tête*, a warm shake-hands and the final *adios*, and up the road we started, leaving the Rio Grande hoarsely roaring in its jagged bed. The deep chasm—the sunset-colored walls overtopping the black waters, the long procession of carts, and mules, and oxen, descending and winding up the opposing cliffs, the groups of soldiers and *carreteros* at the bridge, the bridge itself, the masses of foliage and blossoms relieving the cold hard face of rock, and softening with their shadows the staring wildness of the abyss—all this was forgotten, when, striking the level ground above the river, a vast amphitheatre opened suddenly, boldly, magnificently before us.

Before us were the Plains of Carmen. To the right were the Cordilleras and the volcanic heights of Barba and Irazu. To the left were the mountains of Santa Anna and San Miguel. Breadth, loftiness, infinitude; no paltry sign of human life to blot the scene; the sun in its fullness; the pulsation through the warm earth of distant waters; the rumblings of the thunder in a sky where not an angry speck was visible; wonder, homage, ecstasies; it seemed, indeed, as if we had been disenthralled from the Old World by some glorious magic, and were on the threshold, within sight, in the enjoyment of a new existence!

But what of that vast amphitheatre, overshadowed, and with these immutable sublimities environed? It was once the bed of an immense lake. Suddenly set free by some violent volcanic shock, the waters of the lake exhausted themselves through a rent which now forms the channel and outlet of the Rio Grande. Enormous rocks of calcined porphyry, protruding through the soil and blackening it far and wide, are the testimonies of this convulsion. The Plains of Carmen, the lower portion of the amphitheatre, exhibit a loose dark loam intermixed with quantities of volcanic *detritus*. To this day they have been used as grazing grounds only. With a proper system of irrigation—and such a system, fed by the plenteous rains which fall during the months of June, July, August, September and October, could be easily, cheaply, and extensively carried out—and with, of course, the necessary cultivation, they would yield the sugar-cane, Indian corn, *tapioca*, and other tropical productions in extraordinary abundance. Thus where we have, for the most part, an idle and inanimate wilderness at present, a population of 100,000—in addition to the actual population of the country, computed at something over 130,000—might, in this one section alone, be prosperously sustained. Elsewhere—all over the country, from Lake Nicaragua to the frontier of New Granada—whole nations, such as Portugal and Holland, would find the amplest room and the best of living. The public unappropriated lands, in the northern part of the Republic alone, according to Señor Astaburiaga, amount to millions of acres.

The inducements, held out to emigrants by the Government of Costa Rica, are liberal enough.

The public lands are sold at public auction. These vary in price according to their distance from the principal centres of population. Two acres, for instance, in the neighborhood of San José, the capital, will realize from \$100 to \$150; while in the forest to the North or South, beyond the mountains, 120 acres may be had for \$64. The cost for clearing and preparing an acre of forest-land is estimated by the natives at \$10; but, as Mr. Squier observes, an American backwoodsman would doubtless do it for one half the sum. The buyer of public land becomes the debtor of the National Treasury. Having paid a certain amount of the purchase-money—in most instances a mere trifle—he takes possession of the land and retains it, paying a yearly interest of 4 per cent. on the balance. In a conversation we had with him, President Mora cordially expressed himself in favor of the largest possible immigration. As an evidence of the sincere good wishes of the Government in this respect, he stated that, three years ago, a loan of \$3,000,000 had been negotiated with a mercantile house in Hamburg. The monetary crisis of 1857, however, in which so many lofty houses toppled throughout the United States and Europe, had its evil effect on Costa Rica. The house, with which this loan had been negotiated, broke down just as the negotiation successfully closed. Had the loan been forthcoming, \$300,000 would have been devoted to the introduction of skilled labor, mechanic as well as agricultural.

Besides the inducements offered by the Government, the climate as well as the soil of Costa Rica is most inviting and favorable to the emigrant. Of all tropical countries, Costa Rica is the best adapted for the North American and European emigrant. It is the only country, perhaps, in which tropical productions can be raised with perfect impunity and profit by free white labor. Down along the coast, the Pacific as well as the Atlantic, the climate, of course, is grievously injurious, and in some places—Matina for example, situated between the Boca del Toro and San Juan del Norte—it is absolutely fatal. But here—up here in the great valley of San José, four thousand feet above the sea—no climate could be more healthful, genial, and delightful. A worthy friend of mine—a native of Ohio, who has resided the last ten years in San José, and whose scientific proclivities may be inferred from the fact that he is a daguerreotypist as well as an importer of boots—gave me a copy of the tables of the weather and temperature he had constructed during that decade. From these it appears, that, in and about San José, the thermometer ranges between 65° and 75° the year round, seldom below, seldom above either. Stephens, Molina, and Astaburiaga verify this statement.

Nor is the soil of this and the neighboring valleys capable of producing only the tropical fruits, grains, and vegetables. English wheat and clover, the Irish potato, the American pumpkin, peaches, apples, plums, quinces and strawberries, find in these valleys, and up the slopes

of the surrounding mountains, the most encouraging nurture. The valley of Orosi alone, Mr. Young Anderson informed me, had ample room for 200,000 farmers, and was capable of yielding two full crops of wheat in the year. At present, owing to imperfect cultivation, it yields only one.

But the staple crop of Costa Rica—that which constitutes the principal source of its wealth—that which has been the means of evoking it from indigence and obscurity, and rendering it, in a commercial point of view, one of the most solid, as in the social it is one of the happiest, while in the political it is, perhaps, the most influential of the Central American Republics—is unquestionably the coffee-crop.

From 1819, when the Padre Valverde planted the first tree, the cultivation of the plant has steadily increased. Having passed the plains of Carmen, eleven miles from San José, we come upon the first of the plantations. From that out they occupy the entire of the valley—the entire upper portion of the bed of the ancient lake. They extend, too, right and left all along the road from San José to Cartago—a distance of twelve miles—and are to be met with at the base of the Candelaria, and in the valleys of the mountains, and on the *plateaux*, twenty, thirty, forty miles beyond them again. In 1850 the yield was 14,000,000 pounds. The average crop is 12,000,000 pounds. The crop this year—they gather it in January—exceeded the average by 5,000,000 pounds.

But to me the most gratifying fact deduced from the agricultural statistics of the country, is this paramount one—two-thirds of the population constitute a landed-proprietory. Almost every man has his farm, his mules, his oxen, his poultry, his pigs, his sugar or his coffee plantation. The very men we had seen, barefooted and in draggled linen, descending the Aguacate, winding through the forest beyond the Barranca, carting the coffee to the port, were landlords as well as *carreteros*. This—more than the purity of their Spanish blood, an advantage which, speaking of ninety cases out of every hundred, has not been impaired by any intermixture with the Negro or the Indian—this is the secret of their industry. This the secret of their manhood. This the secret of their promptitude, their pluck, their success in war. This the secret of the perfect tranquillity, the absence of crime, the substantial progress, the political unity, the national spirit, and, to sum up all, the dauntless independence of the country. Every man is at home, and feels at home. Every man has a fireside to fight for, and well he knows that the inviolability of that fireside depends upon the inviolability of the laws, and the liberty of the country. In a Republic there is nothing like having every inhabitant a citizen, every citizen a magistrate, every magistrate a soldier. Where the inhabitant has a vital and indestructible stake in the country—in other words, where he is a landlord, be his fee-simple estate large or small—he will be a citizen, though you give him no suffrage; he will be a magistrate, though you give him no commission; he will be a soldier, though you give him no pay. Political privileges, without such property, are little more than flattering illusions; or, growing to be more, may be instruments of disorder, subjection for the multitude, and tyranny with the few. Accompanied by property that is subject neither to invasion nor dis-



THE PARENT COFFEE-TREE OF COSTA RICA.

pute, the political privileges of the individual are sure to be the inflexible instruments of good order, unpurchasable safeguards against corruption, and the gratuitous defenses of the nation.

Two leagues and a half from San José we stopped to breakfast at the *posada* of La Asuncion. With its broad white face shining through the clouds of yellow dust which the coffee-carts still continued to roll up, we found this *posada* a sweet retreat. The windows, the walls, the floor were clean and bright as those of a Yorkshire dairy. The atmosphere was fresh and richly scented. The furniture—quaintly shaped, curiously and lavishly carved, all of black mahogany—looked as though it were assiduously polished. And so it was. The three plump black-diamond-eyed, sprightly girls—daughters of the healthy widowed lady of the house whose



OUR WIDOWED HOSTESS AT LA ASUNCION.

likeness we have here—were living assurances of that, as they glided round the table with overflowing cups of delicious chocolate, the milkiest eggs conceivable, and oranges from the trees which shaded and perfumed the house. In every respect the breakfast at La Asuncion had the advantage of the breakfast at San Mateo, though the garlic, with which the stewed beef was stuffed to suffocation, might have been dispensed with. The Chili peppers more than sufficed to heighten the flavor of the feast. They drew tears even from the eyes of Don Ramon, who, from infancy, had been accustomed to them. One of the Superintendents of the road entered before we had quite got through, took a cup of chocolate from the most luxuriant of the attendant Graces, and delicately intimating that he did so with our permission, rolled up a *cigarillo*, and lit it with his *mecha*. The *mecha* is a long round skein of prepared cotton, ignited by a flint and steel, whenever it's required, and being drawn through an extinguish-

er attached to it by a hook and chain, is just as easily put out. Almost every one in Costa Rica carries a *mecha*, and the extinguisher, hook and chain, in many instances, are made of silver, and sometimes of gold.

From La Asuncion into San José the road was in the best condition. It was broad, compact, and level. There was a deep trench on either side, an embankment, and a bristling fence. The fence was shady too, for the green stakes of *yuca* with which it is constructed take root, throwing out limbs and leaves in such profusion that the *machetes* have at times to be brought against them, so as to keep them within bounds, and preserve that prim civilized appearance which the circumstance of their being on the high-road to San José, and close up to it, requires. Gangs of laborers, moreover, were busy at different points, filling up ruts, breaking stones, clearing out the trenches, strewing gravel, or over some fresh patch of rubbish, grit and mortar, hauling a monstrous roller after them.

Then came the coffee-plantations, laid out in squares and avenues with the strictest regularity, the delicate dark-green foliage glistening with the sunshine—glistening as though it were suffused with gold—and the fragrance of the blossoms, white and soft as snow-flakes, exhaling in the hazy heat—blending the mildest sweetness of the earth with the fiercest glory of the sky. Then came the Bridge of Ibirilla—*El Puente de Arco de Ibirilla*, as it is set forth on tables of stone inserted in the battlements—with the Rio Grande sweeping over a sunken bed of lava-rock—sweeping over it with the thoughtless brilliancy of youth, with musical whisperings and laughter as it were, ignorant of its prescribed career, for it has yet a desperate race to run—has yet the chasm of the Garita to battle through—has yet three thousand feet to fall. Over a sunken bed of lava-rock it sweeps. Crossing the bridge a huge mass of this same rock overhung the road on our left. Below the bridge—breaking through the thick clusterings of *rexia* and *convolvulus* which cling to it—ten thousand tons of it, smelted into one steep cliff, overhung the rushing waters. Of the tremendous shock which tore asunder the walls of the sea once occupying this vast *plateau*, and which gave liberty to the imprisoned waves, the evidences, as we have already said, multiply themselves on every side.

In gentle contrast with them were the long lines of neat white cottages which extend both sides of the road, from the Bridge of Ibirilla to the municipal limits of San José. These lines are broken by farm-yards, *huertas* and plantations only, all of which exhibit signs of the most careful industry, confirming the favorable impression of Costa Rica which the more striking incidents and features of the road, the grand procession of the coffee-carts, the quietude and propriety of the little towns, the comfortable look of the *haciendas*, the aspect and bearing of the people themselves, produced.

Sun-burned, coated with dust, sweltering a little and somewhat chafed, in our red flannel shirts

and overall boots, both the one and the other rumpled and wrinkled, decidedly the worse for the wear, but nevertheless in the brightest good humor—returning with smiles, and sometimes with winks, the inquisitive glances which from door-ways and iron-barred windows signaled our coming—between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, we rode into San José, the capital of the Republic of Costa Rica.

Jogging past the Artillery Barracks—at the rickety gate of which there stood a sentinel in soiled linen, with sandals of untanned ox-hide strapped to his heels and toes—then past the Palace of the Government, concerning which, and the other notable buildings and institutions of San José, we shall say a word or two in another chapter of our Holidays—we dismounted at the door of the *Hotel de Costa Rica*. Ascending the staircase as leisurely and gracefully as our big boots and spurs would permit, we leaned over the banister at the first landing, and wished good-by to Anselmo. At sundown that mysterious creature set out for Punta Arenas, back the road which Nisus and Euryalus had come, with the three mules straggling behind him, the last being tied by the nose to the tail of the next one, and that one again being made fast in the same way to the other before him.

Viewing it from the pretty balcony of the room into which we were shown by an amiable fat boy from Heidelberg, whose name was Charlemagne, the capital of Costa Rica appeared to be a compact little city, cross-barred with narrow streets, roofed with red tiles. There were flag-staffs and belfries too, and tufts of shining green foliage breaking through those red tiles—breaking through them here and there, and every where—and beyond and above them, but quite close to us it seemed, were the mountains of San Miguel—brown steeps cloven into valleys, and throwing

out other heights, abrupt and black, in the deep shadow of which the smoke of the burning forest rolled up slowly and with a fleecy whiteness, and all over the slopes of which the fields of sugarcane fairly glittered, their verdure was so vivid.

May Heaven be with it—the bright, young, brave city of the Central Andes—the silent but industrious, the modest but prosperous, the inoffensive but undismayed metropolis of the Switzerland of the Tropics!

Radiantly reposing there, with the palm-trees fanning it—the *mangos* shadowing its little court-yards—the snow-white and snow-like blossoms of the coffee-tree, the glossy, smooth, rich foliage of the *guayaba* and sweet lemon, the orange and banana breaking through the waste of red tiles, and filling the serene air with perfume—herds of cattle, the finest in the world, grazing in the paddocks or *potreros* without the suburbs, or with a grand docility toiling through its streets, carrying to the market-place the produce of the peasant, or to his home conveying back such accessories to his comfort as the ships from England, Hamburg, Guatemala, and France import, or such as the Panama railroad from more ingenious work-shops, for some time past, has hurried up—each one at his business, none idle, none too conceited to trade or work—an independent spirit, aiming at an independent livelihood, animating all—the machinery of the Government working steadily, and for its ordained ends, with a commensurate success, though not, perhaps, with the high pressure and expansion which Democrats of infinite views, as some of us are, might with an impetuous rhetoric advise—a growing desire for a closer intercourse with the world, dissipating its fears and prejudices, quickening its intelligence, ennobling its counsels, and opening out, as the proposed new road to the Serapiquí will do, even



ADIOS TO ANSELMO.

through the wilderness where no white foot until this day has been, new channels for the enterprise, the resources, and the credit of the country—the National Flag, which through the vanishing ranks of no despicable adversaries has been victoriously borne, flying from the Barracks and the Palace of the Government, kindling in every native heart a just pride and a fearless patriotism—with all this before us, how could we do otherwise than invoke for that brave little city of the Central Andes—as I do now and ever shall—the sympathies of the American people and the shield of Providence?

Oh! may that Providence—typified by the vast mountain of Irazu which overshadows it, and which has long since quenched its fires and become a glory instead of a terror to the scene—protect it to the end of time; and safe amidst the everlasting hills—prosperous and inviolable—through many an improving epoch may it teach the lesson, that nations may be great—great in honest industry, great in the goodness of domestic life, great in the less ostentatious arts of peace, great in patriotism, great in heroism, great in being the living illustration of this inspiring lesson—though no navy rides the sea for them, and their territory be small!

INSECTS DESTRUCTIVE TO WHEAT.

WHEAT and cow's milk are intimately concerned with the physical and intellectual progress of our species. Not only have the small-cared grasses (*hordeacea* and *avenacea*) followed

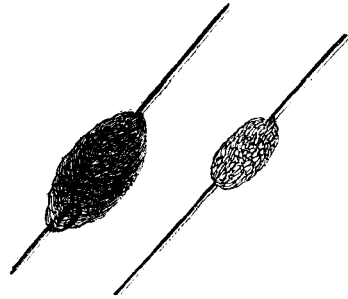


FIGURE 2.—COCOONS OF WHEAT MIDGE.

civilized and progressive man all over the world, making their home wherever nature welcomed him, their master, but all experience and history tells that the more highly cultivated any nation has become, the more attention has it given to the culture of these grains. Thus, we conclude that that people whose chief food is wheaten flour, and whose chief stimulant is the juice of stall-fed beef, is in the high-road of progress. It seems hard; but not only the body but the soul grows on that wheat-bread and juicy beef which has made the Anglo-Saxon race the foremost of the world. If such is the importance of a single grain to the civilized world, any thing conducing to the improving of this food, increasing it in quality and quantity, becomes a paramount question with those who govern and those who are governed. Every hint, every suggestion will be snatched at eagerly by those who have studied the momentous question of raising up a

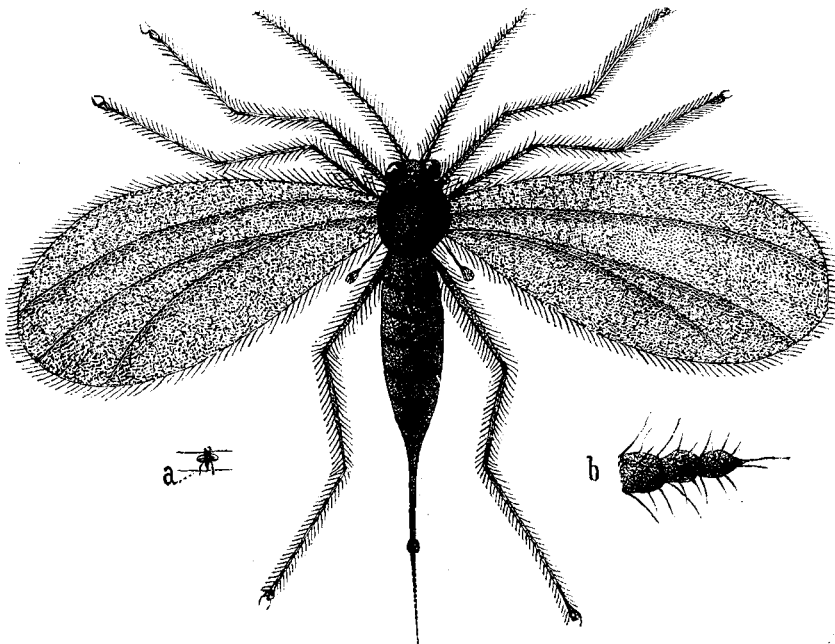


FIGURE 1.—WHEAT MIDGE.

a. Natural size

b. First joint of antenna.