



AVENIDA CENTRALE

The building with the rounded corner balcony is the American Consulate

commanding general to pay the fares for his troops over forty-eight miles of railroad. Of that, however, more hereafter.

Of course, during all the revolutions and counter revolutions the idea of the canal had steadily grown. England at one time took a mild interest in it and sent one Horatio Nelson to look over the land. The young naval officer's health failed him and he returned to become in later years the hero of Trafalgar and the Nile. Later, the great German scientist, Baron von Humboldt, in the course of a famous voyage to South America, spent some time on the Isthmus, and wrote much of its natural features, enumerating nine routes for a canal including of course the one finally adopted. Louis Napoleon, though never on the Isthmus, dreamed out the possibilities of a canal when he was a prisoner in the fortress

of Ham. Had he succeeded in maintaining Maximilian on the throne of Mexico he might have made the Isthmian history very different. Among our own people, De Witt Clinton, builder of the Erie Canal, and Henry Clay, were the first to plan for an American canal across the Isthmus, but without taking practical steps to accomplish it.

Canal schemes, however, were almost as numerous as revolutions in the years preceding 1903. Darien, Panama, Tehuantepec, Nicaragua have all been considered at various times, and the last named for some time was a very close second to Panama in favor. There is reason to believe that the government of the United States deliberately "nursed" the Nicaragua project in order to exact better terms from Colombia, which held the Panama route at an exorbitant figure.



ANCON HILL AT SUNSET

The honor of actually inaugurating the canal work must ever belong to the French, as the honor of completing it will accrue to us. It is not the first time either that the French and the Americans worked together to accomplish something on this continent. Yorktown and Panama ought to be regarded as chapters of the story of a long partnership. In 1876 Ferdinand de Lesseps, with the glory of having dug the Suez Canal still untarnished, became interested in the Panama situation as the result of representations made by a French engineer, Napoleon B. Wyse. Lieut. Wyse had made a survey of the Isthmus and, in connection with Gen. Stephen Turr, a Hungarian, had secured a concession from Colombia to run ninety-nine years after the completion of the canal, with a payment to Colombia of \$250,000 annually after the

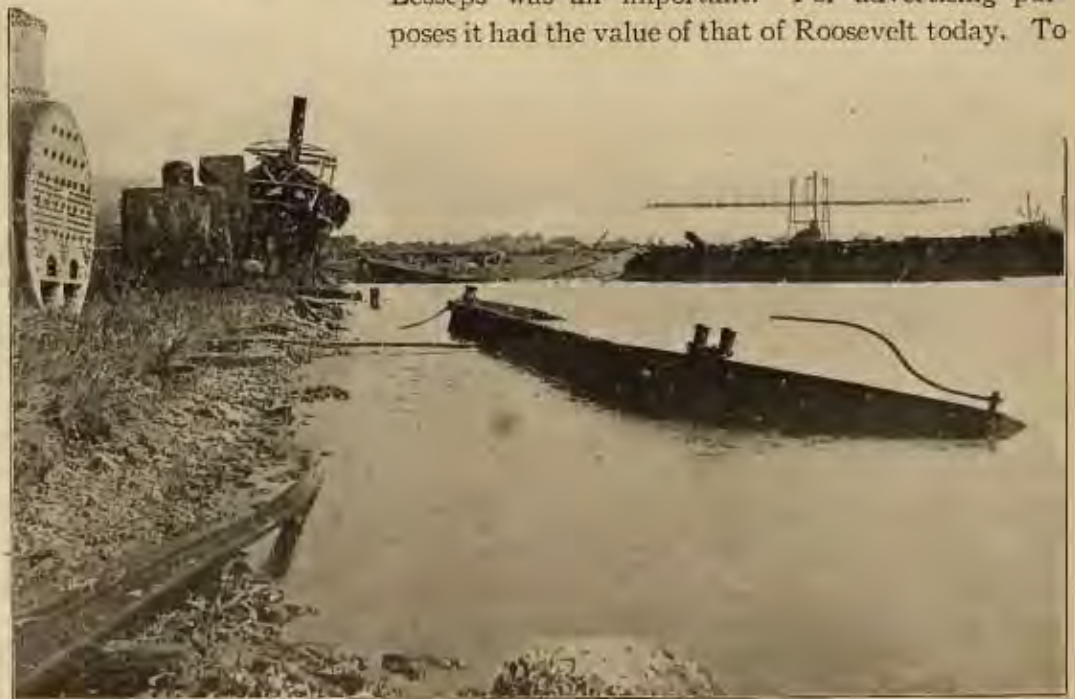


Photo by Underwood & Underwood

ABANDONED FRENCH MACHINERY ON THE CANAL

seventy-fifth year had expired. This franchise was transferable by sale to any other private company but could not be sold to a government—a proviso which later complicated greatly the negotiations with the United States.

De Lesseps was instantly interested. The honors which had been heaped upon him as the result of his successful operation at Suez were very grateful to him. The

French temperament is particularly avid of praise and public honor. Moreover, he sincerely believed in the practicability of the plan and, neither at the outset or later, did any one fully enlighten him as to the prodigious obstacles to be encountered. Lieut. Wyse had interested a group of financiers who scented in the scheme a chance for great profits, and to their project the name of De Lesseps was all important. For advertising purposes it had the value of that of Roosevelt today. To

launch the project successfully money was needed, and this they found. Some sort of professional approval, in addition to the De Lesseps name was desirable and this they provided by calling together an International Scientific Congress at Paris to discuss the great undertaking. One hundred and sixty-four delegates were present, of whom forty-two were engineers and only eleven Americans. It was charged at the time that the congress was more political than scientific and furthermore that it was "packed" so as to register only the will of De Lesseps, who in turn recommended in the main such measures as the syndicate putting up the money desired. However, the Congress gave

a quasi-public and scientific appearance to a project which was really conceived only as a money-making proposition by a group of financiers. There was and has since been bitter criticism of the vote by which the Congress declared for a sea-level canal—

a decision which the French themselves were forced to reverse and which the United States definitely abandoned early in its work. In the French Con-



OVERWHELMED BY THE JUNGLE

gress there were less than 100 of the 164 delegates present when the vote was taken. Seventy-eight voted for sea-level and a majority of the engineers voted against it.

In my description of the canal work the funda-



A LOTTERY TICKET SELLER

of canal the cut at Culebra is 495 feet below the crest of Gold Hill and 364 feet below the crest of Contractor's Hill opposite. The top width of this cut is over half a mile. To carry the canal to sea-level would mean a further cut of eighty-five feet with vastly enhanced liability of slides. As for the Chagres River, that tricky stream crosses the line of the old French canal twenty-three times. As the river is sometimes three or four feet deep one day and nearly fifty feet deep at the same point the next—a turbid, turbulent, roaring torrent, carrying trees, huts and boulders along with it—the canal could obviously not exist with the

mental differences between the respective advantages of the sea-level and the lock type of canal will continually reappear. At this moment it is enough to say that the obstacles to the sea-level plan are to be found in Culebra Hill and the Chagres River. In the lock type

Chagres in its path. The French device was to dam the stream some miles above the point at which the canal first crossed it and lead it away through an artificial channel into the Pacific instead of into the Atlantic, where it now empties. This task the American engineers have avoided by damming the Chagres at Gatun, and making a great lake eighty-five feet above the level of the sea through which the canal extends and which covers and obliterates the twenty-three river crossings which embarrassed the engineers of the sea-level canal.

It is fair to say, however, that today (1913), with the lock canal approaching completion, there is a very large and intelligent body of Americans who still hold that the abandonment of the sea-level plan was an error. And it is a curious fact that while De Lesseps was accused of "packing" his congress so as to vote down the report for a lock canal which a majority of the engineers voting favored, Roosevelt, after a majority of his "International Board of Consulting Engineers" had voted for a sea-level canal, set aside their recommendation and ordered the lock type instead.

Immediately after the adjournment of the International Congress at Paris the stock of the canal company, \$60,000,000 as a first issue, was offered to the investing public. It was largely over-subscribed. The French are at once a thrifty and an emotional people. Their thrift gives them instant



MACHINERY SEEMINGLY AS HOPELESS AS THIS WAS RECOVERED AND SET TO WORK



THE POWER OF THE JUNGLE

Note how the tree has grown around and into this steel dump car at San Pablo

command of such sums of ready cash as astound financiers of other nations. Their emotionalism leads them to support any great national enterprise that promises glory for *La Patrie*, has in it a touch of romance and withal seems economically safe. The canal enterprise at the outset met all these conditions, and

the commanding figure of De Lesseps at its head, the man who had made Africa an island and who dogmatically declared, "the Panama Canal will be more easily begun, finished and maintained than the Suez Canal," lured the francs from their hiding places in woolen stockings or under loose hearth stones.

It has been the practice of many writers upon the canal to ridicule the unsuccessful effort of the French to complete it; to expatiate upon the theatrical display which attended their earlier operations, and the reckless extravagance which attended the period when the dire possibility of failure first appeared to their vision; to overlook the earnest and effective



LA POLIE DINGLER

This house, built by the French for \$150,000, was sold for \$25.00 by the Americans

work done by the Frenchmen actually on the Isthmus while riveting attention on the blackmailers and parasites in Paris who were destroying the structure at its very foundations. It is significant that none of the real workers on the canal do this. Talk with the engineers and you will find them enthusiastic over

the engineering work done by the French. Those sturdy, alert Americans who are now putting the Big Job through will take pains to give their predecessors the fullest credit for work done, for dirt moved, for surveys made and for machinery designed—a great lot of it is in use on the line today, including machines left exposed in the jungle twenty years. Hundreds of their buildings are still in use. If, after listening to the honest and generous praise expressed by our engineers, the visitor will go out to the cemetery of Mount Hope, near Cristobal, and read the lines on the headstones of French boys who came out full of hope and ambition to be cut down at twenty-two, twenty-five—all



NEAR THE PACIFIC ENTRANCE TO THE CANAL

The suction dredge is an inheritance from the French and still working

boyish ages—he will reflect that it is ill to laugh because the forlorn hope does not carry the breast-works, but only opens the way for the main army. And there are many little French graveyards scattered about the Isthmus which make one who comes upon them unawares feel that the really vital thing about the French connection with the canal was not that the first blast which it had been prepared to celebrate with some pomp failed to explode, or that the young engineers did not understand that cham-

largely by our force in carrying material for the Gatun dam. At the Pacific entrance they had dug a narrow channel three miles long which we are still using. We paid the French company \$40,000,000 for all its rights on the Isthmus. There are various rumors as to who got the money. Some, it is believed, never went far from New York, for with all their thrift the French are no match for our high financiers. But whoever got the money we got a good bargain. The estimate of our own commission



WHERE THE FRENCH DID THEIR BEST WORK

The greatest amount of excavations by the French was in Culebra Cut

pagne mixed but badly with a humid and malarial climate, but that the flower of a great and generous nation gave their lives in a struggle with hostile nature before science had equipped man with the knowledge to make the struggle equal.

Today along a great part of our canal line the marks of the French attainments are apparent. From Limon Bay, at the Atlantic end of the canal, our engineers for some reason determined upon an entirely new line for our canal, instead of following the French waterway, which was dug for seven miles to a depth of fifteen feet, and for eight miles further, seven feet deep. This canal has been used very

in 1911 values the physical property thus transferred at \$42,799,826.

Bad luck, both comic and tragic, seemed to attend the French endeavors. Count De Lesseps, with a national fondness for the dramatic, arranged two ceremonies to properly dignify the actual beginning of work upon the canal. The first was to be the breaking of ground for the Pacific entrance, which was to be at the mouth of the Rio Grande River in the Bay of Panama. A distinguished company gathered on the boat chartered for the occasion at Panama, and there was much feasting, speaking and toasting. Every one was so imbued with enthusiasm



AN OLD SPANISH CHURCH

This edifice, still standing at Nata, is said to be the oldest church in Panama

historic sod was to be turned. Accordingly, excavation was begun *pro forma* in a champagne box filled with earth on the deck of the ship. The little daughter of De Lesseps dealt the first blow of the pick, followed by representatives of Colombia. To complete the ceremony the Bishop of Panama gravely blessed the work thus auspiciously begun, and the canal builders steamed back to Panama.

Later, the same party assembled to witness the first blast at Culebra—for the French made the first attack on that redoubtable fortress, which after the lapse of thirty-five years is stubbornly resisting our American sappers and miners. But after due preparations, including wine, the fair hand of Mlle. Ferdinande De Lesseps pressed the button—and nothing

happened. Some fault in the connections made the electric spark impotent, and the chroniclers of the time do not record exactly when the blast was actually fired. But in the official canal paper the ceremony was described as "perfectly successful," and the reporter added that picturesque detail which Koko said "imparts an artistic verisimilitude to an other-

that no one thought of so material a thing as the tide. On the Pacific coast the tide rises and falls twenty feet or more, and while the guests were emptying their glasses the receding tide was emptying the bay whither they were bound. When they arrived they found that nearly two miles of coral rock and mud flats separated them from the shore where the



A view by Underwood & Underwood

JUNCTURE OF FRENCH AND AMERICAN CANALS

The American Canal is the wider, and affords the more direct route to the sea



PART OF THE TOLL OF LIFE

This cemetery on the westerly slope of Ancon Hill is one of the Zone's pathetic spots

wise bald and uninteresting statement of fact," by saying that the rocks were "much less resistant than we had expected."

These needless ceremonies and the false reports which attended them were merely what in our cynical age and nation are called press-agent "stunts," and were necessitated by the need for interesting the French people in the work, lest they let the market for the shares slump. They were early symptoms of the evil that culminated in the revelations of blackmail and forced tribute paid the French press when the final collapse was impending and inevitable.

De Lesseps indeed was a master in the art of "working the press," and had he confined his activities to that, without interfering with his engineers, history might have told a different story of his canal management. But lest doubt should seize upon would-be investors, he continually cut down

the estimates of his engineers, and issued flamboyant proclamations announcing triumphs that had not been won and prophesying a rate of progress that never could be attained. When his very capable Technical Commission, headed by Col. George M. Totten, the builder of the Panama Railroad, estimated the total cost of the canal at \$168,600,000, he took the report to his cabin on shipboard and there arbitrarily, with no possible new data, lopped off about \$37,000,000. Even at that, he calmly capitalized his company at 600,000,000 francs or \$120,000,000, though his own estimate of the cost of the canal exceeded that amount by more than \$12,000,000. One-half of his capital stock or \$60,000,000 the Count had reserved for the United States, but sold not a dollar's worth. The \$60,000,000 first offered in France was, however, eagerly subscribed. Of course it was wholly insufficient.

We know, what the unfortunate French investors



Phot. by Underwood & Underwood

THE ANCON HOSPITAL GROUNDS

The beauty of the grounds is due to early French planning

could not, and their directors probably did not know, that the canal could never be built by a private company seeking profit. Neither could it be built by private contract, as we discovered after some discouraging experiences of our own. The French builders were at the mercy of the stock market. A hurtful rumor, true or false, might at any time shut off their money supplies. Experience has pretty thoroughly demonstrated that the confidence of the investing public cannot long be maintained by false reports or futile promises, but both of these devices the French worked until the inevitable catastrophe.

Disease on the Isthmus cooperated with distrust in Paris to bring about failure. The French in 1880 knew nothing of the modern scientific systems for checking yellow-fever contagion and the spread of malaria. The part mosquitoes play as car-

riers of disease germs was not dreamed of. Beyond building excellent hospitals for the sick, some of which we still use, and dosing both sick and well liberally with quinine, they had no plan of campaign against "Yellow Jack." As a result, death stalked grimly among them, and the stories written of his ravages are ghastly. On the south side of Ancon Hill, where the quarry has gashed the hillside, stood,

until recently, a large frame house, built for Jules Dingler, first director-general of canal work. It



A SUNKEN RAILROAD

Nine feet below the boat is the roadbed of the old Panama railroad



A ZONE WORKING VILLAGE

The low houses were built by the French: all screening added by Americans

cost \$150,000, though perhaps worth a third of that sum, and was called "La Folie Dingler." But it was a rather tragic folly for poor Dingler, for before he had fairly moved into it his wife, son and daughter died of yellow fever and he returned to Paris to die too of a broken heart. His house, in which he anticipated such happiness, became a smallpox hospital, and was finally sold for \$25 with the stipulation that the purchaser remove it.

A dinner was given M. Henri Boinne, secretary-general of the company. Some one remarked that there were thirteen at the table, whereupon the guest of honor remarked gaily that as he was the last to come he would have to pay for all. In two weeks he was dead—yellow fever. Others at the dinner followed him. Of the members of one surveying party on the upper waters of the Chagres—a region I myself visited without a suggestion of ill effects—every one, twenty-two in all, were prostrated by disease and ten died. Bunau-Varilla, whose name is closely linked with the canal, says: "Out of every one hundred individuals arriving on the Isthmus, I can say without exaggeration that only twenty have been able to remain at their posts at the working stations, and even in that number

many who were able to present an appearance of health had lost much of their courage."

Col. Gorgas tells of a party of eighteen young Frenchmen who came to the Isthmus, all but one of whom died within a month. The Mother Superior of the nursing sisters in the French hospital at Ancon lost by fever twenty-one out of twenty-four sisters who had accompanied her to the Isthmus.

How great was the total loss of French lives can only be guessed. The hospital records show that at Ancon, 1041 patients died of yellow fever. Col. Gorgas figures that as many died outside the hospital. All the French records are more or less incomplete and their authenticity doubtful because apprehension for the tender hopes and fears of the shareholders led to the suppression of unpleasant facts. The customary guess is that two out of every three Frenchmen who went to the Isthmus died there. Col. Gorgas, who at one time figures the total loss during the French régime at 16,500, recently raised his estimate to 22,000, these figures of course including negro workmen. Little or no

effort was made to induce sanitary living, as under the Americans, and so ignorant were the French—as indeed all physicians were at that time—of the causes of the spread of yellow fever, that they set the legs of the hospital beds in shallow pans of water to keep the ants from creeping to the beds. The ants were stopped, but the water bred hosts of wrigglers from which came the deadly *stegomyia* mosquito, which carries the yellow-fever poison from the patient to the well person. Had the hospital been designed to spread instead of to cure disease its managers could not have planned better.

It is a curious fact that, in a situation in which the toll of death is heaviest, man is apt to be most reckless and riotous in his pleasures. The old drinking song of the English guardsmen beleaguered

during the Indian mutiny voices the almost universal desire of strong men to flaunt a gay defiance in the face of death:

"Stand! Stand to your glasses steady,
 'Tis all we have left to prize,
 One cup to the dead already,
 Hurrah, for the next that dies".

Wine, wassail and, I fear, women were much in evidence during the hectic period of the French activities. The people of the two Isthmian towns still speak of it as the *temps de luxe*. Dismal thrift was banished and extravagance was the rule. Salaries were prodigious. Some high officials were paid from \$50,000 to \$100,000 a year with houses, carriages, traveling expenses and uncounted incidentals. Expenditures for residences were lavish, and the nature of the structures still standing shows

that graft was the chief factor in the cost. The director-general had a \$40,000 bath-house, and a private railway car costing \$42,000—which is curiously enough almost exactly \$1000 for each mile of the railroad it traversed. The hospital buildings at Colon cost \$1,400,000 and one has but to look at them today to wonder how even the \$400,000 was spent.

The big graft that finally was one of the prime factors in wrecking the company was in Paris, but enough went on in Colon and Panama to make those

two towns as full of easy money as a mining camp after a big strike. The pleasures of such a society are not refined. Gambling and drinking were the less serious vices. A French commentator of the time remarks, "Most of the com-



NEGRO QUARTERS, FRENCH TOWN OF EMPIRE
 Paving and sanitary arrangements due to American régime

mercial business of Panama is transacted standing and imbibing cocktails—always the eternal cocktail! Afterward, if the consumer had the time and money to lose, he had only to cross the hall to find himself in a little room, crowded with people where roulette was going on. Oh this roulette, how much it has cost all grades of canal employees! Its proprietor must make vast profits. Admission is absolutely free; whoever wishes may join in the play. A democratic mob pushes and crowds around the table. One is elbowed at the same time by a negro, almost in rags, anxiously thrusting forward his ten sous, and by a portly merchant with his pockets stuffed with piasters and bank notes".

These towns, which bought and consumed French champagnes and other wines by the shipload, could not afford to build a water system. Water was peddled in the streets by men carrying great jars,

or conducting carts with tanks. There were millions for roulette, poker and the lottery, but nothing for sewers or pavements and during the wet season the people, natives and French both, waded ankle deep in filth which would have driven a blooded Berkshire hog from his sty. When from these man-created conditions of drink and dirt, disease was bred and men died like the vermin among which they lived, they blamed the climate, or the Chagres River.

Amidst it all the work went on. So much stress has been laid upon the riot in the towns that one forgets the patient digging out on the hills and in the jungle. In 1912 the Secretary of the United States Canal Commission estimated the amount of excavation done by the French, useful to our canal, at 29,709,000 cubic yards worth \$25,389,000. That by no means represented all their work, for our

shift in the line of the canal made much of their excavation valueless. Between Gold Hill and Contractor's Hill in the Culebra Cut, where our struggle with the obstinate resistance of nature has been fiercest, the French cut down 161 feet, all of it serviceable to us. Their surveys and plats are invaluable, and their machinery, which tourists seeing some pieces abandoned to the jungle condemn in the lump, has been of substantial value to us both for use and for sale.

But under the conditions as they found them, the French could never have completed the canal. Only a government could be equal to that task. President Roosevelt found to his own satisfaction at least that neither private contract nor civilian management was adequate. Most emphatically, if the desire for profit was to be the sole animating force the canal could never be built at all. When the



FILTH THAT WOULD DRIVE A BERKSHIRE FROM HIS STY

A typical scene in the negro quarters of Colon during the period of French activity in Panama



Photo by Underwood and Underwood

CANAL VALLEY NEAR PEDRO MIGUEL

Through the line of hills in the background extends the deepest part of the Culebra Cut

discovery that the canal enterprise would never be a "big bonanza" dawned on the French stockholders distrust was rapidly succeeded by panic. Vainly did De Lesseps repeat his favorite formula, "The canal will be built." Vainly did the officers of the company pay tribute to the blackmailers that sprung up on every side—journalists, politicians, discharged employees, every man who knew a weak point in the company's armor. Reorganizations, new stock issues, changes of plan, appeals for government aid, bond issues, followed one after another. The sea-level canal was abandoned and a lock canal substituted. After repeated petitions the French Chamber of Deputies, salved with some of the

spoil, authorized an issue of lottery bonds and bankruptcy was temporarily averted. A new company was formed but the work languished, just enough in fact being done to keep the concession alive. After efforts to enlist the cooperation of the United States, the company in despair offered to sell out altogether to that government, and after that proffer the center of interest was transferred from Paris to Washington.

The French had spent in all about \$260,000,000 and sacrificed about 2000 French lives before they drew the fires from their dredges, left their steam shovels in the jungle and turned the task over to the great American Republic.

CHAPTER VII

THE UNITED STATES BEGINS WORK



THE probable failure of the French became apparent some years before the actual collapse occurred and public opinion in the United States was quite ready for the assumption of the work and its expense by our government.

Of course that opinion was not wholly spontaneous—public opinion rarely is, notwithstanding the idealists. There were many parties in interest who found it profitable to enlist various agencies for awakening public opinion in this country to the point of buying the French property and saving something out of the wreck for the French stockholders. But, as a matter of fact, little artificial agitation was needful. The people of the United States readily agreed that a trans-isthmian canal should be built and owned by the United States government. There was honest difference of opinion as to the most practicable route and even today in the face of the victory over nature at Panama there are many who hold that the Nicaragua route would have been better.

Naturally the start made by the French had something to do with turning the decision in favor of the Isthmus, but it was not

decisive. The French had no rights that they could sell except the right of veto conferred by their ownership of the Panama Railroad. Their franchise from Colombia expressly prohibited its transfer to any other government, so it was unsalable. But the charter of the Panama Railroad, which the French had acquired, provided that no interoceanic canal should be built in Co-



Photo by Underwood & Underwood

PANAMA SOLDIERS GOING TO CHURCH

Colombia without the consent of the railroad corporation. This to some extent gave the French the whiphand. What they had to sell was the controlling stock of the railroad company, the land they had acquired in Colombia, the machinery on the spot and the work they had completed. But all of this was of little value without a franchise from Colombia and the one the French held could not be transferred to a government, and was of little worth anyway as it would expire in 1910, unless the canal were completed by that year—a physical impossibility.

In 1898 the race of the battleship "Oregon" around Cape Horn to join the United States fleet off Cuba in the Spanish-American war offered just the graphic and specific argument necessary to fix the determination of the American people to dig that canal and to own it. That voyage of 10,000 miles which might have been avoided by a ditch fifty miles long revolted the common sense of the nation, and the demand for instant action on the canal question was universal.

Accordingly in 1899 President McKinley appointed what was known as the Walker Commission, because headed by Admiral John G. Walker, to investigate all Central American routes. They had the data collected during almost a century at their disposal and very speedily settled down to the alternative between the Panama and the Nicaragua routes. Over this choice controversy raged long and noisily. While it was in progress the bullet of an assassin ended the life of President McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt succeeded him.

The Isthmian Canal was precisely the great, epoch-marking spectacular enterprise to enlist the utmost enthusiasm and energy of this peculiarly dynamic President. A man of strong convictions he favored the Panama route—and got it. He believed in a lock canal—and enforced his beliefs over the report of the engineers whose expert professional opinions he invited. Of a militant tempera-



THE OFFICIAL UMPIRE, COCLE

ment he thought the canal should be dug by the army—and that is the way it was built. Not over tolerant of other people's rights he thought the United States should have a free hand over the canal and adjacent territory—and when Colombia, which happened to own that territory, was slow in accepting this view he set up out of nothing overnight the new Republic of Panama, recognized it as a sovereign state two days afterwards, concluded a treaty with it, giving the United States all he thought it should have, and years later, in a moment of frankness declared "I took Panama, and left Congress to debate it later."

About the political morality and the personal ethics of the Roosevelt solution of the diplomatic problem there will ever be varying opinions. Colombia is still mourning for her ravished province of Panama and refuses to be comforted even at a price of \$10,000,000 which has been tentatively offered as salve for the wound. But that the canal in 1913 is just about ten years nearer completion than it would be had not Roosevelt been President in 1903 is a proposition generally accepted. History—which is not always moral—is apt to applaud results regardless of methods, and



Photo by Underwood & Underwood

THE MAN AND THE MACHINE

President Roosevelt and the monster steam shovel figure largely in the story of Panama

the Republic and Canal of Panama are likely to be Roosevelt's most enduring monuments—though the canal may outlast the Republic.

Prior to this time there had been several sporadic negotiations opened with different nations of Central America for canal rights. The most important one was a treaty signed at Bogotá in 1870 by an envoy especially authorized by President Grant. But this treaty was never ratified by our Senate, and was amended out of acceptable form by the Colombian Senate. For the purposes of this narrative we may well consider the diplomatic history of the canal to begin with the passage of the Spooner act in 1902. This act, written by Senator John C. Spooner of Wisconsin, authorized the Panama route if the French property could be bought for \$40,000,000 and the necessary right of way secured from Colombia. Failing this the Commission of seven members created by the act was authorized to open negotiations with Nicaragua. Events made it quite apparent that the Nicaragua clause was inserted merely as a club to be used in the negotiations with Co-



THE TRAIL NEAR CULEBRA

lombia and the French company. With the latter it proved highly effective, for although the American attorney for the company, Mr. William Nelson Cromwell, fixed a price at first upon the property of \$101,141,500 an apparently active opening of negotiations with Nicaragua caused an immediate drop to the prescribed \$40,000,000. With that offer in hand the Commission unanimously reported to the President in favor of the Panama route.

The Republic of Colombia was less tractable, and naturally so as it held a stronger hand. When negotiations began the French concession had but seven years more of life. If their progress could be prolonged for that period practically all that the United States would have paid the French would be paid to Colombia. Meanwhile the French property was wholly unsalable without a Colombian franchise. The one weak point in the Colombian armor was the possibility that the United States might finally turn to Nicaragua, but this contingency was made unlikely by the report of the Commission, and by the general desire of the American people which was undoubtedly for the Panama route.

In 1903 the Colombian Minister at Washington negotiated with Senator Hay a treaty which by a lucky chance failed of ratification in the Panama Senate. It never reached our Senate, but it is quite incredible that it could have succeeded there, for it had several features that would have led to endless disagreement between the two countries—might indeed have resulted in the United States annexing Colombia altogether. For example the Canal Zone was to be governed by a joint commission of the two countries—Colombia remaining



Photo by Underwood & Underwood

LANDING PIGS FOR MARKET

sovereign over the territory. The United States was to explicitly guarantee the sovereignty of Colombia against all the world. Colombia was to police the Zone. Each of these sections was big with possibilities of trouble. That Colombia did not speedily ratify this treaty would be inexplicable, for it was all to the Colombian good, except for the fact that by delaying any action for seven years the French property along the line of the canal, valued at \$40,000,000, would drop into the Colombian treasury.

Delay, however, while good enough for the Colombians, did not suit the Panamanians, nor did it please Theodore Roosevelt, whom Providence, while richly endowing him otherwise, had not invested with patience in the face of opposition. The Panamanians, by whom for the purposes of this narrative I mean chiefly the residents of Colon and the city

of Panama, wanted to see some American money spent in their various marts of trade. The French were rapidly disappearing. The business of all their commercial institutions from dry goods stores down to saloons was falling off. Even the lottery did not thrive as of yore and the proprietors of the lesser games of chance, that in those days were run quite openly, were reduced to the precarious business of robbing each other. All these and other vested interests called for immediate negotiation of any sort of a treaty which would open the spigots of Uncle Sam's kegs of cash over the two thirsty Isthmian towns. It was irksome too to think that the parent state of Colombia would make the treaty and handle the cash accruing under it. The Yankees were ready to pay \$10,000,000 down, and it was believed a further rental of \$250,000 for the right to build a canal every foot of which would be on



IN THE BANANA COUNTRY, ON THE COAST NEAR BOCAS DEL TORO

the territory of the Province of Panama. If Panama was a sovereign state instead of merely a province, all this money would be used for the benefit of but 400,000 people, including Indians and negroes, who of course could not be expected to have much to say about its use. If employed in public works, it would only have to spread over about 32,000 square miles, or a territory a little smaller than Indiana. But of course it would chiefly go to the two cities. On the other hand if Colombia made this treaty the capital city Bogotá would get the lion's share of the spoil, and for that matter all the provinces would share in the division with Panama, which had the goods for sale.

What more natural than that the Panamanians should turn their thoughts toward secession from Colombia. It was no novel

channel for their meditations, for, as has been pointed out already, there had been 53 revolutions in Colombia in 57 years. Red revolution had become a commonplace except for the poor fellows who got themselves killed in them, or the widows and children thrown on the charity of a rather uncharitable people. Always hitherto the result of the revolutions had been the same—Panama had either been whipped into subjection, or had voluntarily returned to the domination of Colombia. But that was before there was a \$10,000,000 prize at stake.

In several of these revolutions the United States had interfered, always in behalf of Colombia and always with fatal effect upon the hopes of the

revolutionists. For the key to the military situation in Panama was the railroad. In every well ordered revolution—for the business of revolting had become a science—the conspirators began by corrupting the federal soldiers at Panama city where alone any garrison was maintained. This done they proclaimed Panama a free and independent state. As there was no land communication between Bogotá and the Isthmus the federal government was compelled to send its troops to Colon and thence

across the Isthmus to Panama by railroad. If the revolutionists could destroy or obstruct the railroad their chances for success would be greatly enhanced.

But under a treaty with Colombia in 1846 the United States guaranteed the neutrality of the railroad and this guarantee was sensibly con-



Photo by Underwood & Underwood

THE BEST RESIDENCE SECTION, COLON

structed to include the task of keeping the line open for traffic. In several revolutions, therefore, United States marines were detailed to guard the line, and Colombia being thus enabled to pour its superior forces into Panama crushed out rebellion with comparative ease. If the experience of the 53 revolutions counted for anything, it indicated that Panama could not throw off the Colombian yoke as long as the United States kept the railroad open for Colombian troops.

Let us consider the situation toward the mid-summer of 1903. In Washington was the Roosevelt administration keenly eager to have the canal work begun as a great deed to display to the nation



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ANCON HILL FROM HARBOR OF PANAMA

The town nestles under the northeast side of the hill which is precipitous and cuts off the sun's rays early in the afternoon. From the crest the most beautiful view in Panama may be enjoyed.

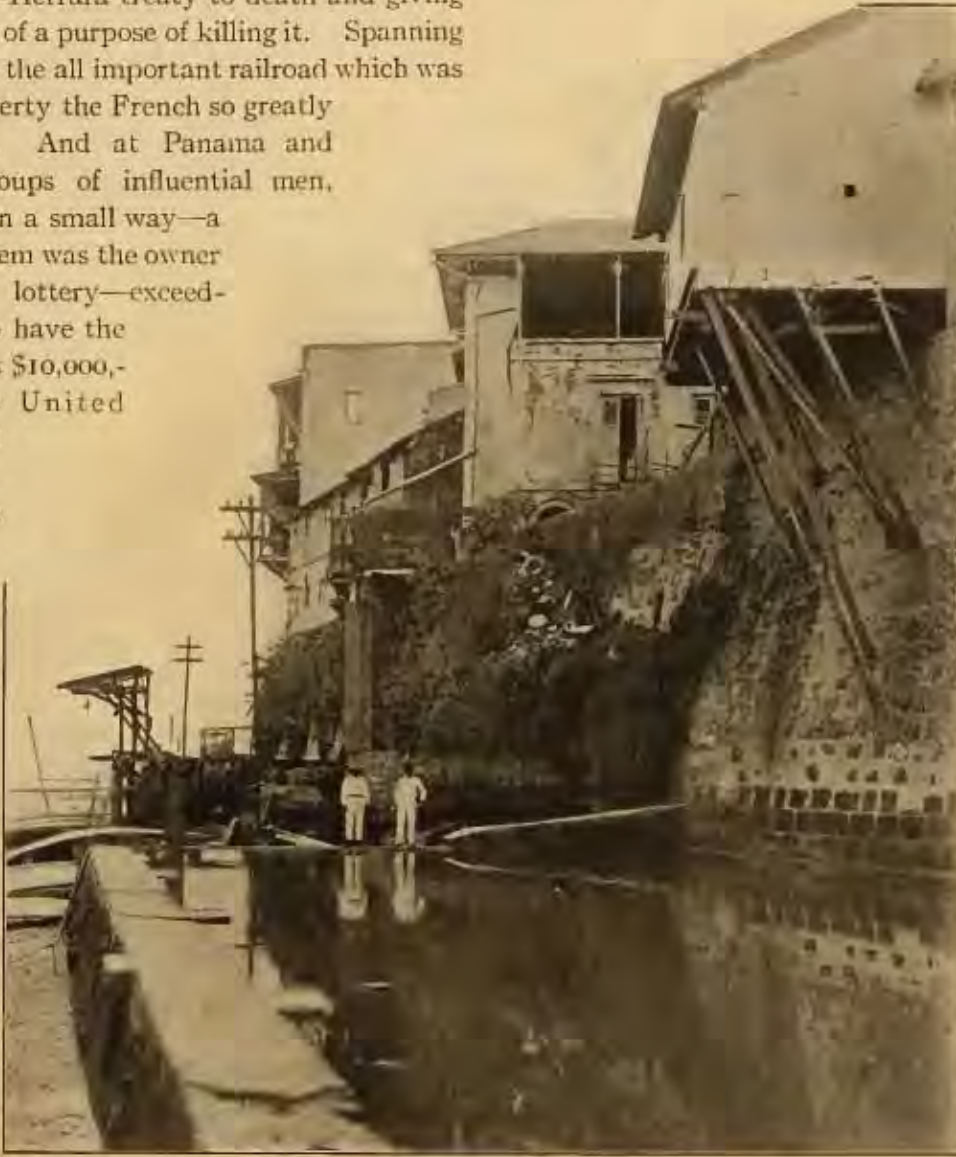
in the coming presidential campaign. In New York was Mr. William Nelson Cromwell, representing the French company and quite as keen for action which would enable him to sell the United States \$40,000,000 worth of French machinery and uncompleted canal. At Bogotá was the Colombian legislature talking the Hay-Herrera treaty to death and giving every indication of a purpose of killing it. Spanning the Isthmus was the all important railroad which was part of the property the French so greatly desired to sell. And at Panama and Colon were groups of influential men, high financiers in a small way—a leader among them was the owner of the Panama lottery—exceedingly anxious to have the handling of that \$10,000,000 which the United States would pay for a franchise, and quite desirous to have the country tributary to those two towns suddenly populated by 40,000 to 50,000 canal workmen, all drawing money from the United States and spending it there.

What happened was inevitable. Under the conditions existing only two things could have prevented the successful revolution which did occur—the quick ratification of a satisfactory treaty between the United States and Colombia, or an observance by the United States of the spirit as well as the letter of neutrality in the inevitable revolution.

Neither of these things happened. The Congress at Bogotá failed to ratify the treaty. In Panama

and Colon the revolutionary Junta conspired, and sent emissaries to Washington to sound the government there on its attitude in case of a revolution. To their aid came Mr. Cromwell and M. Bunau-Varilla, a highly distinguished French engineer also interested in the plight of his countrymen. Dr.

Amador was chosen to sound the then Secretary of State John Hay. He was told, according to trustworthy reports, that while the United States guaranteed Colombia against foreign aggression it did not bind itself to protect the sovereignty of that state against domestic revolution. In the event of such an uprising all it was bound to do was to see that traffic over the railroad was unimpeded. This sounded and



THE OLD FIRE CISTERN, PANAMA

still sounds fair enough, but there were minds among the revolutionists to see that this policy opened the way for a successful revolution at last.

For this is the way in which the policy worked when put to the test and indeed some of the incidents indicate that the Roosevelt administration went somewhat beyond the letter of the rule Secretary Hay had laid down. Our government