

Our Little Mexican and Panamanian Cousins

VOLUME NINE

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Volume 9

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Libraries of Hope

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Our Little Mexican Cousin

Edward C. Butler

Preface

One generation ago American histories pictured Mexico as a land of volcanoes and palms, cathedrals, bandits and revolutions, and a dark-eyed race riding about in stages. Even in 1874 railroads and telegraphs, the veins and nerves of a nation, were unknown, and New York was a fortnight's steamer ride from Mexico City; to-day they are but one hundred hours apart. Bandits and revolutions are now unknown, the only revolutions being of car-wheels and machinery belting.

The mental revolution includes the boys and girls of Mexico. Family life, formerly intimate and conservative, broadens, and the old-time interdependence gives way to independence. English is now spoken by the youth; in fact, they are more ambitious to learn English than their American cousins to learn Spanish. Lads and lassies of this lovely

land are sent to American schools to finish their education. They return with American ideas. The boys are as enthusiastic over baseball and football as are the American boys; the girls fraternize freely with foreign playmates.

Surely our little Mexican cousin now lives in a new morning of thought, on the threshold of modernizing ideas and at the open door of expectant promise and radiant possibility.

The siesta and the fiesta fade, the "mañana" habit is being forgotten, and mutual respect and regard increasingly unite the Mexicans and Americans. In 1894, the writer, as secretary of the American Legation, in conversation with President Porfirio Diaz, heard him call the United States "Mexico's big brother." God grant that this big brother may always treat his Mexican sister with gallantry and kindness, thus helping her to work out her own wonderful destiny.

CHAPTER I

The New Year

On New Year's Eve Juanita had been allowed to sit up long past her usual bedtime, that she might enjoy the celebration of the holiday, as well as take part in the religious observances. To Juanita the latter were no less important than the former, for she belonged to a devout Roman Catholic family. With them holy days and holidays were one and the same thing, and the Mexicans have a great many of them.

Juanita's father, Alvaro Jiminez, was a merchant of the City of Mexico, and the home he had provided for his family was all that a moderate income, combined with good taste, could command.

The big door of this home opened on a tiled entrance leading to a lovely garden. A large palm rose in the centre,

its fronded leaves gracefully falling over beds of violets, heliotrope, and pansies. A brilliant bougainvillea vine, cerise in colour, trailed along one side of the wall like a rich robe instinct with life. A broad, tessellated corridor ran around the garden. This patio, or court, was open to the sky, as is common in Mexican homes, and sunshine and light thus reached all the rooms.

The parlour was a stately room, the chairs lined up on each side of the sofa, so the men could sit on one side and the women on the other.

Of course all the rooms were comfortably furnished, but one of the most interesting in the house was the kitchen.

The Mexican kitchen is always provided with a *brasero* or range built of bricks, about three feet high and from three to six feet wide. On the top are two or more square openings, each containing a grate, and underneath the grate is an open place to furnish draught and from which to collect the ashes. Charcoal is used in the *braseros*.

The earthen pots and iron kettles are placed on the burning coals, and meals are therefore cooked in a very short time. The Mexican cook can thus prepare three or



Señor Jiminez

four articles at once. No stovepipes are used, and the walls of the kitchen are soon very black from the smoke.

Sometimes a brick oven is built apart from the *brasero*. When the family has no oven, the cook puts the food in a dish, with a piece of sheet iron on top covered with hot coals, thus cooking underneath and above.

Though weary, Juanita was very happy on the morning of New Year's Day. The celebration of the previous evening was fresh in her mind, and, childlike, her imagination ran riot.

At midnight, with her parents, she had attended mass in the great cathedral. The privilege of celebrating midnight mass on New Year's Eve was granted to the Mexicans by Pope Leo XIII. Hence, the Mexican churches are filled with devout people as they approach the threshold of the new year. On the first day of the year special services are held, on which occasion a pontifical mass is had, commencing at nine o'clock in the forenoon.

Early in the evening before this midnight service the Jiminez family had partaken of a supper prepared with unusual care and generosity, at which several guests, old

and young, were welcome visitors. The intervening hours were occupied by cheerful conversation and social games. In the latter you may be sure Juanita took an active and joyous part.

In the homes of some of Juanita's friends, where there was less observance of religious rites, entertainments and midnight suppers were given. Peculiar ceremonies were performed. When the cathedral clock struck midnight, the moment on which the old and the new hinged, a pretty girl from among the number present poured a bottle of champagne over a porcelain clock, thus christening the new year. Then the orchestra struck up and everybody danced.

In some other homes there was a more gruesome celebration of the passing of the old year. All the members of the company were dressed in black. Upon a table in the centre candles surrounded a small coffin, upon which was a clock set so as to stop when it reached the hour of midnight. At just that moment the clock was put into the coffin and buried in the garden, or patio, as if it were a dead person.

Strange as it may seem, the Mexican children, as well as

older people, found much fun in this ceremony, and after the mock funeral all engaged in dancing.

Throughout the place a noisy welcome was given to the new year. When the great bell struck the hour of twelve the entire city seemed to give a great throb. Bells all over the city took up the new story; steam whistles were let loose in all the factories, and, during the traditional five minutes that are supposed to cover the eternal confounding of the old and the exaltation of the new year, small boys went through the streets blowing horns and shooting off fire-crackers.

Like the children of many lands, as well as like some children of a larger growth, Juanita made some good resolutions at the beginning of this new year. Among them was a purpose to be helpful to those who were not so happily or so pleasantly situated.

She set about to carry out this purpose at once, and went to call on her friend, Rosa Alvarez, with the express purpose of inviting her home to dinner that day. This was entirely in keeping with the hospitable Mexican's idea of beginning the new year.

Juanita and Rosa were very close friends, though Rosa's father was a man of much more humble occupation than Señor Jiminez. He was a carpenter by trade. He earned $1.50 Mexican money per day, or about seventy-five cents in American currency. Her mother was an industrious woman, and in order to add to the income of the family, she took in laundry work.

The Alvarez family was, however, a happy one. The father was not given to pulque-drinking and gambling, like some of his neighbours, and he spent no money on lottery tickets, cock-fights, or bull-fights. He was a plain, practical man, not given to extravagance, and, while some of his fellow workmen had their belongings in pawn most of the time, this industrious artisan was saving money, and rightly expected some day to exchange his *vivienda* (tenement flat) of four rooms for a home of his own in the suburbs of the city.

Juanita found Rosa at home. She well deserved the pretty name that had been given her. She was a girl ten years of age, with hair as black as the polished wing of a raven, deep dark eyes, and a complexion like a blush rose.

Like many Mexican children, she also had pretty teeth. Juanita's own name had been given her because she was so petite and *simpatica*, the last a term that is scarcely translatable, but which means popular, lovable, etc.

Juanita also found at home Rosa's younger brother, Francisco, who was commonly called by his nickname, Panchito. He was invited by Juanita to dine with Rosa at the Jiminez home.

You may be sure the invitation was gladly accepted, for rarely did they have an opportunity for such a pleasant time.

As Juanita ran along with her little friends, she stooped to pick a deep pink rosebud, which she laughingly pressed to the blushing cheek of her playmate as if to see which rose was the loveliest. Juanita was not as pretty as Rosa, but she was so entirely unselfish that no envy entered her happy thought.

The children gathered little yellow roses and red roses from Juanita's garden, entwining them with honeysuckle, and into the centre of the blooming, blushing flowers they set a couple of glorious gladioli.

"Come right into the house," said Juanita, as they arrived at the door of the Jiminez home. "It is now noon, and I think our dinner will be all ready. We are to eat by ourselves, as papa is at the store and mamma is not in just now."

So Rosa and Panchito followed their hostess into the sunny dining-room, where they found the table well-laden with good things.

The tramp had given the children splendid appetites, and they enjoyed their dinner very much. Vegetable soup was first served, then egg omelette, with rice cooked with tomatoes. They had roasted veal and potatoes, with lettuce salad.

But the dish of the day was *mole*, a spicy food made up with turkey or chicken and prepared with a sauce which had numerous ingredients, such as tomatoes, chili peppers of two kinds, cloves, chocolate, cumin, raisins, almonds, garlic, and one or two other spices. It was eaten with tortillas, the flat unleavened bread of the lower classes in Mexico, which is just like the chupatties of India and other Eastern countries.

Then the children had a course of *frijoles* (Mexican beans), while the dessert was composed of fruit jellies and custards with seasoned gelatines. The sweetmeats were in fancy shapes, and Mexican children, like all others, are very fond of their *dulces*.

When the children had been given their *dulces*, Juanita suggested that they sit out upon the balcony, to which there was entrance from the dining-room through a low window. Here they could enjoy the fresh air and watch with childish pleasure the changing scenes of the Mexican street.

The children handed some of the *dulces* out through the bars of the balcony to the poor children who stood around suggestively. *Dulces* is the one word that carries more suggestion to the hearts of Mexican children than almost any other in their language.

The home-made candies which had been provided for Juanita and her friends were made from Mexican sugar, which is the best in the world, though American sugar is imported for the manufacture of American confectionery. On all family or social occasions *dulces* are passed around on small trays or plates. Birthdays, saints' days, and dances

are always thus sweetened. The native confectionery includes even fruits and sweet potatoes cooked in syrup and encrusted in sugar.

These Mexicans did not chew gum, though millions of pounds of the product of the zapote-tree are annually consumed by young Americans.

Among the children who were thus remembered by Juanita and her little friends were some newsboys. Newsboys were unknown in Mexico ten years ago, but these busy, noisy little fellows are now found everywhere. Poor, ragged, and often hungry, but always resourceful, this waif of the byways will shout the names of his papers, but is not allowed to yell their contents, as his American cousin does.

Panchito knew very well how sharp was the Mexican newsboy's struggle for existence, for on some occasions he had sold papers himself. Like Panchito, many of these youngsters had parents living, but they took no more than a passing interest in their children.

The Mexican newsboy does not get his name registered in the accident books of the police. He is too wide-awake for that. Even among these children of five to seven years



A Fruit-Vendor

of age, the instinct of self-preservation is well-grounded, and the passing carriages and streetcars have no terrors for him. The street belongs to him, and no stray dog knows better than he the art of getting out of the road.

Their sweetmeats consumed, Rosa and Panchito remained with Juanita a part of the afternoon, passing the time in simple childish games. When they finally went to their more humble home, there were at least three very happy children in the City of Mexico.

CHAPTER II

At School

"Come now, my little daughter, school begins to-day, and it is high time you were up and getting ready for it."

These were the first words Juanita heard on the Monday morning following New Year's Day. As she opened her eyes, she saw her mother's smiling face over her.

The girl knew that, though the face was pleasant and the tone a cheery one, her mother's words were not to be lightly regarded. So she quickly hopped out of bed and got ready for breakfast. She was the more willing to do this because, though she liked to play as well as any one, she loved to go to school and enjoyed there the companionship of other children of her own age. She also appreciated the opportunity which was afforded her to learn those things which would help to make her life useful to herself and to

others. Juanita was able to see how by faithful application to her studies she would be better enabled to carry out her new year's resolution of helpfulness to the less fortunate.

With a good-bye kiss from mamma, Juanita started in good season for the schoolhouse, which was only a few blocks distant. She went a little out of her way, however, to call for her friends, Rosa and Panchito.

There were about fifty children at the opening day. As they went in each boy or girl ran up to the teacher to salute her. The girls kissed her, and the boys bowed and said, "*Buenos dias.*" They all brought her lovely flowers, from the elegant and expensive camellias and gardenias down to the poppies, dahlias, and daisies. Rich or poor, each pupil brought some floral offering to the teacher.

On this opening day the children found it hard to get down to routine work. That they might not get too uneasy, and thus disturb the order of the school, the teacher took a little time to tell them something about the early heroes of Mexican independence.

She said the spirit of independence, which is so manifest in England and America, was born in Mexico nearly as early

as in its northern neighbour, with, perhaps, far greater reason for it.

"One of the earliest and most famous of our heroes," said the teacher, "was Hidalgo. His father was a farmer of Guanajuato, where Hidalgo was born in 1753. The boy was educated for the priesthood, and took holy orders in young manhood.

"Hidalgo set a good example to you children by improving his opportunities for education, and, strangely enough, considering his surroundings, he acquired many liberal and advanced ideas. As he was a fearless man, he did not hesitate to make public his views concerning vital questions. For this he was denounced by his conservative and narrow-minded religious superiors.

"In 1810, Hidalgo, in company with Allende, a kindred spirit with similar notions of independence, at the head of eighty men, raised the cry, 'Down with false government!'

"A moblike army of fifty thousand men or more was soon formed, and succeeded in taking possession of Hidalgo's native city. Independence was declared, but this raw, undisciplined, poorly equipped army was no match for

the forces of the Spanish government. The revolution was finally put down, and ended in Hidalgo's execution in the year 1811.

"Can any of you tell me," asked the teacher, "where Hidalgo's body lies?"

Up went several hands.

"You may tell us, Francisco."

"In the great cathedral in this city," was the boy's response.

"Yes, years after his execution, Hidalgo's body was raised and given solemn burial in Mexico's grandest shrine—just as in London Westminster Abbey has received the mortal remains of England's kings and heroes.

"But though crushed for the time being," continued the teacher, "the spirit of independence was not destroyed, and in later years other brave and intrepid leaders arose and led Mexico on in the march toward freedom.

"Many of them met shameful death at the hands of the Spanish rulers, but to-day Mexico honours their memory. Over the door of the birthplace of one of these martyrs, Agustin de Yturbide, who was shot as a traitor, there is now

placed the inscription:

"'LIBERTADOR DE MEXICO.'

"A later liberty-loving hero, who accomplished much, was President Benito Juarez. He is sometimes called the Lincoln of Mexico. He will always be held in reverence for his sublime career, and his life is a standing inspiration to Mexican boys. Until he was twelve years of age Juarez was a barefooted, bareheaded boy among the mountains of Oaxaca. He was born on a couch of straw in 1806, his cradle rocked by breezes and canopied with skies of eternal summer.

"But this Indian boy was good, and had the genius of gentleness as well as the armour of honesty and the courage of his convictions. Forced to the front by natural-born ability, the boy became a man upon whom the nation rested, a rock upon which the republic built.

"As the Magna Charta was forced by the best thought of England from a conservative king, so the Laws of Reform, proclaimed by Juarez in 1859, accomplished much for the poorer classes of our country."

Much more than this the teacher told to the school

children, who were so interested in the stories that they took no notice of the passing time. Nevertheless, they were glad when the closing signal was given, and, after filing to the street in an orderly manner, rushed to their homes to repeat to admiring parents the wonderful tales of Hidalgo and Yturbide and Juarez.

Happy days followed for the children, made joyous by their studious application and their ready obedience to the teacher. At half-past ten every day the boys had recess, after which the girls were given theirs.

For the information of the young reader, it may be said that education was made compulsory in Mexico by President Diaz in 1891. Until that time there was no systematic work of the kind among the Mexican Indians.

The Aztecs had two classes of schools: the Calmecac, where the nobles received instruction in arts of war, and the Telpuchalli, where the people received instruction in history, eloquence, picture-writing, geography, and astronomy, highly tinctured with astrology. The discipline was very strict. These were mixed schools.

In the sixteenth century the Roman Catholic priests

introduced writing and arithmetic along with their catechisms, a sort of forced growth. In the eighteenth century Viceroy Revillagigedo showed Mexico to have a population of four million, with only ten schools.

Later the Compania Lancasteriana made an effort for uniform education in Mexico, and in 1896 their schools were taken up by the government of the republic. In 1895 in the Federal District there were but three hundred people to the thousand who could read and write.

Schools of the primary grade are free, and children from six to sixteen years of age are obliged to attend. The compulsory studies are morals, civic duties, arithmetic, Spanish, reading, writing, elementary geometry, geography, elementary sciences, history of Mexico, and drawing and objective lessons. Corporal punishment is prohibited by law, and the teachers use moral suasion, detention after school-hours, lowering of marks, and suspension for a few days. There is scarcely any permanent expulsion.

CHAPTER III

Making Drawn-Work

"Mamma," said Juanita one day after school, "may I go over to Sarita's a little while? She says her mother will show me how to make drawn-work."

Juanita's mother knew that Señora Ortiz, Sarita's mother, was very skillful in all kinds of Mexican fancy work, and was willing that her daughter should learn how to use the needle and embroidery materials.

"Yes, you may go," said Señora Jiminez, "but you must not bother Sarita's mother about her work. You know that she is a widow and is obliged to support herself and her children by doing fancy work.

"This drawn-work which you want to learn how to make is very popular with visitors from America and other countries, and Señora Ortiz sells much of it to them."

"All right, mamma, I'll remember what you say. Perhaps sometime I may be able to find customers for her. You know papa often brings American visitors to our house."

So through the streets Juanita hurried, and soon came to Sarita's home. This was even more humble than that of her friend Rosa. Here in three small rooms lived Señora Ortiz, together with her two daughters, Sarita and Maria, and her son Carlos. Sarita was thirteen years old, just the age of Juanita, and Carlos was eight. Maria, the baby of the family, was only three.

Juanita tapped at the door, which was quickly opened by her young friend, who greeted her with a hearty kiss. In the centre of the room was placed a large frame made of thin strips of board and mounted on four legs.

Over this frame was tightly stretched a piece of linen cloth.

At one side of the frame sat Sarita's mother, who gave Juanita a cordial welcome and invited her to take a seat opposite. At one end of the frame Sarita sat down, for she had become quite skillful in this work and gave her mother much help in the hours when she was not in school.

"Sarita has already told me," said Señora Ortiz, "that you want to learn how to make drawn-work. I am glad that you want to do this, for, if there is one thing in which Mexican women take pride, it is their skill in fancy work of all kinds."

"We have a sewing teacher in school," said Juanita, "and I like to do the plain work she gives us, but I also want to learn to make the drawn-work. I am sure mamma will be very much pleased if I can do anything which will add to the beauty of our home furnishings.

"Then perhaps sometime I may be able to make an altar-cloth for our church."

Señora Ortiz gave Juanita a few simple directions, explaining to her that she could not expect to do fine work for a long time, for it required experience as well as deftness. She set her to drawing threads in a portion of the linen where the work was comparatively plain.

"Drawing the threads is the fundamental work," the señora said. "This is slow and laborious, especially when the weave of the linen is fine. If a plain piece of cloth is used, the work is easier. The drawing of the threads prepares the



Making Drawn-Work

background or field, upon which to operate. This is the mechanical part of the work.

"Then comes the designing upon the groundwork thus prepared. Combinations of straight lines and small curves, as in elementary penmanship, are used in the simpler work, but sometimes intricate designs are introduced.

"We often copy from flowers and scenery. One of the oldest patterns is the cross and crown, which is also one of the prettiest and most solid, for the weave is close and washes well. It consists of a Maltese cross and an ornamented ring alternating.

"Instead of the ring or crown, we sometimes leave a *cuadro* or block where the threads are not drawn. Another favourite design is the *paloma* or dove with outstretched wings, and the *espiga* or the ear of wheat design is much used, made in the form of a wreath. The daisy design is often combined with cross and crown. After you have had a little practice, I will show you how to work a forget-me-not pattern upon a handkerchief."

Juanita worked away faithfully under the directions given her for about an hour, Sarita and her mother mean-

while steadily toiling on. At the same time little Maria was playing about the room, watching her elders with her sparkling black eyes, and prattling away as only a little child can.

At the end of the hour Juanita said: "I must go now, for mamma likes to have me at home at tea-time. I thank you very much for what you have shown me, and I hope you will let me come again."

"Indeed, we shall be glad to have you," said Señora Ortiz. "Sarita's friends are always welcome here. I know that she is specially fond of you."

Sarita blushed prettily at this, but she urgently added her own invitation to her mother's words.

Just before Juanita was to take her leave, Sarita's brother Carlos came rushing in, his olive-tinted cheeks aglow with excitement and his eyes sparkling under the wide brim of his tall, bell-crowned hat.

"Oh, mamma," he said, "I have just carried a valise from the railway station to the Humboldt Hotel for an English gentleman, and he gave me twenty-five *centavos*. He says if I will come around to-morrow he will have some more errands for me."

Carlos was always greatly delighted when he was able to earn a little money, for it meant just so much more help and happiness for his hard-working mother. She was wise enough to sympathize and rejoice with her boy in all his successes, but she was also careful not to let his ambition to earn money interfere with his school work.

Bidding her friends good-bye, Juanita hastily passed out the door. As she walked up the street, she turned for a last look and caught a glimpse of little Maria throwing kisses after her.

The girl did not dally on her way home, though she saw much to interest her on the streets. Some of the sights excited her tender sympathies. Many little boys, much younger than Juanita, were going about with heavy bundles on their backs, early in life being compelled to become *cargadores*, or burden-bearers, like their fathers.

If Juanita had been in some of the cities of Northern Mexico, where rain seldom falls, she would have seen boys acting as water-carriers. They carry two large cans of water hung on to a clumsy wooden yoke laid across the shoulders.

The donkey-boys were a more pleasant sight, and

Juanita smiled as she saw them skillfully guiding the little beasts about the streets. No grown man could have handled them any better.

Soon, however, she arrived at her own home, where she found her papa returned from his store. Glad as she always was to see him, she was especially affectionate at this time, as she remembered that her friend Sarita had no father to love and cherish her.

Family relations in Mexico are very affectionate and close. The children live with their parents until they are married, meanwhile regarding all that is in the house as their very own. In this respect home life in Mexico is like home life in the East, as pictured in the parable of the prodigal son, where the father said to the murmuring brother, "All I have is thine."

Juanita, like the daughters in other Mexican homes, was watched with jealous care, and was known as *"pedazo del corazon,"* or "piece of the heart," of the parents.

During the evening meal Juanita told her father what she had been doing during the day — about the visit to Sarita, the lesson in making drawn-work, the poor little

cargadores, the donkey-boys, as well as about her school work.

In this her father was always much interested, especially in her history lessons. He often took occasion to tell her tales of the early history of Mexico. To-night he told her that Aztec mythology mentioned traditions of the flood, the ark, the dove, the green leaf, the temptation of Eve, and the subsequent sorrow.

He also told her of the pyramids of Mexico, which are said to be as old as those of Egypt, and are almost as large. The supposition that the Mexicans sprang from Asiatic races, who brought to this continent the old Biblical stories, is sustained by various authorities.

About the year 1500 B.C., the Olmecas, of Tartar origin, superseded the Mexican giants. They inhabited the table-lands, swarmed in its ghostly forests, and like wild birds lived upon its silent lakes.

After twenty centuries the Aztec shifted into the scene, drifting southward from the Californias. Half-hunter, half-fisherman, he reached Mexico, where his troubles began. He was like an Ishmaelite. Five hundred years of wandering

found him entering the Valley of Mexico, and it took him one hundred years to make the circuit of the valley from Texcoco to Chapultepec and from Tlaltelolco to Ixtapalapa.

In 1325 the Aztecs selected as the site of their city an island located between the present cathedral site and the plaza of Santo Domingo. Upon a rock they found the legendary eagle, its claws fastened upon the branch of a thorny cactus and in its beak a writhing serpent. Their little city was named Tenochtitlan.

Mexico City, which is built on the site of that ancient town, is really a great and beautiful city, created in 1523 by the Spaniards. In 1600 the city had only 15,000 people, 8,000 Aztecs and 7,000 Spaniards, but now its population is 450,000.

All this Señor Jiminez told Juanita while they ate their supper. Of course she asked him a great many questions. She would have been very different from other children if she had not. A promise was given that she might soon visit the National Museum, where she would see many relics of the time of the Aztecs.

CHAPTER IV

A Dinner and a Ride

Kings' Day, one of the brightest religious feast-days in Mexico, occurs in January. In the calendar of the Roman Catholic Church it is set aside for the adoration of the Gentile Kings or Wise Men, Gaspar, Melchor, and Baltazar, who were led by the star in the east to Bethlehem.

This feast of the Epiphany is observed in the churches with unusual services; at the cathedral there is solemn high mass at nine o'clock. Mexican flags hang from the big dome and vaulted roofs, and appropriate sermons are preached.

Aside from the religious observance of the holiday, there was much social gaiety, and our young people had a large share in the good times.

Juanita's mother made plans to entertain at dinner a number of her friends. As she did not believe in shutting

the children out of the good times, she told her daughter that she could ask several of her schoolmates. Naturally, Juanita invited the boys and girls with whom we have become acquainted — Rosa and Panchito Alvarez and Carlos and Sarita Ortiz. In addition, Señora Jiminez sent invitations to Señor Alvarez and to Señoras Alvarez and Ortiz. Of course little Maria was not left out.

Impatiently Juanita waited for the time to pass before the party. She was the more impatient because papa had thrown out several hints that he was preparing a splendid surprise to follow the dinner.

No matter how much she teased her father, she could not get him to reveal the secret. He only smiled broadly, and put on a very mysterious look. Juanita tried again and again to guess what it might be, but all to no purpose. The secret could not be discovered.

She talked with Sarita and Rosa about it, and even asked Panchito and Carlos what they supposed it could be; but the girls could only give vague guesses, and the boys put on a very superior air, saying they were not interested in secrets, anyway.

If the truth were known, when the boys got by themselves, they puzzled and guessed as much as the girls, but it would never do for them to own that they were at all curious — oh, no!

So there was nothing to do but to wait for the secret to reveal itself at its own good pleasure. Slowly the time passed, but at last the holiday came, and with it the friends who were to dine with the Jiminez family.

Two tables were set for the dinner. At one the grown members of the party were seated. At the other sat the young folks, with Juanita as hostess, and Panchito on her right.

The tables fairly groaned with the good things that were placed upon them, and both young and old did full justice to them. What most interested Juanita and her friends, though, was the cake that was served as dessert.

In many Mexican homes that day a large cake in the shape of a crown was provided. This was cut in as many slices as there were people present. A bean was hidden in the Kings' Cake, which naturally some one in the party would draw. That person would have to give a party and

dance to the rest within a stated time. This dance is called *baile de los compadres*.

Señora Jiminez had provided no such cake for her own table because some of her guests would have been unable to give a party to such a company of people. But before the children a beautiful Kings' Cake had been placed. It was cut into five pieces, and to the finder of the hidden bean Señor Jiminez had promised a prize or reward.

"Oh, I hope I shall win," said Carlos, with just a tinge of covetousness in his tone.

Sarita, who sat beside him, said nothing, but gave him a rebuking look for the ill-mannered speech.

"I mean, I —" But Carlos did not know how to qualify his remark, so he merely hung his head and looked ashamed.

Juanita, sorry for the embarrassment of her guest, said: "Of course we all want to find the bean, but shall also all be glad to congratulate the lucky winner."

At this, she passed to each one a piece of the fateful cake. For a few moments not a word was said. As each one ate there was anxious search for the hidden bean. Finally,

when the cake was nearly all eaten, a joyful cry was given and Sarita was heard to say, "I have it! I have it!"

Meanwhile, the older people at the other table had finished their meal and were looking on with much interest. When Señor Jiminez saw that Sarita was the fortunate one, he called her to him.

"I am going to tell you children now what the great secret is, but first will you please step to that window?" asked the señor, indicating the one which commanded the street and the front entrance.

Sarita did as requested. A look of surprise came over her face, but she said nothing.

"What do you see?"

"A pair of fine horses."

"What else?"

"A three-seated carriage."

"Anything else?"

"Yes; a coachman."

"Now I will tell you that the secret is a ride for all you children to the Alameda."

"Oh, isn't that splendid?"

"Fine!"

"Great!"

These were the exclamations from the girls and boys.

"But, papa, what about Sarita's prize?" asked Juanita.

"Oh, I nearly forgot. She is to sit on the front seat with me."

Sarita thought that was a splendid reward for her lucky find, and thanked Señor Jiminez in her prettiest manner.

Before long Señor Jiminez and his gay young party were seated in the roomy and comfortable carriage, Sarita by his side on the front seat. Carlos and Panchito occupied the second seat, and Juanita and Rosa sat in the rear.

The older members of the party remained with Señora Jiminez while her husband took the children to ride.

For Juanita, this going to ride with her father was no new experience, but for the others it was an extraordinary occasion, and the mere sensation of riding behind two such fine horses was too pleasant to describe. The sights along the streets seemed very different to them than they had in previous days when they were on foot.

Many were the questions they asked of each other, and

Señor Jiminez took pains to point out the objects of interest as he drove slowly along.

Perhaps nothing on the way excited more comment than a quaint palace built of blue and white tiles.

"That house," said Señor Jiminez, "was built over a hundred years ago, and there is a queer story about it.

"It seems that a certain rich man had a son. The son was extravagant in his habits and squandered the money which his father allowed him.

"Finally the father's patience was exhausted, and he refused to provide a further supply of funds for his son. At the same time he gave him a severe lecture, winding up with an old Spanish proverb about the inability of spendthrifts to build porcelain palaces.

"Now, with all his bad habits, the young man had a certain amount of pride, and he told his father that he could keep his old money. He would ask no more favours of him, anyway.

"So the son took his departure for parts unknown. For several years his father saw nothing of him.

"Finally, after a long time, a messenger called at the

father's house with a note requesting him to come to a certain street and number to meet an old acquaintance. On arriving at the place indicated, he found that it was this very place. In the reception-hall he found his son, who gave him a warm greeting and bade him look over the establishment. He also reminded his father of what he had said about spendthrifts and porcelain palaces.

"Of course the old gentleman was much surprised when he learned that his son was the builder of this palace, but he was none the less gratified at the young man's success."

"But where did the son get his money?" asked the practical Carlos.

"That part of the story we do not know," was the answer; "but we do know that that was a time of pirates and brigands, and I guess the old gentleman didn't care to investigate too closely the source of his son's fortune."

Many other beautiful and grand sights were seen along the way, as well as some that were picturesque and quaint. Often the pity as well as the curiosity of the children was excited, especially when they drove through some of the poorer streets. Even Carlos and Sarita knew little of the

depth of poverty and wretchedness in some parts of the city.

After awhile our party arrived at the Alameda. As they entered the park, Señor Jiminez told something of its history. To Juanita, the story was not unknown, but the other children heard it for the first time.

"For over three hundred years," said Juanita's father, "the Alameda has been not only a big breathing-place for the people of the capital, but its chief pleasure park. It was laid out in 1592 under Viceroy Luis de Velasco, and alamos and cottonwood trees were planted; hence the name Alameda. The park used to be enclosed in a stone wall, but this was removed in 1885.

"Long years ago, when the Inquisition prevailed in Mexico, there were executions on the grounds now occupied by the western end of the Alameda. But those cruel chapters in Mexican history are well-nigh forgotten, and now we see no outward trace of the Inquisition."

But the glorious sight which presented itself to the vision of the children made these old stories of cruelty seem like a dream. The only realities to them were the beautiful green grass, the thick foliage of the waving trees, through

which was caught an occasional glimpse of blue sky, and, above all, the ever moving panorama of life which passed before them.

Many a time, on a Thursday or Sunday forenoon, the children had visited the park to hear the military band play and to see the crowds of people. But never had the Alameda presented such a sight to them as on this holiday.

Hundreds of fine carriages and automobiles passed back and forth. In them were seated the most noted people of the city. Many of the men were dressed in military uniforms profusely decorated with gold lace, while the women were dressed in the most elaborate costumes the country could produce.

Then there were the multitudes of people on foot, laughing and chatting with each other or gazing at the passers-by in their carriages.

Señor Jiminez was kept busy telling his young people the names of prominent people who rode by. As they were jogging slowly along he suddenly said:

"Look quickly, children. See that carriage coming toward us in which is riding the sturdy, military-looking man

with gray hair and moustache."

"The one with plumed hat and so many badges, and who bows to so many people?" asked Sarita.

"The very one. That is President Diaz. You all want to get a good look at him; for though he is a sturdy, strong man, he is getting along in years, and you probably will not have many opportunities to see him.

"I want you to know that Mexico owes a large part of her present peace and prosperity to that man. Our country had practically no railroads until after General Diaz became President.

"He is a living example of the possibilities of the Mexican youth. Although he was born in an obscure corner of the country, in the city of Oaxaca, by successfully meeting new conditions as they presented themselves, he not only improved himself, but lifted his country out of the condition of chronic revolution under which it had suffered from the time of its emancipation from Spain, in the year 1821, until the year 1874, when the last revolutionary attempt ended.

"Much of the success for good that has followed the



President Diaz

career of President Diaz was due to his boyhood training. His father and mother, although not well-to-do people, were industrious, frugal, and conscientious in giving young Porfirio as good an education as they could.

"As a lad he wanted to enter the army, but his parents placed him in the seminary to study for the priesthood. This did not suit him, and he studied law.

"Later he entered the Mexican army and became one of the most illustrious soldiers of the republic.

"When General Diaz became President, Mexico was so isolated from the United States that there were only about a dozen English-speaking people in the City of Mexico, while now in the city and vicinity are about four thousand Americans and English.

"A truer patriot never lived, and at times when funds were scarce in the government treasury. President Diaz has thrown off half his salary, which also was done by hundreds of patriotic statesmen, and the financial difficulties were successfully overcome."

Carlos and Panchito were especially interested in Señor Jiminez's talk about Diaz, and they gazed after the

President's retreating carriage till it was out of sight.

Meanwhile they continued on their way around the park, and came to the Paseo, or boulevard, leading to Chapultepec. At the head of the street stands the great statue of Charles IV.

"That statue," said Señor Jiminez, "has only one superior in the world, that of Marcus Aurelius in Rome. This one is about twenty-two feet in height and weighs forty-five thousand pounds. It is so big that twenty men, it is said, can be stuffed into its stomach of bronze, which has led the common people of Mexico to call it the 'Horse of Troy.' It was made by Manuel Tolsa, the great architect and sculptor, who built the massive School of Mines."

After riding a little way along the boulevard, the horses were turned homeward. The ride back furnished many new and interesting sights, as they drove by a different route.

The young folks were very profuse in their thanks for the afternoon's outing, and all, both young and old, felt that the day had been happily and wisely spent.

CHAPTER V

A Visit to Popocatepetl

The next day Juanita and her friends had to return to school. This was rather irksome to some of them after the holiday, but it did not take them long to get back into the routine of school life.

Juanita was the more willing to apply herself closely to her studies, for her father had promised her that on Carmen Day, if she got on well with lessons meanwhile, he would take her mother and her on a trip to Amecameca and Mt. Popocatepetl.

This was an excursion they had all longed to take for a good while, but of course Juanita was especially enthusiastic over the prospect. She was bound that it should be no fault of hers if there were any failure in the plans. So her teacher was really surprised at the attention she bestowed on her

lessons.

Holidays are frequent in Mexico, and before Carmen Day, which falls on February 17th, Candlemas Day was celebrated.

In the United States the day is profanely confounded with Ground Hog Day, but in Mexico no such custom prevails. It is known as a double-cross festival and occurs forty days after Christmas.

Commencing two days before, candles are placed at the altars of the Virgin and kept burning constantly before the pictures, big and little, of that highly honoured woman. In the churches processions with lighted candles march back and forth, and all candles needed for the churches for the ensuing year are blessed; hence the name Candlemas Day.

But Carmen Day arrived at last, though to Juanita some of the days lagged dreadfully.

The holiday is observed as the festival of Our Lady of Carmen, especially in the Carmen District of the city. It is the saint's day of the wife of President Diaz, who receives gifts and visits and beautiful flowers.

Juanita awoke bright and early. She needed no one to

call her this morning.

Quickly she hopped out of bed and ran to her window to have a look at the sky. Clear as crystal and blue as blue could be, with the morning sun casting its radiant beams over the city with a glory and beauty exceeded nowhere. Mexico's clear atmosphere and blue sky are rivalled only in Italy. Consequently Mexico is sometimes called the Italy of America.

In a very few moments — much quicker than usual — Juanita was dressed, and promptly at breakfast-time she appeared in the dining-room, where her mamma and papa had just preceded her. She could hardly stop to give them the usual morning greeting before she said:

"Papa, are we surely going to Amecameca to-day?"

"We certainly are," was the answer, "if the train goes."

Juanita did not need her mother's injunction not to loiter over her breakfast. Of necessity they all ate rapidly — perhaps too rapidly, for shortly before seven o'clock the maid told them that the carriage which was to convey them to the railway station was at the door.

Ordinarily they would have taken the streetcars, but as

the street-car service in the city was rather unreliable, they did not dare to trust to it when after an early train.

Quickly donning their outer garments, Juanita and her parents got into the carriage, which drove off rapidly to the railway station. Here they arrived just in time to catch the 7.10 train for Amecameca.

It was a comparatively new experience for Juanita to ride upon a railway train. Only a few times had she been out short distances with her father or mother.

So every changing scene was a revelation to her, and as the train sped on through Ayotla and Santa Barbara she saw much to interest her, and she kept her parents busy answering the questions she asked them.

As they got farther into the country, the green fields afforded a beautiful and refreshing sight. In some places, though, there were long stretches of barren soil which bore nothing but different varieties of the cactus. Among them the century plant, or American aloe, was often seen. Its bluish-green leaves were long, with prickly edges, and there were immense clusters of yellowish flowers. The branches were sometimes forty feet high.

Again, Juanita would see the great maguey plantations, from which plant is made pulque, the national drink of Mexico. She already knew that pulque-drinking was a terrible curse to the country, and she learned from her father that if its sale were prohibited it would mean the ruin of thousands of owners of these maguey plantations. At least, that was what they said; but, even if it were true, the poorer classes of the people would be incalculably benefited, as they spend $20,000 a day on the liquor.

But the train kept steadily on. La Compania was passed, and Temamatla in its turn. Then Tenango and Tepopula were left behind. Finally, at quarter-past nine, the trainman shouted "Amecameca," and without delay Juanita and her parents left the cars.

They were immediately surrounded by a crowd of donkey-boys, who besought the privilege of acting as guide.

Beckoning to one of the brightest appearing lads, Señor Jiminez placed in his hand a silver coin and told him that he wanted three donkeys — one for the señora, one for the señorita, and one for himself to ride.

With a broad smile and flourishing bow young Juan said:



On a Maguey Plantation

"You shall have them at once, your Excellency."

He went at once to a near-by shed, and in less time than it takes to tell it returned with the desired animals all saddled and bridled for his party.

"Now we want you to lead us by the best way to Mt. Popocatepetl," said Señor Jiminez. "Of course we do not expect to ascend it to-day, for we have not made preparations for that; neither have we the time."

"Yes, señor, I understand," said Juan. "I show many people the way. I take you where you get the grand view. Then you ride across the valley to the low hills, where you find a resting-place and get some dinner. Yes, señor, I know." And again Juan doffed his broad-brimmed hat and showed a long, even row of white teeth in his inimitable smile.

So, after all were safely mounted on the little but sturdy beasts, they passed on away from the little cluster of houses that surrounded the station.

They had gone but a little way, when, as they turned a corner, the wonderful vision of the volcano Popocatepetl burst upon their sight.

At once they halted, and in silence they gazed upon it. It was too grand, too awe-inspiring, for any words. Even to Señor and Señora Jiminez, who had seen the mountain many times before, it was an entrancing view — one of those sights which, though old, is ever new.

It was a picture that would ever haunt the memory.

Against the foreground were the pin and needle branches of the pines and cedars of Amecameca, the latter brought as saplings from the forests of Lebanon centuries ago by the Spanish conquerors, and which now are large trees. In the centre of this wonderful picture, like a flattened mosaic, was the tiled town of Amecameca, while fixed against the horizon was the cold white brow of the volcano with its crown of snow, a crown sent down from heaven.

Between the town and mountain stretched before them a wide valley, fertile, and dotted with numerous haciendas. Beyond, and beneath the great peak, stood the foot-hills, sparsely inhabited and affording a poor living to those who dwelt among them.

Señor Jiminez explained to his daughter that the



"The wonderful vision of the volcano Popocatepetl"

mountain was over three miles above the level of the sea, and that the crater, which was three miles in circumference, was over one thousand feet in depth.

After gazing on the wonderful sight for a long time, the señor ordered the donkey-boy to lead on, and they took up their march across the valley to the foot-hills.

There was little conversation on the way, so majestic was the view constantly before them. They rode on and on over the winding, dusty roads until our friends had inward feelings that it must be dinner-time.

"When are we to get our dinner, papa?" asked Juanita.

"That's what I have been wondering, too," said mamma.

"I was just thinking it was time to find out," said Señor Jiminez. "Juan, when are we to get that dinner you promised us?"

"Very soon, señor. Just after we get over this hill," was the smiling response.

And sure enough, as the donkeys passed over the crown of the hill there came into sight an adobe hut of moderate size, surrounded by the low green shrubbery of the locality.

As they halted before the hut, there appeared on the

scene an Indian woman and a whole swarm of scantily clad children. These Juan proudly introduced as his mother and brothers and sisters. His father, he said, was at work on a plantation down in the valley. They were all as proud of their Aztec origin as Juanita was of her Castilian forefathers.

Though all the children of this family seemed happy and contented, as Juanita's father told her afterward, life among the Indian babies is not always smooth. They are survivors of a race long relegated to the past, and yet they carry with them all the pathos and the dignity that surrounded the best of them.

The Indian babies are the most pathetic things in the world. Although reflecting life, they seem like bundles of dead matter, so quiet are they in their misery. In Mexico, as soon as possible after birth, the Indian baby is rolled in a *zarape* or blanket, and the load is carried on the back of the plodding mother as she comes into the capital with her vegetables and flowers, while the father trudges ahead with his own load. This baby cries little or none, and simply seems to vegetate. But as he is free from the restraint of

extra clothing he toughens from day to day like a little animal, and, as a rule, the Mexican babies are well formed and healthy.

As he grows up life is never serious to him. As a boy the baby follows his father's trade and the girl's thought follows the slowly unfolding and uneventful life of the mother.

"Mother," said Juan, "the señor and his family are very hungry. It is a long time since they had breakfast, and they have come on a long journey — all the way from the great city. Can you give them a dinner?"

"Why, certainly, if they are willing to put up with what I can give them," was the reply.

"We are hungry enough to eat almost anything," said Señora Jiminez.

"Oh, mother, this is like a regular picnic, to come out here and have dinner, isn't it?" said Juanita.

"Indeed it is, only better, for we have not got to bother with preparing the lunch," was the reply.

Meanwhile, all had alighted from their donkeys, which Juan led away and tethered where they could get generous forage.

At the same time the Indian mother set about preparing the meal for her guests.

The visitors seated themselves upon the ground in front of the hut. In a few moments Juan returned and proceeded to set up on two benches a rough table of boards which were lying about.

Before very long the rude table was set with such viands as the Indian woman was able to produce, and the Jiminez family invited to partake. It was a very different sort of meal from their usual ones at home, but hunger is a splendid appetizer, and they ate with a relish the frijoles and tortillas.

Tortillas are similar to the unleavened bread of the East. They are made from corn put into lime-water and boiled half an hour. The husks are then removed and the ears washed with cold water. The corn is ground by hand on a stone metate, and the dough broken into pieces is formed into round cakes about six inches in diameter and one-eighth of an inch thick.

Juanita would have been much interested if she could have seen Juan's mother and older sister slowly and laboriously grinding the corn.



Making Tortillas

The tortilla is toasted until it is brown, and it is as necessary to Mexican tables as bread to the American. The Mexicans take up their spicy dishes with the tortilla, using it as a spoon, and finally they eat the spoon!

When prepared according to the Mexican method frijoles are very palatable, and rich and poor eat these brown beans with gusto. The principal varieties of frijoles are the *valle gorda* and the *valle chica*.

The beans are put into a pot and covered with water, and boiled four hours, more water being constantly added. They are then fried in lard and eaten with their own gravy, or mashed and fried with onions.

Corn is the staff of life for these Mexican Indians, and is served in many forms, often highly seasoned with the chili. Of the three kinds of tamales the best are those prepared with chili. Some were served for Juanita and her parents. The corn is ground very fine; the dough is prepared in one vessel and the meat in another, the latter being seasoned.

Fresh corn husks are used. These are washed clean and the inside lined with the dough. Finely minced meat is placed inside, and the husks rolled like a big cigarette. They

are then boiled an hour and eaten hot.

All the while our friends were feasting their bodies they were also feasting their eyes upon the majestic Popocatepetl, which towered above them in all its snowy, glittering grandeur. They could not help thinking how terrible would be the result if suddenly from its crater should belch forth the fires so long extinct.

It was no unknown thing for Mexican volcanoes to do just that thing. Señor Jiminez told how, in the middle of the eighteenth century, the site of the volcano Jorullo was covered with fields of cotton, indigo, sugar-cane, all made fertile by generous irrigation. Suddenly, without warning, the mountain cast forth a stream of lava and fire, laying waste the land, and changing the beautiful green landscape to a burning, desolate wilderness. Thousands of dollars' worth of property were destroyed and many lives lost in the catastrophe.

This was rather a depressing story, and Juanita was a little nervous after hearing it, but her spirits were soon restored as she watched the antics and games of the little Indian children as they played about the hut.

The meal ended, Señor Jiminez gave Juan's mother generous payment. Then he said to his wife and daughter, with a glance at the declining sun, "We must now be starting for home. The train leaves Amecameca at about quarter of five, and if we go now we can make it without hurrying the donkeys."

Juan overheard the remark and took the hint without further orders. He soon brought up the donkeys, who also were rested and refreshed by their noonday meal.

At once the travellers mounted and took up their line of march back over the morning's trail, down the hills into the valley, and up again into the town of Amecameca. Here they arrived in ample time for their train, which rapidly whirled them once more to their beautiful City of Mexico. At seven o'clock they were home again and eager for the supper which the cook had ready upon the table.

Though the day had been a happy one for Juanita, it had also been fatiguing, and she needed no urging to go early to bed. But she did not fail to give mamma and papa their good-night kiss and to thank them over and over for her splendid outing — one that she would never forget.

CHAPTER VI

Sight-Seeing

For several weeks Juanita's life moved on with little incident to call for special mention. She went to school as usual, called on her young friends, at Sarita's making considerable progress in learning drawn-work.

One day, late in the spring, she was invited to the home of Rosa and Panchito to see a wonderful sight — the arrival of a little stranger who would make them a long visit. The Alvarez children were wild with delight over the baby sister.

A week later the grandmother and the happy children took the little one to the civil register and entered her arrival. It wore its best clothes on that occasion.

Two weeks afterward there was a baptism. The family took their new treasure to the nearest church. The *padrinos*, or godfather and godmother, were important personages on

that occasion. The entrance to the church was crowded with poor people who had learned that a christening was to occur. Juanita and Sarita and Carlos were present, as well as a number of other friends who had been invited by card.

The father handed the priest five pesos for himself and his assistants. The priest then recited in Latin from the ritual, afterward calling the name of the child, Ramona. After pouring some water on the baby's head and neck, the priest rubbed the neck and the little mouth with salt, and pronounced the benediction, thus completing the ceremony.

As the small party left the church, the crowd of poor people called out *"El Bolo, El Bolo."* Then the godfather gave each a centavo or two, all new coins which he had brought for that purpose. After the baptismal supper, candies were served and cards with coins given as souvenirs.

To Juanita all this was a new and delightful experience, and it formed a topic of conversation with her and her friends for a long time.

Soon after the pretty baptismal ceremony and while Ramona was a baby in arms, Juanita became acquainted

with two American girls, Grace and Louise Winthrop, daughters of an American merchant who was visiting Mexico on business, and who had thus met Señor Jiminez.

The girls were curious to see the sights of Mexico, so a little party was made up, including Florence Mason, also an American girl, who was born in Mexico and who acted as interpreter between the children. Sarita and Rosa were in the party, also Carlos and Panchito, their brothers.

First they visited the national palace, which stands on the site of the "new house" of Montezuma. The old-time cedar ceilings put in place by Cortez are disappearing, giving place to rich frescoes and rare furnishings, and elevators are taking the place of the broad stone stairs. The offices of President Diaz are in the palace, and there he holds public receptions.

The children gazed with a good deal of interest on the portraits of historic personages hung in the palace, and the two American girls were especially delighted to see a painting of Washington among them.

In the same block, which is six hundred feet square, are two barracks for soldiers and the fire brigade. On the front

are three large entrances open all day to the public.

Next they visited the "Thieves' Market," to the south of the palace, where the rarest of things may be purchased.

To the American girls the strange scenes and customs were a continual source of delight. On the street they saw all kinds of costumes — the cavalier clad in buckskin pantaloons seamed with double rows of silver or gold coins, wearing gay vests, sombreros, and clanking spurs; elegantly gowned señoritas in flashing carriages and swift automobiles; soldiers in brilliant uniforms; and an occasional Aztec girl added novelty to the scene.

But the National Museum was the chief object of attraction for our party at this time. Here they saw the famous Aztec calendar stone and other curiosities and relics of centuries of ancient Mexican history. Here also they saw some very interesting objects pertaining to modern history, such as Maximilian's gala coach, his silver service, etc.

The boys were particularly attracted to the mementos of the unfortunate Maximilian.

An old attendant standing near observed their interest,

and said to them, "Ah, he was the brave man!"

Observing the look of inquiry on the boys' faces at his exclamation, the old man proceeded to tell them how he had been a soldier in the patriot army of Mexico in the time of the emperor. He had witnessed Maximilian's death, and had seen him give the gold coins to the soldiers who acted as his executioners.

Like many of the Mexican opponents of Maximilian and his government, the old man's feeling for the dead emperor was one of pity rather than hatred, and many a tear is shed in Mexico to-day over the sad fate of the unfortunate Empress Carlotta — driven mad by her misfortunes.

The old man, made bold by the attention of the boys, led the party of young people about the museum, pointing out here and there the most interesting objects. Many of the stories of the Aztecs and the Spanish viceroys of old time he was able to tell.

"That," pointing to an antique sword hung upon the wall, "was the property of the Viceroy Revillagigedo."

"What a name! How did they ever pronounce it?" put in one of the American girls.

"This viceroy ruled here in 1787," continued the attendant, not noticing the interruption. "He was famous for his unusual sense of justice. On one occasion a certain Indian had found a bag of golden ounces. The Indian was an honest man, and, discovering the owner to be a Spanish gentleman, he returned the gold to him.

"The Spaniard was not so honest, and, as the bag was returned to him, he quietly slipped two gold pieces into his pocket. Then, instead of rewarding him, he charged the Indian with theft, and kicked him out of the house.

"The Indian saw through the Spaniard's scheme to defraud him of a fairly earned reward, and complained to the viceroy, who called the two men before him. He asked the Spaniard:

"'How many ounces were in the bag you lost?'

"'Twenty-eight.'

"'How many ounces in the bag now?' was the second question.

"'Twenty-six.'

"'Very good. It's a clear case. If the Indian had been a thief, he would not have brought the bag back to you at all.

It must belong to some one else.'

"With this conclusion, the viceroy, sweeping up the gold from the table before him, gave the whole thing back to the Indian."

"Good for Revillagigedo!" said Panchito, as the guard finished his story.

"I think we had better be going home now," said Juanita, "but first let's go with Louise and Grace to their hotel."

Thanking the old man for his kindness, they all hastened out of the building to the street. They decided to take a car, as the hotel was some ways from the museum. They had to wait quite awhile for the car on account of the peculiar system of running street-cars in the city.

They all start from a common point in the centre. After running for a couple of blocks or so, they switch off to the right or left, as the case may be. This is convenient for the stranger, because it makes no difference where he takes a car, he will inevitably get back to the locality of his hotel, if he will sit still long enough.

The time-table, however, is peculiar. For some reason no arriving car is permitted to leave the central point until

a certain number have collected. It is a daily thing to see scores of cars waiting for the signal, while all over the city people are standing on corners waiting patiently for transportation to heave in sight.

At last, however, their car appeared, and Juanita and her friends clambered aboard. On the way to the hotel they passed, among other notable institutions, the Home for the Poor Working Boys, which was opened in 1898, and is one of the unique charities of the city, having graduated fifteen hundred boys. The organizer and manager of the home is Rev. A. M. Hunt-Cortez. He is known among the Mexican Indians as "The White Indian," a title he appreciates more than a crown of gold, for it enables him not only to demonstrate his own kindly spirit, but also to bring out the best elements among the boys in his control.

In this home, Carlos told the girls, Father Hunt places the poor boys he picks up on the streets, and educates them and feeds and clothes them with funds which are voluntarily given. He makes an effort to educate the boys in the original tongue of the Aztecs, which he says is too rich a language to be allowed to perish. He does not, however,

neglect reading, writing, and religious education.

Although the institution is sustained at an expense of about fifty pesos per day, the good priest has such a firm hold on God, as the Provider, that the needs have been met and the mission of this good man so far has been crowned with great success.

CHAPTER VII

Feasts and Flowers

The religious ceremonies of Lent were faithfully observed by Juanita's parents. Consequently she, too, was true to the training she had received. On Palm Sunday, in company with her friends, she carried to church palm leaves that had been plaited in various designs, to have them blessed by the priest. These were afterward fastened to the balconies, doors, bedsteads, and other places at home to keep off evil spirits.

On Good Friday Juanita went with her parents to the great cathedral, where the archbishop officiated before an immense crowd.

On the same day, in the suburban towns of Ixtapalapa, Atzcapotzalco, and Coyoacan there were processions in the yards of the country churches, where highly decorated and

grotesquely dressed men and women marched in stately order, bearing a huge cross, and reenacted, in crude fashion, the scene of Calvary. Years ago men, taking the role of Jesus, were crucified, and some even died under the torture, but the government put a stop to that, and the laws of reform no longer allow external religious rites. The processions are therefore confined to the churches and to the church yards.

The noisiest day in the year for Mexican children is Holy Saturday, the last day of Lent, just preceding Easter Sunday. At ten o'clock that day the Judases are exploded and the church-bells ring out after their silence of two days and a half.

That they might enjoy this day together, Juanita invited her girl friends, Rosa and Sarita, to come and sit upon her balcony, where they would get a good view of the street.

Carlos and Panchito went upon the street and joined in the sports with other boys and men. During the day the girls got many a glance and an answering wave of the hand from them.

Along the sidewalks ran many small boys dragging their

matracas, or little carts with pieces of wood fitting into the spokes of the wheels. These were grating and grinding all day long.

The popular feature of the day was the bursting of the Judases. These figures, impersonating the Iscariot, were made of pasteboard, and all sorts of human and inhuman figures were represented. Some had the faces of animals and birds, but the idea was to have them as hideous as possible. Along the arms or legs or wings, as the case might be, were tubes of gunpowder with fuses. When the latter were lighted the whole grotesque creation went up in smoke with loud noises. The louder the noise the more keen the satisfaction and the pleasure of the people, for they were thus avenging the treachery of Judas toward Jesus.

In some parts of the city the effigies were hung across the streets and from the balconies of the aristocratic houses, filled with toys and small coin, for which big and little wildly scrambled.

To the young American girls, Grace and Louise, who watched the fun from a balcony of their hotel, it seemed more like a celebration of the Fourth of July than a religious



"In some parts of the city the effigies
were hung across the streets."

occasion. Easter Sunday was quietly observed, for the people were well-nigh spent by the observance of preceding days.

In the cathedral the services were signalized by grand music, the lighting of the huge paschal candle, and the removal, for the first time since the forty days of Lent, of the girandole from its position. The paschal candle burned constantly until the expiration of the forty days following Easter. Flowers, candles, and incense were profusely employed. The vestments of the clergy were radiant with gold and precious stones, and many of the sacred vessels used on the altars were reserved especially for the Easter festivities. The high altar was decked with ornaments of gold, and the sermons dealt with the resurrection of Jesus.

Aside from the religious services, the day itself was one of the brightest in Mexico, and every one strove to appear in his or her best.

During Easter week Juanita and her friends gave and received presents and *dulces*.

Some months later Juanita called upon Rosa one morning, and asked her if she would not like to go to the flower

market with her.

"Why, yes, indeed I would," said Rosa. "But why are you going there to-day?"

"I want to get some flowers to decorate one of the altars in the cathedral for the feast of the Assumption, and I should very much like to have your help."

"Why not invite Sarita to go, too?" asked Rosa. "She has splendid taste in the arrangement of flowers."

"All right, we will," answered Juanita.

With this purpose in view, they called at Sarita's home, but found she was so busy helping her mother on some drawn-work, for which some customers were in a hurry, that she could not go with them.

The flower-market is situated close by the great cathedral, and thither the two girls hastened.

It was a brilliant, beautiful scene — flowers to right, flowers to left, flowers all around. The immense wreaths of pansies and daisies were displayed effectively by the flower-boys. Great masses of white flowers of all kinds formed a splendid background for the bunches of red and blue and yellow.

"Buy roses?" asked a piping voice at Juanita's elbow.

Juanita looked around and beheld a smiling brown lad not over eight years old, holding toward her a great bunch of splendid American Beauties.

"How much are they?" she asked.

"Ten centavos each."

As Juanita turned away the boy ran after her.

"I let you have them, señorita, for eight centavos."

But Juanita was not to be persuaded by the insistent boy. American Beauties were not what she wanted this morning, even though they could be purchased for a song.

By this time all the flower-boys in the market had discovered the girls' presence, and there was a rush at them with great bunches of all kinds of flowers.

It was hard work for Juanita to make her selection, but finally, with the help of Rosa, she managed to choose what she wanted and rid herself of the boys she did not care to patronize. This took some time, for the flower-sellers all asked at first more than they expected to get for their wares, and Juanita knew it; so she had to pretend not to be anxious to buy until they came down to a reasonable price.

The girls next took their flowers into the cathedral, where Rosa was of much assistance to Juanita in decorating the altar which was her share in preparing for the feast. Many other girls were at work in different parts of the edifice, and a splendid time they all had. When they got through, the place looked like an enchanted land in its profusion of flowers.

Among Juanita's former schoolmates was a young cadet at the military academy. The academy is attached to the Castle of Chapultepec. One day in September he invited Juanita and her friends to visit the institution.

The trip was very much enjoyed. It was explained to the visitors that the military academy was founded in 1824 by General Guadalupe Victoria, the first President of the Mexican Republic. In 1847 the Americans stormed and captured the castle, which was defended by the cadets, an incident fittingly commemorated on the 8th of September. On the 30th of May, Memorial Day, their monument is always decorated by a committee from the American colony. The academy was reopened in 1863, but closed on account of the war with France. Finally, under the decree

of President Juarez, it was opened in 1869. There are now about 250 cadets.

CHAPTER VIII

The End of the Year

About the close of October, Juanita was invited with her parents to a wedding. This momentous incident had been discussed by all the families in all its bearings for weeks before. The groom-elect had graduated from the military academy and was a captain in the regular army, by the name of Manuel Viesca. In the most approved fashion he had been courting Mercedes for some months, calling at the house and being duly accepted.

Early in the month he went to the Civil Register and declared his intentions, and two weeks later, on the 20th of the month, he and Mercedes, with three witnesses, presented themselves for the civil marriage.

The civil marriage in Mexico costs nothing if had at the Civil Register. If the judge goes to the house the fee

averages twelve pesos, but the amount is optional.

Before this civil rite is performed there are fifteen days of probation. The names of the bride and groom elect are posted on a bulletin so that anybody having satisfactory reasons may oppose the ceremony.

But it was the religious ceremony to which Juanita had been invited. This was held in the little Church of La Divina Infanta, and was witnessed by about fifty or sixty friends.

It was a bright, beautiful day that greeted the young couple. Mercedes Silva, the bride, was a tall, pretty girl, a semi-brunette. Her veil was arranged with great care and flowed from underneath a bunch of orange blossoms. She carried an ivory prayer-book and rosary, the gift of the groom.

The bride entered first on the arm of her father, followed by the bridegroom and his mother. Then followed the group of *padrinos*, the godmother and godfather in each case.

When the party got just inside the door of the church, the priest met them, attired in a beautiful costume of cloth of gold, and put the first question to them as to whether

they wished to marry each other. Then the party went up and knelt together below the altar at prie-dieus, the priest offering the prayer. Then he gave two rings of gold to the groom, one to be put on the finger of the bride and the other on his own.

Some more questions were asked and the groom handed the bride thirteen coins, gold pesos, which she gave to the priest. They proceeded closer to the altar, where they knelt about half an hour while the priest prayed and there was some very fine orchestral music.

While they were thus kneeling another priest took part of the bridal veil and put it over the groom, and then placed a silver chain over both the parties. Then the officiating priest blessed them and they marched out of the church.

Thence they rode in a carriage to a photograph establishment to have their pictures taken, which is quite the thing in Mexico, after which they held an informal reception at the home of the bride's parents. The servants brought in *copitas*, or drinks, and then there was a big dinner. Afterward there was dancing.

To witness a wedding was a new experience to Juanita,

and it was no wonder that she greatly enjoyed telling Sarita and Rosa about it afterward. It furnished a subject of conversation for them for weeks to come — in fact until they began to get ready for the Christmas festivities.

In the days of Santa Anna and President Guadalupe Victoria, Christmas was celebrated by the Mexicans with much more ceremony than to-day. Cannon were fired by the government at sunrise and sunset and at high noon, as they are fired to-day on the birth of some earthly prince. Processions went through the streets of Mexico with government officers and the military in full uniform and led by the archbishop and the clergy and canons of the cathedral.

Now Christmas Day is one of the most quiet days in the year and is solemnly but sedately observed in the churches. All the excitement of the season centralizes about the *posadas* and the *piñatas*, that precede this day of days.

In fact, there is less observance of the *posadas* than in former years. The original *posadas* were supposed to be religious in their character or nature, but of recent years the tendency has been to relaxation in the religious

observance, the children being so anxious for the breaking of the *piñata*. Therefore, in 1894, the archbishop forbade the *posadas*. However, the observance is too Mexican in its character to be easily set aside, especially in homes where the Catholic mandate is not taken seriously.

They were the delight of the children. Every night the children gathered in the corridors of their own homes or in their *patios* for this fun-making.

The *patios* were all illuminated and decorated with lanterns and flowers, especially with the brilliant poinsette or crimson flower, which is of bright red colour.

The children marched around the corridors, each holding a lighted candle and singing *"Ora pro nobis"* which is adapted from the Loretto ritual. They went round and round from room to room, stopping at each door and singing their little song. The song described the journeyings of Joseph and Mary looking for a room.

The groups of children were repulsed from one room to another as the Holy Family was repulsed in Bethlehem. Finally, they reached one of the rooms which was opened to them. The little figures which they carried representing

the Holy Family were then placed by the children in some corner and forgotten till the next evening and they began the fun of the *piñata*.

As formerly observed, the ceremonies in connection with the *posadas* began nine days before Christmas Day.

This year, instead of each family having a celebration by itself, the Jiminez and Ortiz families accepted the invitation of Señora Alvarez to join with them in the day's festivities.

In Mexico Christmas is different from the old-time Christmas of Hans Christian Andersen, or from the Christ-time as observed in the United States and in Europe.

There is no snow, except on the big volcanoes sixty miles away, and therefore there are no sleigh-bells or harnessed reindeer in the air.

Until the comfort of fireplaces and open hearths was brought by the Americans, these were not known in Mexico, and there were no chimneys. Consequently, there was no way for Santa Claus to enter the houses.

In American homes, however, Santa Claus has been welcomed for the past fifteen years, and Mexico now knows something about Christmas trees, hungry stockings, mistle-

toe branches, and all the witchery of Christmas as known to its northern neighbours.

But Mexico has plenty of flowers always, and during the days before Christmas Rosa and her two girl friends decorated her home exquisitely. Panchito assisted in this work, for a boy is handy when there are nails to be driven and decorations to be put up.

The preparation of the *piñata* was the special work of Señora Alvarez, though it is fair to say that both Señoras Jiminez and Ortiz had a hand in it.

A jar of clay was dressed in the shape of a great doll and decorated with coloured papers, and filled with candies and toys. The night before Christmas, after Rosa and Panchito were asleep, it was hung in the centre of the sitting-room.

Bright and early Christmas morning Sarita and Carlos and little Maria and Juanita, with their parents, put in an appearance at the Alvarez home. The little house was pretty well filled, but if there was a slight lack of room, there was no want of hospitality and good cheer.

After all had gathered, there was no waiting for the all-important ceremony, for the children were anxious to break



"Each boy and girl had three chances to hit the pinata"

the *piñata*.

They were blindfolded in turn, and each boy and girl had three chances to hit the *piñata* with a stick.

First Carlos took his turn. What shouts all set up as he once, twice, three times, vainly beat the air with his stick.

Strange as it may seem, the children all failed in their first trial to break the *piñata*. Then they began over again with little Maria, who, with a good deal of giggling and dancing, was blindfolded once more. Juanita turned her around several times and said, "Now strike hard."

With a mighty effort Maria swung around her arm, and hit — nothing!

Again she turned a little, and again struck out and hit — nothing!

A third time she moved, and, carefully swinging the stick far over her head, hit the *piñata* squarely in the middle, and scattered its contents all over the room.

With much shouting and laughing the children made a scramble for the good things spread around, and for an hour or more there was plenty of fun in undoing mysterious packages. The rapturous exclamations at the revelation of

their contents amply repaid for all the labour and trouble the affair had cost the older members of the different families.

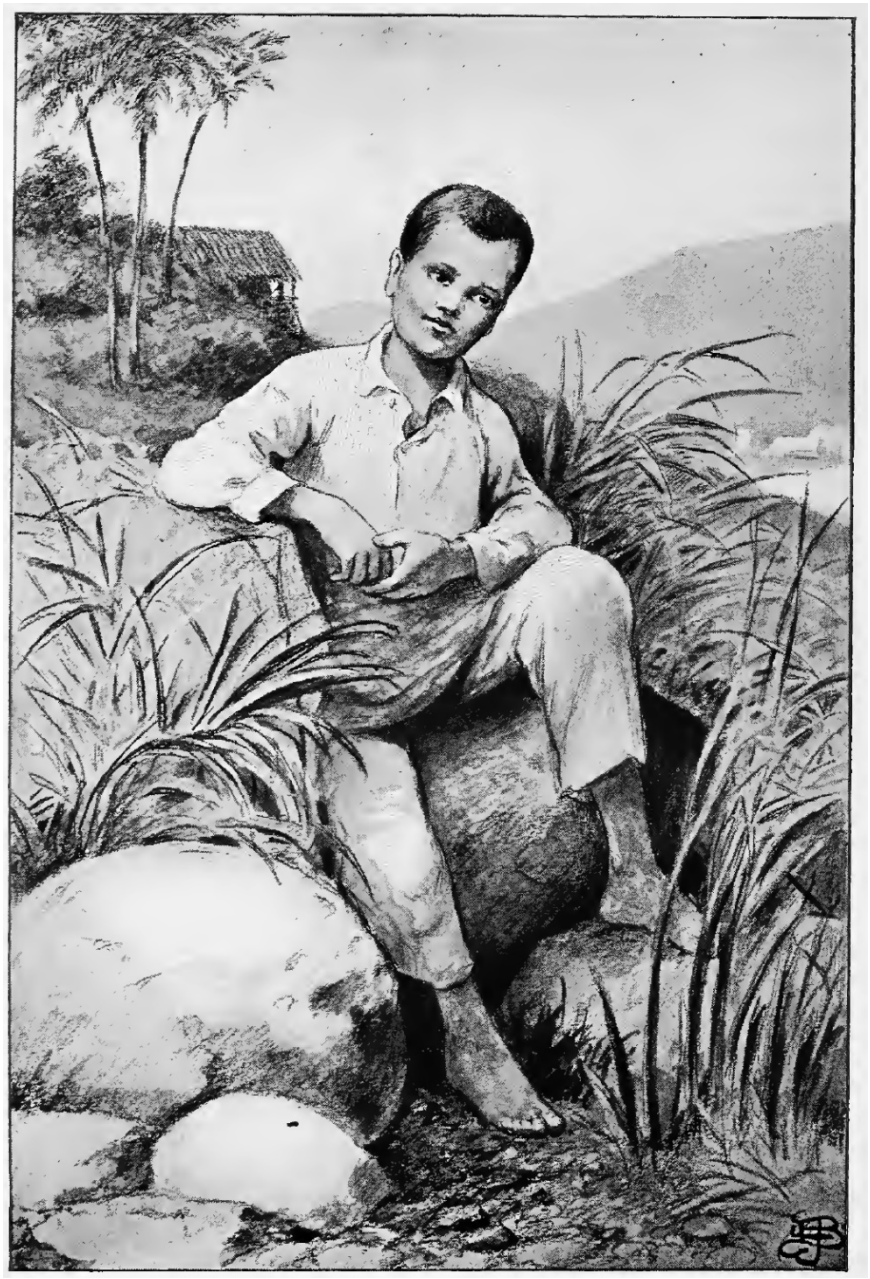
Not until very late that evening did the party break up, but finally all went to their own homes, and tired young folks soon forgot their weariness and excitement in the land of dreams.

THE END.

Our Little Panama Cousin

H. Lee M. Pike

Illustrated by L.J. Bridgman



Vasco Barretas

Preface

Both old and young are interested in the work that the United States is doing on the narrow strip of land connecting North and South America—digging the Panama Canal, a highway for the nations. The country is small, but the work is a great one, and that little spot on the map is of vastly greater interest to-day than many a land of larger area.

The history of the country is a romantic one. The names of Balboa, Pizarro, and other famous Spanish discoverers are closely linked to Panama, and readers of history as well as lovers of adventure are not likely to forget the part the notorious Morgan and his men played on the Isthmus.

There has been much of bloodshed, cruelty, and oppression in Panama's history, but let us hope that is all over. The example of industry and persistent perseverance set by

Americans, as they cut away mountains and turn great rivers into new channels, ought to be a source of inspiration to the leisure-loving native. And such seems to be the fact to-day. Not only a canal, but a nation, is being built. New schools, new docks, new water-works, new streets, new sanitary measures, give evidence of a better era for Panama.

This all means new possibilities for our little Panama cousin. As his young American and English friends read about him, they may well believe that in the days to come they may all stand shoulder to shoulder in the onward march of civilization and progress.

CHAPTER I

Happy Days

In young Vasco Barretas, who had both Spanish and Indian blood in his veins, there had been born a natural desire for excitement and adventure.

Just one thing equaled this desire. That was his dislike for work.

However, we must not blame him for that. His laziness was the result of training, or rather the lack of it. Necessities were few and easily obtained, and he had not learned to care for the luxuries of life.

On account of Vasco's fondness for bustle and excitement the time this story begins was most glorious for him. As his American cousin would say, "something was doing."

A successful revolution had just taken place in Panama.

A revolution was no new thing in the little strip of

country that separates the Atlantic from the Pacific. Vasco's father had been through many such affairs. They had been nearly as regular as the rainy seasons.

Vasco did not understand all about it, yet even the boys in the streets knew that this revolution was different from any other.

There had been no bloodshed, but the results seemed likely to be very important to the country.

Do you want to know why?

Then listen to a little bit of history.

The State or Province of Panama, on the narrow bit of land connecting North and South America, had been a part of the country called the United States of Colombia.

The great republic to the north, the United States of America, wanted to dig a canal across Panama, but had been unable to get permission from Colombia. And so it looked as if there might be no canal — at least not in Panama.

The citizens of Panama were disappointed, for the digging of a canal through their country would bring to them many people and much wealth.

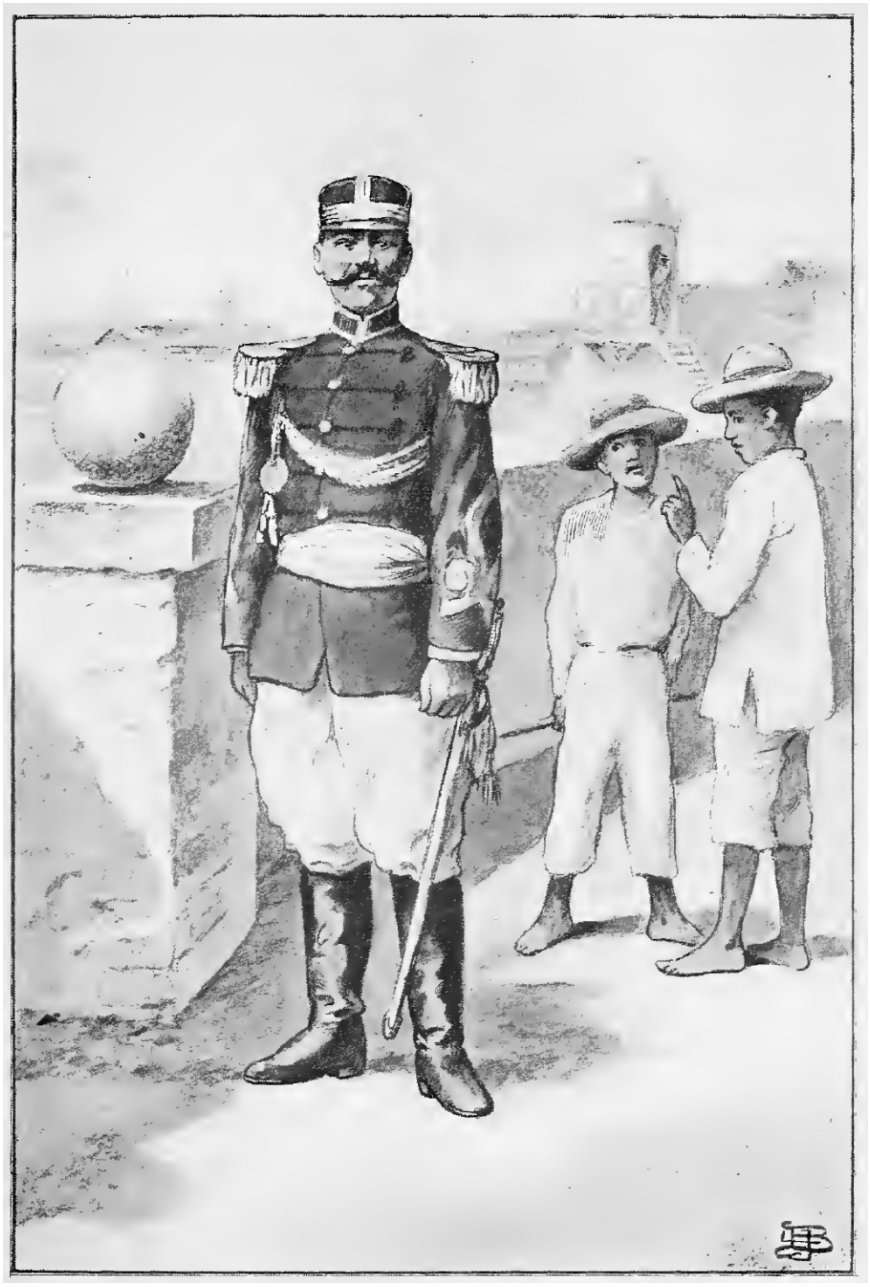
For this reason the leading men concluded that it was best to separate from Colombia, organize a government of their own, and come to an agreement with the United States. At the time this story opens the new government had just been set up, and its authority proclaimed.

But, it may be asked, what has all this to do with Vasco?

To begin with, Vasco's father, in private life a very ordinary citizen, who sometimes had been a waiter in a hotel and at other times the servant of an American engineer, was deeply interested in this latest revolution; for was he not an officer in the new National Guard — Lieutenant Amadeo Barretas?

His position did not require much work, either of mind or body, but little Lieutenant Barretas could assume as much dignity as a seven-foot member of Napoleon's "Old Guard" — and more pomposity. When on parade he would strut about in his gaudy uniform with all the airs possible, and appear very serious — though to you he would have looked more silly than serious.

There was to be a grand review of the Panama "army." The soldiers were to parade through the streets of the city



Lieutenant Amadeo Barretas

and be inspected by the commander-in-chief. Several officers of the United States army were to be guests of the Panama officials, and occupy a place on the reviewing stand.

Young Vasco meant to have a good sight of the parade. Surely he, the son of a lieutenant in the army, ought to have a place where he might see his father march by, and be able to add his voice to the thousands who would shout huzzas! But, for some reason, the officers in charge had neglected to invite him.

Vasco's home was on a side street in the poorer section of the city, so the soldiers would not pass by that place. How, then, could he get a good view of the parade?

Of course he could stand at the side of the street; but what chance would a small boy have in such a place as that?

Now Vasco was a boy of many resources, and it seemed to him that he might make use of the good nature of a young American friend.

Harlan Webster was the son of an American engineer who was in charge of work on the canal.

Mr. Webster had been for some time upon the Isthmus, and, unlike most of the Americans at work on the canal, he

had brought his family, consisting of wife and son, to the city of Panama. They had now lived here over a year. During that time Harlan had learned a good deal about the country. He had also acquired some knowledge of Spanish, the language of the natives. In fact, it was said of him by his Panama friends that he could talk with the people more freely than many older foreigners who had been longer in the country.

The American boy knew many Panama lads, among them Vasco. "Lieutenant" Barretas, as he insisted on being called, had been in Mr. Webster's service at various times, and the two boys had thus become quite intimate and had taken many pleasure trips together.

Harlan was able to tell Vasco a good deal about Panama history. The stories about the buccaneers of old times, about the raid on the city of Panama, about Balboa and his adventures and discoveries, were more familiar to the American lad than they were to the Panama boy.

On the other hand, Vasco could give his friend much information about the every-day habits and customs of the people, and was able to take him to many points of interest.

When it came to excursions by water or by land, Vasco was in his element. He could handle a boat with skill, he could swim like a fish, and he knew the windings and curvings of all the highways and byways of the city.

Straight to the hotel where the Webster family lived went Vasco this morning. This hotel was in the better part of the city, not far from the plaza, or great square.

"Hello, Harlan," said Vasco, after he had found his friend.

"Hello, Vasco."

"How would you like to see the great army parade this morning?"

"Fine," was the reply. "Where can we go to get a good view?"

"That's what I'd like to know. I don't want to stand in the crowd on the street, for I could never see anything that way."

"Let's see what my father can do to help us," said Harlan.

Mr. Webster, who was in an adjoining room, greeted his son's friend with a pleasant "Good morning" when the boys

appeared before him. Seeing the eager, inquiring look on their faces, he asked what he could do for them.

"The Panama soldiers are going to parade to-day," said Harlan, "and Vasco is anxious to find a place where he can see them."

Mr. Webster smiled. He had an idea that Harlan was as anxious to get a view of the parade as was Vasco.

"Why don't you go into the cathedral and watch from the tower or from one of the upper windows?" asked Mr. Webster.

"None but officials and their families or others holding tickets can enter the cathedral till after the parade," replied Vasco, "and all entrances are guarded."

"If I tell you of a way to get into the cathedral, do you think you can remain within till the soldiers go by?" asked Mr. Webster.

"I'm sure we can," replied Vasco.

Mr. Webster, during his stay in Panama, had been able to pick up information about the place that even Vasco did not know, and he said to the boys, "You know where the old sea-battery is, on the other side of the plaza from the

cathedral?"

"Yes," said the two boys together.

"Well, from that battery to the cathedral is an underground passage, built centuries ago to afford escape from the building. In times of revolution there was often danger even within its sacred walls."

Mr. Webster told the boys how they might find the entrance to the tunnel, and at once they were off to see for themselves. It took only a few moments to make their way from the hotel, down the street, across the plaza, and through a narrow alley to the old battery. Quickly they passed inside. Here Vasco was entirely at home, for many times he had wandered about the place, and with his friends had played hide-and-seek and other boyish games.

Notwithstanding this, it was hard for Vasco and Harlan to find the entrance to the underground passage. They opened many doors and wandered into several blind corridors. Vasco was almost ready to give up the search, but his American friend insisted on continuing. At last, behind a heap of old rubbish, they found the entrance they had so eagerly sought.

With a brave front the boys went into the dark passage. After going a few yards, they found themselves in complete darkness.

"I hope we shall not have to go far in this dark place," said Vasco.

Harlan pretended to give a careless reply, but, after he had stubbed his toes and scraped his shins on various obstacles in the path, he agreed that the adventure had its drawbacks.

Just then it occurred to Vasco that he had a supply of matches in his pocket. He scratched them one by one, thus faintly lighting the path. Then the boys were able to move forward more rapidly, and soon they came to what was evidently the foundation wall of the cathedral.

Through this wall was a low archway, which was blocked by what seemed to be a wooden barricade. There was no sign of a door.

"Well, we are really in trouble now," said Harlan.

"There's no doubt about that," replied Vasco as he put his shoulder to the partition. It did not budge, and the Panama lad was again inclined to give up the attempt to get

into the cathedral.

"We may as well give up trying to get in this way," he said.

"Not yet," was Harlan's reply as they stood in the dark. "Strike another match, and let's see what this looks like, anyway."

Vasco scratched another match, and the two boys hastily looked over the stout planking. Not a crack nor a loose joint was to be seen.

Just before the match went out, Harlan glanced backward and spied upon the ground a stick of timber eight or ten feet long.

"Light another match," he shouted, darting toward the stick.

Lifting one end of it, he directed Vasco to take up the other end. It was not very easy for Vasco to do this and keep his match burning at the same time, but he managed to do so, though the light went out just as they reached the archway again.

"Let's batter down these old planks," said Harlan.

Together the boys began to pound at the barricade.

Though Vasco was a small lad, compared with Harlan, his well-trained muscles, hardened and toughened by out-door life, came well into play.

Under such hammering as the boys were able to give, the planks began to loosen, and soon they made a hole large enough to crawl through.

Fortunately, this was in a remote part of the basement, and none heard the noise the boys had made. No one dreamed of putting a guard at this point. The entrance had been so long closed that nearly everybody had forgotten it.

Passing through, the boys found themselves in a small room which had been used as a storeroom.

"See the relics here," said Harlan.

"Mostly old rubbish, I guess," was Vasco's reply.

Whether relics or rubbish, the lads had no time to stop and examine the stuff. They made their way to a steep stairway, down which a ray of light came from a crack in the trap-door overhead.

Without a moment's delay Vasco and his friend mounted the stairs. With a strong push they put their shoulders to the heavy timbers of which the door was made.

But the door had been too long settled in its place to yield at once to their pushing. By persistent effort, however, the door was moved. Slowly the boys raised it, looking carefully about as their eyes became accustomed to the light which flooded the room into which it opened.

It proved to be an anteroom on the main floor of the cathedral into which the boys had come. Vasco immediately recognized their surroundings. No one else was about, and the boys were able to make their way without challenge to the portico facing the plaza. Once mingled with the throng, there was no danger of any one interfering with their movements. It was taken for granted by the soldiers that Vasco and his friend had a right to be in the cathedral.

In truth, several of the guards were members of Lieutenant Barretas's company, and they knew Vasco, who had often visited their camp. They supposed, however, that the son of one of their officers had a right within the space reserved for guests. Vasco, in turn, knew who these particular soldiers were, and was not long making friends with them.

While waiting for the marching soldiers, Vasco told

Harlan something of the history of the cathedral, which is built of yellow stone, with high Moorish towers.

As the boys looked up to the great dome, Harlan asked:

"What makes the dome sparkle so in the sunshine?"

"That's because of the hundreds of pearl shells that are stuck into the cement covering," replied Vasco.

"Do you know," continued Vasco, "that this great building was put up nearly one hundred and fifty years ago?"

"Yes," replied Harlan, "and I have heard that its builder was the first coloured bishop of this city."

"That is true," said Vasco, "and he was the son of a poor man who burned charcoal and then sold it from his back through the streets of Panama. The son was very kind to the poor people, and was noted for his charity."

"Yes," added one of Vasco's soldier acquaintances who stood near and overheard the talk, "and this cathedral is really a monument to the useful life of the bishop."

Further conversation was interrupted by the music of a brass band in the distance. The boys looked down the street by which the soldiers were to come to the plaza. In the distance they soon saw the uniforms of the officers followed

by the long white lines of the soldiers.

Vasco's enthusiasm knew no bounds as the battalion wheeled into the plaza and passed by the cathedral with salutes for the onlookers. When he finally spied his father, Lieutenant Barretas, marching at the head of his company, Vasco was delirious with joy. To his mind, not even the general in command looked finer than did the little lieutenant — his father!

What cared Vasco if the lines of soldiers were not precisely straight? Even less did he mind Harlan's criticism and lack of admiration for the parade. Were not these soldiers enlisted in the service of his country, and were they not ready to lay down their lives in its defence?

Vasco's only wish was that he were old enough to join them and wear the uniform which to him seemed so glorious.

But, like all spectacles, grand as it seemed to Vasco, this one at last came to an end. The last flag had dipped before the reviewing stand, the last soldier had disappeared from the plaza, the last beat of drum was lost in the distance.

Meantime, the sun had risen high, and with its hot rays

was driving to cover all the people of Panama. As was their usual custom, shopkeepers and market-men closed their doors at eleven o'clock and betook themselves to their homes to enjoy their noonday siesta.

Even the throngs of boys forsook their sports and disappeared from the streets, and Vasco and Harlan took their departure from the cathedral — the latter to his cool room in the hotel, the former to his more humble home.

CHAPTER II

About the City

Perhaps you would like to know more about Vasco Barretas — who he is, his home, his surroundings, his occupations, his ambitions. Of the two latter there is little to be said. Like many of the boys of Panama, he had no occupation — not even going to school — and no particular ambition. If any thought of the future ever did come into his mind, it was quickly forgotten for some pleasure of the moment.

It is fair to Vasco to say that it was not his fault that he did not attend school. Under the Colombian government there had been no public schools. There had been a few private schools under the care of the priests, but their equipment was very poor, and accommodations were limited.

Under the new government there was destined to be an

improvement in this respect, and the year after the Panama Republic declared its independence, there were more than three thousand children in the schools, though previous to that there had been less than five hundred.

Vasco's home was a humble one, though it does not follow that it was unhappy. The contrary was the fact.

There were two children younger than Vasco — Inez, his eight-year-old sister, and the little baby brother Carlos. The parents loved their children as fathers and mothers do everywhere, and were willing to sacrifice much for their welfare.

Both Lieutenant Barretas and his wife boasted of their Spanish ancestry, though they were of mixed descent, and there was evidence of Jamaica negro blood in their features. Perhaps this accounted for Vasco's aversion to hard labour, though the strict truth of history does not reveal that the early Spanish discoverers were specially fond of manual toil.

Though Vasco's home could boast no luxuries, he had never seen the time when there was lack of food, and for clothing all he required was a pair of trousers and a shirt, both made of cheap linen cloth. Boy readers will realize the

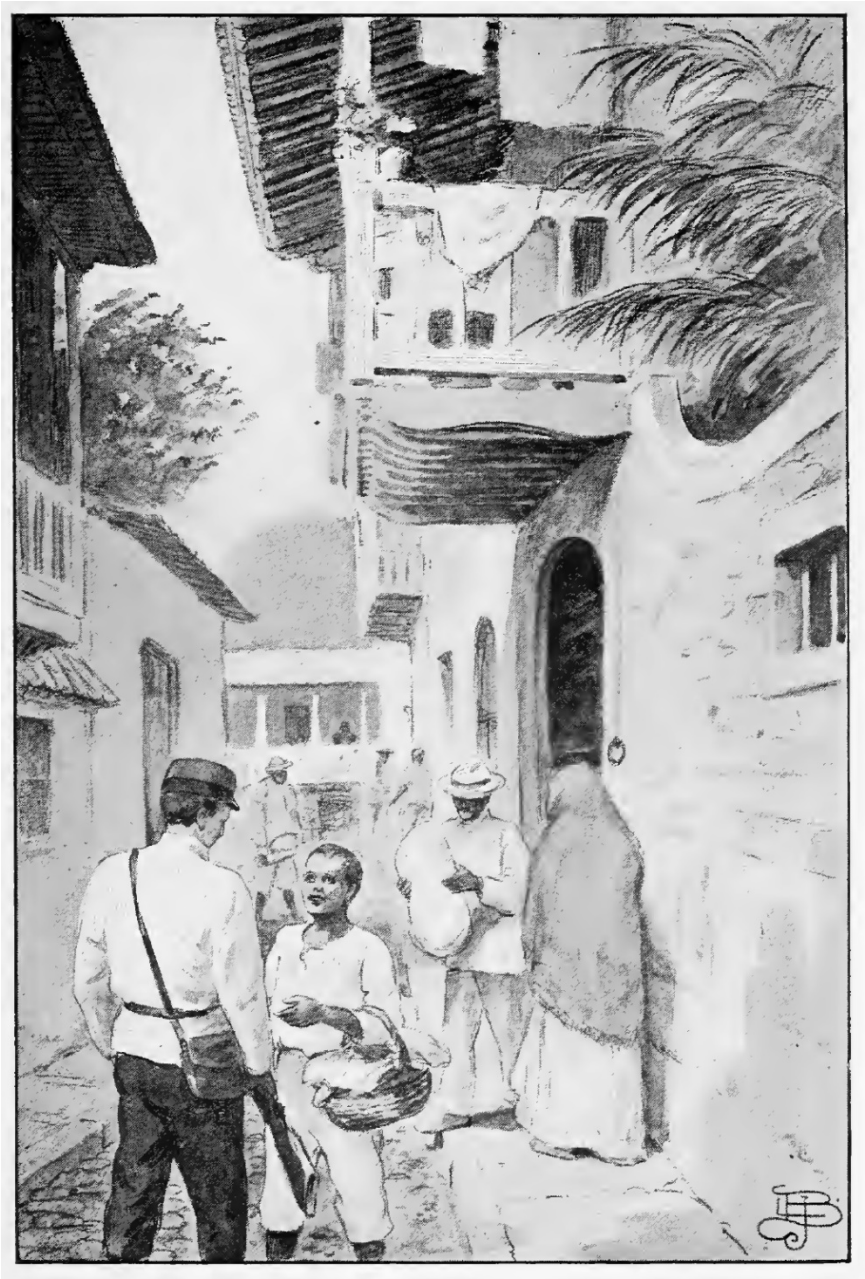
glorious possibilities in such a scanty attire.

Much of his time Vasco spent about the streets of the city, indulging in sports and games with boys of his own age. Often he went to the water-front and watched the loading and unloading of vessels. He specially liked to watch the fishermen as they came in with their little vessels, and brought their finny harvest ashore.

Fish are very abundant in Panama waters. The name of the city means "abounding in fish." Years ago many whales were caught off the coast, and whaling vessels were a common sight in the harbour.

At present, in addition to the edible fish, sharks are numerous in the Pacific near Panama. On one occasion Vasco had gone on a short fishing trip in one of the larger boats with the father of a boy friend. A shark was seen following the boat, and in consequence other fish were scared away.

To rid themselves of the unwelcome intruder the fishermen attached a piece of pork to a large fish-hook held by a small chain. To this was fastened a stout rope. No sooner was the baited hook cast overboard than the shark made a



A Street in Panama

rush for it and swallowed it whole. When he found he was caught, there was a terrible lashing of the water, the shark leaping bodily into the air and vainly snapping his teeth again and again upon the chain.

After the fish had become pretty well exhausted, the men drew him on board the boat, but not without a fierce struggle. Soon he was killed, though not without much unnecessary torture.

Often Vasco wandered into the market district of the city. Many of the vendors of vegetables, fruits, and provisions occupied the narrow sidewalks, displaying their wares in full view of the passers-by.

At other times Vasco would spend hours under the shady palms in the great plaza watching the passing to and fro of all classes of people — some on foot, some in carriages, some mounted on donkeys, and occasionally a military officer on horseback. When one of the latter came in sight, Vasco, with scores of other boys, would run a long distance to keep watch of the fine figure in such an abundance of gold braid.

The water-sellers, with their little carts drawn by

wobegone-looking donkeys, were always an object of interest to Vasco. He felt that it would be almost as much fun to ride about on a water-cart all day as to be a soldier.

Among the buildings within Vasco's vision as he sat in the plaza was the Cabildo, or town hall, which is the Independence Hall of Panama, for here was signed the Declaration of Independence from Spain. Naturally the place is an object of much reverence to the natives. Nearby is the Bishop's Palace, an imposing structure where much important Panama history has been made. At the present time the street floor is occupied by the great Panama Lottery Company. Let us hope that some day the people of that country will be delivered from this national shame, and the lottery banished.

Sunday evenings there was always a band concert in the plaza, and Vasco never failed to be present. Generally he took with him his sister Inez, and sometimes his mother, with little Carlos, would accompany them. This was always a joyful occasion, for Vasco liked nothing better than to hear the music and to watch the continual passing of the people.

CHAPTER III

A Trip to Old Panama

Though Vasco had explored nearly every nook and corner of the city in which he had lived, he had never visited what was called Old Panama.

You must understand that the Panama of to-day is not on the site of the original city. The present city was built after the former one had been destroyed by the buccaneers. Of them you may learn something further on.

The so-called "modern" Panama was founded in 1673. As protection from pirates and buccaneers a high stone wall was built around the city, which cost over eleven million dollars. That seems to us an enormous sum, and to the people of those days it was fabulous. It gives some idea of the vast wealth that must have been stored in the city to admit of such an outlay for its protection. Few traces of this

wall now remain. As civilization has advanced, and life and property have become safer, it has gradually been torn down.

One day, not long after the great military review, Vasco was down at the water-front watching the fishermen unloading their boats. As it happened, he fell in with Enrique Mendoza, in whose father's boat he had witnessed the capture of the shark.

Enrique, as well as Vasco, was always looking for some new adventure. At this time he hailed his friend with a glad shout, and asked:

"What do you say, Vasco, to a trip over to Old Panama to-morrow? Father will let us take a small boat he is not using, and we can go part of the way in that."

Vasco was much pleased at the invitation, but was in doubt as to whether it were perfectly safe for them to go without some one for protector and guide, as he had heard many disquieting stories about the old city.

"Have you ever been over there?" he asked Enrique.

"Many times."

"Do you know the way about?"

"Of course I do. I have often been there with father. Besides, there's an old friend of his who lives in a hut near the ruins, and he will be glad to show us about."

When Vasco heard the last statement, he hesitated no longer. "I'll go, then," he said. "I have never been there, and I should like to see what the place looks like. What do you say to asking my American friend Harlan to go with us?"

"That will be fine. The boat will carry three all right, and we will have all the jollier time."

Enrique had never seen Harlan Webster, but he had heard Vasco talk about him, and was greatly pleased at the thought of having him along on this trip. He had seen and heard enough of the Americans about the city to know that they were very active and enthusiastic. So he felt certain that this American boy would add to the fun of the excursion.

"All right, then," said Vasco. "We'll start early tomorrow morning. What time do you say?"

"Six o'clock won't be too early. It will take at least three hours to get over there. That will give us a little time to

look around before the middle of the day, when it will be too hot to move about. Then in the afternoon we can search among the old ruins awhile, starting for home in season to get here before dark."

This plan suited Vasco, and he took leave of Enrique, saying that he would see Harlan sometime during the day. He had little doubt that the young American would go with them.

As the day was now well advanced, though, Vasco first made his way home, when for several hours he remained within doors. He told his mother of his plans for the next day, to which she made no objection. She rarely interfered with his movements, except that sometimes she asked him to do some chores about the house, and occasionally required him to look after Inez and his baby brother while she was away on an errand.

In the latter part of the afternoon Vasco went to see if Harlan could go with him the next day. It didn't take long to give the invitation, and it took Harlan even less time to accept it, so far as he was concerned.

"Wait a moment, though," he said to Vasco. "I must ask

my mother if she is willing for me to go with you."

To Vasco this seemed unnecessary. He never thought of having to ask his mother about such things. But he had known Harlan long enough to learn that American ways, especially so far as boys were concerned, were different from Panama customs.

The American boy immediately went to his mother and told her what he wanted. At first she was inclined to object to his making this trip with only two other boys for companions, but his arguments and persuasions finally overcame her scruples, if not her fears, and he secured her consent.

Back to Vasco he hurried and told him the welcome news.

"Remember, now," said Vasco as he took his leave, "and be at the beach near the Panama Railroad pier at six o'clock sharp."

"I surely will. Good night," was Harlan's reply.

Both boys retired in good season that evening, to get well rested for their early start.

At dawn next day Vasco sprang out of bed. He was not

concerned about the weather, for this was the dry season of the year, when for months no water falls, and there was no danger of rain preventing the day's outing.

Quickly he ate the breakfast his mother provided, and many minutes before the appointed time was on his way to the meeting-place. Though the first on the scene, he did not have to wait long for the other two boys. Enrique was the second to arrive, and shortly afterward Harlan made his appearance.

Harlan was glad to meet Enrique, and felt sure that if his mother could have seen the sturdy brown fisher-lad getting the boat ready she would have had no concern for their safety. All three boys were familiar with boats, though of course Harlan's acquaintance was with less rudely built craft than the one in which they were to cross the bay.

Each boy had brought along fruit for lunch. In addition, Vasco had some hard-boiled eggs, wrapped in corn-husks, as sold in the market. Eggs are not bought by the dozen in Panama, but by the pair. The boys expected either to catch fish or to get some from Juan, Enrique's friend who lived in the hut near the old city.

Soon they got under way in the little boat, with its sail spread wide to catch the light morning breeze. Enrique was at the rudder and Vasco acted as lookout at the bow, while Harlan made himself as comfortable as possible midway. All of them hugely enjoyed the sail across the bay.

Old Panama is only about four miles northeast of the present city in a straight line, but as the boys went, partly by water and partly on foot, they had to cover a much longer distance. That did not trouble them, however, especially while in the boat.

After sailing about an hour, a landing was made at Point Paitillo, which forms the protection for the upper side of the Bay of Panama. The boat was safely drawn up to shore and made fast to a huge boulder by a long line.

As the tide was high when they landed, they knew there was no danger of the boat's going adrift later in the day. In fact, as the tide receded it left the craft high and dry upon the shore. At Panama the tide has a rise and fall of about twenty feet.

The boat secured in its position, the boys took up their way afoot. They passed along the rocky shore, through

some swampy lowland and over broad green fields, crossing many little brooks and rivulets.

To Harlan especially this walk was delightful. He greatly admired the park-like trees and shrubs, the luxuriant tropical vegetation, the beautiful scenery, fleeting glimpses of city and sea, and over all the clear blue southern sky.

After awhile the boys came to Algarrobo River, which empties into the sea close beside the ruins. The stream was spanned by an old stone bridge, built over 350 years ago. Across this they made their way and came in sight of the old city — or what was visible in the bewildering mass of tropical vegetation.

They did not immediately go into its depths, however, but, led by Enrique, sought out the hut of Juan, who lived a hermit life on the border of this city, where years ago there had been a great tide of humanity, and where ambition, avarice, gaiety, luxury, once had full sway, but now was only a memory. Where once thousands of people had thronged, now the only living things were serpents, alligators, iguanas, pumas, and such.

The boys were fortunate in finding Juan at home, and as

it was now well toward the middle of the day, they were glad to get into the shelter of his little thatch-roofed hut, and rest their weary limbs after the long walk.

CHAPTER IV

Story of the Buccaneers

Enrique's friend Juan was a fine specimen of the Panama Indian. He was straight, clean-limbed, big-boned, well-shaped. His long, coarse, straight black hair hung loosely upon his shoulders. He was not very tall, but out-door life had made him nimble and active and strong, and Harlan especially admired his athletic appearance.

Indians of unmixed blood are a rarity in Panama now, and Juan was exceedingly proud of the fact that no Spanish or negro blood flowed in his veins. This, too, probably accounted for his living alone. He was a member of the Tule or San Blas tribe of Indians, which not many years ago lived on the Atlantic coast of Panama, peaceably pursuing an honest, industrious life, occupied in fishing, hunting, farming, and sometimes trading.

Juan knew well what his ancestors had suffered from the Spaniards centuries ago, and how much it had cost to resist successfully their attacks. In consequence, he had no love for the white man. His hatred, however, did not include everybody, and he was on terms of close friendship with Enrique's father, who often marketed the fish Juan caught.

The Indian met Enrique and his companions with a smile, his even white teeth gleaming between his thin lips. He gave them a warm welcome, and invited them into the shelter of his hut, and the boys were very glad to accept his hearty hospitality.

"We have come to visit the old city," said Vasco, "and Enrique said you would be glad to show us about and tell something of its history."

"Yes, yes, but not now. Sun too hot. Go in and lie down. By and by we go to see the ruins."

Within the hut swung a hammock, which was generously given up to Harlan, while Vasco and Enrique made themselves comfortable on a rude grass couch covered with skins.

Meanwhile Juan set about, in his deliberate way, to

prepare a meal for his visitors.

"Doesn't it seem strange," said Harlan to his companions, "that this place where there were once so many people should now be deserted?"

The American boy, though as full of fun as any lad, had a poetic nature, and in quiet moments was either building air-castles or dreaming over past events. The historic associations of this place brought to his mind much that he had read of the early visits of the Spaniards and of the bold buccaneers who followed in their trail.

Harlan's question had not much meaning either to Enrique or to Vasco, for in fact they knew much less about the history of the country and of their ancestors than did their American friend. But Vasco had enough curiosity to be interested in Harlan's question and the thought that might be behind it.

"Were there, then, very many people living here?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed, thousands and thousands. After his discovery of the Pacific Ocean Balboa founded the city, and thousands of Spanish countrymen flocked to the place in

search of gold."

Harlan came very near saying something about their treatment of the native Indians, but he happened to think that Vasco and Enrique were both descendants of these same conquerors, and he was wise enough to hold his tongue.

"Many of the Spaniards," he continued, "succeeded way beyond their wildest dreams, and right here where you see these old ruins they were able to pile up a big lot of gold."

"If they became so rich," asked Vasco, "how did it happen that the city was deserted and fell to ruin?"

"Oh, that is a long story, and I am not sure that I could tell it very well, either," replied Harlan.

"There's plenty of time before Juan will have dinner ready," broke in Enrique, "and I am sure we would both like to hear how Old Panama was destroyed. You may be certain that not many boys in this country know the story, and it will give us something to brag about."

"Well, then," began Harlan, "you must know that for many years your ancestors and mine quarrelled, particularly over the control of the sea and its commerce. It was a long

fight between the English and the Spanish, and it was a bitter one, too. Millions of dollars were spent, and blood — well, that flowed in rivers.

"In the search after wealth in the new world, the old rivalry between Spanish and English continued, and I guess that when it came to a fight neither side stopped to ask which was right or wrong. The men who sailed the ships on both sides were nothing but a set of pirates, and the governments at home didn't much care what the sailors did to their enemies.

"Thus it came about that a fierce and strong band of buccaneers, under Henry Morgan, was allowed to attack the Spanish vessels even at times when the nations were supposed to be at peace, though of course with no direct authority. It was this Morgan and his blood-thirsty cutthroats who destroyed the old city of Panama."

"How did you learn all this?" interrupted Vasco. "I have lived here all my life and never heard about this Morgan, though I have heard my father say that some of his ancestors were among those who lost life and property when the city was destroyed."

"Oh," said Harlan, "some things I learned in history at school, but a great deal I got from books of adventure that father has given me. If you only could read English I would lend you some of them, and you would find out much more than I can possibly tell you.

"But let me tell you about Morgan and his men. The old pirate chief himself was a Welshman, and if I remember correctly his father was a respectable farmer.

"The son didn't love the quiet life of a Welsh farmer, and so he left home when quite young. He joined the crew of a merchant vessel, and sailed for Barbados.

"Here he had very bad luck, which no doubt was partly the cause of his awful cruelty to his enemies in later years. He fell into the hands of the Spaniards and was sold into slavery."

"I'm mighty glad there are no slaves now," broke in Enrique. "I've heard my father tell some things about the way they lived, and it must have been terrible."

"It surely was," replied Harlan, "and yet the conditions of slavery with which your father is familiar were as nothing compared with the sufferings of slaves in Morgan's time.

Probably his case was no better than others, but, as matters turned out, he succeeded after a time in getting his freedom. I can't tell you just how this was brought about, though I am sure his great strength and daring must have had much to do with it.

"Morgan next went to Jamaica, where he joined a band of pirates — mostly English and French — who attacked the Spanish treasure-ships in these waters. You can easily imagine that Morgan's part in this business wasn't small. He never thought of such a thing as mercy. The crews of captured ships who weren't killed in the battles had to walk the plank.

"Fortune favoured Morgan, and, unlike most of his companions, he saved his booty, and in a little while was able to buy a ship. In this vessel he had as villainous a body of men as ever walked the deck.

"With his ship he joined other pirate captains, and it was not long before he was in command of a fleet of fifteen vessels, with over five hundred men — men who were not afraid of anything, and who did dreadful things wherever they went.

"With the constant additions to their force, the buccaneers began to spread out. They were not satisfied with capturing ships and killing their crews, but began to go upon the land, and a good many native and Spanish settlements in the West Indies and on the shore of South or Central America suffered. Wherever the pirates suspected Spanish treasure might be stored, they were sure to make their appearance, sooner or later. Town after town was captured and destroyed, and everything of value carried away."

"But what has all this to do with Panama?" asked Vasco, who, though interested in Morgan's history, was anxious to learn about the destruction of the city.

"I'm coming to that very soon," replied Harlan. "After a time Morgan and his men began to wonder if they could not capture Panama, which was then the chief city of all this region, and was famous everywhere for its vast wealth. And, as so often happens, the stories about its wonders far exceeded the reality.

"The inhabitants did not dream that the buccaneers would ever dare to attack Panama, fortified as it was, and

defended by Spanish soldiers. But they didn't know much about the spirit which was in Morgan and his men, and they didn't realize to what the greed for gold would lead.

"To make a long story short, Morgan decided to attack Panama. By this time he had twelve hundred followers. Landing about forty miles from the city, with only a small supply of provisions, they took up their long march through forests and over the mountains and across the streams. They could not move very fast, and the men were nearly starved. I remember reading in some book, that at nightfall often the happiest man in the company was the one who had saved from his breakfast a small piece of rawhide on which to make his supper."

Vasco, who could make good use of anything eatable at any time, and who even now was wondering if Juan had dinner nearly ready, could not restrain an exclamation at this statement. "How could they live on that sort of stuff?" he asked.

"I don't know, myself," replied Harlan, "but we are told that the skins were first sliced, then dipped in water, and afterward beaten between stones. The morsel would then

be broiled, cut into bits, and deliberately chewed, with plenty of cold water to wash it down.

"In addition to the danger of starvation, the pirates were in constant fear of ambuscades. The Spaniards, who knew of their approach, sent out parties of soldiers to meet them and hinder their march, though the defenders of Panama knew very well that they would lose a pitched battle. Consequently they confined themselves to attacks from the cover of the dense forests, and in this way many a buccaneer was killed."

"Weren't the Englishmen able to find anything to eat while on the way?" asked Enrique.

"Very little indeed," replied Harlan, "until the ninth day, when they came to the outskirts of this city. What they saw there was very pleasing to these hungry men. On the broad, level land the other side of that bridge we just crossed were great herds of cattle."

"I'll wager they made a rush for them," said Vasco.

"They did, you may be sure," continued Harlan, "and so hungry were the men that they would hardly stop even to cook the meat.

"Their hunger satisfied, Morgan and his men moved on, and very soon caught a glimpse of the roofs and towers of the city. Then what a shout went up! The pirates, tired as they were, tossed their caps in the air and rushed forward with cheers. Drums were also beaten, and the invaders acted like crazy men at the thought of securing the rich treasure that lay in the city before them.

"Many of them wished to charge on the city and capture it at once, but their leader gave wiser counsel, and the pirates went into camp for the night, intending to move forward early in the morning."

"I should think the pirates would have been afraid to attack the city," said Vasco, "for there must have been many Spanish soldiers on guard there."

Probably Vasco had a higher opinion of Spanish bravery than did Harlan, but the young American gave no hint of his real thought. He simply said: "The pirates were the most desperate men on earth, and in their position it was win or die, for they could expect no quarter, and could not retreat over the path by which they had come.

"It is true," continued Harlan, "that the Spaniards

greatly outnumbered the buccaneers, and they tried all sorts of schemes to defend the city. Among other things, they collected a great herd of bulls and drove them into the pirates' ranks with the hope that such disorder would be created as to make easy the enemy's destruction.

"But all that could be done in defence was useless against the villains who were greedy for gold. No mercy was shown, and death was the lot of all on either side who fell into the hands of their foes.

"After fierce fighting, which continued several days, Morgan and his men got into the city. Immediately the search for treasure was begun. Every house and building was ransacked, and if any inhabitant dared to resist, his life was immediately taken. Even helpless women and children were not spared."

"I don't see why they killed those who were unable to resist them," said Vasco.

"One reason why the pirates were so merciless was because of their disappointment. Though they did find vast stores of silver and gold, in many houses they were unable to find anything of value. This was because some of the

people who lived in the city had hidden their treasure — in many cases burying it deep in the ground."

"That is so," interrupted Enrique, "and I have heard my father tell of seeing people come here to dig for buried gold. I never heard, though, that any one found much."

"Let Harlan go on with his story," said Vasco, sharply. "I want to hear how Morgan succeeded. Besides, I'm beginning to get hungry."

"There isn't much more to tell," said the young American. "When the pirates had finished their hunt they set fire to the city. At the same time they went on killing the people. Special vengeance was visited on the priests, for the robbers had been unable to find the great store of plate which the Church was supposed to possess.

"Morgan stayed here four weeks, taking everything of value, both on land and in the harbour. It is said that when he finally left the place it took one hundred and seventy-five mules to carry the plunder."

"What became of Morgan finally?" asked Vasco.

"Soon after his capture of Panama, I believe," replied Harlan, "he was appointed by King Charles the Second of

England as deputy governor of Jamaica. Afterward King James the Second removed him and threw him into prison for his crimes."

"And good enough for him!" was Vasco's comment.

Just at this time Juan appeared in the doorway of the hut. "Come, boys, let's have something to eat," he said.

That was an invitation none of them cared to refuse, and they responded as only three hungry boys could.

Outside on a rude bench was spread the fresh fish that Juan knew so well how to cook over his camp-fire, together with Vasco's boiled eggs, potatoes, plaintains, and all sorts of vegetables and fruit. The sail and the long walk had added zest to appetites always splendid, and the good things on the bench disappeared as if by magic.

"I must say," said Harlan, "that that's about the best tasting fish I ever ate. And I have eaten a good many kinds, too."

Juan, silent like most of his race, said nothing in reply to the compliment, but a significant look and a grunt of satisfaction showed that he appreciated the American boy's remark.

The boys finished their meal with generous mugs of hot cocoa. Juan was an expert in its preparation, but to his own particular draught he added a seasoning of chili pepper. This he drank boiling hot — a process which would have terribly scalded the mouths and throats of his visitors, but the Indian swallowed the hot mixture without any trouble and with much satisfaction.

Vasco and his friends looked on in amazement, and were all the more surprised when Juan told them that in years gone by it was the fashion of his forefathers to sit upon the ground with open mouths while their squaws poured the boiling mixture down their throats.

Their generous dinner disposed of, Vasco suggested that they immediately begin the exploration of the old city. This was agreed to by the others, and under Juan's guidance they at once made their way into the dense jungle which had grown up about the ruins.

Neither of the Panama boys was very romantic in disposition, but Vasco could not help thinking of the pirates of whom Harlan had told — how they had trod this very ground, and how back and forth Spaniards and buccaneers

had swept in bloody battle. All the military ardour which had been born in his breast was aroused, and he even caught himself wishing that he had been there to help defend the city. Little did he realize how much less enchanting was the experience than the story.

It is not possible to describe all that the boys saw. As they wandered back and forth they imagined that here was a market-place, and there was the residence of some rich old Spanish trader. Over yonder was all that remained of a bishop's palace, and nearby may have been the governor's abode.

The old cathedral was easily identified by the tower which still stands. Within its walls the boys went and gazed with awe upon the ancient altar on which Pizarro, the adventurous explorer and conqueror, had left an offering to the Holy Virgin before starting on his voyage to Peru.

Time passed swiftly, however, and it was Enrique who discovered that the sun was fast setting.

"We must soon be starting," he said to Vasco, "if we are to get home before dark."

Harlan, who overheard what Enrique said, was anxious



The Tower of the Old Cathedral

to start immediately, for he knew his mother would be worried if he were late.

So bidding Juan good-bye and thanking him profusely for his kindness to them, the boys took up their homeward march across the old bridge and along the coast. Not so much time was spent on the way as in the morning, for now they were intent only on getting home.

The boat was found safely fast where they had left it, and, quickly spreading the sail, they were soon speeding across the blue waters of the bay. The sail was a delightful one, the cool breeze fanning their cheeks while the slanting rays of the sun cast a glory over the scene which subdued their boyish spirits and filled them with awe as they gazed about them.

Before long, however, they arrived at the water-front of the city. Here was a busy, bustling scene. A great steamer from San Francisco had arrived during the day, and a gang of negro labourers was busily transferring the freight from its capacious hold to the cars which stood alongside on the dock. On the other side of the Isthmus the process would have to be repeated in a reverse manner. The freight would

be unloaded from the cars and shipped to New York, New Orleans, Liverpool, and other ports of the United States and Europe.

At the same time numerous small boats were drawn up near the beach, discharging fish, poultry, fruit, and various cargoes. Here the boys saw a sight which was new even to Vasco, though he had seen about everything that went on in Panama. A small schooner from up the coast had brought in a cargo of live pigs for the Panama market. The vessel was not made fast to a wharf and the pigs taken out over a gangplank, but it was moored as near the beach as safety would allow. Then the pigs were dumped overboard and compelled to swim for land, where they were caught. Later they would be slaughtered and their carcasses exposed for sale in the market-place.

The sight of the squealing, swimming pigs was very amusing to Vasco and Harlan, and they watched with glee the unloading of the whole boat-load before they went ashore.

"What queer-looking pigs those are!" said Harlan.

"Why?" Vasco asked.

"See how lean they are, and what long snouts they have!"

"Well, isn't that the way all pigs look?"

"Not up in my country," replied Harlan. "Those that I have seen were so fat that they could hardly move. These pigs are not at all like them; though I have heard that in the Southern States many of the wild hogs are thin and long-legged."

Soon the boys bade each other good night, and Vasco went to his home ready for the supper his mother had prepared for him. Not long afterward he went to bed, thoroughly tired, but very much pleased with his day's outing. If he dreamed at all that night there must have appeared a strange mixture of Spaniards and pirates and Indians and ruins and — pigs!

CHAPTER V

An Earthquake

"Vasco," called his mother to him early one morning a few days later, "I want you to get up and go to market for me."

"Oh, dear, I don't want to get up now," said Vasco.

"No matter," replied his mother, "you'll want something to eat by and by, so hurry up."

Vasco knew it was no use to protest further, and, as the process of dressing was a very short one with him, he soon was ready to do his mother's errand.

"What do you want me to get this morning?" he asked.

"I want you to get some potatoes and peas and rice and half a yard of beef," his mother replied, as she handed him a basket.

It sounds strange to hear about a yard of beef, doesn't it?

Vasco did not think so, though, for in Panama beef, instead of being sold by the pound, is often cut into long strips and sold by the yard.

By the time Vasco was all ready to start his sister Inez was up.

"May I go with you?" she asked.

"Of course, if you want to. Come on."

So together they trotted out of the house and off to market.

Inez looked about her with wide-open eyes, for her visits to the market, especially in the early morning, had been very rare.

"See what a lot of donkeys standing over there," said the little girl, pointing across the street.

"Yes; they belong to the fruit-sellers you see here. The animals stand there all day long, and at night, when their masters and mistresses have sold all their stock, they ride home on the backs of the donkeys. Some of them go many miles into the country, too."

But other sights soon attracted Inez's attention, and the donkeys were forgotten.

Many of the buyers were women cooks dressed in red and yellow and green and bright colours of all sorts. They made the place look very brilliant.

Soon, however, Vasco had done his errands and with Inez hurried home for breakfast.

Sometimes, in the evening, Vasco would go out with his mother and Inez and little Carlos.

On Sunday evenings, as you have already learned, they went to the plaza and listened with rapt attention to the band concert.

Quite often, on these occasions, Vasco's father, the lieutenant, would have a leave of absence from his military duties, and would go with his family. Then Vasco was supremely happy, for he was extremely proud of the gorgeous uniform which his father wore, and felt as if some of the military glory were reflected upon him.

Since Panama had become an independent nation, much patriotic music had been played at these concerts, and the large crowds were always enthusiastic.

On one Sunday evening, soon after the boy's visit to Old Panama, all the members of the family except little Carlos

were listening to Vasco's tales of the sights he had seen in the old city. He also was repeating the story of the buccaneers that Harlan had told him.

Lieutenant Barretas was especially interested in what Vasco said about the treasure buried amid the ancient ruins.

"Our ancestors," he said to his son, "were not the only ones who left their wealth buried in the ground about here. The pirates who so cruelly robbed the early settlers of the country often hid their ill-gotten gains in caves in the sand on the shore or upon some barren island. Then they sailed away, and sometimes never returned to secure their treasure. If the stories were to be believed, all we need to do to obtain untold wealth is to take picks and spades and turn up the earth along the coast of our country or on the islands near its shores.

"Years ago a good many people actually spent much time searching for hidden gold. I remember hearing my grandfather tell of a neighbour who formed one of a party that went to Cocos Island for such a purpose.

"It seems that many years before a dying pirate had confided to an old countryman, a carpenter by trade, that a

vast store of gold was buried on Cocos Island."

"I have heard of that place," interrupted Vasco. "Some of the sailors whom Enrique and I know have mentioned it. The island is several hundred miles from Panama, and there are no people living on it."

"That is true," said the lieutenant. "Well, this carpenter was nearly mad with joy at the information the dying pirate gave him. He thought surely that his fortune was made. No more hard work for him! All he needed to do was to dig up the treasure, and for the rest of his life enjoy ease and freedom from care."

"I don't much blame him, father, do you?" asked Vasco.

"I can't say that I do," was the reply. "I'll admit I wouldn't mind digging up a pot or two of gold myself, though I don't believe that we take so much stock in the stories of hidden wealth as our fathers and grandfathers did.

"With this carpenter, however, it was a pretty serious question how he was going to get to Cocos Island and secure the treasure. He knew the island was a desert place and far from shore. It would be necessary to have a ship, a good store of provisions, and tools with which to do the

digging, to say nothing of a company of men to help him. All this required much money, and our poor carpenter had none. But he was possessed of a large amount of courage and perseverance, and he managed after a time to enlist the help of men of means, who furnished the capital for the expedition.

"Many hardships were endured by the little band of men who made up the carpenter's company, but they finally arrived at the island.

"The pirate had not made very clear the exact location of the hidden gold, and as the island was covered with a dense growth of trees and vines, the search was a heartless task from the beginning. The men, however, got to work, and with picks and spades and gunpowder managed to uncover a large part of the island."

"And did they find the gold?" asked Vasco, his face now aglow with excitement.

"Not any," replied his father. "Several months they dug and blasted, but all in vain. No sign of chest, box, silver, or gold was found. Day after day the search continued. Finally the provisions became exhausted, the men grew dis-

heartened, and a weary, disappointed company of men returned to Panama."

Just as Vasco's father finished his story a strange rumbling noise was heard. You would have wondered what it was, and perhaps have been a little frightened. The Barretas family, however, knew in a moment what had happened.

"An earthquake!" cried Vasco.

Even as he spoke two or three tiles fell from the roof into the street. A startling clatter breaking the stillness of the evening proved that the tiles had been shaken loose from neighbouring houses, also.

"We'd better get out quick," cried the lieutenant, and he made a dash for the door.

Vasco and his mother were more thoughtful about the younger children, and, while the mother rushed into the bedroom after Carlos, Vasco took Inez by the arm and followed closely on his father's heels.

In a moment the whole family was in the street.

"Get away from the house!" shouted Vasco's father. "The tiles are likely to fall upon you if you don't."

To the middle of the street they all dashed, where they

were quickly surrounded by a noisy, chattering mob of men, women, and children.

Again the earth seemed to shake and to shiver, and the shrieks and moans of frightened women and children were accompanied by the sound of more falling tiles and cracking timbers.

The experience was truly fearful, even to the older and wiser ones. The terror of the young children was something to excite pity in the most hardened breast. It was only by the utmost efforts and constant reassurance that no harm would come to her that Vasco was able to quiet his sister Inez. Even after her cries had become stilled she trembled like a leaf.

Fortunately the shock was a light one and the shaking and trembling of the earth were soon over. Lieutenant Barretas and his family returned within their house none the worse for the adventure, and went to bed, but many of their neighbours lingered in the street for hours — some even until daylight, when the terror of the night was dissipated by the cheerful rays of the rising sun.

The earthquake had been a mild one compared with

some instances of previous years. In September, 1882, the city had been visited in the night by a terrible shock. The darkness always adds intensely to the terror of the people. On this occasion men and women of all classes — high and low — had rushed to the street. Great hotels were emptied in a few moments, many guests not stopping even to put on clothing.

The great plaza was one vast mass of shouting, crying people, while the earth heaved and the air quivered as it had never done in the memory of the inhabitants. Many houses were ruined, much property destroyed, and it is said that some even died from fright.

At daybreak new courage revived the hearts of the people, but for several nights the plaza was occupied by tents and all sorts of rude shelters for thousands who dared not sleep in their houses.

CHAPTER VI

A Journey

A few days after the earthquake, early in the forenoon, there came a rap at the door of Vasco's home. Inez, always alert, ran to the door, and, throwing it open, saw Harlan Andrews standing there.

"Good morning, Inez," said the young American.

Inez had become quite well acquainted with Harlan because of his many visits to Vasco, and was always glad to see him. So she gave a cheerful smile and hearty response to his greeting, and invited him to enter.

"Is Vasco at home?" asked Harlan, as he came into the living-room.

"Yes, he is out in the courtyard. If you will sit down I will call him."

Harlan thought he was quite fortunate to find Vasco.

Generally at this time of day he was out upon the streets with other boys of his age.

In a moment Vasco came into the house, and, boylike, Harlan stated his errand without any preliminary conversation.

"Father is going to make a trip to Colon in connection with his canal work, and will spend some time on the way, particularly at the Culebra cut. Perhaps, too, he will go up the Chagres River to the place where it is proposed to build the big dam. He is going to take me with him, and says I may invite you to go along."

"Oh, that will be fine!" exclaimed Vasco, and he fairly jumped up and down with glee. In fact, he was so overwhelmed by the thought of the proposed journey that he nearly forgot to thank Harlan for the invitation. When he did come to his senses, his gratitude was profuse, and his tongue could not begin to express his thoughts.

Then again, after a few moments, he remembered that this trip was for more than a day, perhaps for more than a week, and it might be necessary to consult his parents before accepting the invitation. At once he turned to his

mother, who had overheard all the conversation.

"Are you willing I should go with Harlan?" Vasco inquired.

For a moment his mother did not reply, and the boy was very anxious for fear that when she did give her answer it might not be favourable.

Finally the señora said, "If your father has no objection, I think I am willing to let you go."

"Then I'll go now to ask him. Come on, Harlan," said Vasco.

The lieutenant was stationed in the city at this time, so the boys had not far to go. Vasco did not anticipate any great difficulty in gaining his father's consent to the journey. As the result proved, his hopes were well founded, for Lieutenant Barretas was quite willing his son should go anywhere, provided he was in Mr. Andrews's care.

"It's all right, then," said Harlan when the matter was decided. "Meet me at the railway station next Monday morning at eight o'clock." This was Friday.

For Vasco, the two days between Friday and Monday passed — oh, so slowly! It seemed as if they would never go

by!

Meanwhile, his mother gave him a bit of information which later turned out to be of value. "You say you may go up the Chagres River?" she asked her son.

"Yes, so Harlan told me," was Vasco's reply.

"I have never told you that I have a brother living in that part of the country — your Uncle Francisco Herreras. The last I knew of him he had a plantation not far from Palo Grande. I hope, if you go near there, you may be able to call upon him. I am sure he will be very hospitable to you all."

At last Monday morning came. Very early Vasco awoke, ate the breakfast his mother made ready for him, and long before the hour appointed was ready to start for the railway station. He was so impatient to be on his way that he left home a full hour earlier than was necessary. Consequently, he had to wait a long time at the depot.

But time flies, even for the most impatient lads, and in due time Harlan and his father made their appearance.

"What do you think, Vasco?" said Harlan. "We are going to have a special train!"

"Where is it?" asked Vasco, who saw no sign of anything of that sort in the depot.

"Oh, it's not in here. It's outside in the train-yard. We are going out there to get aboard."

Vasco thought this a little strange, but felt that he could ask no questions. In a moment Mr. Andrews called to the boys to follow him, and led the way outside the station.

Directly they came in sight of an engine, to which was attached a box car and a flat car such as are ordinarily used for freight. On the flat car were fixed several seats, and an awning had been erected as protection from the fierce rays of the sun. In the box car were well-equipped bunks, where the members of the party might sleep at night when better accommodations were wanting.

"This is our special private car," said Harlan. "What do you think of it?"

"I think it will suit me all right," said Vasco.

Mr. Andrews explained to the boys that he was on a tour of inspection in connection with the canal work, and this train had been placed at his disposal. He was glad, in connection with his work, to give a pleasure trip to the

boys. He hoped it might also prove an instructive and beneficial one to them.

While Mr. Andrews had been talking to the boys they all had climbed upon the flat car and taken seats. Then, with a wave of the hand to the engineer, the signal was given, the throttle opened, and the train began its journey.

Slowly it moved until away from the city, but when it had passed out upon the beautiful broad savannahs, or grassy plains, which lie near Panama it moved with greater speed. To Vasco it seemed very fast indeed, though it was far otherwise to Harlan, who had ridden on the rapid express trains in his own country.

As the train drew farther from Panama they came to a more hilly region. In turn they passed through Corozal, Rio Grande, Miraflores, Pedro Miguel, and Paraiso. Most of these places were small settlements. Near the little railway stations would be seen a few wretched houses. What few inhabitants were in sight appeared to be of native Indian descent and wandered about in scanty clothing, with no apparent occupation.

At Paraiso the train was run on to a side-track.

"We shall have to wait here awhile for the regular passenger-train for Panama City to pass us," said Mr. Andrews.

"How long shall we have to wait?" asked Harlan.

"Oh, I'm sure I don't know. The trains on this road come when they please and go when they get ready. You may as well take it easy till we can go on again."

"How long does it take to run across the Isthmus?" asked Vasco.

"Generally about three hours for the forty-mile trip, but as I just told Harlan, you can't be sure of anything on this road. They ought to give better service, for they carry nearly one hundred thousand people a year."

Fortunately our friends did not have to wait very long, and when they again had a clear track they proceeded on their way.

"It must have been a big job to build this road," said Vasco, as they rode on.

"Yes," replied Mr. Andrews, "it was a great triumph of American genius. During its construction multitudes of men were killed by the deadly fever, but finally Chinese labourers were imported and successfully completed the



"'That scoop will dig out of the mountain a ton of earth at a time'"

work, though even many of these Oriental coolies died."

The train whirled on through rocky hills and valleys luxuriant with tropical foliage. As it approached Culebra Mountain Vasco's eyes opened wide at the sights he saw. From the main track various spurs were laid, on which stood giant steam-shovels.

Pointing to one of them, Mr. Andrews said: "That scoop will dig out of the mountain a ton of earth at a time. Then it is swung around and its load emptied into a gravel-car. In this manner train-load after train-load is taken from the sides of the mountain each day and hauled away and dumped either into a valley or into the sea at Colon."

Vasco also saw large gangs of men at work on the side of the mountain. Most of them were negroes from Jamaica. As the boys watched them at their labour Harlan said to his friend: "Well, those fellows can't be accused of trying to work themselves out of a job. I reckon they would move livelier than that if they were at work on some of our American railroads."

CHAPTER VII

Culebra

At the Culebra station Mr. Andrews's train stopped. "Now, boys," he said, "it is nearly noon. We will see what we can get for dinner, and then I shall have to leave you to yourselves for the rest of the day. I have considerable business to which I must attend. All I ask is that you keep out of danger and show up at supper-time. We shall sleep in the car to-night and to-morrow go on our way to Colon."

"That will give us the whole afternoon to look about this place, and I think we can manage to see a lot in that time," said Harlan.

"I'm glad we're going to have some dinner first," said Vasco, "for I'm hungry."

"Come on, then," said Mr. Andrews, and he led the way to a large wooden shanty a few rods from the station. The

building was dignified with the title of a "hotel," and served as a boarding-place for the American overseers of the gangs of men at work in the Culebra cut. Here the three sat down to a generous meal. There was not much style about it, but Mr. Andrews cared little for that, and certainly the boys were not fussy.

Dinner over, the boys were left to their own devices.

"I tell you what let's do," said Vasco. "We'll climb to the top of Culebra Hill this afternoon. We can get a splendid view of the country, and we can certainly get back in time for supper."

"That suits me," said Harlan.

At once they started. From the level of the railway tracks, the climb at first was up the steep and slippery banks that had been made by the steam-shovels. Many times the boys lost their foothold and slid backward, only to renew the struggle and clamber upward once more.

As they got higher up their progress was hindered by the dense undergrowth of shrubs and vines, so that they were obliged to make many a turn and twist in their path. In some places they could not get through the bushes, and had

to tramp a long way around to gain a few yards toward the summit.

Finally their perseverance was rewarded, and they stood upon the top of the great hill. Such a scene was spread before them as is seldom witnessed. In the immediate foreground far below them they could see the hundreds of men at work. They looked hardly larger than ants and not half so active. Here also they saw the labourers' camp — a collection of rude shanties closely huddled together.

Looking farther out, the scene was more attractive. Down through the valleys the rich-looking tropical foliage made a picture no artist could reproduce, and even boyish spirits were subdued as Vasco and Harlan gazed about them. In the distance ridge upon ridge of hills arose, adding grandeur to the magnificent view.

Awe-inspiring as was the handiwork of nature spread before them, to these boys the great work which man was here undertaking seemed even more wonderful. The scores of steam-shovels in sight were scooping up tons upon tons of earth every hour. Vasco could hardly believe it when Harlan told him that it would take years to complete the

work of cutting through the mountain. The great valleys in the locality would be entirely filled with the earth, and thousands of car-loads were to be hauled to Colon and dumped into the Atlantic.

Little did those early Spanish explorers and English buccaneers who travelled over this country imagine that great ships — many times larger than any they ever dreamed of — would be sailing through this mountain.

Vasco could hardly fancy such a thing now, but Harlan, with sublime confidence in American skill and force, had perfect faith in the early completion of the Panama canal. Certainly here before him was splendid evidence of American purpose.

When the boys had become thoroughly rested after their hard climb, and had concluded that there were no more worlds to conquer in this direction, they began to think of returning to the camp. The declining sun also reminded them that it was time to be on the move. Possibly, also, a vigorous appetite added to Vasco's zeal for the return journey. At any rate, he said to Harlan: "What do you say to a race to the railway station?"

This suggestion suited the American boy, and in a trice they were off — running, jumping, sliding, tumbling, dodging, twisting, and turning in the race for the foot of the hill. There was just enough danger in it to add interest to the contest.

In the end Vasco won, though Harlan pressed him closely all the way. Several times, indeed, he seemed to gain the lead, his shrewdness and good judgment proving nearly a match for the sturdy limbs and deep breath of his opponent.

The race over, the boys wandered about watching the shifting gravel-trains, the giant steam-shovels in operation, the hundreds of men at work, and toward the close of the day returned to the car.

Here they found Mr. Andrews, and with him went to supper. At an early hour thereafter they turned into their bunks in the "sleeping-car," where, with nets protecting them from hungry mosquitos and other insects, they soundly slumbered through the night.

Early in the morning the three travellers were again on their way, for Mr. Andrews was anxious to get to Colon.

They did not even go to the "hotel" for breakfast, but ate some canned food which had been brought along in the "sleeper." Taking his meals on a railway train was a novelty for Vasco — more so than a dinner in the finest Pullman dining-car would have been to Harlan. Nonetheless, Harlan enjoyed the novelty of the situation as much as his Panama friend.

Breakfast eaten, the boys devoted themselves to watching the scenery along the route. The forests through which they passed abounded in all sorts of bird and animal life.

As the train whirled along, the boys caught glimpses of wild turkeys, bright-coloured macaws and parrots, as well as of innumerable smaller birds. Monkeys were seen darting about amidst the foliage. Once also a drove of peccaries was seen scuttling away through the undergrowth. These little animals resemble the Virginia wild hog in shape, and are black in colour. The natives of Panama kill them for food.

The trees were innumerable in variety. Besides the ordinary oak, cedar, beech, and ash, were seen teak, rosewood, mahogany, and ebony in abundance. When they become more accessible, these will bring fortunes to their possessors.

Vasco called particular attention to the macaw-trees. He said they bore a very palatable fruit about the size of a pear, with a stringy covering and a stone in the centre. In old times the Indians were very fond of it, and recklessly cut down thousands of trees for the sake of the fruit alone. They used the black and very hard wood for arrow-heads.

As the train rolled into Obispo, the travellers got their first glimpse of the Chagres River, which forms such an important link in the construction of the canal.

CHAPTER VIII

Balboa

Along the river's bank the train sped. As it approached Matachin Mr. Andrews pointed to a high hill not far away.

"Do you know what hill that is?" he asked Vasco.

"No, sir."

"Well, you ought to, for it is the spot of greatest historic interest in your country. Cerro Gigante, or Big Hill, is its name, and from its summit was gained the first sight of the Pacific Ocean. Do you know who the discoverer of that ocean was?"

"Yes, sir, it was Balboa, who also helped to build the city of Panama. I have heard my father speak of him."

"Balboa's life was full of adventures," said Mr. Andrews, "and included many dramatic incidents, but none equaled in intensity the moment when he first sighted the broad

blue Pacific, which he called the 'Sea of the South.' At the head of a little band of tired Spaniards he toiled up that hill. The vision that met his eyes amply repaid him for all the hardships and privations he had suffered — and they had not been few."

Vasco's interest was now thoroughly aroused, and he asked Mr. Andrews to tell him more about Balboa and his adventures.

"Perhaps I do not know very much about Balboa, but I am very glad to tell you what I can.

"If I remember correctly, he was born about 1475 in Spain. So you see he was just coming to young manhood when the wonderful discovery of a new world by Columbus thrilled every Spanish heart.

"Balboa was of noble parentage, though his family had become poor. A few years after the discovery of America he sailed with Bastides and coasted up and down this country.

"At first he was very successful in his ventures, but on account of the sinking of his ship he settled in Santo Domingo, and undertook to make his living by farming. In this he failed. Soon his savings were spent, and he found

himself in debt. This was a serious matter for Balboa, as under Spanish law debtors were shown very slight consideration."

"Why didn't he run away?" asked Vasco.

"That is just what he wanted to do," replied Mr. Andrews, "but it was almost impossible to get away from the island unobserved. Finally, however, he made a desperate effort. He placed himself in a cask and caused it to be carried from his farm on board a ship that was ready to sail for South America.

"When well out to sea, he appeared to the captain, who at first was exceedingly angry. The captain relented, however, after he had heard Balboa's story, and allowed the fugitive to remain with him.

"Later, a wealthy friend supplied funds for an expedition of which Balboa was the head. At first he was unsuccessful and results were not promising, but on a visit to the Isthmus much wealth was secured, and Balboa's great success — the discovery of the Pacific — was attained.

"The building of the city of Panama soon followed. It was from that place that Pizarro, one of Balboa's compan-

ions, a few years later, sailed for Peru, whence such fabulous wealth was carried back to Spain. You saw in the ruins of the old cathedral the altar where Pizarro offered sacrifice to the Holy Virgin."

Here Mr. Andrews concluded his story, and Harlan added:

"You did not tell Vasco that Balboa made friends with an Indian chief on the Isthmus, and married his daughter. More than that, unlike a lot of Spanish explorers, he really loved his Indian wife and remained true to her — so true, in fact, that he afterward lost his life on her account."

"And was Balboa finally killed, then?" asked Vasco.

"Yes; he was executed by order of a jealous governor of the Isthmus," replied Mr. Andrews.

"That seems strange, after all he had done for his country," said Vasco.

"I know it does," was Mr. Andrews's answer; "but that was the way Spain often dealt with her adventurous explorers. Many of them deserved their fate much more than Balboa, though."

While Mr. Andrews had been telling the story of Balboa,

the train continued to roll on. Gorgona, San Pablo, and Tavernilla were passed in succession. Bohio was a special point of interest, for here, as Mr. Andrews told the boys, the canal is to enter the artificial lake to be formed by a great dam. When complete, there will be a broad, deep body of water seven miles in length, affording room for anchorage as well as for navigation.

Gatun was the next place of importance, and not long after the train passed through Monkey Hill, a suburb of Colon, and finally into the city of Colon itself.

CHAPTER IX

Colon

Arriving in Colon, as they did about midday, the boys had little desire to go sightseeing immediately. The weather was too hot and uncomfortable. They ate dinner at a hotel with Mr. Andrews, but it was decided to sleep on board their car every night. It was as comfortable as any place they were likely to find.

As the car was side-tracked upon the railway dock, they had the full benefit of the sea breezes, and during the remainder of that day Vasco stayed upon the car with Harlan, watching the waves roll in from the broad Atlantic.

Colon is situated on the extreme point of land between Limon and Manzanillo Bays. There is really little harbour, and in case of severe storm little protection for shipping.

"Sometimes there are terrible storms here," said Harlan,

"when the waves come in with tremendous force."

"I can see along the shore," said Vasco, "where much damage has been done."

"That is not the worst, either," continued Harlan. "During these storms many lives have been lost. It was only a little while ago that one of the most severe of these 'northers' attacked this coast. Father was telling me about it, as he happened to be in Colon at the time.

"Three steamships put to sea for safety and remained away three days. The gunboat Dixie also ran out as quickly as it could to escape the danger. Not a vessel of any kind remained in the harbour except two schooners in the slips close by this station. They were tied by a number of cables at a sufficient distance from the piers to prevent damage from the pitching and rolling. They couldn't get away, and rode out the gale.

"Great waves rolled directly into the harbour, breaking over the water-front, and even the streets were filled with water. From a number of houses the people had to get out."

"It doesn't look now as if the sea ever could do such harm, does it?" said Vasco.

"Indeed it does not. It is very calm and gentle this afternoon. Father told me that one of the plans in connection with digging the canal is the building of a big breakwater here."

"If that is done the harbour will be much safer, won't it?" asked Vasco.

"Yes, and the entrance to the canal will be less likely to suffer damage in a storm," said Harlan.

"It looks as if a number of old wrecks were strewn along the shore now," said Vasco, indicating at the time numerous hulks that appeared just above the surface of the water along the shore.

"Those are relics of the French effort to dig a canal here. Scores of scows were built by the De Lesseps company, and when work was given up they were left to decay and sink."

"Why didn't some one take care of them?" asked Vasco. "They must have cost a lot of money."

"That's one of the questions no one can answer, any more than one can tell why so many costly engines and steam-shovels and dredges were left to rust and grow useless by exposure."

"I remember we saw some of them near the railway. A good many were more than half-buried in the sand, too," said Vasco.

Thus the boys whiled away the afternoon, and at night, with Mr. Andrews, turned into their berths in the "sleeper."

In the morning, after an early breakfast, the boys started to explore the town. They found that most of the buildings were mere wooden shanties.

"This city makes me think of some of the beach resorts in my country," said Harlan. "The houses are just such flimsy affairs."

There were no cellars, and the houses were set up on stakes. The streets hardly deserved the name, and were littered with all kinds of dirt and filth.

Even Vasco, who could not be accused of being particular, said that he much preferred to live in his own city of Panama.

After dinner, during the hottest part of the day, the boys indulged in a siesta, and later took a walk to Coconut Point, where the French had built a number of fine houses, and cleared and drained the land to make healthful surround-

ings for the officers of the canal company.

One specially elegant house was built for the sole use of De Lesseps — and he occupied it less than one hour. The whole situation and surroundings were ideal and a splendid reminder of the extravagance of the French canal company.

At night, when the boys returned to their car, Mr. Andrews told them that he had completed his business in Colon, and that they would start on the return trip in the morning.

CHAPTER X

Up the Chagres River

After another night on the "sleeper" in Colon, Mr. Andrews and the boys started on their return journey. The trip was made as far as Obispo without special incident. Here a halt was made and the train shifted to a side-track. Mr. Andrews was obliged to inspect the site of a proposed dam near Alhajuela. This was about ten miles northwest of Obispo, and the journey would have to be made by a boat and on foot.

It was too far to go that day, so Vasco suggested that they go to Palo Grande and hunt up his uncle, Francisco Herreras. "I am sure," said the boy, "that he will give us all a hearty welcome and be glad to provide shelter and food for us."

"Let's go there," said Harlan to his father. "It will be lots

more fun than staying here to-night. It will give us more chance to see the country, too."

Vasco's suggestion was favourably received by Mr. Andrews, who proceeded at once to carry the plan into effect.

On going to the nearest river landing-place to see if he could find a boat and men to row them up-stream, he met with unexpected good fortune. Two natives, who had come down to Obispo with a boat-load of bananas, were just ready to return, and were glad to earn an extra sum by taking along three passengers.

The boat in which passage was secured was a large flat-bottomed affair, suitable for navigation of the shallow stream. On the way up many similar boats were seen, also rude canoes propelled by single persons.

Vasco and Harlan, full of curiosity as boys always are, were soon on familiar terms with the boatmen, who told them that in former times many of the canoes were hollowed out of the trunks of cottonwood-trees.

The boys learned, too, that the Panama native Indian is a natural sportsman. Parrots, monkeys, pigeons, and small

deer are his favourite game. His life is a very simple one. Nature provides him with bread in the shape of bananas and plantains. He makes his own pottery from the clay beneath his feet, and in place of knives and spoons uses gourds cut into proper shape.

He sleeps in a hammock or on a couch of bamboo with hides thrown over it. The hammocks are woven by the women.

All the time the boat was making good progress, and about four o'clock in the afternoon arrived at Palo Grande. On inquiry, it was learned that Señor Herreras lived about two miles west of the river, and after securing definite directions as to the route our friends started to walk to the plantation.

To Vasco, as well as to Harlan, the sights along the way were of special interest, for he knew nothing of country life. The growing corn, tobacco, indigo, coffee, vanilla beans, and other products of the country were a source of wonder to him. Even Mr. Andrews could well believe, with a former visitor to Panama, that "here it would puzzle a healthy man to die of hunger."

In less than an hour Señor Herreras's plantation was reached. It was now Vasco's turn to serve as guide and leader of the party. Finding his uncle at home, he introduced him to his friends, and told him of their desire for food and lodging.

"It is with great pleasure I welcome you all to my humble home," said the señor. "Will you kindly follow me within that you may rest after your long walk, and I will see that food is served to you at once. It is about our supper-hour, any way.

"And how is my sister, your mother?" Señor Herreras continued, addressing Vasco. "It has been many a long year since I have seen her."

"She is very well indeed, uncle, and it is because she told me of you that I am here with these friends. She said you would be sure to give us a royal welcome."

"And glad I am you took her advice. I only wish she were with you. Sometime I hope I may get down to the great city to see her."

Meanwhile, all had stepped within the house. The visitors were given an opportunity to remove the travel-

stains, and by the time this had been done they were ready for the food which was set before them.

Vasco was specially glad to find that here were two cousins of about his own age, Jago and Alfeo, and before long the four boys were very well acquainted with each other.

The meal ended, Vasco's uncle inquired of Mr. Andrews as to his plans for the next day.

"I intend to go on up the river to Alhajuela, where I have some business in connection with the canal work."

"Did you expect to take the boys with you?"

"That was my plan."

"Well, why not let them stay here until you return. I will agree to take good care of them, and my boys will show them all about this place. I am sure they would all have a fine time — perhaps better than if they went with you, for boys love boy company."

"You may be right," said Mr. Andrews, "and I think I will accept your generous invitation on behalf of the boys. This is Wednesday, and I shall probably get back here Friday."

"Very well, then, we will consider that settled," said the host.

Early the next morning Mr. Andrews resumed his journey, Vasco's uncle providing a horse and accompanying him as far as the river.

Thus the four lads were left to their own devices.

"Let's take the boys down to the sugar-mill first," said Alfeo to his brother.

"That's a good idea," was Jago's reply, and Vasco and Harlan readily fell in with the suggestion.

Vasco's uncle raised much sugar-cane on his plantation, and in this mill he also did grinding for neighbours who were less fortunate and were unable to possess mills of their own.

Harlan found that the "mill" was not at all like what he imagined, and he regarded it as rather a small affair, but Vasco was immensely impressed with the wonderful work it performed.

It consisted of three upright cylinders of very hard wood, two of them about five feet long and one in the centre two feet higher. They were set close to each other, and a crude

cog-wheel made the three revolve together.

An arm from the top of the central cylinder extended outward about fifteen feet. To this, oxen were attached. Round and round in a circle the animals walked, and as they did so the machinery revolved. The stalks of cane were fed between the cylinders, and the heavy pressure squeezed out the juice, which fell into a large tub below.

Nearby the boys saw the juice boiled. A great iron kettle was set in rough stone masonry, and dried cane was used for fuel. The boiling process was watched by an old woman, who was constantly dipping up the syrup with a long-handled gourd dipper.

Vasco and Harlan were each given a drink of the partially boiled cane-juice, which they found very pleasant to the taste.

"After the boiling is completed," the old woman told them, "the sugar is run into wooden moulds and then wrapped in plantain leaves, when it is ready for the market."

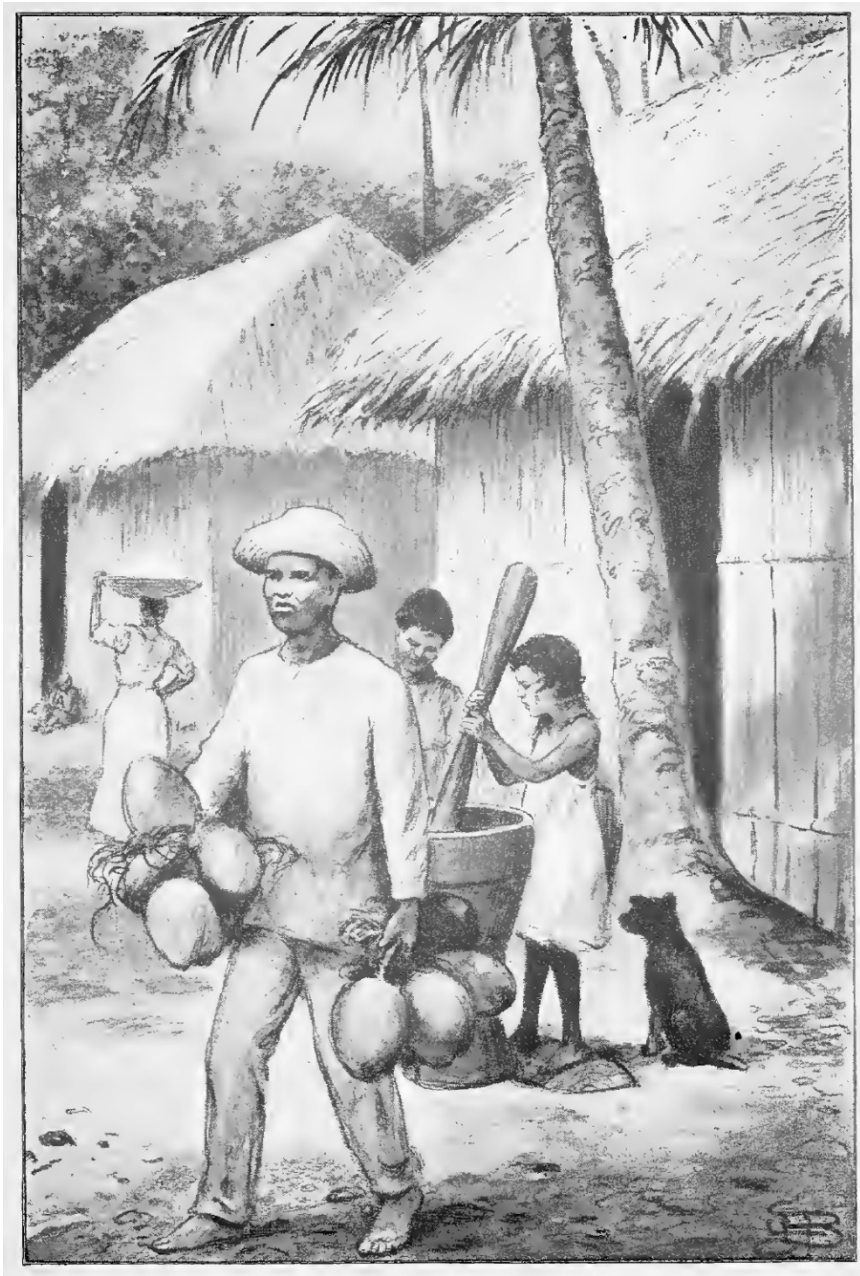
Harlan and Vasco were next taken to visit an aged woman who in years gone by had been a cook in Señor

Herreras's father's household. This woman was said to be nearly a century old, and could tell the boys much of the ancient customs and habits of Panama.

The house in which she lived was like many of the native huts. It was very simply built. Four trees about six inches in diameter had been cut down, the branches lopped off, and a Y-shaped fork left at the tops. These four trees were set deep into the earth as corner posts. Side pieces were lashed on top with withes. The roof was made of small saplings thatched with native grasses, bunches of which overlapped each other like shingles.

In this particular hut there were two rooms, and an attic overhead, though many houses have no upper room. The sides of the hut were made of plaited split bamboo, and the chinks were filled with mud.

The old woman always welcomed the visits of Jago and Alfeo, and she was also glad to see the two young strangers. They found it easy to enter into conversation with her. She told how the Indians in her youthful days used to adorn their bodies with figures of birds, beasts, and trees. The women did the painting and took great delight in it. The



A Native Village

men also wore a crescent-shaped metal plate over the lip, attached to the nose, and the women wore a ring in the same manner.

"What were the rings made of?" asked Vasco.

"Sometimes of gold, but more often of silver or of some cheaper metal," replied the woman. "Chains of animals' teeth and shell were also common.

"You would have laughed to see how the men used to smoke tobacco," continued the old woman. "Instead of a cigar, or even a pipe, long strips of tobacco leaf were wound into a roll two or three feet long and as large as your wrist.

"A boy would light one end of the roll and burn it to a coal, wetting the leaf next the fire to keep it from wasting too fast. The lighted end he put in his mouth and blew smoke through the roll into the face of each man in the company, no matter how many of them. Then they, sitting down as usual, with their hands made a kind of funnel around their mouths and noses. Into this they received the smoke as it was blown upon them, snuffing it greedily and strongly as long as they could hold their breath. It seemed to give them great pleasure."

"I don't think I should have liked the boy's task," said Vasco.

"Did the boys go hunting when you were young?" asked Alfeo.

"Oh, yes. They did not have guns for weapons, but used bows and arrows. They could shoot very straight with them, too. Just wait a moment and I will prove that to you."

The old woman hobbled to a chest in the corner of the room and took therefrom an old bamboo cane.

"Do you see the cleft in the end of that cane?" she asked.

"Yes, I do," answered Alfeo.

"Well, that was split by an arrow shot at twenty paces by my oldest brother when he was only eight years old."

The boys now took leave of the old woman, and the rest of the day they spent visiting various points of interest in the vicinity of the plantation. They also fished and went in swimming in a small stream which flowed nearby and emptied into the Chagres.

At nightfall, four tired but happy boys were glad to get an early supper and seek the rest which a day of unusual activity demanded.

The next day, according to his plan, Mr. Andrews returned and remained overnight with Vasco's hospitable uncle.

Early Saturday morning, amid profuse expressions of regret at their departure and with invitations to come again, the travellers took up their journey homeward. This was made without special incident and was completed in safety.

CHAPTER XI

New Ambition

"Did you have a good time on your trip with Harlan and his father?" asked Lieutenant Barretas of Vasco.

"To be sure I did," was the answer. "I am not likely ever to forget the sights I have seen in this journey through our country."

"I hope you thanked your American friends for the pleasure you have enjoyed."

"I did, father."

"Our people are much indebted to the Americans for the prosperity into which we have come. I have some more good news to tell you now."

"What is it?" asked Vasco, his face aglow with eager anticipation.

"To-morrow a public school is to be opened, and I have

decided that you shall attend."

This conversation occurred on Sunday, the day after Vasco's arrival home. The lieutenant was making his usual Sunday visit with his family, though he had come a little late on account of army affairs that had called him to the Blue House — the President's mansion. It was there that he had learned about the school.

Vasco received the information with a doubtful smile. A few weeks before he would have been sad to hear such a suggestion. But his acquaintance with Harlan, and especially the close companionship of the past week, had wrought certain changes in his spirit, and a dawning ambition had begun to arise within him.

He had come to see that there was a world different from that in which he had lived — that his friend Harlan was of that world — and that the key to that world was knowledge. And knowledge, he knew, could be obtained only by hard labour. Was it worth the effort?

That was the question Vasco asked himself as he stood before his father.

To his credit be it said that his answer was the right one.

"I am glad of the chance," at last he told his father. "You may be sure that I shall try to make the best of it."

Let it be said here that this opportunity to go to school was a result of the formation of the new republic of Panama. One of the provisions of its constitution is: "Primary instruction shall be compulsory, and, when public, shall be free. There shall also be schools of arts and trades."

Monday morning Vasco and his sister Inez together started for school. To them, thus far, the institution was but a name, vague in its meaning, but full of great possibilities.

May we not well leave our little Panama cousin right here, as he stands on the threshold of a new life, under the folds of a new flag, with a new ambition and an earnest purpose spurring him on to attain to a higher and better life than he has ever known?

THE END.