IN AN ISTHMIAN CAPITAL.

THINGS THAT A TRAVELLER SEES IN SANTIAGO DE VERAGUAS.

It Has a Big High School as Well as the Seat of Government, but no Hotel—Some of the Peculiarities of a Boarding House and Its Backyard—An Infirmary Supported by Charity—Traits of People Who Wear Shoes—The Badge of the Sect—Effects of Yankee Blood—Talk of a Chinaman—The Jamaica Nigger—Two Mixed Drinks—At a Barefoot Dance—The Trade in Food Products—They Have Paved Streets—Where the Dead Lie.

A right interesting town is Santiago, the capital of the State of Veraguas, in what Colombians call the interior of the Isthmus of Panama. When Colombians use the word interior in connection with any part of the Isthmus they have in mind precisely the same idea that New Yorkers have when speaking of somebody "from way back." Santiago is at the head of the creek in a way-back region, if one may adopt the vernacular.

As has been told in THE SUN, the needs of the Isthmian people in the way of transportation are amply supplied by a little British steamer that once a month makes a voyage along the coast as far as David, and is supplemented by little cattle-carrying schooners and dugout canoes at intervals. But to reach Santiago one must first go to the little seaport of Aguadulce, on the western side of the Gulf of Panama, and then travel forty-two miles back into the country over a trail that crosses hills, plains, swamps, and streams—a trail that in the dry season is good enough for a bicycle, but in the wet is of a consistency that is a bit too thin for any known vehicle on wheels, and a bit too thick for navigation by boats.

This is not said of Santiago to depreciate it in any way, but rather to call attention to the fact that here is a hermit capital, so to speak, a town whose people live a long day's journey back from a route of travel as little frequented as that on the Pacific coast of the Panama Isthmus. There are probably more people in the United States who have been to the coast of Greenland than have visited the capital of the State of Veraguas.

As I drew near to Santiago on my ride from the sea I passed through a range of little mountains where the trail was alternately rocky and muddy although in the dry season, and where there were traces of a paved highway, built—who knows when or by whom? Then I came out on a fairly level grassy plain of rich, dark soil that was crossed by a shallow brook, and on the further edge of this plain, say three or four miles away, the tossing plumes of the cocoanut palm rose above a mass of green foliage, in which patches of red tiles and of gray thatched roofs were seen, and that was Santiago—the holy, as it is called by the priests.

Here and there about the borders of the plain were thatched huts with some little sign of cultivated ground. Here and there along the paths that led from these huts to the town was a man dressed only in thin white cotton shirt and trousers and a straw hat, or a woman in calico waist and skirt. The men touched their hats respectfully when I said "Good evening" to them, while the women showed an odd mixture of shyness and curiosity at the sight of an American.

Guided by Don Juan Diaz, of whom THE SUN has told something, I entered the main street of the town. The first building passed was a remarkable structure. It was not less than 200 feet long by 25 deep; it was one-story high, and there were 8 arcades along the entire front, which, with its many open windows, gave the interior an appearance that was refreshing after a hot day's journey. The Don explained that this was a high school for boys supported by the Government, and that he was ordinarily considered there preferred as teachers in the common schools to be found in every town on the Isthmus.

A CAPITAL CITY WITH NO HOTEL.

A hundred yards beyond this we came to an old church on the right and a plaza on the left, and into the plaza we turned to stop before a low, mud-walled, tile-roofed house, with a veranda in front, supported by whip-sawed posts. An elderly woman, rotund and comfortable in appearance, sat in the wide open door. Beside her was a little table, on which were some chunks of home-made candy, some cakes of brown sugar, some rolls of bread, and some other groceries. The Don told her that I wanted a room and something to eat for a few days, and he told me: "The lady has a little store and bakery here, and you'll be very comfortable with her."

Having ridden forty-two miles on a mule that day, I was glad to get down at the woman's invitation and enter a room adjoining the one in which she sat, while Don Juan led away the mule. The town has 2,000 inhabitants. It is worth noting that although there are more than a dozen villages scattered about the Isthmus of a size that would in the States support two hotels each at least, there are only two hotels west of Panama—that at Aguadulce, of which brief mention has been made, and one at David, of which something will be told further on. The capital of the State of Veraguas has no hotel at all. There are, however, a number of private houses in every village where a stranger can get food and lodging for a price, and it was at such a place that the good Don left me.

A SANTIAGO BOARDING HOUSE.

On entering my room I found that I had, in fact, secured a suite. There was a sitting room 12x15 feet long, but it was flanked by small rooms, and back of that the rear yard. One of the rooms was used for storing broken furniture and other traps, while the other room was my bedroom. For furniture I had in the sitting room two chairs and a table, all made by native workmen out of a species of mahogany. Although straight-backed and square-angled, the chairs were so thick and substantial in appearance as to be pleasing. A heavy man could sit down in one and tilt back against the wall, after the comfortable fashion of the region, with no fear of disaster.

In the bedroom were two more chairs and a cot built on the sawbuck model and covered with canvas. The bedding consisted of a sheet and a bedspread.

Having noted so much, I looked at the walls and floors. The outside walls were made of adobe, while the partitions were of inch-thick plank, sawed by hand from logs of cedar. There had been no attempt to match the boards together, but they were put up when well seasoned, and no one could look through the cracks. The floor was covered with tiles ten inches square. These were tolerably dusty when I first looked at them, but the landlady sent a girl in to sprinkle the floor with water. This had the same effect on the floor that sprinkling has on a sandy road.

There was nothing between the floor and the roof frame. The partitions were about 12 feet high, and above them the movement of the air was practically unobstructed. The roof was like all tile roofs of the country, made by placing for sheeting the common cane fish poles that are sold in the States for a nickel each on the rafters, and over these laying the trough-shaped tiles. I had slept under such roofs a good many times during my journeys to the Spanish Main, and I did not give the roof a thought until after I had gone to bed.

WHERE THE RATS LIVE.

I do not think I was in bed a minute before I was aroused to a sense of little better than a dream that an earthquake was shaking the tiles off the roof, and then I awoke to hear a great scrambling on the fish-pole sheeting under the tiles. It was too dark to see anything, although my eyes were caught by something in the next room, and so when I felt something drop from the roof on my face I was reminded that scorpions and centipedes were said to inhabit every old roof by the score. It seemed certain that every scorpion in that up there would surely be knocked down pretty soon.

I lighted a candle without any delay whatever, and then saw that only bits of cane leaves had fallen down from the roof, and a little later the sweeping overhead showed that a colony of rats had made a home under the tiles. It was reasonable to suppose that no venomous insects would be found in the runways of the rats, and so I spread a handkerchief over my face to keep the dirt off, and went to sleep again. The handkerchief was not a complete protection against all the dirt that fell, but I passed a very good night, nevertheless, and next day, after rigging a towel as an awning above the pillow, had nothing to complain of on that score.

IN THE DINING ROOM.

Next day I found that the housing of rats in the roof was not the only feature of the caravansary likely to attract the attention of a foreigner. After I had dressed myself a round-faced little maiden, the landlady's daughter, came to invite me to coffee, and I was conducted through the store, which was a room precisely like my sitting room, to a rear room like my bedroom. This was the dining room. A little table with a clean white cloth on it stood in the centre, and on it were a pot of coffee and a plate of crispy rolls fresh from the mud oven to be seen through the open door at the rear of the backyard. There was brown sugar for the coffee, but one gets neither butter nor milk in the country.

After the little girl had poured my coffee and gone away I had opportunity to study the surroundings, and found I was in a storeroom for the grocery as well as the dining room. There were tierces and bags of flour and rice and beans along both walls. There was a heap of cakes of home-made soap, some of which were wrapped in wild banana leaves in lieu of wrapping paper, in one corner. There was in another corner a big globe-shaped jar full of water with a rope of little ones on a shelf above it, all full, and all damp with the moisture oozing through their pores.

THE PIGS WERE COMFORTABLE.

The oven in the backyard was reached by passing under the veranda of the kitchen, a building that stood behind the main one. Two lazy pigs were tied by their hind legs to one of the veranda posts. They did not have over four feet of free rope, but they cared for no more. The servants threw the kitchen slops down by the post to keep the mud puddle there constantly full, and in this the pigs spread themselves at least as much as any boarder would enjoy himself sitting at the dining-room table and watching them while he ate his meals.

In fact, the contrast between the fresh, clean appearance of the tablecloth and the condition of the backyard was remarkable, but it was a contrast that I found to prevail in about all the backyards of the Isthmus, the exceptions being a few belonging to the wealthy people and those who had at some time lived in a foreign country. However, a traveller becomes accustomed to seeing curious things, and pigs in a foreign country are not nearly so repulsive to him when under his eyes as they seem to be when he is afterward he sits down at home to write about them.

AN ISTHMIAN INFIRMARY.

And yet the backyards of the town did not form its most unpleasant feature. As said, it is known among the religious people of the Isthmus as the holy city of Santiago. This title was earned through the generosity of its people in giving wealth to the Church for charitable purposes. Santiago has a combined poorhouse and hospital right in the heart of the town, and the inmates of this establishment have free range. The church facing the plaza on the side in which I was domiciled was more than a hundred years old. Its bells were cracked and its tower covered with brush and weeds that were nourished by the dirt that had accumulated in its hollows and crevices. On one side of this old structure was a plot of ground perhaps 100 feet square on which were two rows of one-story houses—front and rear tenements—in all room for a dozen separate families. In a couple of the front houses lived the priests, who, with notable self-sacrifice, were caring for the unfortunates kept in the rest of the two rows. The number of inmates is never great—a score on the average, perhaps, but it is a distressful lot to look upon, and one must look at them every day, for they are always on the streets. The most of them are feeble minded, their faces and bodies are distorted, and goitre in its most remarkable form prevails. They are able to work hard enough for the buildings and do the cooking. They live on beans, rice, and corn. I saw the deformed women husking the rice and making cakes of the corn. They were certainly a contented lot in appearance.

A GOITROUS POPULACE.

Probably there is no town beyond the limits of Switzerland where so great a proportion of the inhabitants are afflicted with goitre as in Santiago de Veraguas. I have seen three generations—grandmother, mother, and daughters—going along the street together and all afflicted with hideous necks. I tried to form an estimate of the proportion of people that had the disease by counting these I met in various strolls about the street, and I am confident that 20 per cent. of them were so afflicted. The disease is hereditary, and is supposed to be infectious by some people there. As a rule the women were the ones troubled, and tiny girls of 6 and 8 years showed the beginning of the disease. Two of the servants in my boarding house had little knobs.

There was still another disfiguring disease among the people, that consisted of a swelling of the lower extremities, beginning at the feet and gradually extending upward to the body. According to Don Juan Diaz, this peculiar trouble could be cured in its earliest stages by a voyage on the ocean, and those of the wealthier classes who were attacked immediately availed themselves of this cure. The rest suffered its encroachments with such fortitude as their religious teachings gave them until the swelling reached their bodies, when they died. There was no other cure known than the voyage at sea, and that availed only when taken promptly.

SANTIAGO'S FIFTH AVENUE.

I have told of the unpleasant features of the town first because they are the first to be seen by a traveller, and because, too, they are peculiar to it. But it is by no means without pleasant features or cultivated, companionable inhabitants. The cultivated people live facing another plaza, which, with its ancient church, can be found a hundred yards—a block—beyond the one where I lived. Facing this plaza were the Government buildings, which included a one-story schoolhouse and a two-story combined Court House, barracks, and jail, side by side. The jail was a room on the first floor 25 feet square with barred windows and a heavy wooden door. It was guarded by a small squad of soldiers, who lived in another room on the same floor. Up stairs were the rooms, furnished with tables and chairs, where the Alcalde and the Judges of the district attended to business.

CONCERNING THOSE WHO WEAR SHOES.

Naturally there is no better place for seeing the wealthier people of the interior of the Isthmus than in the capital and metropolis. Through the good offices of Don Juan Diaz I met a number of them. The evidences of wealth are found in the number of cattle one has roaming over the plains, the number of acres he has in cultivated fields, and the value of the stock of goods carried in the store. Every rich man is a merchant. So is his wife for that matter. Each house has one large room facing the plaza in which a stock of goods is displayed, and in this room the aristocratic lines of trade are dry goods and drugs. A few of the houses have a parlor adjoining the store, and facing the plaza, but the most of these people use the store as a combined sitting and reception room, and have a parlor for use on state occasions in the rear. The real living room, the place where the señor and the señora pass their days and evenings is the store, just as the kitchen is the living room of the New York farmer.

NATURAL BORN MERCHANTS.

Keener traders than these Ladinos cannot be found. To sell many goods is a matter of pride with the women as well as with the men at it, and she whose sales are the largest in town boasts of it as a Boston young woman does of culture and ancestry. They all learn to sell goods as soon as they learn to read and write, but they keep at it until too old to roll their own cigarettes. I saw a ragged buck Indian passing the store that carries the largest stock in town. As he arrived opposite the wide double doors he stopped and looked fixedly at the shelves a lingering look but did not stop his pace for an instant. The watchful eyes of the proprietor's wife saw that look, and a bright slip of a saleslady, to use the New York term, was sent after the Indian in an instant. The saleslady could talk the Indian's own language and carry herself like the Queen of Castile at the same time. The Indian could not resist her invitation to come in—not many white men under 90 could have resisted it. He did not want to buy very much—a couple of yards of gorgeous calico to make a waist for his squaw, and a couple of sticks of cash counted up to only 50 cents—but he was as courteously received and attended to by the señora as any other customer I saw in the store.

And yet nowhere in America are social lines drawn tighter—not even on Fifth avenue. The men of the peon classes of the Isthmus go barefooted and wear unlaundered cotton shirts outside of white cotton trousers; their women go barefooted and wear low-necked waists. The wealthy shoes are the sign of a man having laundered shirts and stand-up collars, while the women wear high-necked dresses of a style that would serve in New York. The peons, in other words, are marked as serfs by their dress.

A SAMPLE STOCK.

The largest stock of goods in any store in Santiago was valued at "more than $10,000" by Don Juan Diaz, who said that its proprietor often imported $20,000 worth (valuation in silver coin of the country—say $14,000 in gold) at one order just before the rainy season set in. The stock was composed chiefly of calicoes and cotton goods, notions and certain kinds of hardware. The calicoes were invariably of bright and gaudy colors. The hardware included a great variety of machetes, the crook between a sword and a cheese knife which every Isthmian peon feels bound to carry at all times—and cutlery for the table. There were also some dishes and kitchen utensils such as frying pans to be found. In a rack in the centre of one store were a dozen Belgian shotguns fit to make a sportsman weep. They were single-barrelled muzzle loaders, with one exception, which was a double-barreled. The stocks were plastered over with gilt and the barrels were stained in imitation of the Damascus twist. Of the quality one could judge by the price, even if unable to do so by an examination of the weapons. The best one was marked at $6 in silver, and the merchants invariably charge the Dutchman's 1 per cent. or double the cost price for such goods. And yet the Indians kill deer, aguars, and panthers, as well as small game, with these wretched weapons, and the skins of the larger animals are to be found in every store awaiting transportation to Panama for sale.

THE INFLUENCE OF YANKEE BLOOD.

Among other people whom I met in Santiago were the three daughters of Dr. Henry Dixon, formerly of Virginia, of whom THE SUN has made mention. Although real children of the Isthmus they were of pure white blood, their mother having been one of the few of pure Castilian descent to be found there. They were all remarkably handsome and intelligent young ladies. They were all married, and, being wealthy, they were at the heads of the leading stores of the town. They had all travelled in the United States, but only one had sufficient confidence in her knowledge of English to use it in the presence of her mother's tongue. This one would have taken a standing as a young woman of unusual mental attainments anywhere, for she was well read in the literature of three languages, was an accomplished musician, understood the difference between the sort of a republican government to be found in South America and that in the United States, and, moreover, knew as much about drugs and medicine as any dealer on the Isthmus, her husband being a druggist. I did not see another woman in the Spanish Main that was the ideal of an American girl in knowledge, spirit, and practical common sense. What the Ladino women are will be told in part at another time.

"A JIM" IS SOMEWHAT IN LUCK.

Among the merchants of the town doing a successful business was a Chinaman who was called Antonio. He was a pleasant and intelligent young fellow and had a large enough business to require the assistance of two of his countrymen in caring for it. Antonio had been at one time in the American navy, where, under the name of Antonio Jim, he served as valet to a paymaster. He showed me with great pride a fancy scroll that had been tattooed on his left arm while he was under the fears and Stripes, with "A. Jim" within the scroll. He further testified his admiration for the flag by using seven American ten-cent pieces as buttons for an expensive silk sack coat which he wore when on the street. After serving in the navy, where he served eighteen months, he had gone to Panama, and there hearing of a city without a Chinaman had rightly concluded that it was big enough for at least one. He said he had a very good trade in silk, something in which Chinamen do a profitable business throughout the Spanish Main.

While I was talking with him in one corner of his store I noticed two very good-looking girls of the country standing near the door staring him as if they could eat him very much.

"Plenty nice girls, no?" he said, as he saw me look at them, and then he laughed ecstatically. His remark was worth noting because it emphasized what every traveller must observe in the Spanish Main—that is to say, that there is found a land where color is no bar to material and social advancement. Broad as the line is between the peon and the shoe-wearing classes, the negro and the Chinaman who have wealth and intelligence can get on as well as the white man or the native born of mixed Indian and Spanish blood. And yet Antonio Jim, like every other Chinaman I met between Panama and Paso del Norte, in spite of his success, had seen bitter opportunities, fretted continually over the law that excluded him from Uncle Sam's domain.

THE JAMAICA NEGRO.

Quite a different style of citizen is the Jamaica negro. Santiago, like every other Isthmian town, has its quota of British subjects from Jamaica. Early on the first morning after my arrival a quadroon boy of perhaps 16 years came to my door, held out a clammy hand, and expressed great pleasure in seeing "a white gemman, sah." Then he said his mother was an excellent seamstress, and would do up a gentleman's linen in beautiful style. Without waiting to hear what I would say in reply he bowed in a jerky fashion and said he would call again.

He kept his word. An hour later he was at the door again, where he said:

"I see a white gemman, sah. I'se been thinking of buying a music, sah. The Chinamen has some for sale, and they is very good musics. I was just looking at them, sah. I have no music, sah; music costs only twenty cents, sah, and they is very cheap. I have been thinking of asking you for the twenty cents to buy one, sah."

He wanted a mouth organ. Every Jamaican that I met in that country was a beggar. They all understand the pleasure one feels in a foreign country when he hears his own language spoken, and were all keen to make a dime out of the pleasure. Don Juan Diaz, who had employed them about his mine and in other unspecified ways, was the best friend of human beings than the Jamaica negroes of the Isthmus would be hard to find.

A RELIGIOUS PROCESSION.

On the night of Friday, Feb. 17, there was a religious procession in the aristocratic plaza of the town. Because every book of travels relating to the Spanish Main tells at great length about the religious doings of the people there, I took very good care to note everything that was done.

Between 300 and 400 people gathered at the church soon after sundown. Nearly all of them were of the barefooted class. I did not see one man with shoes on. Though a number of the women had shoes on. There was a brief service in the church which consisted chiefly of prayers by the priest and singing by the people, after which four men put a sort of bier on their shoulders, one man supporting each corner of it. On each corner was a square glass lantern with a candle burning in it, while standing in the centre of the bier was an effigy of the Christ. It consisted of a papier-maché head with a crooked body covered with a purple cloak that was secured with a yellow girdle at the loins. There was a yellowish band around the figure's head, while the face showed a small painted black moustache and a thin painted black beard. The right shoulder was hidden a cross of cedar about five feet long, and the figure was made in a stooping position as if bowed under the weight of the cross.

Going to the plaza with this outfit, its bearers halted while a prayer in Latin was offered. Two men bearing square-glass, candle-lit lanterns on top of short crooked sapling poles took places beside the bier. Others with similar lanterns took places at intervals in front, there being a file of lanterns at a distance of ten feet from the effigy. A half dozen soldiers with bayonets on their muskets were scattered about the bier, while a black-robed priest, with a book in hand, stood immediately before it. The rest of the audience from the church, others who came up as they came to the plaza, then divided into two crowds, the one consisting of all the men going before the bier and the other of the women falling in behind it. They did not form in rank, but in lengthened groups instead. Everybody was bareheaded.

When all were in place the men began singing in high-pitched voices a most dolorous refrain, and all marched slowly away up the plaza. When the men had sung a stanza, the women took up the mournful song. When they had finished their stanza a little bell jingled, all faced the effigy, and nearly all knelt down. A few on the outskirts merely bowed their heads, but some, especially among the women, took the attitude of devotion with hands in the dust. Then the priest read a prayer from his book, looking up from the book to the face of the papier-maché Christ now and then as he read. The prayer being ended, the procession turned and marched back to the church.

As the houses were passed women came from them and put burning candles on the veranda, where they flared about in the gently moving air. Some of the women knelt on the veranda floors, and others on the sidewalk. They were in almost all cases the servants.

When the procession had marched entirely around the plaza it entered the church again, where the effigy was put away quickly, and the service was over.

"I did not see many people with shoes on in the procession," said I to an educated native.

"No."

"What do people of your class think of such doings?"

He smiled and remained silent for a moment, then he said:

"What do intelligent people in the States think of the Salvation Army and the Methodist camp meetings?"

A GOLD COIN.

Though rarely seen, collectors of curios are not unknown in the interior of the Isthmus. A merchant on the corner, near my boarding house, wore as a charm on his watch chain a little gold image of a bird that had been dug from an Indian grave. On seeing it I asked permission to examine it. Thereat he began to tell me that such things were very old and very rare, and were valued at enormous figures by their fortunate owners. His was the finest ever found in the Isthmus. Still, if I wanted it he would out of courtesy to a stranger, let me have it for $30.

A pair of druggist's scales stood under a glass case, and I asked him the price.

"You do not want it for $30?" he asked.

"No. Some men would pay that, but in my country they are called cranks."

"Oh, I thought you were a collector, and would rather have it as a curio at $30 than for $10 as a piece of gold. Let us have some wine," he said.

TWO KINDS OF ISTHMIAN DRINKS.

That night a young man who played the guitar delightfully invited me to attend a dance in one of the thatched huts of the suburbs and see how he could stir the populace with his music. To put us in an appreciative frame of mind for the occasion he said his sisters would make what he called a bowl of punch for us before we went. The sisters were lassies of perhaps 17 and 18 years, big-eyed, slender in form—in short charming girls who did not look now half Indian. They wholly approved a foreigner so totally different from any other they had ever seen or not. But at the brother's behest they brought a bowl and three eggs and three lumps of brown sugar and a stick with a notched knob on one end. Then they broke three eggs into the bowl and one yolk, put the knob of the stick into the eggs and swiftly twirled the other end between her hands. After about five minutes the eggs were a fluffy mass of froth. Into the froth the girl crumbled the sugar, and stirred the mixture until it frothed again. This done, a small bottle of very sweet wine was stirred in with a spoon, and the drink was ready.

The native sugar tasted very much like American sorghum, but when a pretty Spanish girl makes a drink for a guest the drink has to be swallowed and praised. Should any reader of THE SUN ever find himself honored by an invitation to drink native punch on the Isthmus, let him begin at once to praise the native rum, which they call *seco* here, and *aguardiente* in most other places. Will the lady be so kind as to make the native punch entirely of native products will she not use three pints of wine? She will be delighted to do so, and the resultant mixture will be found much richer and better than the rum and molasses served at any New York bar. It is a drink that, if taken in suitable quantities, will make one see the world through in the golden haze of a tropical sunset—sometimes of two tropical sunsets at once—no matter what the hour.

A DANCE UNDER A THATCHED ROOF.

The wine mixture nauseates the unaccustomed drinker, but we went to the dance after a drink of *seco* straight that took off the flavor of sorghum and sweet wine. We found a hut 14x15 feet large that had three chairs and a table for the seats, two chairs, and a short little bench. The smoking flame of a little lamp that had no chimney and was perched in a forked stick high up in one corner half revealed the dark mud-plastered walls and smooth adobe floor. The hostess, a half Indian, sat in the corner opposite the lamp. She wore a low-necked dress that was much like a chemise—a garment that revealed the rounded form beneath it, as a Greek robe might do, as she sat on the floor, and half reclined over the little bench at her side. Here she smiled a welcome to each guest, while her big eyes flashed out in the shadows with a glow that had something wild in it. She was the ideal of a savage princess, but perhaps her beauty was of a sort that increased with the depths of the shadows. I asked my guide if that were the case, but he resolved only "who knows?"

There were other young women there dressed much as she was, and young men who were, for the most part, dressed in cotton shirts and trousers, with no shoes nor stockings. A few wore shoes, but all the girls were barefooted. The young men and the young women crowded about the walls of the room or leaned up against the walls outside in the shadow of the thatched veranda, and talked fears and Stripes, with "A. Jim" within the scroll. He further testified his admiration for the flag by using seven American ten-cent pieces as buttons for an expensive silk sack coat which he wore when on the street. After serving in the navy, where he served eighteen months, he had gone to Panama, and there hearing of a city without a Chinaman had rightly concluded that it was big enough for at least one. He said he had a very good trade in silk, something in which Chinamen do a profitable business throughout the Spanish Main.

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Going to the plaza with this outfit, its bearers halted while a prayer in Latin was offered. Two men bearing square-glass, candle-lit lanterns on top of short crooked sapling poles took places beside the bier. Others with similar lanterns took places at intervals in front, there being a file of lanterns at a distance of ten feet from the effigy. A half dozen soldiers with bayonets on their muskets were scattered about the bier, while a black-robed priest, with a book in hand, stood immediately before it. The rest of the audience from the church, others who came up as they came to the plaza, then divided into two crowds, the one consisting of all the men going before the bier and the other of the women falling in behind it. They did not form in rank, but in lengthened groups instead. Everybody was bareheaded.

When all were in place the men began singing in high-pitched voices a most dolorous refrain, and all marched slowly away up the plaza. When the men had sung a stanza, the women took up the mournful song. When they had finished their stanza a little bell jingled, all faced the effigy, and nearly all knelt down. A few on the outskirts merely bowed their heads, but some, especially among the women, took the attitude of devotion with hands in the dust. Then the priest read a prayer from his book, looking up from the book to the face of the papier-maché Christ now and then as he read. The prayer being ended, the procession turned and marched back to the church.

As the houses were passed women came from them and put burning candles on the veranda, where they flared about in the gently moving air. Some of the women knelt on the veranda floors, and others on the sidewalk. They were in almost all cases the servants.

When the procession had marched entirely around the plaza it entered the church again, where the effigy was put away quickly, and the service was over.

"I did not see many people with shoes on in the procession," said I to an educated native.

"No."

"What do people of your class think of such doings?"

He smiled and remained silent for a moment, then he said:

"What do intelligent people in the States think of the Salvation Army and the Methodist camp meetings?"

A GOLD COIN.

Though rarely seen, collectors of curios are not unknown in the interior of the Isthmus. A merchant on the corner, near my boarding house, wore as a charm on his watch chain a little gold image of a bird that had been dug from an Indian grave. On seeing it I asked permission to examine it. Thereat he began to tell me that such things were very old and very rare, and were valued at enormous figures by their fortunate owners. His was the finest ever found in the Isthmus. Still, if I wanted it he would, out of courtesy to a stranger, let me have it for $30.

A pair of druggist's scales stood under a glass case, and I asked him the price.

"You do not want it for $30?" he asked.

"No. Some men would pay that, but in my country they are called cranks."

"Oh, I thought you were a collector, and would rather have it as a curio at $30 than for $10 as a piece of gold. Let us have some wine," he said.

TWO KINDS OF ISTHMIAN DRINKS.

That night a young man who played the guitar delightfully invited me to attend a dance in one of the thatched huts of the suburbs and see how he could stir the populace with his music. To put us in an appreciative frame of mind for the occasion he said his sisters would make what he called a bowl of punch for us before we went. The sisters were lassies of perhaps 17 and 18 years, big-eyed, slender in form—in short charming girls who did not look now half Indian. They wholly approved a foreigner so totally different from any other they had ever seen or not. But at the brother's behest they brought a bowl and three eggs and three lumps of brown sugar and a stick with a notched knob on one end. Then they broke three eggs into the bowl and one yolk, put the knob of the stick into the eggs and swiftly twirled the other end between her hands. After about five minutes the eggs were a fluffy mass of froth. Into the froth the girl crumbled the sugar, and stirred the mixture until it frothed again. This done, a small bottle of very sweet wine was stirred in with a spoon, and the drink was ready.

The native sugar tasted very much like American sorghum, but when a pretty Spanish girl makes a drink for a guest the drink has to be swallowed and praised. Should any reader of THE SUN ever find himself honored by an invitation to drink native punch on the Isthmus, let him begin at once to praise the native rum, which they call *seco* here, and *aguardiente* in most other places. Will the lady be so kind as to make the native punch entirely of native products will she not use three pints of wine? She will be delighted to do so, and the resultant mixture will be found much richer and better than the rum and molasses served at any New York bar. It is a drink that, if taken in suitable quantities, will make one see the world through in the golden haze of a tropical sunset—sometimes of two tropical sunsets at once—no matter what the hour.

A DANCE UNDER A THATCHED ROOF.

The wine mixture nauseates the unaccustomed drinker, but we went to the dance after a drink of *seco* straight that took off the flavor of sorghum and sweet wine. We found a hut 14x15 feet large that had three chairs and a table for the seats, two chairs, and a short little bench. The smoking flame of a little lamp that had no chimney and was perched in a forked stick high up in one corner half revealed the dark mud-plastered walls and smooth adobe floor. The hostess, a half Indian, sat in the corner opposite the lamp. She wore a low-necked dress that was much like a chemise—a garment that revealed the rounded form beneath it, as a Greek robe might do, as she sat on the floor, and half reclined over the little bench at her side. Here she smiled a welcome to each guest, while her big eyes flashed out in the shadows with a glow that had something wild in it. She was the ideal of a savage princess, but perhaps her beauty was of a sort that increased with the depths of the shadows. I asked my guide if that were the case, but he resolved only "who knows?"

There were other young women there dressed much as she was, and young men who were, for the most part, dressed in cotton shirts and trousers, with no shoes nor stockings. A few wore shoes, but all the girls were barefooted. The young men and the young women crowded about the walls of the room or leaned up against the walls outside in the shadow of the thatched veranda, and talked fears and Stripes, with "A. Jim" within the scroll. He further testified his admiration for the flag by using seven American ten-cent pieces as buttons for an expensive silk sack coat which he wore when on the street. After serving in the navy, where he served eighteen months, he had gone to Panama, and there hearing of a city without a Chinaman had rightly concluded that it was big enough for at least one. He said he had a very good trade in silk, something in which Chinamen do a profitable business throughout the Spanish Main.

While I was talking with him in one corner of his store I noticed two very good-looking girls of the country standing near the door staring him as if they could eat him very much.

"Plenty nice girls, no?" he said, as he saw me look at them, and then he laughed ecstatically. His remark was worth noting because it emphasized what every traveller must observe in the Spanish Main—that is to say, that there is found a land where color is no bar to material and social advancement. Broad as the line is between the peon and the shoe-wearing classes, the negro and the Chinaman who have wealth and intelligence can get on as well as the white man or the native born of mixed Indian and Spanish blood. And yet Antonio Jim, like every other Chinaman I met between Panama and Paso del Norte, in spite of his success, had seen bitter opportunities, fretted continually over the law that excluded him from Uncle Sam's domain.

THE JAMAICA NEGRO.

Quite a different style of citizen is the Jamaica negro. Santiago, like every other Isthmian town, has its quota of British subjects from Jamaica. Early on the first morning after my arrival a quadroon boy of perhaps 16 years came to my door, held out a clammy hand, and expressed great pleasure in seeing "a white gemman, sah." Then he said his mother was an excellent seamstress, and would do up a gentleman's linen in beautiful style. Without waiting to hear what I would say in reply he bowed in a jerky fashion and said he would call again.

He kept his word. An hour later he was at the door again, where he said:

"I see a white gemman, sah. I'se been thinking of buying a music, sah. The Chinamen has some for sale, and they is very good musics. I was just looking at them, sah. I have no music, sah; music costs only twenty cents, sah, and they is very cheap. I have been thinking of asking you for the twenty cents to buy one, sah."

He wanted a mouth organ. Every Jamaican that I met in that country was a beggar. They all understand the pleasure one feels in a foreign country when he hears his own language spoken, and were all keen to make a dime out of the pleasure. Don Juan Diaz, who had employed them about his mine and in other unspecified ways, was the best friend of human beings than the Jamaica negroes of the Isthmus would be hard to find.

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