

## THE PANAMA CANAL.

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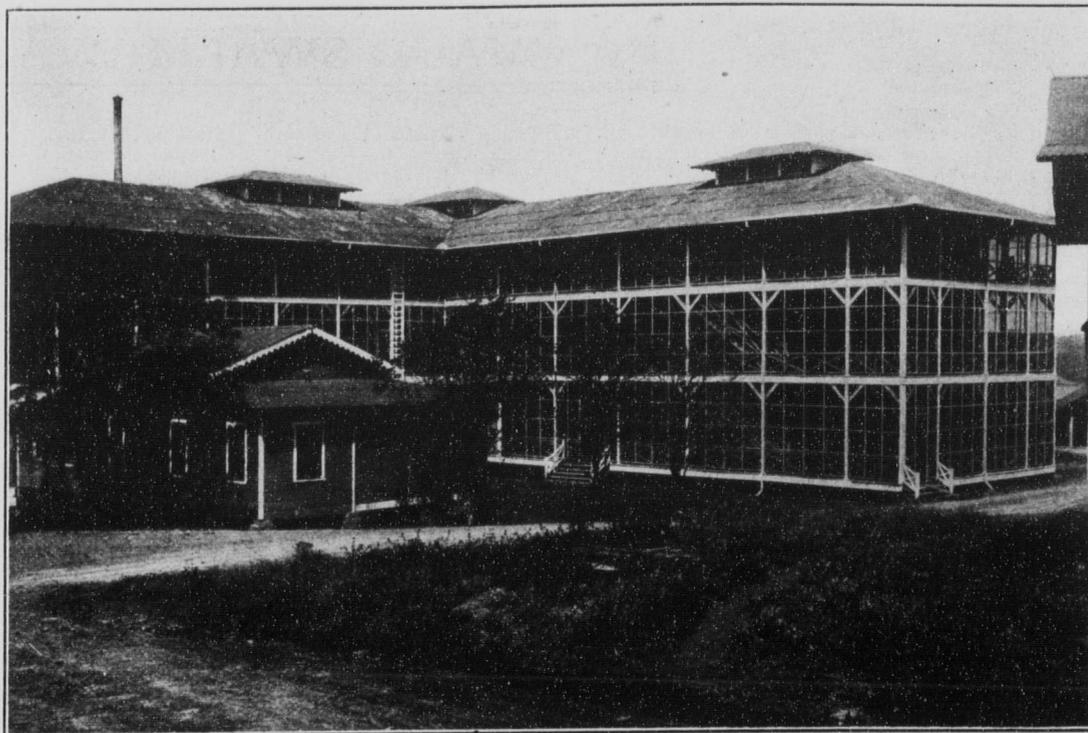
and now, if not before, is proving himself a great executive. Major Gaillard, the second in command, in charge of the excavation and dredging, is most certainly showing his ability by the results he is getting. Perhaps the most interesting problem that he has had to solve is the conquering of the Cucaracha Slide, a vast land slide on the side of Culebra cut pretty well through toward the Panama end of the cut. The amount of earth which moves here is variously estimated from five hundred thousand to two and a half million cubic yards. The name means cockroach and it has been slowly crawling into the canal each wet season, but it will probably never crawl again.

Major Seibert at the head of the department of Locks and Dams, Lieutenant H. H. Rousseau, well known in the U. S. Navy but perhaps just now more in the public eye for marrying the daughter of the American minister to Panama, somewhat against the wishes of the father, ex-Senator J. S. C. Blackburn, governor of the Canal zone, Mr. Jackson Smith who supplies the labor for the work and Colonel Gorgas who has converted this one time vile pest hole to a fairly healthful place, need no more than mention here to assure us that no more efficient body of men could be chosen to carry on this great work.

I might mention a number more, scarcely less efficient and well known.

The success of the Panama Canal is assured and we may expect to see the water turned into Gatun lake within five years.

It only remains then to carry out the well formed plans of our Deep Waterways Commission here to perfect the water transportation of this vast country of ours as it should be.



Commission Hotel, Culebra.

## The Use of Flowers for Decorative Purposes.

The use of flowers for decorative purposes dates back to a very remote antiquity among all nations who could lay any claim to civilization, and even to many that are called barbarian or savage. On some of the Egyptian tombs we find drawings of vases filled with flowers, indicating their use for mortuary purposes at least. In Hindostan the bow of their god Camdeo, or Cupid, is represented as made of sugar-cane entwined with flowers, and his fine arrows were each pointed with a flower. They were also used for sacrificial decorations, as well as for festive occasions. The like use of them was made by the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Persians, the latter especially using them in great profusion. Among the Jews, Greeks, and Romans the altars were strewn or covered with flowers, and among the last two the worshipers were frequently decorated with flowers. Cicero states that at the annual festivals of the Terminalia, even the peasants were all crowned with garlands of flowers. So highly were they esteemed that they decorated the statues of their gods with them. Jupiter was crowned with flowers and laurel; Bacchus, with grapes, vine and ivy leaves, berries, and flowers; Castor and Pollux, with bulrushes; Apollo, with laurel and rushes; Hercules, with poplar; Pan, with pine and alder; Minerva and the Graces, with olive and laurel; Venus and Cupid, with roses and myrtle; Ceres and Iris, with corn and poppies; the Lares, with myrtle and rosemary; the Penates, with poppies, lettuce and other flowers. Hymen was always represented as crowned with flowers, of which yellow was the predominant hue. Pitho, the goddess of persuasion, was represented as grasping with one of her hands a thunder-bolt and fetters composed of flowers, to represent the power and attraction of eloquence. Euterpe, the Muse of music, Comus, the god of merriment, Concordia, the goddess of concord, and Copia, the goddess of plenty, were each in some form or other adorned with flowers. The temples, as well as the altars, the victims, and the worshipers, were also decorated with them, and on some occasions the offerings themselves were composed of them.

In short, there was scarcely an occasion, either festive or mournful, on which they were not used—philosophers, statesmen, and warriors, as well as the common people, alike using them. In Athens as well as in Rome there was a flower market, and the trade of the florist and maker of floral decorations was as regular a trade then as it is now among us. These customs have descended to us not only as appropriate on occasions of joy and sorrow, but also, to a certain extent, of devo-

tional and religious expression; for the Christian Church has always used them for this purpose, probably because, as in our secular affairs, they tend to heighten the expression of those feelings which words inadequately express.

Many, if not most, persons suppose that the use of flowers for funereal purposes is a modern custom; but it is by no means so. It has been practiced from time immemorial, among both civilized and uncivilized nations, as a mode of heightening the expressions of love and affection which the survivors entertained toward the deceased.

Among the Athenians the bodies of those slain in battle were anointed with perfumes and strewn with flowers previous to burial. The Indian magi placed flowers and rich viands on the tops of high towers, supposing that the spirits of the departed would regale themselves thereupon, and some of our North American Indians adorned their sepulchral mounds with flowers. The Hungarians and Tripolitans at this day construct their tombs with niches or recesses made for the reception of flowers. In Switzerland and France, crosses are planted on the graves, and upon these chaplets of flowers are hung. In Wales, it is the custom to strew the bed upon which the corpse is laid, with flowers; and in England it was always the custom in the rural districts to strew the grave with flowers. Shakspeare, in *Cymbeline*, alludes to this in the lines,

"With fairest flowers,  
Whilst summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,  
I'll sweeten thy sad grave."

And in *Hamlet*—

"Sweets to the sweet; farewell! . . .  
I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,  
And not to have strewed thy grave."

Byron, in the "Corsair," alludes to the Levantine custom of placing a bunch of flowers in the hands of young persons deceased.

In olden times, flowers of all hues were used for the strewing of the bier, the corpse, or the grave. In his "Lycidias" Milton thus apostrophizes:

"Return, Sicilian Muse,  
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast  
Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues.  
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use  
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,  
On whose fresh lap the swart-star sparely looks;  
Throw hither all your quaint enameled eyes,  
That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers,  
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.  
Bring the rath primrose that forsaken dies,

The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,  
The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,  
The glowing violet,  
The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,  
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,  
And every flower that sad embroidery wears:  
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,  
And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,  
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies."

But in our modern fashion of using flowers on such occasions we have lost all this sweet and charming simplicity, and have adopted instead a sickly sentimentality, which finds expression in such stupid symbolical and allegorical designs of crosses, lyres, harps, anchors, crowns, and broken columns made of wire work and composed of white flowers. Imagine Milton apostrophising his Muse to bring him a twenty-dollar crown and anchor, or Hamlet giving an order to the undertaker for a hundred dollars' worth of allegorical floral designs! Simplicity, whether of the heart or in æsthetics, always indicates strength and depth of feeling; but the elaborate and costly designs of the bouquet-makers only indicate depth of pocket on the part of the mourners, who publish it to the world by attaching their cards, thus aggravating their bad taste, and rendering it disgusting.

The use of entirely white flowers on these occasions is another instance of mawkish sentimentality, whence derived we know not, unless it is the outcrop of the suggestion made by that great sentimentalist, Mrs. Hemans, who, in one of her poems, says:

"Bring flowers, pale flowers, o'er the bier to shed,  
A crown for the brow of the early dead. . .  
They are love's last gift—bring flowers, pale  
flowers."

In pleasant contrast to such notions was a design we lately saw laid on the coffin of an aged and beloved Christian minister. It was a wreath of ivy leaves, among which were interwoven ears of wheat, and no card attached. We knew not who laid it there, but we felt assured that it was a strong, heart-felt expression of the feelings of the donor, symbolizing the belief in the evergreen and clinging faith of the deceased, and his ripeness for the change which had come to him, in the most delightful simplicity. It is time that we had a change in the fashion on such occasions, and that we should restore the custom to its former and proper expression of a true and real affection for the departed.