

## CHAPTER XIV

## CENTRAL AMERICA

GUATEMALA, HONDURAS, BRITISH HONDURAS, NICARAGUA,  
SALVADOR, COSTA RICA, PANAMA

The region collectively known as Central America is one of the most interesting portion of Latin America, and embodies six independent republics and the British Colony of Honduras. Geographically it is taken as extending from Panama, to Tehuantepec in Mexico, but politically the southern boundary of Mexico is the limit of the region. These six Central American republics have much in common as regards their physical formation and inhabitants; although each is stamped with its own individuality, and jealous of its rights. Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua cover respectively areas of 48,000, 46,000, and 49,000 square miles, and the smaller republics of Salvador, Costa Rica, and Panama cover 7,200, 23,000 and 32,000 square miles respectively. British Honduras covers 7,562 square miles.

Central America, physically, may be regarded as a transitional zone of territory connecting the continents of North and South America, rather than being part of either. It is a region of mountains and lowlands: the mountains having many high plateaus of limited extent, and containing many volcanoes, which form some of the highest summits and are among the most destructive on the earth's surface. Among the principal of these volcanoes six are in Guatemala, two in Salvador, four in Nicaragua and four in Costa Rica. Guatemala and Salvador are countries possessing more volcanoes than almost any other, and throughout the whole history of Central America, up to present times, these

countries have suffered greatly from eruption and earthquake, with repeated overwhelming of cities and destruction of plantations. The geological formation of the Central American region has been greatly influenced by volcanic disturbances in past ages. It forms, as it were, a joint in the earth's crust, a weak point subject to the outburst of the forces within. In earlier geological times, it has been shewn, the Atlantic and Pacific oceans were connected by various straits across what now are the narrow necks of land of Central America, the region having constituted a great insular system which has been consolidated in later times. Thus the cutting of the Panama Canal may be regarded, in a sense, as reverting to earlier hydrographic conditions.

Historically, Central America is of great interest. It was on September 1, 1513, that the Spanish explorer Vasco Nuñez de Balboa began his march across the Isthmus of Panama, and on the 25th, having ascended the range of hills forming the water-parting, that he stood "silent upon a peak in Darien"—silent at the sight of an enormous unknown ocean stretching away towards the west. This was the first view of the Pacific Ocean by the white man, from its eastern side. Four days later—it was Michaelmas day, 1513—Balboa waded knee-deep into the new ocean, tasted its salt waters, and cried aloud to his followers: "I take real and corporal and actual possession of this sea and its coasts for the king of Spain!" It was an extensive claim to make. On the one hand the Pacific coast stretched northwardly for eight thousand miles through what is now Central America, Mexico, California, Oregon, British Columbia and Alaska, to where it touches the fringe of eastern Asia; on the other, southwards for five thousand miles through Columbia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile to Cape Horn.

Although not an acre of this vast territory pertains to-day to the country whose agents discovered it, Spain has nevertheless left her imprint indelibly stamped upon it. The whole of Central America was formerly united in one political area. Under the rule of Spain, which came to

a close in 1821, the entire region from Mexico to Panama was embodied in a single administrative division: the kingdom of Guatemala, under a Captain-General, independent of the viceroyalty of Mexico and South America, and directly responsible to the home government. After independence was gained a federal republic of the five states was set up, which lasted until 1842, since when independent government for each republic has been maintained. Some attempts since have been made to consolidate the region politically again, but have not been carried out. Alliances and peace proposals, on the contrary, have generally terminated in strife and bloodshed, as if the people inhabiting the land partook of something of the turbulence of the volcanic region on which they have their being. As a whole these people may be credited with good intentions—the roads to their political and financial chaos are paved with such. A Central American "Hague Tribunal" or Arbitration Court was set up some years ago, under treaties signed by Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Salvador, and meets when occasion requires judgment upon matters at issue between these various states.

The geographical position of Central America is one of extreme importance, and the whole region, including the Antilles and West India Islands, may in the future become the centre of an increased maritime and commercial movement; Central America forming, as it were, a bridge between the two great oceans, the Pacific and the Atlantic, and the two American continents: midway between Asia and Europe. Only the future, however, can show if this assumed importance will be compassed.

The Cordillera, or mountain chain, traverses the whole territory of Central America from end to end, except that it is broken by the great lake-basin of Nicaragua. The mountains lie, as in South America, much closer to the Pacific than the Atlantic, except that in Costa Rica and Panama they occupy the centre of those narrower territories. The eastern side of the region consists in broad plains and highlands, watered by numerous rivers. Central

America comprises some of the most fertile land on the earth's surface ; and the landscape and scenery are among the most noteworthy, and the natural resources of the soil the most prolific of the whole of Latin America. The topography of the region gives rise to the vertical climatic conditions of *Tierra caliente*, *Tierra templada* and *Tierra fría*, or hot, temperate, and cold lands, a range of temperature from tropical to temperate which ensures the production of plant life of all kinds. The climate generally is healthy except in certain places on the coast, where lack of sanitary improvements and neglect of common hygienic conditions give rise to malarial fevers and worse disorders. In some zones, as at Panama formerly, and other ports on both shores of Central America, yellow fever was a terrible scourge, and malarious disorders rendered life for the foreigner unsafe. The improvements brought about at Panama, under the control of the United States, have shewn that these tropical scourges are not inevitable conditions of Central American environment.

The total population of the Central American republics numbers somewhat more than 6,000,000, distributed approximately as to 2,200,000 in Guatemala, 600,000 in Honduras, 740,000 in Nicaragua, 2,000,000 in Salvador, 460,000 in Costa Rica, and 400,000 in Panama. The estimates of population are very approximate. Accurate statistics cannot be obtained, partly by reason of the ignorance of the masses of Indians in certain regions, and largely by reason of fear of military conscription, or taxation, especially in Nicaragua and Honduras, both of which matters the inhabitants have good cause to avoid. In Guatemala 60 per cent. of the population are pure Indians ; the remainder mestizos, with small class of whites. The Indian tribes are more diverse than in any part of Central America, and belong principally to the Maya and Quiche stocks, who in olden times were the builders of the famous Central American temples. There are about 15,000 foreigners in the country and several important German coffee-growing settlements. In Honduras the mestizos are the most numerous, and the white element is small. There

are many Indian tribes, a portion of which are Christianised, but a number, of about 90,000, still retain their aboriginal mode of tribe life, living in the mountains and cultivating the soil. These Indians are good and industrious labourers. On the north coast the vigorous Carib race is found, forming the principal source of labour for mahogany-cutting. There is a considerable but disappearing number of zambos and negroes. In Nicaragua the population is largely of a composite character, formed by the union of the original Indians, Spaniards, and negro slaves. Intermarriage of immigrants of all nations, including Dutch, French and British, has produced a half-caste type with blue eyes and fair hair, an uncommon type for a Latin-American country. Indians of pure race are few, as they were almost exterminated in earlier times by the Spanish buccaneers and colonists. Salvador is the most thickly populated of the Central American republics. The mestizos or "ladinos," as the mixed race is commonly termed in Central America, form more than half the total; the Indians 40 per cent., and the whites and foreigners 10 per cent.; the pure whites of Spanish race not being more than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. There is a small proportion of negroes. In Costa Rica the proportion of Spanish blood is greater than in any of the six republics, but the mestizos form the larger proportion of the inhabitants. The native Indians, who number about 4,000, are of a quiet, docile nature, dwelling in stockaded encampments, in a still savage and unChristianised state. There are about 8,000 Europeans in the country. In Panama the population is extremely mixed, due to the labour of various nationalities brought in for the building of the canal. Negroes from Jamaica predominate, and Spanish, Italian and Greeks are plentiful. These, however, are not permanent elements. The population upon the canal zone numbers over 50,000; and there are 36,000 native Indians throughout the country.

The birth-rate in the Central American countries is generally a high one, and the death-rate low, and although there is little or no immigration the population tends rapidly to increase. The high excess of births over deaths

is a result of the naturally favourable conditions of soil and climate, added to the native woman's disposition towards child-bearing, characteristic generally of the Latin American people. In Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala the increase in population, notwithstanding the constant political unrest, is very marked. A large proportion of the births are illegitimate, amounting to 30 per cent. of the whites in Guatemala, and 50 per cent. of mestizos and Indians. Guatemala was originally the home of the great Quiche nation, and of people of Maya stock, who had reached a high degree of civilisation, as elsewhere described.

The governments of the Central American republics are generally of the centralised system, the various countries being divided into departments, with *jefe-politicos* or political governors at their head. Single chamber government prevails, the legislative power being the Chamber of Deputies, and the executive power the President and Cabinet. The president and deputies are elected according to the constitution, by free popular vote; but by reason of political influence, dishonesty, and intimidation, the result of free suffrage has become a mere travesty of the popular voice. The governors or *jefes* of the departments are appointed by the Central Executive; the deputies are elected under the system of proportional representation, varying as to numbers in the different republics.

Education in the Central American states is generally extremely backward, and practically non-existent in certain regions. In Guatemala 80 per cent. of the population can neither read nor write, and the proportion varies little in the other republics. Primary education is free and compulsory. The most advanced community in this respect is that of Costa Rica, but the Guatemalan government is making strong efforts towards improvement. In all the republics the government supports the schools and educational establishments, but lack of funds and political unrest prevent the consolidation and growth of public instruction. The Roman Catholic religion prevails in every state, but other creeds may be in general practised with

liberty. There were 1,064 government schools in Guatemala in 1903 and a number of private schools; and the owners of plantations on which the labourers' children aggregate more than ten are obliged by law to provide schools. Two national institutes, one for men and one for women, exist in the capital, and at Quezaltenango and Chiquimula respectively; and for professional instruction in law, medicine and engineering there are private, government-aided schools; also a national conservatory of music, a commercial college, national library, and four schools of trades. There is also a German school, endowed by the German government. In all schools military training is given. Military service is compulsory for all white and mestizo citizens. Guatemala, in reality, makes considerable pretensions as to the education of its people, and at times enthusiasm is aroused on the subject; but the great bulk of the people remain illiterate. In religion the state recognises no distinction of creed, and monastic institutions are prohibited by law. The national Roman Catholic creed is, however, strong among the people, although a large section of the upper class have long been pronouncedly "liberal," as the anti-clerical element is termed.

The products of agricultural and forestal industries, as well as minerals in Central America, shew the exceedingly wide range of natural resources of which this rich territory is possessed. The chief plantations are owned by Germans, and the yearly product is worth about £1,500,000 sterling. Somewhat similar conditions of coffee-production prevail in Nicaragua, the German-owned plantations producing coffee of good quality. The coffee of Costa Rica is especially famous, the volcanic soil in places possessing peculiar properties favourable for the growth of the shrub. The development of the banana trade in various parts of Central America has become of considerable importance. Rubber planting has been successfully carried out in certain districts. Mahogany and cedar are valuable timber products, but the forests have been recklessly destroyed in some cases. Almost all the fruits of the tropic and temperate regions are produced, and cattle-raising is carried on and dairy products manu-

factured. Sugar and some cotton are grown, and alcohol distilled. Relatively considerable quantities of gold-dust and bars have been exported from Nicaragua, Honduras, and other states, most of which are rich in minerals.

In certain of the Central American republics, state lands for colonisation are to be obtained on easy terms, both under free grant and purchase. The Indians upon the plantations in Guatemala and other states live often in a condition akin to slavery: the truck system and peonage, under which contract debts are incurred, virtually tying them to their masters.

### GUATEMALA

The republic of Guatemala is bounded on the north and west by Mexico, and on the east is cut off from the Atlantic ocean, except for a few miles of coast line and the seaport of Puerto Barrios, by British Honduras. To the east and south are the republics of Honduras and Salvador, and on the south-west the Pacific ocean.

The soil of Guatemala is largely of volcanic origin, and almost everywhere is fertile, yielding products which vary greatly according to the elevation of the land above sea level. Almost all products of the temperate or tropical regions can be grown to perfection within the borders of the country, from the finest cocoa on the Pacific coast zone, and bananas, logwood, and mahogany on the Gulf shores, to wheat, potatoes, and all kinds of sub-tropical fruits and vegetables in various parts of the temperate regions. The low-lying plains are clothed, especially on the Atlantic side, with a luxuriant vegetation, having all the characteristics of the tropical American woodlands. The chief commercial products are maize, sugar, coffee, cocoa, and cochineal. As in Mexico, maize is everywhere grown, yielding one crop annually in the temperate and cold zones, and two and even three in the hot coast districts. The sugar-cane flourishes up to an altitude of about 5,000 feet, which also is nearly the extreme limit of coffee culture; and cacao, properly a tropical plant, no higher than 1,600 feet. Wheat,

on the other hand, thrives on the uplands above 5,500 feet. In the lowlands and slopes somewhat higher, cotton, bananas, and indigo are cultivated, although not in large quantities. Cacao, sugar, and wheat and cotton are mostly consumed in the country, coffee and bananas alone being exported. The coffee plantations are situated chiefly on the lower slopes of the volcanic range facing the Pacific. This long tract of country, like the neighbouring district of Soconusco in Mexico, is remarkable for its scenery, fertile soil, and relatively dry and pleasant air; and many foreigners have settled in this maritime region and invested a good deal of capital in the coffee industry. The coffee plantations lie mainly between 2,000 and 4,500 feet above sea level and have hitherto escaped the attacks of insect pests, showing that here all the conditions are highly favourable for coffee culture. They have, however, suffered in some cases from the eruption of the volcanoes. The coffee crop has yielded annually 720,000 quintals. The plantations are chiefly in the hands of German settlers.

Other plants of commercial value are—vanilla, rubber, sisal, guava, ginger, oranges, cacao, cocconut, banana, and plantains, the last two being the most important. The cultivation of these fruits has been stimulated by government bounties, and the establishment of regular lines of steamships between Livingston and New Orleans. Of the 200 recorded varieties of bananas, two only, one red and one yellow, are raised for exportation. The former yields from 200 to 250 pods to the bunch, weighing unripe about 80 to 90 pounds. The plantain, which greatly resembles the banana, but is much larger, is always yellow and rarely has more than thirty-six fruits to the bunch, the fruit being often more than a foot long, and more palatable and nutritive than the banana. When dried, this fruit, it is stated,\* will keep for twenty years, and it has been calculated that a piece of rich land forty feet square will yield some 4,000 pounds of nutritive substance from plantains, capable of supporting fifty persons, while the same land under wheat would not support more than two.

\* "Industria."

Among the forest growths of Guatemala are the mahogany and palm of the lowlands, and the pines and oaks of the uplands: one species of oak, which is smaller and much softer than the European variety, bears acorns "as large as the largest turkey eggs." Among the more costly woods are the cedar, a species of palisander, the so-called rosewood, and the palmolatla, a close-grained yellow wood streaked with grey and brown veins.

There is in Guatemala water power for future manufactures; and considerable, though little worked, mineral wealth. Gold, silver, lead, tin, copper, mercury, salt, sulphur, antimony, and coal are all found, but it has to be demonstrated that they are commercially exploitable.

The principal towns of Guatemala, with their populations are: Guatemala city 80,000, Quezaltenango 30,000, Totonicapan 26,000, Cobán 25,000, Sololá 20,000, Chiquimula 13,200, Zacapa 12,600, Escuintla 12,500, Sta. Cruz del Quiché 12,000, Salamá 11,000, Huehuetenango 10,800. The principal industries of which they are the centres, are native weaving, cattle-rearing, coffee, cereals, and tobacco-growing, and in some cases mining and small manufactures.

The capital cities of the Central American republics are in some cases handsome and pleasing in appearance, with conditions of climate and environment of much beauty and utility. Guatemala city is marked by a general air of prosperity. It is lighted electrically, and possesses well-built public buildings, wide, regular streets, and tree-planted avenues, broad plazas, numerous fine churches, theatres, museums, and a number of schools for both sexes. The houses are built low in order to minimise the danger from earthquake shocks, which have entirely destroyed the city in earlier years. The population is about 80,000 people. Guatemala city is by far the largest city in Central America. It is built upon a fertile, spacious tableland, 5,000 feet above sea level, and is surrounded by lofty mountains and volcanoes. The trade is mainly in coffee, and there are various cigar and textile factories. Among the manufactures fine cotton goods, muslin, silver articles, artificial flowers, and high-class embroidery have place:

the embroidery being a specially famous product of women's work in the city. Wood-carving is a native industry.

Access is gained to the capital by railway from Puerto Barrios, on the Atlantic, 200 miles distant, and from San José, on the Pacific, seventy-five miles. Guatemala is thus crossed entirely by railway, which forms a transcontinental route between the two oceans. The railway from Guatemala city to the city of Mexico has for some time been under construction, and now affords communication between the two capitals, and thus with New York and North America generally. The creating of railway communication across this little-known territory between Guatemala and Mexico is of much interest, and will doubtless lead to increased trade between the two countries.

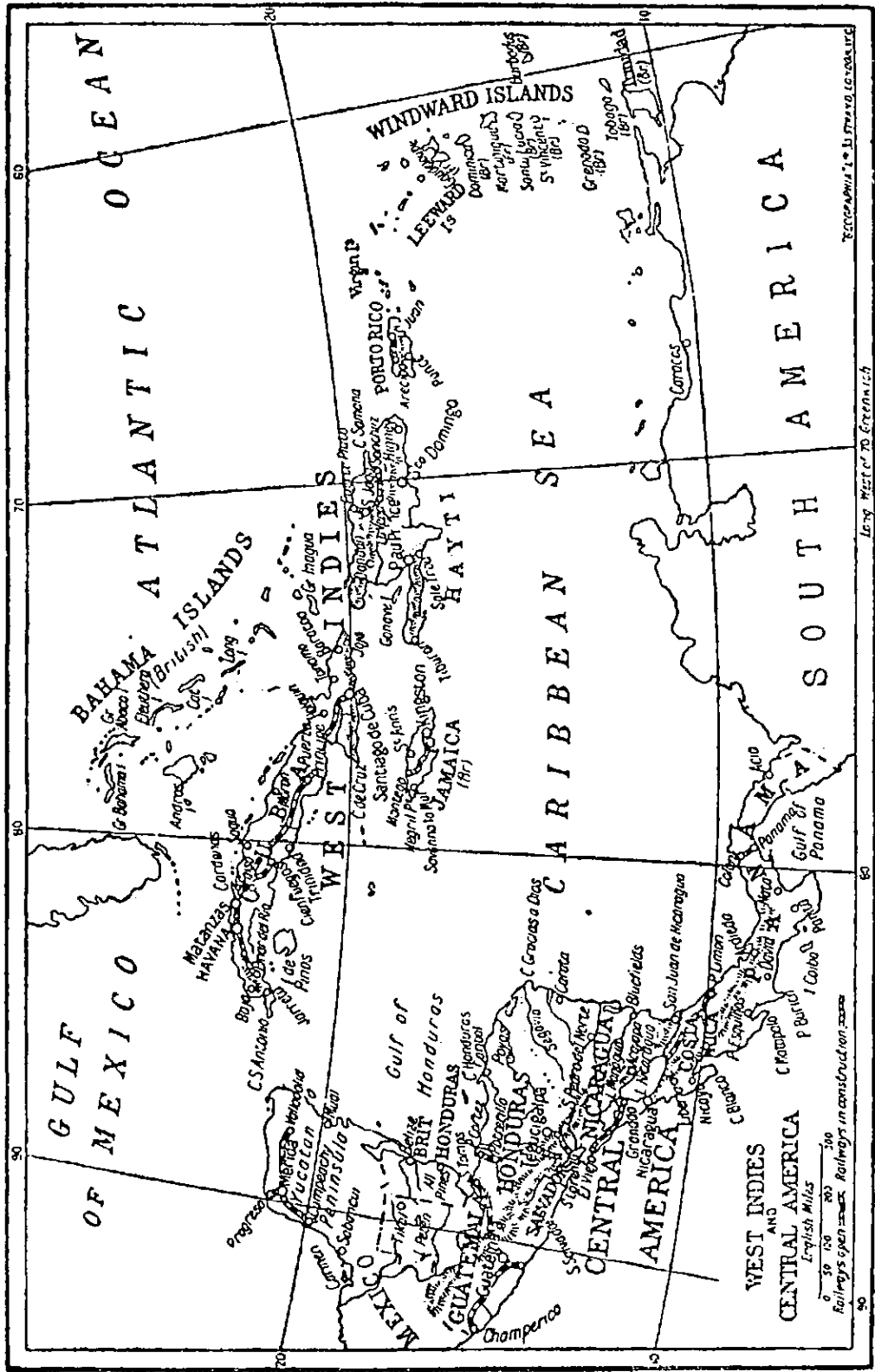
The building of the present city of Guatemala, which is the third capital of the republic (the site of the first being known as Ciudad Vieja), was commenced in 1776, three years after the earthquake of 1773, which devastated Guatemala la Antigua, or Old Guatemala, the second capital. The latter is situated twenty miles from the present capital, at the foot of the volcano of Agua, and near the site of the earlier city, Ciudad Vieja, which was destroyed by a volcanic discharge from Agua in 1541, when a great flood of water was ejected from a crater lake, which overwhelmed the city. Besides the capital there are places in the interior which are noted for their historic associations. Such is Santa Cruz de Quiché, which stands in the neighbourhood of Utatlan, the capture of which in 1542 by Alvarado signalled the downfall of the great Quiché nation; and Totonicapan and Quezaltenango, places which have survived the destructive wars. The former is a thriving centre of peaceful industry, such as weaving, pottery, cabinet work, and musical instruments; the latter, "the Green Feather town," still keeps alive some of the old national arts, and here are prepared the gold-embroidered cloaks, masks, and plumed headgear worn by the natives at their festive gatherings, which celebrate their ancient grandeur.

The total value of the agricultural productions of Guatemala amount to somewhat over £5,000,000 annually.

The value of the coffee was £1,117,000, of the maize £806,000, potatoes £103,000, sugar £375,000, rubber £57,000, chewing-gum and cocoa about £14,000 each, barley £156,000, timber £375,000, bananas, £75,000, and so forth. Of these native products articles to the value of £2,000,000 were exported in 1909, of which coffee accounted for £1,750,000, hides £62,000, timber £53,000, rubber £35,000, bananas £46,000, sugar £24,000, chicle or chewing-gum £14,000. Other tropical products of interest in Guatemala, and available in small but generally growing quantities are alfalfa, aniseed, broom root, carria, cocoa butter, tree cotton or kapok, beneseed, castor oil, ginger, marjoram, quinine bark, tiger skins, and myristina wax, and other varieties of cotton and wax.

The rivers of Guatemala are of some importance, as regards the eastern side of the country. The Motagua is 250 miles long, and is navigable to within ninety miles of the capital, and forms a delta on the south of the gulf of Honduras, an arm of the Atlantic; and the Potochic, 180 miles long, partly navigable. The Usumasinta is a noble stream forming part of the boundary with Mexico, and falling into the gulf of Campeche to the west of the Yucatan peninsular. The western slope of the country being short, gives rise only to small streams, numerous and rapid. Of the various lakes, Peten, about twenty-seven miles long, with the island of Flores, famous for the number of ancient objects of archæological interest which have been recovered from its soil, is the principal. The Golfo Dulce is about thirty-six miles long, a freshwater lake communicating with the Atlantic, and this would be of value as a harbour but for its bar. Lakes Aitlan, Amatitlan, and Guija are all of considerable size and interest.

The average rainfall of Guatemala is heavy, reaching, on the Atlantic slope, where the winds are moisture-charged from the Caribbean sea, 195 inches in places, but in the centre of the country it is about twenty-seven inches. The climate is healthy except where malarial fevers on the coast prevail; but Guatemala, and Central America as a whole, cannot be the subject of any generalisation as to climatic conditions.



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## NICARAGUA

Nicaragua is, territorially, the largest of the Central American republics, and second in point of population. On the Atlantic side the coast line of the country is 300 miles long, and on the Pacific 200 miles. The two great lakes upon the the western side are a distinguishing feature of the republic, and these formed part of the projected route of the once-discussed Nicaragua canal, put forward as an alternative to the Panama canal.

The principal interior towns of Nicaragua are Leon, the old capital, Managua, the actual capital, and Granada. These three towns are in direct communication with the Pacific coast by a line of railway about 170 miles in length. Managua has a population of some 45,000 people, and is the most important commercial place. It is well situated as an industrial town, and geographically is the centre of the republic. Managua is connected by rail with Corinto on the Pacific coast, and when the projected railway to Matagalpa, and that connecting the lakes with the Atlantic coast are completed, it will be brought into direct communication with all the important districts in the republic. The town has a plentiful water supply and an electric light installation. The department of Managua is small; it produces coffee in the highlands, or Sierras, and sugar-cane in the lowlands, chiefly for distilling *aguardiente*.

Leon, with a population of about 63,000, is situated in the midst of some of the finest pastoral and agricultural land of the republic, and forms the distributing centre for the important coffee, sugar, and mining districts of Matagalpa, Chichigalpa, and Chinandega. Leon probably ranks second in importance among the commercial towns of Nicaragua, but, like Managua, very little of the foreign trade is in British hands. Granada, the chief town of the department of the same name, is the third largest city of the republic. The climate in this department, although tropical in the lower parts, is cool and temperate on the higher levels. The town is situated on the lake of Nicaragua, some thirty-six miles from Managua, and is in direct communication with the capital

by rail and road. The Granada district is an essentially agricultural one; coffee is produced on the slopes of the extinct volcano Mombacho, and beans, maize, and other crops. The department of Granada possesses the San Rafael sugar plantations, one of the largest of its kind in the republic, and at Nandaime there is a large cocoa plantation, the property of one of the great French chocolate manufacturers. The population of the town of Granada is about 15,000.

The department of Chontales comprises important mining and pastoral districts, and is well watered, being intersected by numerous small rivers which flow down from the highlands into the lake of Nicaragua. The ranges of hills in the centre of the department are favourable for the production of coffee and cocoa, but, owing to want of communication, only a small area is cultivated. A large part of the district is utilised for cattle-raising, and a business is done in exporting cattle to Costa Rica. The region is heavily wooded, but up to the present the timber has been but little exported. The department of Rivas contains some of the most fertile districts of the country. It lies between the lake of Nicaragua and the Pacific, and the chief town, Rivas, has a population of about 10,000. The principal products are cocoa, rubber, tropical fruits, and fine woods, such as mahogany, cedar, and hardwoods, which are shipped in considerable quantities from the port of San Juan del Sur. Large numbers of cattle are also raised in this department and exported to Costa Rica. In other districts yellow pine is abundant. The Prinzapolka district comprises the upper waters of the Prinzapolka river and its tributaries, and the northern tributaries of the Rio Grande. The whole district, is rich in mineral wealth, and there are several well-equipped mines producing gold, and many smaller ones, but all are handicapped by the difficulties of transport. Besides gold, copper and other metals are found in paying quantities. The highest mountain ranges of the country form the northern boundary of the department of Bluefields, and constitute the water-parting, dividing the northern part of Nicaragua.

In general, British enterprise has not been much attracted to Nicaragua, although a large amount of foreign capital is invested in the mines. The American trade has increased rapidly of late.

The exports from Nicaragua include a number of valuable articles, very diversified in character. For the year 1910 the principal of these articles were: coffee, 12,000 tons, at a value of £576,200, which went chiefly to France and Germany; cotton, to the United Kingdom almost entirely, sixty-three tons, value £2,260; hides and deer-skins, value £50,000; rubber, 285 tons, value £71,200, almost all to the United States; gold recovered in various forms, whether amalgamated, cyanided, smelted, or in bars, to a value of £183,000, principally to the United States; and a small amount of silver and auriferous copper; cedar to a value of £2,400, and mahogany, Brazil wood, and *lignum vitæ* in lesser quantities; also dye-woods—*mora* and *nambar*—worth £5,000; sugar £3,000; bananas £22,000, to the United States; cocoanuts and turtle-shell, of which last-named article a considerable quantity is, during some years, sent to Great Britain. The cotton, cocoa, rubber, and wood exports are far from representing either the production or the possibilities of the republic. In its mahogany and cedar forests, Nicaragua possesses great wealth; and as regards the injury done to the rubber forests in the past, steps have been taken by the government to remedy this.

### HONDURAS

Honduras lies between Guatemala and Nicaragua, and has a coast line on the Caribbean sea more than 300 miles long, and on the Pacific a short seaboard of the gulf of Fonseca, with Amapala as the seaport. The capital of the republic is Tegucigalpa, with a population of about 40,000; standing at an elevation of 3,200 feet above sea level. It is connected with Comayagua, its principal suburb, by a lofty bridge of ten arches over the torrential Choluteca river. The houses are generally of one storey, built round a *patio*, and fronting the park is the large domed and ornate cathedral. The government offices, university, law courts,

and schools of industry are other noteworthy buildings. There is only one small railway line in the country, and the roads are bad. A railway is greatly needed to cross the republic from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the capital to Amapala.

In Honduras fruit-growing and mining are both important industries. Of the export trade 40 per cent. is in bananas, for the growing of which there are vast lands available on the Atlantic coast, only a small portion of which is cultivated. The Honduras railway earns 85 per cent. of its revenue from fruit transport, and the steamers on the Ulua river are entirely occupied with the business. The great Cuyamel plantation, an American enterprise, is an important concern, with a large area of land, and a modern colony, railway, docks, and other equipment devoted to the growing and export of bananas. From Puerto Cortes, on the Atlantic coast, which serves the region, millions of bunches of bananas are shipped annually. The soil on this side of the country is also well suited for sugar-cane, but little planting has been done, although the finest kind of cane has been produced, and the home demand calls for greater production. Coffee and cocoa are equally capable of production, and lands are available at an almost nominal price. Similar conditions exist with regard to tobacco.

The chief industry in Honduras is mining. But although the mines have not yet been developed to any appreciable extent, there is sufficient proof of wealth in gold, silver, and iron. Coal and oil have also been discovered in several parts of the country, but have not been developed. A New York Mining Company is the only enterprise that has been seriously worked, and this has yielded some £3,500,000, with a capital of some £250,000. Water power is abundant in all parts of the country. The placer mines of the department of Olancho are also important and have yielded good profits. Honduras has been almost entirely neglected by foreign mining interests, but its great wealth is now attracting some attention abroad. Mines are worked by natives in nearly every department of Honduras, the ore being so rich

as to afford good profits even when worked by the most primitive methods.

There are openings for investment of foreign capital in Honduras in the mines, agriculture, and public works, and the government are anxious to attract foreign capital. There are immense undeveloped resources. The timber lands are valuable, and contain pine, oak, cedar, and mahogany; and vegetable oils from the cohun nut, which grows in large quantities in the coast lands, should be valuable if exploited in quantities. The Atlantic coast lands are especially fertile and the Pacific lands produce excellent rubber.

The usual varied exports of Central American countries are represented by the following for Honduras, in 1911-12: gold and silver £200,000; bananas £268,000; coffee £16,000; cocoanuts £35,000; mahogany £12,000; which, with other matters, and a few manufactured articles, gave a total value of £630,000. In 1909 the foreign debt of Honduras had reached nearly £22,500,000, of which £17,000,000 represented arrears of interest.

### BRITISH HONDURAS

The British Crown colony of British Honduras, or Belize, being a foreign possession is outside the political scope of this book, but territorially forms part of Latin America. Physically it differs little from the Mexican peninsula of Yucatan of which it is topographically part, and its flora and fauna are those of the neighbouring republics. The littoral, facing the Carribean sea, is low and swampy, and the coast is of somewhat dangerous approach from coral reefs and *cayos*. Inland from the mangrove swamps and tropical jungle are belts of rich alluvial soil, pine-bearing ridges and broad savannas, with mountains beyond, and some sixteen streams or rivers descend to the sea. Good pasture land up to 3,300 feet above sea level exists, and there are indications of minerals. The climate is sub-tropical, and cannot be considered unhealthy in comparison with the West Indies and Central America generally. Larger than Wales, the country has a population of only 50,000 people, of which

about 2,000 are whites, the majority being of hybrid race descended from negro slaves, whites and aboriginals. The population increases very slowly, and 45 per cent. of the births are illegitimate. The land was at one time more thickly populated, under the prehistoric Indian civilisation which has left ruined cities in the jungle, as elsewhere in Central America. The coloured people are expert woodmen. It is recorded that all the pine trees on crown lands were sold to an American concessionnaire, in 1903, at the price of one cent per tree. Agriculture is neglected, only about 90 square miles of land being under cultivation. Sugar cane, bananas, cocoanut palms, rubber, palm oil, and other valuable matters are cultivated or collected, and could be produced in large quantities. There are no railways, and few roads. The capital, Belize, has a population of about 10,000 people. The total imports are of a value of about £450,000, and exports £400,000. The Colony is administered by a lieutenant-governor and an executive council of three official and three unofficial members. It cannot be said that the development of this territorial unit is in advance of that of its Spanish American neighbours.

### SALVADOR AND COSTA RICA

The republic of Salvador lies wholly upon the Pacific side of Central America, and does not, like its neighbouring states, enjoy trans-continental facilities. A narrow seaboard of alluvial plains gives place to a plateau of 2,000 feet elevation, crowned by a number of volcanic cones. The river Lempa flows through a magnificent valley, and is navigable for small steamers for the third of its length, and falls into the Pacific. The capital, San Salvador, lies in a region subject to earthquakes, and the treacherous San Miguel, one of the most destructive burning mountains in America, after periods of repose at times bursts forth and causes devastation around it; and the phenomenon of unrest is shared by the lake of Itopango, which rises suddenly in its steep, trough-like bed; in which in 1880 a volcanic cone appeared, 500 feet in diameter. San Salvador, lies at an elevation of 2,100 feet, in the valley of Las

Hamacas, thirty miles from the Pacific coast, and has a population of about 65,000 people. It is connected with the Pacific ports of La Libertad and Acajutla by railway, and with Santa Anna to the north-west. A handsome university and others of the customary Latin American institutions mark out the city for distinction, and it may favourably be compared as a centre of life with small cities of Europe.

The principal industry of Salvador is agriculture; and coffee, sugar, indigo and balsam are the most important products. The "Peruvian balsam" is not cultivated in Peru, but is an indigenous balm of Salvador, and was so named from being first shipped to Callao and thence to Europe in earlier times. Rubber, tobacco, rice, cereals, and fruit are other products. Cotton-growing is encouraged by the government, which has established a model farm. Mining is principally for gold, whose output has reached during past years a value of £250,000; and silver, copper, quicksilver, and lead are found, also iron. The Salvador Railway Company, controlled by British interests, with a government subsidy, together with its steamers, is actively engaged in the development of the regions traversed by the line. The peasantry of Salvador are generally hard-working, and the general prosperity of the country is advancing.

Among the Central American states, it may be said that Costa Rica has the least sombre past.\* The republic is fourth in area and population, but undoubtedly a larger proportion of the country is capable of immediate utilisation, and the population, Galician by origin, is the most European and the most industrious and prosperous in Central America. The republic is bounded on the north-west by Nicaragua, from which it is partly separated by the river San Juan, on the north-east by the Caribbean sea, on the south-east by Panama, and on the south and west by the Pacific ocean. The Pacific coast is indented by the two large gulfs of Nicoya and Dulce, in the former of which the pearl-fishing industry is carried on.

\* "Industria."

The country, which is separated by a narrow strip of land from lake Nicaragua, is traversed from south-east to north-west by the Sierra Talamanca and its continuation, which near Cartago is indented by the depression known as Col d'Ochomopo, from which two streams flow in opposite directions to the Atlantic and Pacific oceans—mountains which attain elevations of 10,000 to 11,000 feet, with a number of volcanoes, active and dormant. Irazu, the volcano of Cartago, the loftiest, 11,200 feet, whose summit commands a view of both Atlantic and Pacific oceans, is freely active, and it has given rise to several seismic disturbances. Along the coast of the Pacific, especially round the bay of Nicoya, the country has a beautiful and picturesque appearance, being diversified by valleys and intersected by numerous streams. The gulf of Nicoya is a land-locked inlet containing an archipelago of richly wooded islands, and it takes its name from an Indian chief who, with his tribe, was converted to Christianity in the sixteenth century. Its pearls and mother-of-pearls and purple-yielding murex have made it famous.

The two ports of entry to the republic are Puntarenas on the gulf of Nicoya—the Pacific—and Port Limon on the Caribbean sea, the latter being connected by rail with San José and Alajuela, a distance of 117 miles, forming a transcontinental line.

Costa Rica was so named by the early Spanish settlers on account of its immense natural wealth, and it contains, in addition to its virgin forests, broad savannas and valuable vegetable and fruit products, mineral deposits of great value. Many gold mines were worked by the early Spaniards, and recently some activity has been shown in exploiting this branch of industry, warranted by the richness of the mineral deposits in the extensive mining zones of the republic. The native Indians worked, in a crude way, the silver, gold, and copper mines of the land in olden times.

In all parts of the republic, with the exception of the sea coast, the climate is mild and temperate, never subject to excessive heat or cold, and rarely experiencing any other

vicissitude than that from dry to rainy season. At San José, at an elevation of 3,700 feet, there is a perfect spring with a mean annual temperature of 68°; the rainfall is in places very abundant, and more so on the Atlantic than on the Pacific side, ranging as high as 140 inches at Port Limon. The land, therefore, is well adapted to agricultural purposes, and capable of bringing to maturity many European plants, as well as those peculiar to the tropics. Heavy and luxuriant forest covers a large part of the country, extending far up the mountain slopes, and includes mahogany, ebony, indiarubber, Brazil wood, native cedar, oak, and myrtle. This growth of tropical forests has covered the land for ages, and in consequence the rock has been overlaid with a very thick vegetable mould, and the soil is, therefore, remarkably fertile, especially in the valleys between the mountains, where two harvests a year are commonly reaped. Sugar-cane, maize, beans, cocoa, rice, tobacco, rubber, spices are among the principal products; with great quantities of hard woods and dye woods for export, on both coasts. Rubber export fell off, due to the over-exploitation of the trees, but new plantations have been made. The cocoa is of excellent quality and its cultivation is increasing. The excellent quality of the Costa Rica coffee is well known; it commands a high price abroad, and more plantations are being established. Banana cultivation is exceedingly important, and heavy exports of the fruit are made, amounting to more than 10,000,000 bunches annually, taking a leading place in the country's foreign trade. The soil in certain districts is peculiarly suited to the banana, and large areas remain to be planted, such as are capable of furnishing continuous supplies of this valuable source of food. The great banana trade of Costa Rica has grown to being entirely since the year 1880.

The capital of Costa Rica, San José, with a population of about 27,000, stands in the central plateau, 3,870 feet above sea level. It is of modern appearance, with good streets electrically lighted, although the houses are of one storey in order to lessen danger from earthquakes. The

suburbs consist in the cane huts of the Indians. There are two large public parks ; and the cathedral, government offices, schools, museum, library, and barracks are among the principal buildings.

The valuable resources of Costa Rica, its comparative immunity from revolution, earlier attracted considerable capital from abroad, principally from Great Britain and the United States, which served for interior development ; but later, large arrears on the foreign debt came to being, followed by bankruptcy. The political stability of the country, however, is noteworthy, and is due in great part to the existence of a large class of peasant proprietors, including more than two-thirds of the population : a condition of comparatively rare occurrence in Latin America. Education is free and compulsory as regards primary instruction : complete religious liberty is guaranteed by the constitution, and military service is compulsory in time of war.

### PANAMA

The small republic of Panama has built considerable hopes for its future upon the Panama canal ; dreaming that its at present small cities will be transformed into great emporia of wealth by reason of the traffic passing through its territory, and the presence of ships of all nations in transit upon its coasts. Whether these hopes will be realised only the future can shew, but practical consideration will give rise to doubt as to whether any very rapid change of fortune can take place. The considerable floating population which the building of the canal required must disperse as the work is completed, and the loss of the harvest of money which the pay of the workers brought must react upon local industries and trade. The city of Panama is not upon the direct route of the canal, and whilst predictions of a rapid growth of its population have been made it is reasonable to suppose that the town of Balboa, the Pacific terminus of the waterway, is more likely to expand. Considerable progress has been made in the nine years of independent life of the republic, since the separation from

Colombia, and it is doubtless in a slow, steady growth that the young republic will find its greatest advantage. The influence of the United States in recent presidential elections has been of much benefit ; the turbulent or corrupt elements of political partisanship having been shewn that the ballot must be respected.

The natural resources of Panama are considerable, but there is a tendency to exaggerate them. Those parts of the territory which are best known are capable of yielding useful tropical products, such as rubber, ivory, nuts, hardwood. Cocoanuts, sugar-cane, tobacco, and other products can be cultivated throughout large areas of country ; and cattle-breeding offers some possibilities. The cultivation of cocoanuts in Panama, as in most of the Central American republics, may be expected to increase considerably in the future, as is the case with rubber ; and new plantations are being made. An American company has recently laid out 32,000 acres of bananas and 1,000 of cacao, and elsewhere 150,000 rubber-trees have been planted, success being attained in the lands away from the hurricane belt. At present, however, nearly all the rubber exported is from wild trees. Of coconut palms 7,000 have been planted. For the year 1911 bananas to the value of £215,000 were exported ; cocoanuts £2,500 ; turtle-shell £2,500, also chocolate, live turtles, hides, sarsaparilla ; and in 1910 exports included : gold £27,000, hides £17,000, ivory nuts £26,000, mother-of-pearl shell £15,000, rubber £32,000 : which serve to shew the variety of products.

The Panama canal works embodied first, the formation of a sheltered basin in Limon bay on the Atlantic coast of the Isthmus, by means of a breakwater from the fortified Toro point, and the dredging of a channel, affording a depth of forty feet of water from the sea through the low, swampy ground as far as Gatun. At Gatun are the eastern locks, a double flight of three locks, and abutting on their walls to the west is the immense earthen dam which closes the lower valley of the Chagres river. Through the centre of the dam runs a concrete-lined spillway, and the waters of the artificial lake Gatun thus impounded extend far back,



flooding the low-lying country behind and covering an area of 164 square miles—a lake whose surface is eighty-seven feet above the height of mean tide. The vessels rise through the three locks, eighty-seven feet, to float upon the surface of the lake, across which they proceed under their own steam for twenty-two miles, at a fair rate of speed, to Gamboa. From this point a great artificial canyon, the famous Culebra cut, one of the greatest cuttings of earthwork ever attempted in the history of engineering, encloses the canal for eight miles to Pedro Miguel, where a single-flight lock, in duplicate, lowers the vessel to the surface of another artificial lake, that of Miraflores, a mile and a half long. At the termination of this lake a double flight of twin locks again lowers the vessel to the level of the Pacific ocean, to a waterway formed for eight miles through low swamps to deep water in the Pacific, at the new port of Balboa—so named after the famous discoverer—situated slightly to the west of the city of Panama. Here the Naos islands dyke protects the terminus of the canal from silting currents, and connects the mainland with the fortified islands. The entire length of the canal from deep water in the Atlantic to deep water in the Pacific is fifty miles. The bottom of the Culebra cut is forty feet above mean tide, and the surface of the water, eighty-seven feet, giving a maximum depth of forty-seven feet of fresh water in the canal and a minimum of forty-one feet, according to the wet or dry season affecting the level of the lake. The available length of the locks is 1,000 feet; their width 110 feet.

The shortening of routes by the canal are, for Vancouver and other ports north of Panama on the west coast of America 8,400 miles to New York, 7,000 miles to Montreal, and 6,000 to Liverpool, Antwerp, and Hamburg. For ports on the west coast, south of Panama, the distance varies from 8,400 miles to zero, near the southern extremity of the continent, the average reduction being about 5,000 to New York and 2,600 to Liverpool. From Yokohama to New York the reduction is 3,700 miles, and from Shanghai 1,000. The distance from Hong Kong and Manila remains practically unreduced from the Suez route. From Sydney

to New York the reduction is 3,800, and 2,500 to Montreal, and from Melbourne to New York 2,600. Thus Yokohama, Sydney, and Melbourne via the canal, are nearer New York than Liverpool. For the first time the circumnavigation of the globe north of the equator will be possible. East of Australia runs an imaginary north and south line, on which all points are at an equal distance from New York via Suez or via Panama. The British West Indies will no longer be at the end of a cul-de-sac, but on a great highway of commerce, with Jamaica in a position of strategic importance, and Trinidad on a line of communication from the Pacific countries of America to Brazil and Argentina.

The canal is owned and operated by the government of the United States, and will be fortified and garrisoned thereby: and the foreign relations of the Panama republic are controlled by the same power. The history of the canal is a chequered one, and whether from the engineering and the financing, whether from the diplomatic point of view, has been sullied by doubtful methods in certain respects. The extravagances and corruption of the Lesseps' engineers and financiers, the machinations of the United States directed against Colombia in the establishment of the Panama republic, and the proposed violation of the Hay-Pauncefote treaty by the United States, in the matter of canal dues, are among the incidents of the history of the great work. On the other hand, the work of actual construction and the labours of medical science upon the canal zone have aroused general admiration, and have reflected great credit upon the American engineers and administrators. From one of the most terrible fever spots in the world, the death rate of the canal zone was reduced, in 1912, to eleven per thousand, among the part of the population immediately under American control.

The building of the canal by the United States arose largely out of necessity, in the naval economy of that country; due in a measure to the Spanish-American war; and was accentuated by the voyage of the *Oregon* from San Francisco, via the straits of Magellan, to join the

American fleet off Cuba—a voyage which was a noteworthy incident in naval annals. The American people suddenly became aware of the vital necessity for a waterway between their Atlantic and Pacific coasts. The New Panama Canal Company, the successors of the de Lesseps Company, unable to raise sufficient capital for the completion of their enterprise, were willing to sell out; and the American offer of £8,000,000 for the rights and property of the French was accepted. Negotiations were then entered into with the republic of Colombia for an extension of time for the work, and for territorial rights over the canal zone, and after long delay a treaty was signed by representatives of both countries, but was refused ratification by the senate of Colombia, who threw it out in October, 1903. Within three weeks, the municipal council of the city of Panama proclaimed the Independence of the Province as an independent republic. American warships gathered to prevent the landing of Colombian or other hostile forces; the United States recognised the new republic; and the Panama Canal convention was signed, all in that brief period. The proceedings gave rise to world-wide discussion. The Colombian senate were within their rights in refusing to ratify the treaty; but, on the other hand, Panama being very remote, by reason of lack of means of communication, from Bogotá, and the people of Panama wroth at what they regarded their loss by the throwing out of the treaty by their own national government, secession was easy.

As regards its financial side, the total cost of the canal was finally estimated at £75,000,000; the interest upon which, and the annual cost of operation constitute, it is estimated, a charge of £600,000 per annum. It has been stated, as an example, that the profits on the Suez canal are so considerable that the British government alone, by virtue of its shares, receives upwards of £1,000,000 per annum in dividends: and the fixing of the Panama rates will be a subject for judicious commercial calculation, if efficient competition is to be maintained.

As regards the construction of the canal, considerable difficulties due to rock-flow have occurred, shewing some geological instability of the district.

The twelve Latin-American countries which front upon the Pacific are likely to receive considerable stimulus from the canal, due to the greater facilities for trade with the Atlantic coast of the United States and Europe. From the northern frontier of Mexico, to the straits of Magellan, the 8,000 miles of coast contain a resourceful and valuable territory, which has been much isolated from the activities of which the Atlantic ocean is the theatre, due to the long journey round South America. At the present time the twelve countries upon the Latin-American Pacific coast, conduct a foreign trade of the annual value of £100,000,000, which is an increase of 100 per cent. in ten years. In foreshadowing the increase of this trade it must not be forgotten that vast portions of the 8,000 miles of coast are arid, in Mexico, Peru, and Chile, and cut off from the interior by the vast range of the Andes in South America, and that the natural slope and outlet for South American products is towards the Atlantic. The theme of enthusiastic writers, who hold that the commercial axis of the world will be shifted from the Atlantic to the Pacific, by reason of the Panama canal, may or may not be verified. This crowning piece of engineering work and human activity in Latin America will have its special function and value, but cannot bring about any profound changes in world politics or commerce. As earlier remarked, the tendency of the world is likely to be towards increased home production and consumption, and economic stability, rather than towards a vastly extended commerce and carrying trade, although doubtless this will increase to some degree.

The Central American republics, with small exception, have been notorious throughout their history for constant revolutionary outbreaks, and the easy repudiation of, or failure to pay their foreign debts. The land has been drenched with the blood of its unfortunate inhabitants. Never perhaps, in the history of Christianity have people of the same race and family so slaughtered each other in partisan strife as the people of these distressed states. Over and over again the inhabitants have been impoverished and debased, the land laid waste, the male population

sacrificed in civil war. The rulers who governed, misgoverned, or exploited Central America in Spanish times—often little more than rascals and murderers—were succeeded after Independence was gained by revolutionary generals and dictators, whose rivalries were the cause of the fratricidal struggles that have continued, in some cases, up to the present day. Revolutions, and war with the neighbouring states, have stunted the economic growth of these communities, and rendered futile the attempts of well-meaning administrators for social or political betterment. Enormous debts entered into by irresponsible and dishonest governments have mortgaged the future of the people, or have been followed by repudiation. The foreign debt of some of the republics is extremely heavy. No interest has been paid, and in some cases the countries are bankrupt. Yet on the other hand the Central American republics contain elements, both in their soil and their people, which under more stable political conditions might convert the Isthmian regions into important centres of population and production. The ultimate future of lands so favourably situated and naturally endowed cannot fail to be of importance. The lands are of rich and varied resources, and the population tends rapidly to increase; and with the advance of education and good government, this part of Latin America might be expected more fully to enjoy the valuable inheritance, which its geographical and climatic conditions afford.