

CRATER OF A VOLCANO.

## THE SMALLEST OF AMERICAN REPUBLICS.

BY WILLIAM ELEROY CURTIS.

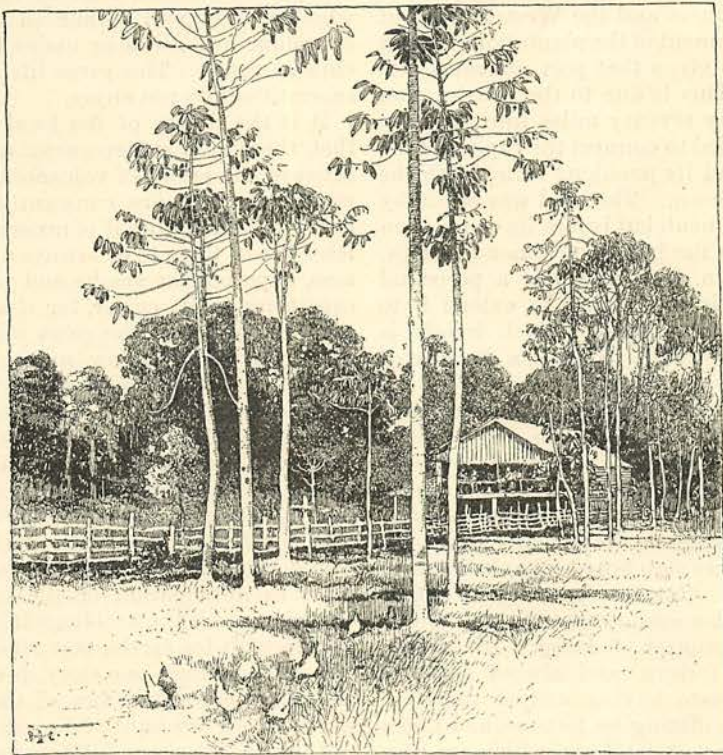
**N**EARLY four hundred years ago an old sailor coasted along the eastern shore of Costa Rica in a bark not much bigger than a canal-boat, searching for a passage to the western sea. He had a bunk built in the bows of his little vessel where he could rest his weary bones and look out upon the world he had discovered. There was little left of him but his will. He had explored the whole coast from Yukatan to Trinidad, and found it an unbroken line of continent, a contradiction of all his reasoning, a defiance of all his theories, and an impassable obstacle to the hopes he had cherished for thirty years. The geography of the New World was clear enough in his mind. The earth was a globe; there was no doubt of it; and there must be a navigable belt of water around. So he groped along, seeking the passage he felt should be there, cruising into each river, and following the

shore lines of each gulf and bay. Instinctively he hovered around the narrowest portion of the continent, where was but a slender strip of land, upheaved by some mighty convulsion, to shatter his theories and defy his dreams. It was the most pathetic picture in all history. Finally, overcome by age and infirmity, he had to abandon the attempt, and fearing to return to Spain without something to satisfy the avarice of his sovereign, surrendered the command of his little fleet to his brother Bartholomew, and wept while the carnival of murder and plunder, that was to last three centuries, was begun.

Among other points visited for barter with the Indians was a little harbor in which were islands covered with limes, and Columbus marked the place upon his chart "Puerto de Limon." To-day it is a collection of cheap wooden houses and bamboo huts, with wharves, warehouses,

and railway shops, surrounded by the most luxurious tropical vegetation, alive with birds of gorgeous plumage, venomous reptiles, and beautiful tiger-cats. Here and there about the place are patches of sugar-cane and groups of cocoa-nut trees, with the wide-spreading bread-fruit that God gave to the tropical savage as He gave rice and maize to his Northern brother, and the slender, graceful rubber-tree, whose frosty-colored mottled trunk looks like the neck of a giraffe. It scarcely casts a shadow; but the banana, with its long pale green plumes, furnishes plenty of shelter for the palm-thatched cab-

the birds, the Espiritu Santo and other rare plants being as plentiful as the daisies in a New England meadow. There is another flower, elsewhere unknown, called the "turn-sol," which in the morning is white and wax-like, resembling the camellia, but at noon has turned to the most vivid scarlet, and at sunset drops off its stem. This picture is seen from shipboard through a veil of mist—miasmatic vapor—in which the lungs of men find poison, but the air-plants food. It reaches from the breasts of the mountains to the foam-fringed shore, broken only by the fleecy clouds that hang low and motionless in the at-



RUBBER-TREES.

ins, the naked babies that play around them, and the half-dressed women who seem always to be snoozing in the sun.

Surrounding the city for a radius of threescore miles is a jungle full of patriarchal trees, stately and venerable, draped with long moss and slender vines that look like the rigging of a ship. Their limbs are covered with wonderful orchids, as bright and radiant as the plumage of

mosphere, as if they, with all the rest of nature, had sniffed the fragrance of the poppy and sunk to sleep.

But in the mornings and the evenings, when the air is cool, Limon is a busy place. Dwarfish engines with long trains of cars wind down from the interior, laden with coffee and bananas. Half-naked roustabouts file back and forth across the gang-planks loading steamers for Liver-

pool, New York, and New Orleans. The coffee is allowed to accumulate in the warehouses until the vessels come, but the bananas must not be picked till the last moment, at telegraphic notice, the morning the steamer sails. Trains of cars are sent to the side tracks of every plantation, and are loaded with the half-ripe fruit still glistening with the dew. There are often as many as fifty thousand bunches on a single steamer, representing six million bananas, but they are so perishable that more than half the cargo goes overboard before its destination is reached. The shipments of bananas from Costa Rica are something new in trade. Only a few years since all our supply came from Honduras and the West Indies, but the development of the plantations around Limon has given that port almost a monopoly. This is due to the construction of a railway seventy miles into the interior, intended to connect the capital of the country and its populous valley with the Atlantic Ocean. The road was begun by the government, but before its completion passed into the hands of Minor C. Keith, of Brooklyn, who now has a perpetual lease, and is attempting to extend it to San José, from and to which freight is now transported in ox-carts, a distance of thirty miles.

Along the track many plantations have been opened in the jungle, and produce prolifically. Many of the settlers are from the United States, from the South particularly, and it being the fashion to christen the plantations, the traveller finds over the entrances sign-boards that bear familiar names. Over the gateway to one of the finest haciendas, as they are called, is the inscription, "Johnny Reb's Last Ditch," a forlorn and almost hopeless ex-Confederate having drifted there, after much buffeting by fortune, and taken up government land, on which he now is in a fair way to make a fortune.

From the terminus of the railway the ride to the capital is over picturesque mountain passes and through deep gorges and cañons whose mighty walls never admit the sun. There are no coaches, but the ride must be made on mule-back, starting before sunrise so as to reach the city by dark. San José is found in a pretty valley between the two ranges of the Cordilleras, and surrounded by an entertaining group of volcanoes, not less than eight being in sight from any of the

house-tops. Ordinarily they behave very well, and sleep as quietly as the prophets, but now and then their slumbers are disturbed by indigestion, when they get restless, yawn a little, breathe forth fire and smoke, and vomit sulphur, lava, and ashes. One would think that people living continually in the midst of danger from earthquakes and eruptions would soon become accustomed to them; but it isn't so. The interval since the last calamity, when the city of Cartago was destroyed, has been forty years—so long that the next entertainment is expected to be one of unusual interest; and as no announcements are made in the newspapers, the people are always in a solemn state of uncertainty whether they will awake in a pile of brimstone and ashes or under their ponchos as usual. This gives life a zest the superstitious do not enjoy.

It is the theory of the local scientists that there is a subterranean connection between the group of volcanoes, and that prodigious fires are constantly burning beneath. Therefore it is necessary for at least one of them to be always doing business, to permit the smoke and gases to escape through its crater, for if all should suspend operations the gases would gather in the vaults below, and when they reached the fires would shake the earth by their explosion. It is said to be a fact that the total cessation of all the volcanoes is followed by an earthquake, and if Tierra Alba, which is active now, should cease to show its cloud of smoke by day and its pillar of fire by night, the people would leave their houses and take to the fields in anticipation of the impending calamity. All the buildings in the country are built for earthquake service, being seldom more than one story in elevation, and never more than two, of thick adobe walls, which are light and elastic.

The city has about 30,000 inhabitants—nearly one-seventh of the entire population of the republic—and seems quaint and queer to the North American traveller because of its unlikeness to anything he has seen at home. The climate is a perpetual spring. The flowers are perennial; the foliage fades and falls in autumn, dying from exhaustion, but never from frost. The days are always warm and delightful, and the nights cool and favorable to sweet rest. Winter is not so agreeable as summer, for when it isn't raining, the winds blow dust in your eyes,



THE ROAD FROM PORT LIMON TO SAN JOSE.



PEON.

and you miss the foliage and fruits. There is not such a thing as an overcoat in the place—the store-keepers do not sell them—and the natives never heard of stoves. One can look over the roofs of the town from the tower of the cathedral and not see a chimney anywhere. The mercury seldom goes above eighty, and never below sixty, Fahrenheit. The thick walls of the houses make an even temperature within, scarcely varying five degrees from one year to another, and it never rains long enough for the dampness to penetrate them. There is no architectural taste displayed, and a never-ending sameness marks the streets. It is only in the country that picturesque dwellings are found, and usually nature, not man, has made them so. The shops differ from the residences only in having wider doors and larger rooms, while the warehouses are usually abandoned monasteries or discarded dwellings.

The merchants are mostly foreigners—Frenchmen or Germans; the professional men and laborers are natives. The people are more peaceful and industrious than in the other Central American states,

and have the reputation for greater honesty, but less ingenuity, than their neighbors. They take no interest in politics, seldom vote, and do not seem to care who governs them. There has not been a revolution in Costa Rica since 1872, and that grew out of the rivalry of two English banking houses in securing a government loan. The prisons are empty; the doors of the houses are seldom locked; the people are temperate and amiable, and live at peace with one another. The national vice is indolence—*mañana* (pronounced manyannah), a word that is spoken oftener than any other in the language, and means "some other time." It is a proverb that the Costa-Rican is "always lying under the mañana-tree," and that is why the people are poor and the nation bankrupt. The resources of the country, agricultural, mineral, pastoral, and timber, are immense, but have not even been explored. Ninety per cent. of the natives have never been outside the little valley in which they were born; while the government has done little to invite immigration and encourage development. There are two railroads, both

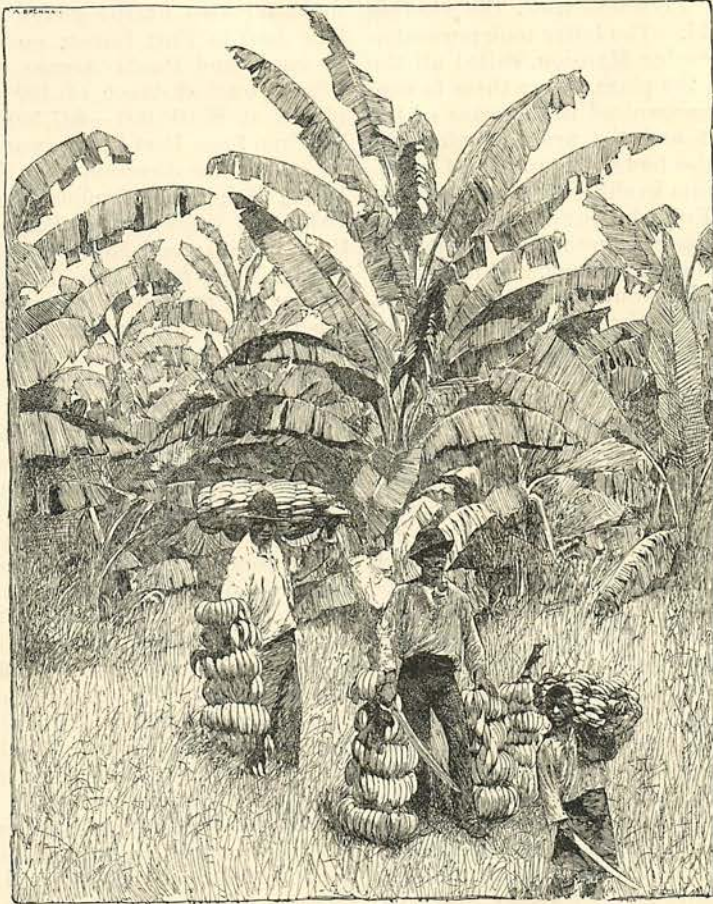
unfinished, and the money that was borrowed to build them was wasted in the most ludicrous way.

In 1872 it was decided that the future prosperity of the country demanded the construction of railways connecting the one inhabited valley with the two oceans, and the Congress ordered a survey. It was made by English engineers, who submitted profiles of the most practicable routes and estimates of the cost of construction. There being no wealth in the country, a loan was necessary, and the two banking houses, both operated by Englishmen upon English capital, sought the privilege of negotiating it. The President made his selection. The disappointed banker decided to overthrow the government and set up a new one that would cancel the contract and recognize his claims. Down on the plains of Guanacasta was a cow-boy, Tomas Guardia by name, who had won reputation as the commander of a squad of cavalry in a war with Nicaragua, and was known over all Central America for his native ability, soldierly qualities, and desperate valor.

The banker who had failed to get his

spoon into the pudding called into the conspiracy a number of disappointed politicians and discontented adherents of the existing government, and it was decided

army consisted of but 250 men, accustomed only to police duty and parades, this was not a difficult or a daring undertaking. Those of the officials who were cap-



A BANANA PLANTATION.

to send for Guardia to come to the capital and lead the revolution. By offering him pecuniary inducements, and a promise of being made commander-in-chief of the federal army if the revolution was a success, the services of the cow-boy were secured. He called together about one hundred men of his own class, made a rendezvous at a plantation just outside of the city limits, and one moonlight night rode into town, surprised the guard at the military garrison, captured the commander of the army and all his troops, took possession of the government offices, and proclaimed martial law. As the Costa-Rican

army consisted of but 250 men, accustomed only to police duty and parades, this was not a difficult or a daring undertaking. Those of the officials who were captured were locked up, and those who escaped fled to the woods and then left the country. Among the latter class was the "Constitutional President," as the regularly elected rulers in Spanish America are always called, to distinguish them from the frequent "Pronunciamento Presidents" and "Jefes de Militar," or military dictators.

Having thus dethroned the legitimate ruler, Guardia proclaimed himself Military Dictator, and called a Junta, composed of the men who had employed him to overthrow the government. They met, with great formality, and solemnly issued

a proclamation, reciting that the Constitutional President having absented himself from the country without designating any one to act in his place, it became necessary to choose a new Chief Magistrate. In the mean time the Junta declared Guardia Provisional President until the election could be held. The latter took possession of the Executive Mansion, called all the people into the plaza, swore them to support him, reorganized the bureaus of the government and the army, placing the cow-boys who had come up from Guanacasta with him in charge. The father-in-law of the English banker who suggested the revolution was announced as the candidate for the Presidency, and it was expected that he would be chosen without opposition. But General Guardia, having had a taste of power, thought more of the same would be agreeable, and passed the word quietly around among his officers that he was a candidate himself. As they constituted the judges of election and the returning board, this hint was sufficient, and when the returns began to come in after election day the banker and his co-conspirators found, to their surprise and chagrin, that their tool had become their master, and General Guardia was declared Constitutional President by a unanimous vote, only 2000 ballots having been cast by a population of 200,000.

This cow-boy, when he took his seat, could neither read nor write. He was, however, a man of extraordinary natural ability, gifted with brains and a laudable ambition. He sprang from a mixture of the Spanish and native races, had energy, shrewdness, a cool head, and a fair idea of government: in all respects the most remarkable and in many respects the greatest man the little republic ever produced. He learned rapidly, and selected the wisest and ablest men in the country for his advisers. Under his administration the nation showed greater development than it has enjoyed before or since, and, so far as lay in his power, he introduced and encouraged a spirit of moral, intellectual, and commercial advancement, established free schools and a university, overthrew the domination of the priests, sent young men abroad to study the science of government, and preserved the peace as he aided the progress of the people. If he had been as wise as he was progressive, Costa Rica would have made rapid strides toward the standard of

modern civilization, but in his mistaken zeal for the development of the country he left it bankrupt.

The two railroads were commenced by him. Under the estimates of the engineers the cost of construction and equipment for two narrow-gauge lines, from San José to Port Limon, on the Atlantic coast, and Punta Arenas, on the Pacific, a total distance of 160 miles, was placed at \$6,000,000—\$37,500 per mile. The line from Port Limon was constructed under the direction of a brother of Henry Meiggs, the famous fugitive from California (who fled to Peru, and lived there like a second Monte Cristo), but the shorter line, from San José to Punta Arenas, was attempted under the personal supervision of the President himself, who went at it in a very queer way.

All the necessary material and supplies to build and equip the road were purchased in England, sent by sailing vessels around the Horn, and landed at Punta Arenas. But instead of commencing work there, the President, who had never seen a locomotive in his life, repudiated all advice, rejected all suggestions, and ordered the whole outfit to be carried seventy-five miles over the mountains on carts and mule-back, so as to begin at the other end. This undertaking was more difficult and expensive than the construction of the road. But Guardia's extraordinary departure from the conventional was not without reason. It was based upon a mixture of motives, not only ignorance and inexperience, but pride and precaution. The conservative element of the population, the Bourbon hidalgos and the ignorant and the superstitious peons, were opposed to all departures from the past, and saw in every improvement and innovation a dangerous disturbance of existing conditions. The methods their fathers used were good enough for them. There was also a large amount of capital and labor engaged in transporting freight by ox-carts, which had always been the "common carriers" of the republic, and those interested recognized that the construction of the railway would make their cattle useless, and leave the peon carters unemployed. To resist the construction of the railroad they organized a revolution, threatening to tear up the tracks and destroy the machinery. To mollify this sentiment, and furnish employment for the cartmen to keep them out of mischief,



PICKING COFFEE.



was the controlling idea in Guardia's mind, so, with great labor and difficulty, and at an enormous expense, the locomotives and cars were taken to pieces and hauled over the mountains to San José. The first rails were laid at the capital by the President himself, with a great demonstration, and the work continued until the money was exhausted; and the government, having destroyed its credit by this remarkable proceeding, was unable to borrow more. The loan, which under ordinary circumstances would have been sufficient to complete the enterprise, was all expended before forty miles of track were laid, ten miles of which extend between Punta Arenas, the Pacific seaport, and Esparza, the next town, and thirty miles between San José and Alajuela, at the western end of the valley. This road is now operated by the government, under the direction of a native engineer, who was never outside of the boundaries of the republic, and never saw any railway but this. He is, however, a man of genius and practical ability, and if he were allowed to have his way, the road might be a paying enterprise. But the government uses it as a political machine, employs a great many superfluous and incompetent men—mostly the relatives and dependents of influential politicians—carries freight and passengers on credit, and does many other foolish things that make profits impossible, and cause a large deficiency to be made up by taxation each year. On every train of three cars, one for baggage and two for passengers, are thirteen men. First a manager or conductor who has general supervision, a locomotive engineer and stoker, two ticket takers, two brakemen for each car, and two men to handle baggage and express packages—all of them being arrayed in the most resplendent uniforms, the conductor having the appearance of a major-general on dress parade. Freight trains are run upon the same system and at a similar expense. Shippers are allowed thirty and sixty days after the goods are delivered to pay their freight charges, and passengers who are known to the station agents can get tickets on credit and have the bill sent them upon their return—a concession to a public sentiment that justifies the postponement of everything until to-morrow—the *mañana* policy that keeps the nation poor.

Thousands of ox-carts are still employed

between the towns of Esparza and Alajuela, the termini of the railway, carrying freight over the mountains, and it usually takes a week for them to make the journey of thirty-five miles, often longer, for on religious festivals, which occur with surprising frequency, all the transportation business is suspended. A traveller who intends to take a steamer at Punta Arenas must send his baggage on a week in advance. He leaves the train at Alajuela, mounts a mule, rides over the mountain to the town of Atenas, where he spends the night. The next morning at daybreak he resumes his journey, and rides fifteen miles to San Mateo, breakfasts at eleven, takes his siesta in a hammock until four or five in the afternoon, then mounting his mule again, covers the ten miles to Esparza by sunset, where he dines and spends the night, usually remaining there, to avoid the heat of Punta Arenas, until a few hours before the steamer leaves; and then, if the ox-carts have come with his baggage, makes the rest of his trip by rail.

The journey is not an unpleasant one. The scenery is wild and picturesque. The roads are usually good, except in the dry season, when they become very dusty, and after heavy rains, when the mud is deep. But under the tropic sun and in the dry air moisture evaporates rapidly, and in six hours after a rainfall the roads are hard and good. The uncertainty as to whether his trunks will arrive in time makes the inexperienced traveller nervous. The Costa-Rican cartmen are the most irresponsible and indifferent beings on earth. They travel in long caravans or processions, often with two or three hundred teams in a line. When one chooses to stop, or meets with an accident, all the rest wait for him if it wastes a week. None will start until each of his companions is ready, and sometimes the road is blocked for miles, awaiting the repair of some damage. The oxen are large white patient beasts, and are yoked by the horns, and not by the neck, as in modern style, lashings of raw cowhide being used to make them fast. They wear the yokes continually. The union is as permanent as matrimony in a land where divorce laws are unknown. The cartmen are as courteous as they are indifferent. They always lift their hats to a *caballero* as he passes them, and say, "May the Virgin guard you on your journey!" Thousands of dollars in gold are often intrusted

to them, and never was a penny lost. A banker of San José told me that he usually received \$30,000 in coin each week during coffee season by these ox-carts, and considered it safer than if he carried it himself, although the caravan stands in the open air by the road-side every night. Highway robbery is unknown, and the cartmen, with their wages of thirty cents a day, would not know what use to make

At sunset the oxen are released from their burdens at the nearest *tambo*, or resting-place, upon the way, and are kept overnight in sheds provided for them. At these places are drinking and gambling booths, with usually a number of dissolute women to tempt and entertain the cartmen. The evenings are spent in carousal, in dancing, and singing the peculiar native songs to the accompaniment of the



THE MARIMBA.

of the money if they should steal it. Nevertheless they always feel at liberty to rob the traveller of the straps on his trunks, and no piece of baggage ever arrives at its destination so protected unless the strap is securely nailed; and then it is usually cut to pieces by the cartmen as revenge for being deprived of what they consider their perquisite.

“marimba,” the national instrument, which is, I believe, found in no other land.

The “marimba” is constructed of twenty-one pieces of split bamboo of graded lengths, strung upon two bars of the same wood according to harmonic sequence, thus furnishing three octaves. Underneath each strip of bamboo is a gourd, strung upon a wire, which takes the place

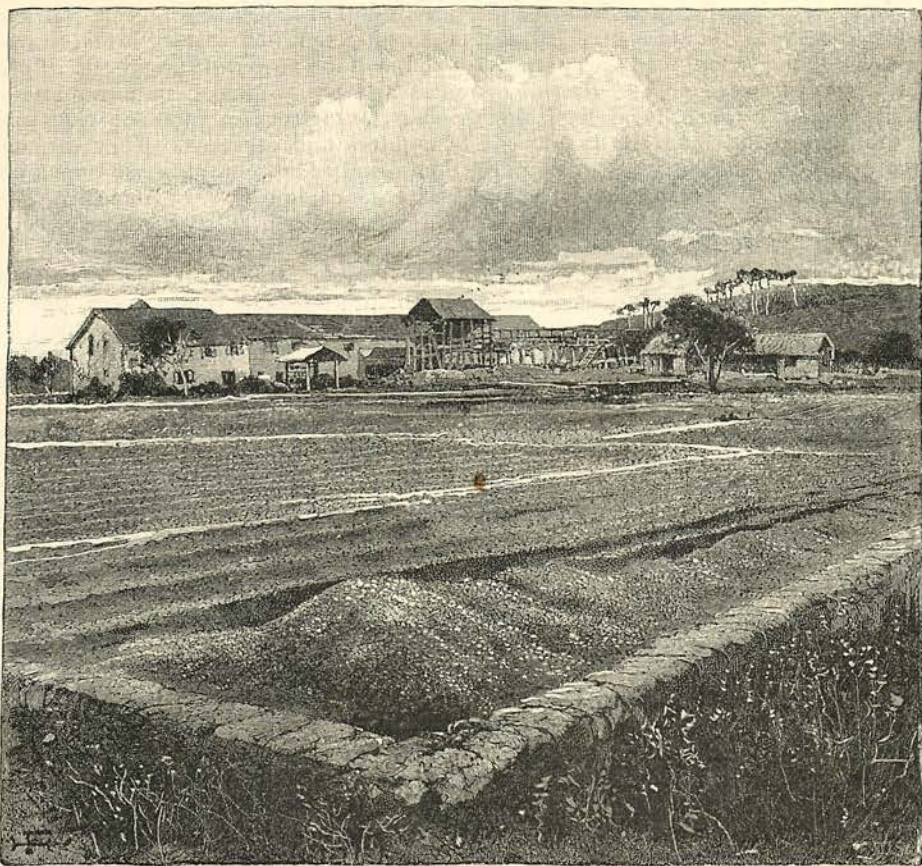
of a sounding-board, and adds strength and sweetness to the tones. The performer takes the instrument upon his knees and strikes the bamboo strips with little hammers of padded leather, usually taking two between the fingers of each hand, so as to strike a chord of four notes, which he does with great dexterity. I have seen men play with three hammers in each hand, and use them as rapidly and skillfully as a pianist touches his keys. The tones of the "marimba" resemble those of the xylophone, which has recently become so popular, except that they are louder and more resonant. The instrument is peculiarly adapted to the native airs, which are plaintive but melodious. At all of the tambos where the cartmen stop "marimbas" are kept, and in every caravan are those who can handle them skilfully. Tourists generally travel in the cool hours of the morning and evening to avoid the blistering sun, and it is a welcome diversion to stop at the *bodegas* to listen to the songs of the cartmen, and watch them dancing with dark-eyed, bare-footed señoritas.

The women of the lower classes do not wear either shoes or sandals, but go bare-footed from infancy to old age; yet their feet are always small and shapely, and look very pretty under the short skirts that reach just below the knees. The native girls are comely and coquettish in the national dress, which consists of nothing but a skirt and a chemise of white cotton, with a brilliantly colored scarf, or "reboza," as they call it, thrown over their heads and shoulders, and serving the double purpose of a shawl and bonnet. The features of the women are small and even, and their teeth are perfect. Their forms, untrammelled by skirts and corsets, are slender and supple in girlhood, and the scanty garments, sleeveless, and reaching only from the shoulders to the knees, disclose every outline of their figures, and are worn without a suggestion of immodesty. Such a costume in the United States would call for police interference; but one soon becomes accustomed to bare arms and necks and legs, and learns that these innocent creatures are quite as jealous of their chastity as their sisters in the land where the standard of civilization forbids the disclosure of personal charms outside the ball-room or the bathing beach. The ladies of the aristocracy imitate the Paris-

ian fashions, except that hats and bonnets are almost unknown. They seldom leave their homes except to go to mass, and at the entrance of a church every head must be uncovered. There is not a millinery store in the land. Every woman wears a "reboza" of a texture suitable to her rank and wealth, and as it is not considered proper to expose their faces in public, the scarf is generally drawn over the features so as to conceal all but their ravishing eyes. And it is well that this is so, for they plaster their faces with a composition of magnesia and the whites of eggs that gives them a ghastly appearance, and effectually conceals, as it ultimately destroys, the freshness and purity of their complexions. This stuff is renewed at frequent intervals, and is never washed off. There is a popular prejudice against bathing. A man who has been on a journey will not wash the dust off his face for several days after arrival, particularly if he has come from a lower to a higher altitude, as it is believed that the opening of the pores of the skin is certain to bring on a fever.

While passing over a dusty road upon a hot, sultry day I dismounted at a foaming brook, rolled up my sleeves, and commenced to bathe my head and face and arms. The guide who was with me cried "Caramba!" in astonishment, and tried to pull me away. When I demanded an explanation of his extraordinary behavior he begged me for the love of the Virgin not to wash my face, for I would certainly come down with the fever the next day. I smiled at this remonstrance, and gave myself a refreshing bath, while he looked on as solemnly as if I intended to commit suicide. For an hour after, as we travelled on, he muttered prayers to the Virgin and his patron saint to protect me from the fever, and to-day, no doubt, believes that I was saved by the interposition of Divine power in answer to his petitions. He afterward reproached me for not having made a vow because of my remarkable deliverance.

However, if anybody supposes that the inhabitants of the little republic are uncouth, unmannerly, or uneducated, he makes a great mistake. They are quite up to our standard of intelligence, and although education is not so universal as in this country, the leading families of Costa Rica are as cultivated as our own. They surpass us in social graces, in con-



COFFEE-DRYING.

versational powers, in linguistic and other accomplishments. They have keener perceptions than we, are more carefully observant of the nicer proprieties, can usually speak one or two languages beyond their own fluently, and have a cultivated taste for music and the arts. No Costa-Rican lady or gentleman is ever embarrassed; they always know how to do and say the proper thing, and while in many cases their sympathetic interest in your welfare may be only skin-deep, and their affectionate phrases insincere, they are nevertheless the most hospitable of hosts and the most charming of companions. In commerce as well as in society this deportment is universal; in their stores and offices they are as polite as in their parlors, and the same manners are found in every caste. No laborer ever passes a lady in the street without lifting his hat; every gentleman is respectfully

saluted, whether he be a stranger or an acquaintance, and in the rural districts whoever you meet says, "May the Virgin prosper you!" or "May Heaven smile upon your errand!" or "May your patron saint protect you from all harm!" He may not care a straw whether you reach the end of your journey or not, and may not have any more regard for your welfare than the fleas on his coat, and if you ask him how far it is to the next place he will tell you a falsehood; but he recognizes and practises the beautiful custom of the country, and says, "God be with you!" as if he intended it as a blessing.

The government supports a good university at San José, under the direction of Dr. Juan F. Ferras, and a system of free graded schools, managed by the Minister of Education, who is a member of the cabinet. Education is compulsory,

the law requiring the attendance of all children between the ages of eight and fourteen; and it is enforced, except in the sparsely settled districts where the schools are infrequent. Those who send their children to private schools, or do not send them at all, are subject to a heavy fine, which goes into the school fund. There is also a poll-tax for the support of the educational system. The schools are entirely free from sectarian influences. In fact, both the Minister of Education and the Director of the University belong to the German school of materialists, toward which all men of education in these countries drift when they leave the Mother Church. There is no other place for them to go. The Protestants in San José have a little chapel where the Church of England service is recited, hymns are sung, and usually Sabbath mornings a selected sermon from some published volume is read by a lay member; but the flock is too small to support a pastor, and none of the missionary societies in England or America appear to care to enter the field. During the administration of President Guardia there was a constitutional amendment adopted separating the Church and the state. The monks and nuns were expelled from the country, the monasteries and nunneries confiscated, and by legislation the priests were deprived of much of their power and perquisites. In 1884, a few months before his death, the late President Fernandez expelled the Archbishop from the country. The latter went to him demanding a voice in the management of the university, and a share of the public funds for the use of the Catholic theological seminary. The controversy was heated, and when the Archbishop departed from the Presidential mansion he left the curse of Rome behind him. Fernandez, hearing that his Grace was talking about a revolution, sent him a passport and a file of soldiers to escort him out of the country, to which he has not been allowed to return.

The confessional is open and public by law, and the priests are forbidden to wear their vestments in the streets. But these statutes are not enforced, and, regardless of the offensive attitude of the government, the devotion of the masses to the Church is quite as marked as in any of the Catholic countries. The intelligent families, however, are gradually growing

unmindful of their ancestral religion, and the next generation will see a more rapid decline of the power of the priests. Business and professional men never attend mass, leaving that duty to their wives and daughters and servants. They are seldom seen inside a church, except upon occasions of ceremony, or at funerals. But the women invariably attend mass each morning.

A familiar sight in Costa Rica is a death procession. When some one is dying the friends send for a priest to shrive him. The latter comes, not silently and solemnly, a minister of grace and consolation, but accompanied by a brass band, if the family are rich enough to pay for it (the priest receiving a liberal commission on the business), or, if they are poor, by a number of boys ringing bells and chanting hymns. Behind the band or bell-boys are two acolytes, one bearing a crucifix and the other swinging an incense urn. Then follows the priest in a wooden box or chair, covered by a canopy, and carried by four men wearing the sacramental vestments, and holding in his hand, covered with a napkin, the Host—the emblem of the body of Christ. People upon the streets kneel as the procession passes, and then follow it. Reaching the house of the dying, the band or bell-ringers stand outside, making all the disturbance they can, while the priest, followed by a motley rabble, enters the death-chamber, administers the sacrament, and confesses the dying soul. Then the procession returns to the church as it came. Going and coming and while at the house the band plays or the bells are rung constantly, and every man, woman, and child within hearing fall upon their knees, whether in the street or at their labor, and breathe a prayer for the repose of the departing spirit.

Funerals are occasions of great ceremony. Notices, or *avisos*, as they are called, are printed and posted upon all of the dead-walls, like announcements of an auction or an opera, and printed invitations are sent to all the acquaintances of the deceased. The priests charge a large fee for attendance, proportionate to the means of the family, and when they are poor it is common for some one to solicit contributions to pay it. The spectacle of a beggar sitting at a street corner asking alms to pay the burial fee of his wife or child is a very common one, and

quite as often one can see a father carrying in his arms to the cemetery the coffin of a little one, not being able to pay for a priest and a carriage too.

The number of illegitimate births in the country is accounted for, not so much by a low state of morals, as by the enormous fees exacted by the priests for performing marriage ceremonies. Unfortunately the government has not yet established the civil rite, as is the case in several of the Spanish American states. It takes all a peon can earn in three months to pay the priest that officiates at his nuptials.

The government of Costa Rica consists of a President, two Vice-Presidents, who are named by the President, and are called Designado Primero and Designado Segundo (the first and second designated). They have authority to act in the place of the President in case of his absence from the seat of government, or in the event of his death or disability, and he is responsible for their official conduct.

There is a Congress, consisting of a Senate of twelve members and a Chamber of Deputies of twenty-four, elected biennially, as in the United States. Also a Council of six men, selected from the Congress by the President, who act as a sort of cabinet and Supreme Court combined. They are continually in session, have power to review the decisions of the courts, to reverse or affirm them, to issue decrees which have the force of law until the next session of the Congress, to audit the accounts of the Treasury, and perform various other acts. This Council is confirmed by the Congress, and is supposed to act as a check upon the President and the judiciary. The President has a cabinet of two members, appointed by himself, and they are usually the two Vice-Presidents, or Designados. To one he will assign the duty of looking after foreign affairs and the finances of the government, while the oth-



DON BERNARDO DE SOTO, PRESIDENT OF COSTA RICA.

er will have the army, the educational system, and other internal affairs to manage.

The successor of the famous cow-boy President, Guardia, was his brother-in-law, General Prospero Fernandez, one of his lieutenants in the revolution by which he came into power, and who was made commander-in-chief of the army of 250 men when Guardia took the Executive chair. He was a man of fine appearance, but of dull and slow mental powers, spending most of his time upon his hacienda, or plantation, and leaving the affairs of the state to his secretaries, Don Jesus Maria Castro and Don Bernardo de Soto. Fernandez died before the expiration of his term, in the spring of 1885, and was succeeded by De Soto, a young man of whom much is expected. He was a pet and protégé of the great Guardia, and after graduating at the University of San José was sent to Europe to complete his education, and by a study of the world as well as books to qualify himself to succeed his patron in the Presidential chair. Guardia died, however, before De Soto had reached the age that made him el-

igible to the Presidency, and Fernandez stepped in to fill the interim. He conscientiously acted as a sort of trustee or executor of Guardia's will, and made the young man, then only twenty-seven, his Minister of War, Education, and Public Works. When Fernandez died De Soto assumed the Presidency, just as if he had inherited a crown, there being no other candidate. The President has just passed his thirtieth birthday, and commands the respect and confidence of the people.

Costa Rica was the first discovered of all the countries on this continent, but of its resources the least is known. The Cordilleras of the Andes pass through the republic from the southeast to the northwest. South of Cartago they divide into two ranges, one running up the Pacific coast, and the other tending toward the Atlantic until it is broken off at Lake Nicaragua. These ranges not only enclose rich valleys, in the chief of which is San José, but along their slopes on either side are extensive tracts of land already cleared and abounding in fertility. Along the coast are large areas of jungle and plains of more or less extent, only slightly developed because of the malarious atmosphere. The Pacific coast is healthier and more thickly settled. A large prairie covers the northern part of the republic, upon which many cattle are grazed, and it extends over the Nicaragua boundary. In the northeastern corner is an extensive forest, inhabited by bands of roaming Indians, and full of the most valuable timber.

What the country needs is enterprise and capital, and these it must secure by immigration. The population has increased somewhat during the last half-century, but entirely from natural causes, as more people have moved away than have come in to settle. No attempt has been made by the government to attract immigrants until recently, for years ago the conservative element of the population were opposed to inviting strangers into their midst. This sentiment has, however, died out, and there is an increasing desire to do something to call in capital and labor.

The staple products of the country are coffee, corn, sugar, cocoa, bananas, and other tropical fruits, but only coffee and bananas are exported in any quantity. The increase in the coffee crop has been very large, the product in 1850 being 14,000,000 pounds, while in 1884 it was over 40,000,000. The quality is said to be superior to that grown elsewhere, and the yield greater in proportion to the number of trees. England and France take the greater share of the crop, the exports to the United States reaching only 8,500,000 pounds in 1884. The land is practically free, for the government sells it at a nominal price per acre, and allows long time for payment. Quite a number of settlers from the United States and the West Indies have come in recently and located on the line of the eastern road, which is to connect Port Limon, on the Atlantic, with the interior.

### TO A MOST COMELY LADY.

BY LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY.

**Y**OUR presence floods the room with wiles, with grace and soft heart-melting glory;  
Like thistle-down along the aisles float rumors of your olden story.

They say your lip is scarce sincere; that from love's arm ambition won you;  
They say the King was sad the year death's keen requitals fell upon you.

What odds? I am your friend, elate, howe'er the bubbling gossip plashes;  
But here is grievous smart and great, if your fair flesh be dust and ashes!

My pulses at your beauty sing, and urge the world, an evil donor,  
To bring you blame of anything before this last, this strange dishonor.

I hear them call you pitiless, shrewd, poison-sweet; nor yet resent it:  
But—"dead"? Nay, that, my Marchioness, I'll not believe! Let them repent it,

While hour by hour their skeptic grows your dupe, O beauty flushed and stirring!  
And with Vandycck for voucher, knows no art on earth can prove him erring.