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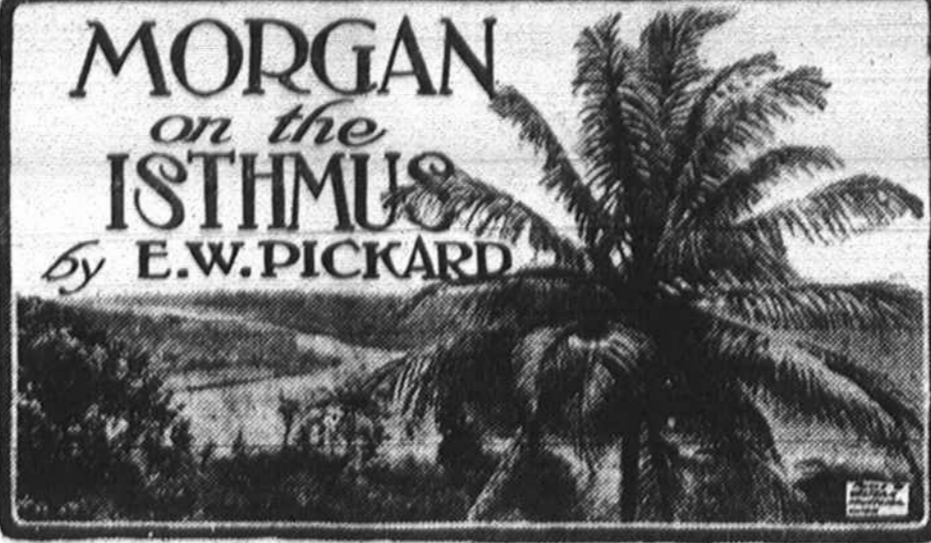
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Panama, R. P.—It is not given to many men to destroy a city so utterly that it is never rebuilt. That is what Capt. John Morgan, the master buccaneer, did in 1871, when he led his band of cutthroats down from the hills upon Panama. After he had finished with that big, flourishing city there was so little left of it that the Spanish moved five miles west along the coast and there built a new Panama—the Panama we know today.

The story of Morgan's justly famous exploit, often told, never grows stale. It is a wonderful story of desperate bravery, endurance, suffering and ruthless cruelty, and as John Esquemeling was the first to relate it in detail, so he has been the best. Howard Pyle has well said: "In the case of the Esquemeling history, it should be decidedly hands off. One touch of the modern brush would destroy the whole tone of dim colors of the past made misty by the lapse of time."

So I wish I had space to quote the entire story of Morgan and Panama as Esquemeling, who was one of the band, tells it. Some of it, at least, must be given in his quaint language, beginning with the capture by a part of Morgan's fleet of Fort San Lorenzo at the mouth of the Chagres river. Says Esquemeling:

"Captain Brodely being made commander, in three days after his departure (from St. Catherine's) arrived in sight of the said castle of Chagre, by the Spaniards called St. Lawrence. This castle is built on a high mountain at the entry of the river, surrounded by strong palisades, or wooden walls, filled with earth, which secures them as well as the best wall of stone or brick. The top of this mountain is, in a manner, divided into two parts, between which is a ditch thirty feet deep. The castle hath but one entry, and that by a drawbridge over this ditch. To the land it has four bastions, and to the sea two more. The south part is totally inaccessible, through the cragginess of the mountain. The north is surrounded by the river, which here is very broad. At the foot of the castle, or rather mountain, is a strong fort, with eight great guns, commanding the entry of the river. Not much lower are two other batteries, each of six pieces, to defend likewise the mouth of the river.

"No sooner had the Spaniards perceived the pirates, but they fired incessantly at them with the biggest of their guns. They came to an anchor in a small port about a league from the castle. Next morning, very early, they went ashore and marched through the woods to attack the castle on that side. This march lasted till two of the clock in the afternoon, before they could reach the castle, by reason of the difficulties of the way, and its mire and dirt; and though their guides served them very exactly, yet they came so nigh the castle at first that they lost many of their men by its shot, they being in an open place without covert."

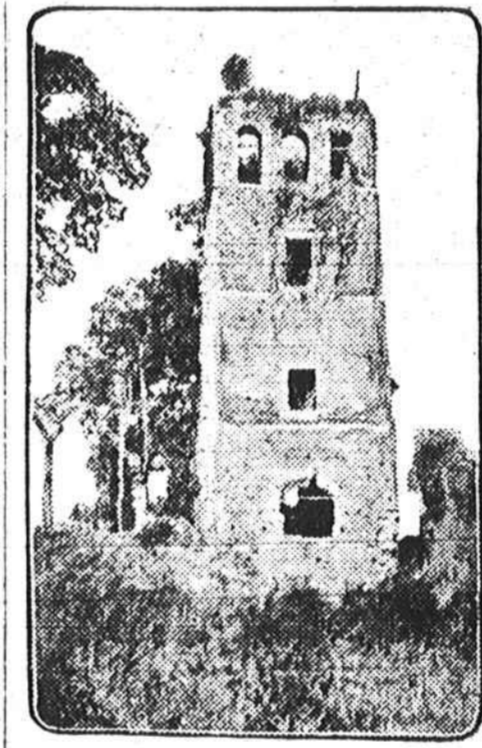
The pirates bravely assaulted the castle, sword in one hand and fireball in the other, but were repulsed with heavy loss. Renewing the attack under cover of darkness, "there happened a very remarkable accident which occasioned their victory. One of the pirates being wounded with an arrow in his back, which pierced his body through, he pulled it out boldly at the side of his breast, and winding a little cotton about it, he put it into his musket, and shot it back to the castle, but the cotton being kindled by the powder, fired two or three houses in the castle, being thatched with palm leaves, which the Spaniards perceived not so soon as was necessary; for this fire meeting with a parcel of powder, blew it up, thereby causing great ruin, and no less consternation to the Spaniards, who were not able to put a stop to it."

Full advantage was taken of this by the buccaneers, and they set fire to the palings and gained a foothold within them, despite "many flaming pots full of combustible matter, and odious smells, which destroyed many of the English." All next morning the fight raged, but about noon the English gained a breach through which they fought their way to the heart of the castle. "The Spaniards who remained alive cast themselves down from the castle into the sea, choosing rather to die thus (few or none surviving the fall) than to ask quarter for their lives. The governor himself retreated to the corps de guard, before which were placed two pieces of cannon; here he still defended himself, not demanding any quarter, till he was killed with a musket shot in the head."

In a few days Captain Morgan arrived with the rest of his fleet and organized the expedition against Panama. He took his men by boat on the Chagres as far as Cruces, now a village not two miles from the canal, and there landed them for the overland march. Leaving 160 men with the

boats, he started through the jungle with about a thousand. For days they struggled on, suffering intensely for lack of food, for the Spaniards and Indians had destroyed the villages and crops along the way. At one point they found a number of leathern bags, and "made a huge banquet" upon them. At another a few sacks of meal, some plantains and several jars of wine were discovered in a cave. On the sixth day after leaving Cruces "ascending a high mountain, they discovered the South sea. This happy sight, as if it were the end of their labors, caused infinite joy among them." Then they came to a vale, where they found plenty of cattle, and their period of starvation came to an end with a monstrous feast. "Cutting the flesh into convenient pieces or gobbets, they threw them into the fire and, half carbonaded or roasted, they devoured them, with incredible haste and appetite; such was their hunger, as they more resembled cannibals than Europeans; the blood many times running down their beards to their waists."

That evening the pirate band came in sight of Panama, and pitched their camp, which was ineffectually bombarded all night by the guns of the city. Next day Captain Morgan led his thousand bold men down the hillside and confronted the forces of the governor of Panama, consisting of two squadrons of horse, four regiments of foot and a huge number of wild bulls driven by Indians. The Spaniards began the battle, but their horse were useless, owing to the softness of the ground. The foot were held in check by the fire of the pirates, so the wild bulls were driven forward but, frightened by the noise of the conflict, the animals ran away. After two hours of fighting the surviving Spaniards fled within the city walls. Six hundred of their comrades lay dead upon the field. Morgan at once attacked



the city, and though the defense was desperate, many of the pirates being killed, Panama fell within three hours. What Morgan did to the devoted inhabitants in the effort to find all their hidden treasure is too horrible to relate. Soon after the capture of the city fire broke out in many quarters, and Esquemeling says the conflagration was started by Morgan, though he laid the blame on the Spaniards. Anyway, as the houses were almost all built of cedar, the entire city was soon consumed by flames. Some three weeks later "Captain Morgan departed from Panama, or rather from the place where the city of Panama stood; of the spoils whereof he carried away with him 175 beasts of carriage laden with silver, gold and other precious things, besides about six hundred prisoners, men, women, children and slaves."

Of old Panama naught remains but the ruins of the cathedral, the tower of St. Stanislaus' church and the fragments of a few other stone and brick structures. For more than two centuries they have been buried in the jungle, but are now being brought to view by the efforts of the Panama government, which is having the undergrowth cleared away from the ruins.

The visitor to the Isthmus should not fail to make the trip down the Chagres from Gatun to the sea, reversing Morgan's route. The scenery along the river is beautiful, and the great stretch of ocean beach—clean, hard green and purple sand over which immense breakers roll—is ideal for bathing.

The massive walls of Fort San Lorenzo still stand on the hill at the mouth of the Chagres, and the heaps of cannon balls left by the Spaniards are yet there. In the distance the castle of the pirates is visible on the hillside.

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