

TISINGAL: The Lost Mine of Panama

By Charles Melville Brown

IT IS not improbable that during the dry season of 1910 some trace of the once famous mine of "Tisingal" will be found, as by Law Third of January 2, 1909, passed by the national assembly of Panama, the immense savannas and selvas of the Pacific slope of Panama are thrown open to acquisition on very favorable terms and already a number of Americans, especially of the Canal Zone, have taken up land there.

In the westernmost part of Panama, bordering on Costa Rica, lies the province of Chiriqui, the richest of the seven provinces constituting the Republic of Panama. Its north coast is washed by the Caribbean sea, known to the Spanish conquerors as the North sea, while the island-dotted Pacific, or South sea, washes its southern shores. Twenty miles from the Atlantic side and 40 miles from the Pacific is the highest crater of the "Volcan de Chiriqui" or Chiriqui volcano, rising nearly 12,000 feet above sea level. Two other craters of lesser height rise on either side of the main crater; then a sheer drop of several thousand feet of sulphur-coated rock to the highest signs of vegetation. Below this on the Pacific slopes stretch beautiful rolling llanos or steppes, lower and lower, on down to the palm-fringed coast line.

Somewhere on these immense slopes lies the lost mine of the Indians, "Tisingal," known to and worked by the early Spanish settlers, who changed its name to "La Estrella," or Mine of the Star.

During the year 1833-34, in going through the archives at Cartago, Costa Rica, some official documents pertaining to this mine were found and permission was obtained from the Costa Rican government for their publication. Shortly thereafter a company was formed in Cartago to send out exploring parties, and although considerable time and money were wasted and several lives lost in an endeavor to locate this mine, no indications of its whereabouts were found.

Reprints of some of the documents referred to have come into the hands of the writer, in which is preserved the old style Spanish in which they were originally written during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Translations of these papers have been made and the information contained therein summarized, to which have been added data obtained through a personal acquaintance with the country described. During last year an unsuccessful attempt was made by the writer to ascend the highest crater of the Chiriqui volcano for the purpose of verifying certain information purported to have been secured in the year 1605 from this point and pertaining to the Tisingal mine. During the dry season of this year a second attempt will probably be made.

Among the documents consulted is one that, literally translated, reads as follows:

"Within the limits of the department of Chiriqui, contiguous to the Republic of Costa Rica, exist places rich in gold, known by the names of Tisingal, Quebrada Ancha, Quebrada de Oro and others quite important. The first of these places was explored some time ago by a Spanish colony, which in the year 1601 founded the city of Concepcion de la Estrella, near this mine of great wealth. The excessive stinginess of the conquerors reduced the Indians of the locality to the condition of slaves, they being forced by the Spanish to work, mining the gold of the Tisingal. These Indians became tired of the excessive work and had treatment and became desperate. In the year 1611 they revolted against their oppressors and exterminated them; but other Spaniards at the place of the mutiny again compelled the Indians to resume the working of the mine and made harder for them their state of slavery. This almost eliminated the Indians from this stretch of country.

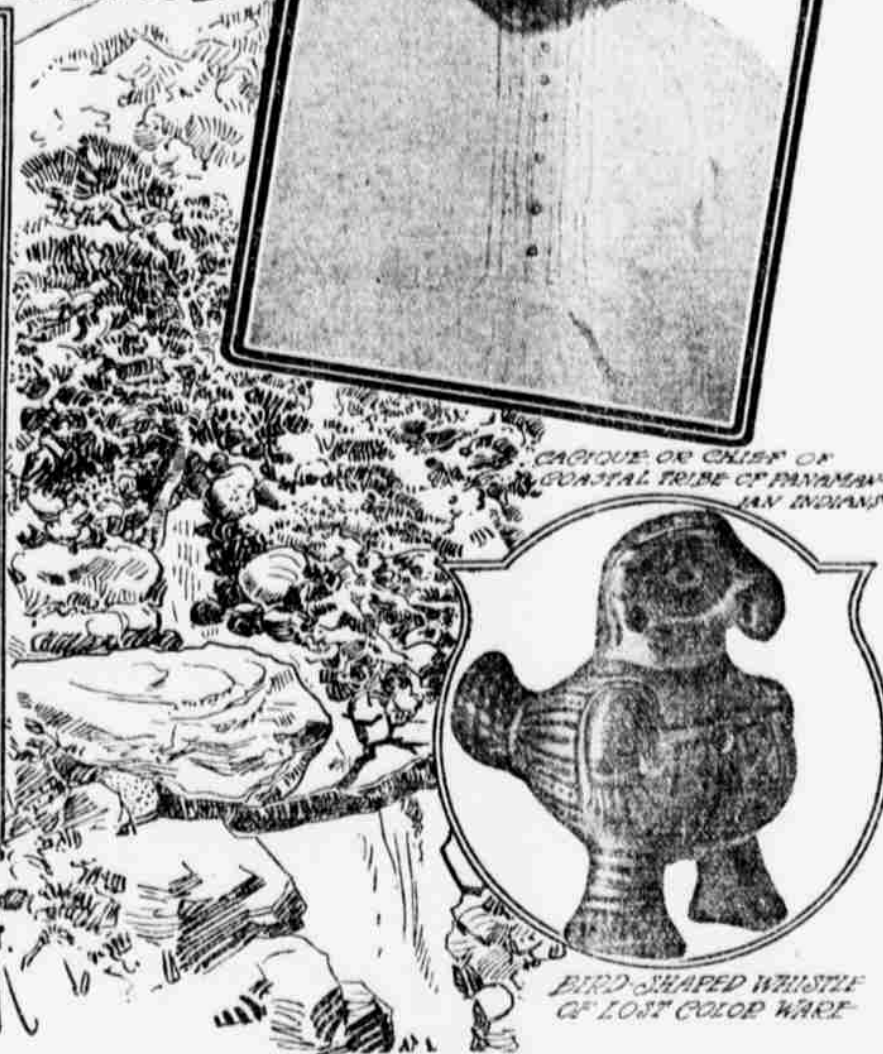
"On the twenty-eighth of September, some years after these happenings, the Indians returned, and without pity or consideration took the life of every foreigner living in the country; and not only this, but, carrying stones from distant localities, they covered up and destroyed all traces of the workings of the mines, and they also razed all houses and churches belonging to the Spaniards. The only traces remaining of these ancient buildings today are the foundations of the church and a bell belonging to it.

"At last the news of the new rebellion reached Cartago in Costa Rica, where immediate preparations were made for revenge. It is known that at the beginning of the year 1710 the government at Cartago sent 200 men by the way of Boruca and Tuis to San Jose Cabecar, a town to the east about 15 leagues from Concepcion. This expedition took 500 Indians of both sexes prisoners and reduced them to a state of slavery, and as such assigned them to the inhabitants around about Cartago upon their return to that place. These prisoners and all other Indians they met along the way were massacred shortly thereafter.

"From that time all Indians living in the mountains in all directions up to a distance of 70 leagues turned bitter enemies of the foreigners and up to a few years ago would have nothing to do with the white races. Due to these events all traces of the villages of Turrialba, Tuis, Atirro, San Jose Cabecar and other places that lay on the route to Concepcion de la Estrella and Tisingal were lost and the trails of communication with the mines were covered with brush and completely destroyed, so that after 40 years in Cartago no knowledge was to be obtained as to the locality of the Estrella and practically no person living knew or had seen the mines at



PANAMANIAN INDIANS IN NATIVE CANOE



BIRD-SHAPED WHISTLE OF LOST COLOR WARE



MAP OF THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA

Tisingal.

"Due to the hostility and cruelty of the Indians, together with the dangers of the trails and the unhealthiness of the country, people gradually began to forget about these mines and whoever spoke of making an expedition for the purpose of discovering these mines was considered to be committing suicide. . . ."

The slopes of the Chiriqui volcano are traversed by numerous rivers, in many places not more than a mile apart—wild, rushing mountain torrents that form navigable rivers near the coast, many of which are constantly changing their courses. Along the banks of these rivers the Spaniards found the richest Indian villages. The Indians extracted gold from the sands of many of these rivers and worked it into weird figures representing alligators, frogs, birds, turtles, fish, snakes, bells, plates, images and others, which it was the custom to bury with the owners thereof in the rock-walled tombs in which their dead were interred.

Among the documents referred to are found the records of an expedition that set out from the city of Garci-Munoz in Costa Rica, in the year 1563, for Quepo, Couto, Boruca and the valley of Guaymi. An extract from this document literally translated reads as follows:

"Going up the Guaymi valley one arrives at a place called Couto, where much gold has been found, and the natives have it worked into all forms; and on being questioned as to where they obtained it they stated that they had gotten it in very big grains from a river four days' journey from that place, in the dominion of an Indian cacique called Ucarac. Not one day's march from Couto lies the village of Turrucaca, the inhabitants of which stated that they had obtained gold in the same river as the inhabitants of Couto. The provinces of Couto and Turrucaca lie 50 leagues from the city of Garci-Munoz at the beginning of the valley of Guaymi, 10 leagues from the South sea in front of the Golfo Dulce. It is known that following up the Guaymi valley to the mountains toward the north there are to be found numerous villages, such as Quepo, Couto, Boruca, Act, Uriaba, Xarixaba, Yabo, Duba, Cabara, Barerto, Tabicte, Arabora, Cabangara, Quecabangara. . . ."

The following year, 1564, another expedition set out from Cartago, Costa Rica, to explore this same country, and the chronicler, writing of their discoveries, says:

"Crossing the province of Ara and passing the valley of Coaca, we arrived in the province of Terbi and made our camp in the village of Co-curu, which lies in the valley of Duy. And the Indians having brought to the leader a great quantity of gold, he sent the slaves to explore, and they brought back such large pieces that the leader himself decided to explore. We then arrived at a river called La Estrella, which is the principal one as to the quantity of gold found. . . ."

from Cartago the expedition returned to the province of Terbi, to the village of Cururu, in the valley of the Duy (Indian name for Quequexque); and from there we went to the big river which had already been named Rio de la Estrella."

Since the sixteenth century the land bordering the Sixiela river, which lies to the north of the Chiriqui volcano and which empties into the Caribbean sea, had been in dispute between the governments of Costa Rica and that of Panama. At that time it was claimed by both the governor of Costa Rica and the governor of Veraguas. The province of Chiriqui adjoins Sixiela and formerly formed part of the province of Veraguas, now one of the seven provinces of Panama. After the independence of Panama in 1903 this dispute again arose, due, to a great extent, to changes in the names of many of the rivers of this part of the two countries, some of which still retain their Indian names, while others have been renamed. The question was finally submitted to President Fallieres of France for arbitration and an entirely new boundary line was traced in accordance with his findings.

The Indians inhabiting the country lying near

the border line of Costa Rica and Chiriqui have at ways been hostile and in several instances have risen against the whites and massacred them. The Talamanca Indians, who still inhabit these parts, were especially bellicose.

The existence of the "Tisingal" mine has never been doubted, nor is it considered the product of the fertile imagination of the natives of Chiriqui. At Cana, in the province of Panama, at the present time there is being operated a gold mine formerly worked by the Spaniards. Several years ago, while blasting in one of the galleries of the Cana mine an aperture was made into what proved to be buried the remains of a gold mine worked several centuries ago. Leather buckets, with straps that fit around the forehead and around the shoulders of the mine workers and instruments of steel were found in a good state of preservation. The mouth of this mine had been so completely hidden that mining operations had been carried on for years almost paralleling the entrance shaft, without the engineers suspecting its proximity. Records of the old Cana mine are in existence, but its exact location had never been fixed before.

Gold can be found in almost all the rivers of Chiriqui. In 1859 there were discovered the first Indian graves, from which were taken gold ornaments, stone figures, arrow points, etc. Since this time there have been found in Chiriqui hundreds of these Indian graves, known to the present day natives by the name of "guacas." The writer himself opened up one grave from which he took 18 pieces of pottery.

It is a well-known fact that the half-Indian natives of Chiriqui, knowing the whereabouts of a rich "guaca," prefer to work it alone and to sell the gold found only in such quantities as their needs may require. They are suspicious of the white man, this suspicion and distrust being inbred in them and handed down in tradition from their ancestors, who in truth had cause to hate that race. A hunting and exploring party that recently returned from the vicinity of Buenos Aires and Boruca, in the heart of the Indian country to the west of David, reported that although they were not openly attacked by the Indians yet they were conscious of being constantly watched; that food was scarcely obtainable, and that on several occasions they found the water of the springs muddied, apparently but a few minutes before their arrival. If this report be true, and there is every reason to believe that it is, inasmuch as it is but a repetition of former ones of a similar nature, then it is quite evident that the party were not cognizant of the customs, likings and language of the natives with whom they had to deal.

Odd inscriptions and decorations are found carved on volcanic boulders in many parts of Chiriqui, and these inscriptions, according to the Indians, indicate the burying grounds of the caciques. Many of these decorations appear on the pottery found in the graves and in the ethnological report referred to are classified.

Gold-bearing copper ore has been found in many districts in Chiriqui, especially in that of Bugaba, in which "Tisingal" is in all probability located, the analysis of which has shown 15 per cent. copper bearing two per cent. gold.

The Panamanian government is at the present time planning the construction of a railroad from David in Chiriqui to the city of Panama, which, when built, will greatly open up this part of the country and make it more accessible. The Indians of Chiriqui will give way before the advance of civilization and the earth will give up another of her treasures so well hidden for centuries by nature's barriers aided by the avenging hand of the vanquished American.

THE KING IS DEAD

EDWARD OF GREAT BRITAIN SUC-CUMBED FRIDAY NIGHT.

DEMISE NO GREAT SURPRISE

Pneumonia, Following Bronchitis, Sup-posed To Have Been Immediate Cause—Worried Over Po-litical Situation.

London.—Edward VII, King of Eng-land, died at 11:45 o'clock Friday night.

The prince of Wales is king, assum-ing the title of Geove V, and took the oath before the privy council at 2 o'clock Saturday afternoon.

Coming so suddenly the death of the king cannot but bring the greatest sorrow to the nation in whose hearts Edward, first as prince of Wales and afterwards as sovereign held first place.

Edward VII's short reign of eight years has been a history of stirring times. It opened with the conclusion of peace after a long and trying cam-paign in South Africa and concludes at the critical moment one of the most momentous political struggles of modern times between the peers and commons.

In a day the political outlook of Great Britain has been entirely revo-lutionized.

Gathered around the bedside of the dying king was the queen and princes. No hope had been held out throughout the day for the recovery of his majes-ty, whose death, it is believed, was due to pneumonia following bron-chitis contracted shortly after his re-turn from Biarritz. The king was ill but a week, and seriously so only three days.

The prince of Wales succeeded to the crown immediately according to the laws of the kingdom without of-ficial ceremony. His first official act was to dispatch to the lord mayor the announcement of his father's death, in pursuance of custom. His telegram read:

"I am deeply grieved to inform you that my beloved father, the king, passed away peacefully at 11:45 to-night.

"GEORGE."

The physicians soon afterwards is-sued their official bulletin which was as follows:

"May 6—His majesty, the king, breathed his last at 11:45 tonight in the presence of her majesty, Queen Alexandra, the prince and princess of Wales, princess royal, the duchess of Fife, Prince Victoria and Princess Louise, the duchess of Argyll.

"LAKING."
"REID."
"POWELL."
"DAWSON."

Pneumonia, following bronchitis, is believed to be the cause of death, but the doctors thus far have refused to make statements. Some of the king's friends are convinced that worry over the critical political situation which confronted him, with sleepless nights aggravated, if it did not cause, the fatal illness.

Besides the nearest relatives in England, the duke of Fife and the archbishop of Canterbury were in the death chamber.

The king's brother, the duke of Connaught, with his family, is at Suez, hastening home from Africa. The king's daughter, Queen Maud of Norway started for England on Saturday.

Edward VII assumed the throne on the death of Queen Victoria on Janu-ary 22, 1901, so that he was king less than ten years.

He was born at Buckingham palace on November 9, 1841, the son of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert of Sax-Coburg and Gotha. Educated by private tutors on a plan outlined by his father, he later studied at Edinburgh, Oxford and Cambridge. A long period of travel followed, during which he went over Europe and the east. In 1860 he made a triumphant tour through the United States and Canada.

The prince was married March 10, 1863 to Princess Alexandra, oldest daughter of the Danish prince, who became some months later King Christian IX. Six children were born, two of whom—the Duke of Clarence and Prince Alexander—died.

The surviving children are George Frederick, prince of Wales, Duke Cornwall and York, who now becomes King; Princess Louise who was mar-ried to the duke of Fife, Princess Victoria Alexandra and Princess Maud Charlotte, who was married to Prince Karl of Denmark, now King Haakon VII of Norway.

The king was of the house of Han-over, which dates from the accession to the throne of King George I, in 1714.

George Is Now King.

London—George Frederick Ernest Albert, prince of Wales, who now be-comes king, is the second son of King Edward and Queen Alexandra, was born at Marlborough house on June 3, 1865. In 1892, when his brother died, he became heir apparent and took his seat in the house of lords as duke of York. In May, 1893, his engagement was announced to Princess Victoria May of Teck, and they were married on July 6, 1893.

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The Drake—Why, he imagines he's in the public eye since the production of Rostand's "Chanteclair."

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Food Remark.

"The inanity of courtesy remarks that some people feel called upon to interject into conversation calls for a permanent commission in lunacy," said the man with the ingrowing grouch. "Now, the other day I was telling Jones going down on the subway that my four-year-old had swallowed a safety pin, and we were up half the night with him. "It was an accident, of course," said that idiot Jones."

Bishop Eats His Own Boots.

Few bishops have to lead such a strenuous life as Bishop Stringer. In company with a missionary companion he made a tour recently to Herschel island, in the Arctic ocean, and back to Dawson City, where the bishop re-sides.

Their small supply of food becoming exhausted, they were obliged to eat their muckalucks and moccasins. These, made of raw sealskins, were soaked until they became glutinous, and were then toasted in strips over the fire. The bishop says the food was real good, especially the muckalucks.

Whole Country is Stirred.

One of the most interesting reports at the recent meeting of the Na-tional Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis was that of the executive secretary, Dr. Living-ston Farrand, showing the growth of the anti-tuberculosis movement since May 1, 1909. The number of as-sociations for the prevention of con-sumption has increased from 290 to over 425; the number of sanatoria and hospitals for the treatment of tuber-culosis is from 298 to 400; and the special tuberculosis dispensaries from 222 to 265. During the year 1909, thirty-six out of forty-three legislatures in session considered the subject of tu-berculosis, and in 28, bills were passed for the prevention or treatment of this disease. Since the opening of the legislative season of 1910, out of ten legislatures in session up to May 1, all have considered the subject of tuber-culosis and every one of them has enacted some law that bears on this subject.

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