

Where United States May Get a Coaling Station



AMERICAN COFFEE PLANTATION—MRS. DEDHAM AND HER CHILDREN DRYING COFFEE.



QUARTERS OF DAVID, WITH REVOLUTIONARY TROOPS IN FRONT.

POSSIBLY it was devious Latin-American politics, and possibly it was merely straight Latin-American acquisitiveness, that led certain dark, bare-footed Colombian revolutionists under General Herrera to seize or to be accurate, to steal, or to speak in Herrera's language, expropriate, certain thousands of bags of Chiriqui. It was only an incident in the somewhat wearisome game of revolution that has been dragging on for some time in the chaotic affair that calls itself, between revolutions, the Republic of Colombia.

But it was an incident that promises to awaken a lively American interest in the noisy game. For it happens that most of the expropriated coffee belongs to American citizens, and it happens that Chiriqui is on the Isthmus of Panama and that the United States has long had its eye on the spot as being just the thing for a coaling station and base.

So it may be that, in unraveling the tangle, Chiriqui will become a place with the American flag flying over it.

Central and South American republics are only just beginning to awaken to the fact that it is not open season for Americans whenever a Latin-American feels like shooting. A few years ago the arrival of an American warship was so rare in the ports along the Caribbean sea that many of the night-blooming governments did not know what an American naval officer looked like. But lately, and especially in the last few months, the republics and dictatorships whose coasts front on the great tropical ocean have not been able to open their mouths real wide before a rapid fire battery would peer at them from the deck of a white cruiser.

Disorderly Republic.

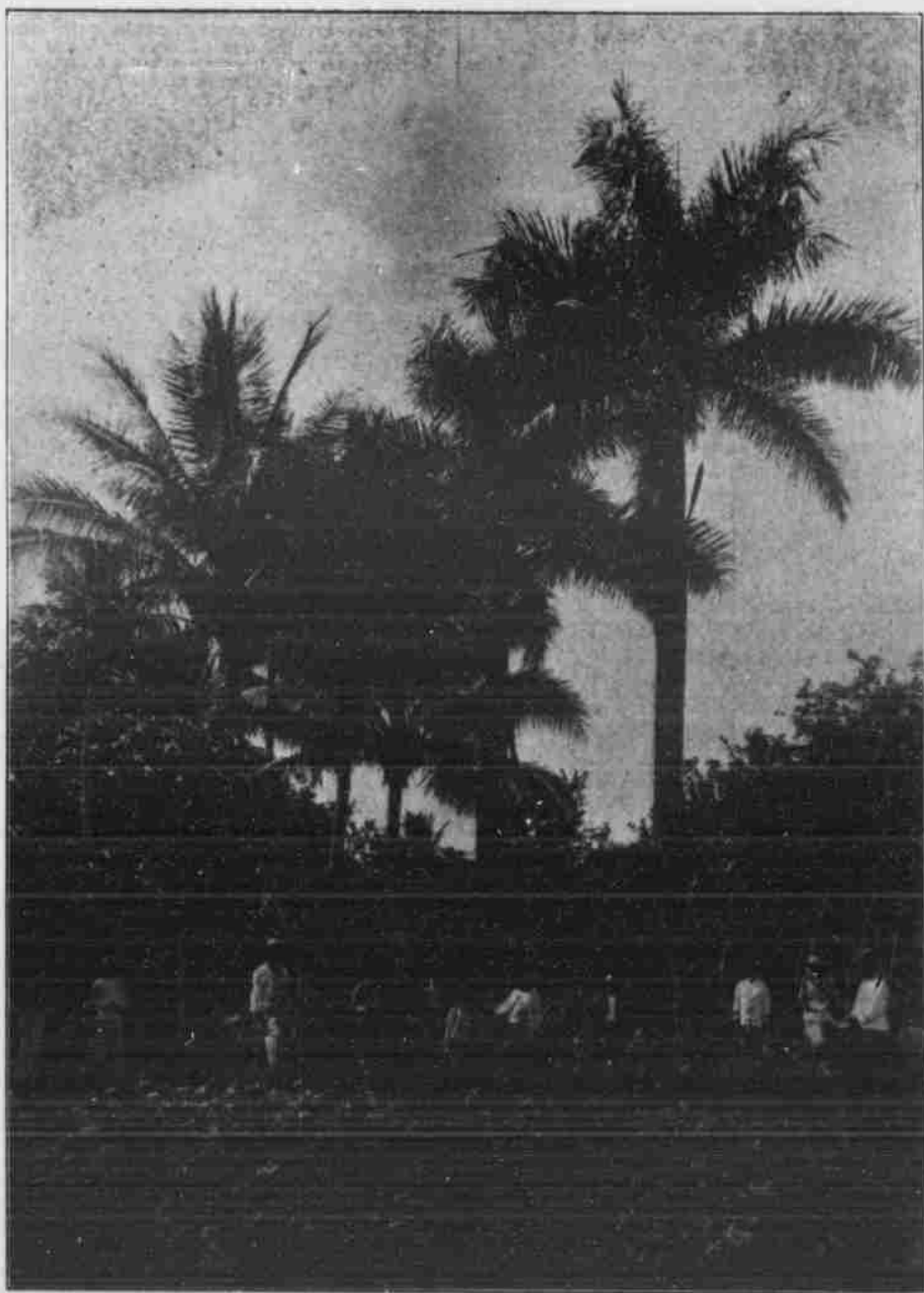
The Republic of Colombia has given the United States more trouble of late than any of the other unquiet folk that follow the pursuits of internecine war instead of commerce. Twice it has been necessary to land American marines and blue jackets. The last time was only recently as everybody will remember. The affair before that was in 1885, when McCalla took Colon and then sent his men across the isthmus in armored cars and scared the revolutionists and legitimists alike into "stopping it, whatever it was."

In the last seventy years Colombia has had more than twenty-five revolutions that are considered big enough to record. Of small sideshows in the same line, such as local insurrections in separate provinces, no full account ever has been made. If there had been, the history of the country would read monotonously like a pollen blotter.

The Bureau of American Republics once essayed to publish a handbook on Colombia and the statisticians charged with the work nearly lost their minds trying to devise a polite way of giving a resume of its history that should be truthful and yet polite enough to hurt no one's feelings. The republic itself has published such a handbook and by actual count a "political disturbance" is recorded on the average in every five lines of a historical sketch covering seven pages.

The Americans whose coffee was taken in Chiriqui are mostly from the Pacific coast. The nucleus of the colony was formed about seven years ago, when thirty people from Stockton, Cal., cut a trail through the primeval forests and established their plantations on the sides of the mountains at an elevation of about 5,000 feet. Among those whose success was marked were the families of the Dedhams and Farnsworths, who settled there with their wives and children. For a time the work was hard, owing to the difficulty of hiring labor, and the women and children pitched in and helped. But the tract is a fine coffee growing territory and soon they had thousands of coffee trees flourishing.

As the trees do not bear until they are four years old, many of the Americans went home to wait for them to develop and most of them did not return to Colom-



REVOLUTIONARY SOLDIERS UNDER ROYAL PALMS NEAR CITY OF DAVID.

bia until a year or two ago, when they found their trees bearing well.

Talent of Expropriation.

It was hardly to be expected that the thrifty Central Americans should scorn the gifts of Providence thus displayed for them any more than it was to be expected that they should demean themselves by clearing their land with their own lordly hands and raising their own coffee. The national labor-saving device of expropriation is far more convenient. It covers a multitude of valuables, from asphalt right to coffee.

The persons who clamor aloud that they are the legitimists, the only real things in the government, were very much disappointed about this particular expropriation. As soon as they heard that the revolutionists had achieved it, the governor of Panama, General Salazar, sent two gunboats to capture the revolutionists with the goods on them. He expected that they would attempt to ship the coffee in order to raise money. The good man's grief, when he found that the villains had hidden it away where he could not get it, is said to have been profound.

He then appealed to the American consul general to send a warship. He wanted Philadelphia to go. But the consul general wouldn't send it, possibly not caring to play the game that way. However, Ranger finally was dispatched to the city of David, which is General Herrera's headquarters in the revolutionary business, to argue with that strenuous person about those bags of coffee.

The city of David is away up a river.

It is a town that is noteworthy chiefly for its unusual decorations in the way of shot-holes and cannonball punctures. It has a stronghold where most of the fights are "pulled off," apparently by mutual consent. This is the Quartel. The walls of the tower there have even more cannonball's sticking in them than has the rest of the town.

A really pretty fight was enjoyed there recently, during the last attempt by the government forces to take the town. A government captain got as far as the tower, but unhappily his troops had not cared to imperil their health by accompanying him. So he had to fight for his life, which is rare in Central American revolutions, where the non-combatants usually are the only ones killed as far as both sides can arrange it.

This captain, however, was a real fighter. He had a huge Colt's navy revolver, which is a weapon that disgusts Colombians, who prefer to battle with the machete. He managed to ensconce himself behind a wall. By taking pains and paying strict attention to his work, he managed to shoot or stab twelve men during his lone stand. The revolutionists themselves admit it. But thirteen was his hoodoo. As he swung his machete at the head of the man with the unlucky number, a cannon ball wandered along and took his head off.

Savage Chiriqui.

Chiriqui has seen the bloodiest scenes in the present revolution. Non-combatants have been slain without mercy, in the city of David alone fifty persons having been



TOWER WHERE MOST OF THE FIGHTS HAVE TAKEN PLACE.

backed to death because they did not declare for either party.

The natives do not like "gun plays," at least when the other person makes it. What they love passionately is to drive away at each other with machetes. Many of them can fence wonderfully with these immensely heavy knives. But most of them are stronger in the art of hacking away at their opponents from a distance that is judged with fine perception of danger, so that nothing fatal shall occur to mar the day's war. They do not object to death particularly, but their anxiety that it shall be confined to the other fellow makes them cautious.

The lagoon of Chiriqui would make an excellent coaling station. The peninsula of Tobolo shuts it in on the east and several beautiful islands protect it to an extent from the sea. Columbus discovered the lagoon in 1502. He found that the natives had abundance of gold and he returned to Spain with glowing reports of the prodigious wealth of the country in minerals and vegetation. And he did not exaggerate. Colombia is a country that is wonderful in natural riches. Coffee, cacao, sugar, tobacco, bananas, cotton, vanilla, yucca, indigo, rice and scores of other foods grow almost wild. The forests contain nearly every valuable wood known, and many rare and strange and beautiful kinds that appear to promise vast commercial returns if they could be brought to market.

The chains of mountains that cut the country, from Chiriqui province south, offer all sorts of climates and soils and

other conditions for every form of agriculture from planting to raising cattle, according to location.

But besides being cursed with perpetual revolution, the country is cursed with fever in the lowlands along the coast and in the deep valleys between the mountains. A white man must learn to eat quinine in doses that would be fatal in temperate zones. Living along a greater part of the coast is impossible for any except Indians and certain acclimated classes of half-breeds and negroes. The sea coast towns are filthy and the heat is steady and killing. In some parts of Colombia it rains for six months in the year. In some of the valleys the fever-bearing vapors shroud the land day and night. In other parts life is delightful. In the higher altitudes on the mountain sides, one can often select climate to suit one's self, obtaining every range from sub-tropical to frigid as he ascends or descends.

Land of Romance.

Colombia is full of romance. A wonderful race once dwelled there, a race of worshippers of the sun. They built cities and somewhere in the unknown recesses of the land they had great treasure houses that no man has been able to find since their day.

Even in what may be called modern times there were such treasure houses that now are lost to man, but that surely will be found some day. Somewhere in South Darien, on the track crossed by the grim Balboa, there once were mines known as the mines of Cana or Espiritu Santo, that produced ore almost pure. Those mines were so vastly rich that in the seventeenth century they were called "Potosi" and became a synonym for inexhaustible wealth as the name "El Dorado" is now.

When Spain held the Isthmus of Panama, Cana attracted all the adventurous spirits who were hungry for gold. Then began that bloody time of attacks and raids by the great buccaneers. Again and again Panama was besieged by them. Again and again their cruel bands marched on the route over which Balboa had marched and sacked and slew without mercy.

At last Spain, wisely designing to save the territory even if she had to give up the gold, decided to close the mines, and if possible, destroy all knowledge of where they were. So in 1685 the great treasure house of Cana was worked for the last time. Then its entrances were blown up with gunpowder. The roads leading to it were destroyed. The men who knew its secrets were sent to distant parts of the world.

The tropics at once began to weave their green mystery over the site of the world's desire. Royal palms grew and became great. Creepers and orchids and ferns covered all. And the centuries passed, the buccaneers passed, a new world grew—but no man has seen Cana, the Place of Gold, since then.

Pointed Paragraphs

Chicago News: An office boy who is taken on trial often proves to be one.

Some people are about as useful as a third wheel to a bicycle.

Distance doesn't lend enchantment to one's view of a silver dollar.

Every man may have his price, but it isn't every man who has his market.

There's always room at the top; people will not live in attics if they can help it.

The husband who presents his wife with a pet dog is evidently tired of his job.

Self-made men and home-made shirts may be useful, but they are seldom ornamental.

In England gentlemen often ride to hounds; in this country they frequently go to dogs.

If some people did nothing but mind their own business they would soon become rather narrow-minded.