

SCENERY—VEGETATION.

The route of the Panama railway lay through the heart of a primeval forest of the utmost tropical luxuriance, interspersed with the wildest and most picturesque scenery, and along beautiful rivers. Perpetual summer reigns, but with a dry and wet season; the latter from May to October, when the verdure is most brilliant, though in the dry season flowers are in abundance. We had the advantage of this dry season now, when from the evergreen palms hung clusters of ripe palm-nuts of the richest scarlet; while passion-flowers of the richest crimson and purple convolvuli decorate the scene. The great variety of parasitic growths excite attention everywhere. Almost every tree and shrub supports more or fewer of these treacherous leaches, from the form and size of a tuft of grass to some whose branches exceed in magnitude those of the largest trees. Some large trees have been killed by them, and then left mere shells. A curious variety, deposited by birds upon the highest trees, sends down long fibrous tendrils, without a single branching twig, to the earth, where it again takes root, when it increases to five or six inches in diameter; the smaller ones are used as cordage. Trailing vines and blossoming creepers are on every side in great profusion. A principal bush is the mangrove, whose branches, shooting downwards, often enter the soil, take root, and, interlacing, form an impenetrable barrier. Some very fine trees, with white smooth bark, are the cedro, out of which the natives will hollow a canoe of fifteen to twenty tons. Its broad roots spread out like buttresses, and its trunk runs up without a branch a hundred feet, and then spreads out in a canopy of foliage, fifty feet in diameter. Here and there, native huts are seen, surrounded with patches of plantains, bananas, Indian corn, and sugar-cane. There is a great variety of palms, not less than twenty-one varieties, on the rail. The palm-oil of commerce is very abundant, with its clusters of scarlet nuts; the wine-palm, the sago-palm, the ivory-palm, the glove-palm, the cabbage-palm, from which are derived articles of food or of useful application. There are stations at every four miles, and a telegraph whose posts are of concrete. It was found wood did not answer, on account of the rapid decay. A small straight stick, of the necessary height, was placed in the ground, surrounded by a jointed wooden mould, wide at base, some way in the ground, tapering at top. This was filled with concrete, and has produced solid pillars, as hard as stone. There is but one rail; two trains leave each terminus daily. The highest point on the road at the summit is not 300 feet above the sea. The inhabitants are Negro and Indian; many of the latter being mixed with Spanish blood. Their huts are of bamboo, thatched with plantain-leaves; their beds are hammocks. Sun-dried and fresh beef, pork, eggs, and fowls are plentiful; but their chief subsistence is the yam and plantain. The distance across is forty-eight miles; we travelled it in two hours and three-quarters, reaching Panama and the gentle ocean of the West, after a pleasant journey, at a quarter to five o'clock.