

most evil and pitiful residence in the world. It rains there almost always, and if the rain ceases for an hour, the heat is so great, that the water becomes quite infected, and renders the air contagious, so that the greater part of the newly arrived soldiers and mariners die. The country is very mountainous, covered with forests of fir, in which there are such quantities of monkeys, that it is wonderful to behold. Nevertheless, the said harbour of Porto-bello is very good; there are two castles at the entrance, which are tolerably strong, where there are three hundred soldiers in garrison. Adjoining the said port, where the fortresses are, there is another, which is not at all commanded by them, and where an army might land safely. The king of Spain esteems this port a place of consequence, being near to Peru, there being only seventeen leagues to Panama, which is on the south coast.

This port of Panama, which is on the sea of the (south), is very good; there is good anchorage, and the town is very mercantile.

In this place of Panama is collected all the gold and silver which comes from Peru, and where it is embarked, with other riches, upon a little river, which rises in the mountains, and descends to Porto-bello; which river is four leagues from Panama, from whence all the gold, silver, and merchandise must be conveyed on mules: and being embarked on the said river, there are but eighteen leagues to Porto-bello.

One may judge that, if the four leagues of land which there are from Panama to this river were cut through, one