INTERAMERICAN GEOGRAPHICAL READERS. A CENTRAL AMERICAN JOURNEY

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ROGER W. BABSON

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Trieste

A typical Central American country scene.

Interamerican Geographical Readers

A Central American Journey

By Roger W. Babson

Member of United States Commission to Central America in 1916; President of the Babson Statistical Organization; Author of "Business Barometers," "The Future" Series, etc.

Illustrated with engravings maps and original drawings

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PREFACE

THE attempt to combine in the form of a story for children an account of travel in the various countries of Central America and certain information on our commercial relations with these countries needs a word of explanation. The second of the two elements may seem, at first sight, to have no place in a book for young readers; for the commerce of today is so many-sided and complex in its operations, it depends for its success on so many elements in agricultural, political, and financial conditions, that the subject might well seem too involved for the understanding even of Macaulay's often quoted schoolboy.

It must be remembered, however, that salesmanship is the romance of today, and the linking of nation with nation, the world over, by friendly trade relations is the romance of the immediate future. Children hear their parents, older brothers, and uncles talk of some successful adventure in salesmanship as the youngsters of a past generation heard of the settlement of the Great West and the voyages of daring Yankee merchantmen to the Orient. It will be found that the subject of commerce has in itself great possibilities of interest for boys and girls.

Successful commerce, as our exporters have found out, must take into account an element which is not down in tables of statistics, which has never been reduced to a formula — and that is human nature. Every business transaction is a human relation. Every time an exporter receives an order from a ranchero in Guatemala or a dealer in a coast city of San Salvador, every time he sends out a consignment of shoes, or barbed wire, or

striped drilling, or oil stoves, to some remote mountain locality of a little-known country, his success in the transaction depends a great deal upon what he knows of the people to be supplied and of their ways and wishes.

The foregoing facts were most forcibly brought home to the author in the course of a journey made in the spring of 1916 as a member of the Central American Commission appointed by W. G. McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury, under the direction of the President. It was on this journey that the idea occurred to him of writing a story to set forth the unique conditions and picturesque features of our trade with Central America. Considering that the commerce of the next fifty years will be in the hands of the boys and girls of today, it seemed well worth while to attempt a book that might help to give our young people a more sympathetic knowledge of one of the most important fields of our commercial relations.

It is the belief of the author that no successful trade relations can be established with any country on merely selfish principles. Action and reaction take place whenever one man has anything to do with another, whether they meet on a street corner or cable half around the globe. Unfairness begets unfairness, and fair dealing sooner or later insures fair dealing. The old saying that he who would have friends must show himself friendly is quite as true in the export business as it is in any other form of human association.

It is not the purpose of this little book to preach any particular business creed or establish any special theory in commercial dealing. Nevertheless, truth is truth, and no book not based on the truth is of much value in either prose or poetry, history or fiction. Every

American must desire that the American standard of business dealing, the American sense of honor, should be such as every American will be proud of. It rests with the boys now growing up to maintain what is fine and high and to root out, as far as they can, what is unwise and selfish in our business world.

In this story, the Carroll family, in their travels through Central America, see not only the beauty of mountain and valley, the quaint costumes of señorita, caballero or peón, but also the forces that help to make civilization. In the cities and towns of Central America they find people as interesting as any of their friends at home. They learn, as only the traveler can learn, the infinite variety and complexity of human life and the peculiar pleasure of adapting oneself to new conditions and making new friends where no friends were.

Grateful acknowledgment is made of the author's indebtedness to the President of Guatemala and to various other persons in official position in Central America who put at his disposal every opportunity for observation and for the gathering of information; also to Mr. John Barrett, Director-General of the Pan American Union, for valuable suggestions given. For assistance in adapting the material to the interests and the comprehension of boys and girls, thanks are due to Miss Louise Lamprey. The photographs which are used to illustrate the book have been gathered from many sources; the author wishes to acknowledge especially the kindness of the Pan American Union and the Washington Office of the Panama Canal in permitting the use of prints from their collection.

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