

**PANAMA
ROUGHNECK
BALLADS**

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Panama Roughneck Ballads by John Hall

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JOHN HALL

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Panama Roughneck Ballads

BY

JOHN HALL

UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA

PUBLISHED BY

ALBERT LINDO

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PANAMA AND CANAL ZONE

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INTRODUCTION

This little book is dedicated to the men in the "Big Ditch," as the Panama Canal, now rapidly nearing completion, is called.

The terms "roughneck" and "husky" are not used in a disparaging sense; on the contrary, the author is inspired by feelings of respect and friendship for the brave, hardy fellows who are facing the countless dangers attendant upon such a gigantic undertaking as the piercing of the Isthmus of Panama and the joining of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

A feeble effort has been made to give the outside world an idea of the type of man now carrying to realization the dream of the lamented de Lesseps and the crowning ambition of the mighty Republic of the West. They are wonderful! Since the dawn of history no such body of builders has been brought together, and, probably never will again.

It has been the privilege of the writer of these lines to live among these men for five years. He has found them men—men "in the rough;" big-hearted and courageous unto recklessness; laughing at the nearness of death, and dying when their time

Introduction

came, determined to face the "Grim Reaper" without flinching.

Much has been written about the excellent health conditions in the Canal Zone, and great credit is due the Sanitary Department of the I. C. C. The country traversed by the Canal has been made habitable. But Panama is Panama; and the hardy Northmen, despite their sanitary surroundings, are sweating under an alien sun whose rays act strangely upon them at times.

The canal diggers earn every dollar they receive. They are risking their lives every day of the year. Comparatively few have gone the disease route, when we think of the awful days of the French. But when one of the big fellows goes he goes like a shot: Blast or Blackwater, it's all the same.

Here's to you, my brave brothers! May those of you who have "stuck to the job" be present at the opening, and have the great satisfaction of seeing your years of hard work rewarded by beholding the commerce of the world safely passing over the ground baptized with your sweat—aye, your blood! And forever hallowed as the last resting place of those who fell in the battle.

Panama Roughneck Ballads

"ROUGHNECK'S" LOVE LAY

As I sit and hear the calling
Of the jungle folk at night,
While the dewdrops, gently falling,
Mark the fleeting hours' quick flight.

As the little midnight greetings
Sound from mate to mate,
To me come back our meetings
At the rustic garden gate.

Lovers' songs I hear a-ringing
From the smoothly flowing brook;
To their lady loves they're singing
From each fragrance-laden nook.

'Neath the Southern Cross, soft gleaming,
From the azure-painted dome