



# Colombia: A Commercial and Industrial Handbook (Classic Reprint)

*P. L. Bell*

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Excerpt from Colombia: A Commercial and Industrial Handbook

Possessing the unique distinction among the countries of South America of having a coast line on both the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, Colombia is also the nearest of the South American Republics to the United States. Occupying a large territory (sixth in area in South America) in the northwestern part of the continent, Colombia lies at the very gates of the Panama Canal, the country's geographical position being the most favorable for commerce of any in South America. It has a coast line of about 465 miles on the Pacific Ocean and of about 640 miles on the Caribbean Sea. The distance from Cartagena to New York is only 1,900 nautical miles (as compared with 4,500 miles to Liverpool) and to Colon at the Panama Canal only 266 miles by sea.

Possessing also a great variety of natural resources, and occupying third place in population, Colombia was, at one time, the best known country in South America and the foremost in development. It was the richest colony of Spain in South America, Cartagena being the principal seaport of the continent during the early colonial period. When the sovereignty of Spain was cast off more than \*a century ago, great predictions were made concerning the achievements for which the country was destined, and Colombia became very well known to Europe, receiving the attention of scientists and business men who understood its potentialities.

For various reasons, these hopes of development and progress have not been realized to the fullest extent. The country has been neglected by foreign capital and immigration and has been outdistanced by other nations of the continent. But, even under unfavorable conditions, progress in commerce and industry has been constant, showing a steady modern development; and during the last 15 years the country has entered upon a new epoch of economic activity in which the exploitation of rich natural resources in cattle and sugar-cane lands, coal deposits, and petroleum bodies, and the increase in production of such products as coffee, bid fair to make the development of Colombia rival that of Argentina and Mexico in the near future.

Notwithstanding its proximity to the United States, Colombia's commercial and intellectual intercourse in the past was mainly with Europe. With few exceptions, such development of transportation and resources as was carried out in the country was effected with European capital, and European influence predominated in the business life of the country up to the beginning of the World War.

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