

PERILOUS NEWS GATHERING.

THE RECORD-UNION CORRESPONDENT CROSSING THE ANDES.

Four Days "On the Deck of a Mule"—Traveling in the United States of Colombia.

Special Correspondence of the RECORD-UNION.

BOGOTA (Colombia), January, 1890.

The city of Honda, though nearly 800 miles above the mouth of the Magdalena, and the present terminus of the steamboat routes, is by no means at the "head" of that river's navigable waters. The growing town, which has acquired consequence only on account of the river trade, is beautifully situated, surrounded by rugged mountains, and at the junction of two great streams, for here the Rio Gauji comes rushing down to join the Magdalena on its long journey to the sea.

Otherwise there is nothing about Honda to distinguish it from a hundred other cities of Spanish-America. It has the usual tall-towered church, rows of white-washed houses roofed with red tiles, and suburban cottages thatched with straw, all shaded by cocoa trees and groups of graceful palms.

There are a very few old buildings of early Spanish origin, whose enormously thick walls were built with special view to withstanding the earthquakes that are frequent in this locality; but in spite of their solidity, most of the old houses were long ago shaken into ruins. To my mind, the most interesting thing about the place is the remains of an antique bridge, built by the conquerors in the year 1601. Its quaint arches are yet entire, and the stone walls show niches, now dismantled, where saints and crosses used to stand commending the worship of all wayfarers, telling mutely how those stern crusaders built all time, and never forgot the outward tokens of religion in the midst of their greed for gold.

Before bidding adieu to the Magdalena, that fluvial highway which is to Colombia what the Nile is to Egypt, I have collected some facts concerning the river. The river is still navigable for small vessels many miles above Honda, though nearly all

THE RICH STATE OF TOLIMA.

Which, being level with the stream, is one of the best agricultural sections of the republic. Until within the last few years Tolima supplied the greater portion of Colombia's export agricultural trade. Lately, however, the two Atlantic States have been more extensively cultivated, and these, being so conveniently situated for foreign trade, besides possessing remarkable fertility of soil, and the great advantage of being intersected by several considerable streams, have suddenly begun to yield at least two-thirds of the entire export produce. The Cauca river, which runs through this region, is itself navigable for light-draught steamers as far as Cali, a place about seventy-five miles northeast of Buenaventura, the Pacific seaport.

THE CAUCA VALLEY.

Is best described as a level upland, 5,000 feet above the sea, a series of uncultivated meadow lands overgrown with tall, rank grasses. Through the meadows are scattered cattle-raising, the land produces cotton, coffee, corn, cocoa, rice, tobacco, sugarcane, potatoes and most fruits of the tropic and temperate zones, the banana, especially, growing wild in the greatest abundance. The population of the valley is reckoned at about 435,000, and its average temperature is 77 degrees Fahr. Another magnificent river is the Atrato, whose valley presents a similar aspect to that of the upper Magdalena.

Bogota is the capital of Colombia, is only seventy miles from Honda; but the journey thereto being straight over the main cordillera of the Andes, is very tedious and difficult, and can only be accomplished on horse or mule back. From Honda to Bogota, the route is a long and arduous one, American companies have attempted the construction of a railroad between these two points. About thirty miles of track have actually been laid; but those in charge of the work have again and again been compelled to abandon the project of frequent revolutions and the impossibility of securing laborers. The natives will not work, and the company can not afford to pay wages enough to induce immigration. But notwithstanding all these disadvantages, the enterprise has not been abandoned, and having received

SUBSTANTIAL ENCOURAGEMENT.

From the Colombian Government in the shape of land grants, and a "concession," it will doubtless be finished sometime. Meanwhile, on its own account, the Government has projected a railway from Bogota to Honda, and has also given a liberal concession for the construction of another line leading into the Cauca valley, where are supposed to exist the richest gold mines in all the world, the same from whence came those hundreds of millions that were sent to Spain in the days of the Viceroy.

A stage line has recently been established between Honda and Agriabarga, thus shortening the saddle-journey by 30 miles; but it is a mooted question, which is hardest, the rattling over the mountains shut up in a spring-coach like dice in a box; or to go sailing over them on the deck of a mule. In either case the trip necessitates four of the longest and hardest days that are likely to fall to the lot of an ordinary human being in the course of his life.

Because of the certainty of obtaining good mules for the through trip at Honda, and the uncertainty of all things at Agriabarga, we decided (whether wisely or not remains to be seen) to make use of the mule in the saddle. The ladies of our party secured riding habits of dusty-colored alpaca, buck-skin gloves reaching nearly to the elbow, and wide-brimmed hats of Panama grass, tied tightly under the chin a "poke." Right here permit me to whisper a secret.

TO LADIES ONLY.

When making saddle journeys in any of these mountain regions, it is well to be guided in the matter of dress by the advice of the natives, who, traveling always in this fashion, certainly ought to know what they are talking about. A lady, "to the manner born," never burdens herself with too much riding skirt, but makes it scant as possible, and only about four inches longer than an ordinary walking dress, and never, by any possibility, does the direct expense of a pair of hose or a glimpse of the under garments which are unmentionable to ears polite, for she dons a pair of very wide, full trousers, of the same material as her habit, gathered Turkish fashion, close around the tops of her shoes. However the wind may blow when horse and rider are in full sail over breezy heights, breeches and all pass for riding skirt, and none can tell where one begins and the other ends, even should a catastrophe tumble her upside down.

Clattering out of still sleeping Honda, about three o'clock one balmy morning (for the seasons are reversed down here, you know, and mid-summer comes in January), our road wound for some distance under a complete arch of papayas, mangoes and fig trees, whose interlacing branches obscured the sky, and rendered yet darker the silent hour between night and dawn, that gruesome hour in which all the forces of life and nature are at their lowest ebb, and in which, it is said, souls go out of the body into the vast unknown more readily than at any other time. Not even a dog was stirring to bark us out of town, and

the mules huddled closer together with an instinctive need of companionship. In the uncertain light we could not discern one another's faces, and our figures looked ghostly and unreal, as might a procession of disembodied spooks on some uncanny expedition. No did the doctor's muttered recitation of his our spirits.

"Somewhere in desolate, wind-swept space, In twilight land, in No Man's land, Two shivering shapes meet face to face, And bid each other stand, 'And who are you?' asks one again, 'I know not,' said the second shape, 'I only died last night!'"

But when the stars were lost in the sea of crimson and gold that presages the rising of the tropic sun, Dame Nature suddenly shook off her comatose condition, the flowers lifted their dewy heads, birds began to twitter, smoke to curl from house-tops, and the hum of human activity was heard. Presently the road became alive with Indians trudging to market under heavy loads, bare-footed women in short calico skirts and wide straw hats, sitting astride of mules, each beast generally carrying two persons; and donkeys and black and white colts, so heavily laden as to be literally

COVERED FROM STEM TO STEM.

With piles of chincona bark, bags of gold or silver ore from the mines, or loads of merchandise of various sorts. The principal towns of Colombia, scattered along the fertile valleys lying between the spurs of the Andes, are distant from the Magdalena from 60 to 100 miles; and to them all goods must be forwarded over the rugged mountain pathways. Merchandise is distributed into bales of 125 pounds each, allowing two bales or 250 pounds to a donkey-load. Parcels exceeding this weight must be opened and repacked, or they will not be carried at all. The majority of interior caravans are women and their charge for each load is from 24 to 30 reales (a Colombian real being about 10 cents in American money) or between \$3 and \$4. Their systems of transit apply only to the comparatively light weight, making it utterly impossible to forward across the country to those places where they are most needed such heavy objects as agricultural implements, mining machinery, fire engines, wagons, or indeed anything of less than a ton and a half to two tons. Yet we are told that in Bogota every well-to-do family has its piano, which had to be brought piecemeal over the Sierras at the cost of a thousand dollars per piano for its transportation to the city. They have a fine system of transit, in Bogota's capital, which were also noted in sections over the mountains, as were the rails and ties, on the backs of mules and human beasts of burden.

Two hours' ride rough and rocky, and soon the road grew rocky, winding over hills which in some places ascend almost perpendicularly and in others offer so narrow a pathway that our little beasts, ambling one behind another, can hardly find a footing.

HEAVEN BLESS THE DONKEY.

Say I! Whatever his faults, he is sure-footed and faithful, and has borne many a traveler in safety over perilous paths where a horse would refuse to go. About 1 P. M. we reached Consuelo, and stopped at a narrow-thatched posada, or inn, for breakfast, which, though very poor, was acceptable, though the hasty desayuno of bread and coffee before day-light.

Two hours' ride, and a good rubbing down with alcohol and hot water, the best remedy, by the way, for the lameness of the traveler, especially the mule, that afflicts the amateur equestrian, and by 3 o'clock everybody cheerfully responded to the call of "boots and saddles," not wishing to remain over night in desolate Consuelo. However, there is not much choice in positions on the road to Bogota, one being about as bad as another.

As we ascended, ever higher and higher, the air grew cooler and cooler, and at 4,000 feet above Honda the temperature was delightful. Winding around the steep sides of the Sierras, we caught glimpses of a most wonderful panorama in the Magdalena valley, which, far below, looked like a gigantic chess-board, squared off by hedge-rows inclosing cultivated fields, the pale yellow-green of sugar-cane patches, the dark, glossy gleams of the coffee-groves, and palm-thatched huts for huts, all environed by distant hills whose tops were lost in the clouds. Long before we reached

the moon was up, though the miles are not many between these wayside hiding-places, the moonlight was so bright that the traveler in the saddle, who was not Mazzepas, and therefore he need not hurry himself. Down into a green valley, over an antique bridge built three centuries ago and now crumbling to its fall, past a pretty waterfall in the midst of a coffee grove; and at last the posada was reached where a smoking dinner awaited and the night was to be passed. Ganduas is said to be one of the most comfortable places on the road, though its high-priced posada would put the comparison to the poorest of the United States. F. and I enjoyed the luxury of a clean and airy room, and though its floor was paved with damp bricks, the walls covered with old newspapers, the window entirely without glass and the door fastening a pole set up against the wall, we slept the sleep of the just, each in his little white-canopied cot. In these Southern countries the beds are all "single," two persons never sleeping together, though several of the narrow cots may be put on a bedstead for the purpose.

"Thanks to another thorough rubbing with hot alcohol, we were in tolerable order to start next morning by the first peep of dawn, while the early mists mercifully obscured from view the heights we were yet to climb. Always upward and upward, like that foolish youth who bore a banner with the strange device "Excelsior," and came to grief, as he richly deserved; till before mid-day we had ascended something over 3,000 feet. The highest peaks of the mountains known as

ALTO DEL CAZAL.

Marked by a little white house set against a gigantic heap of red-gy sandstone. The view from this place was even more glorious than that of the day before, overlooking a wider prospect, being so much higher, including a circle of mountain summits, with rocky peaks, one behind the other, seemed out of an ocean of clouds. Descending thence to Las Tibayas was the most difficult task we have yet encountered, over a road strewn with loose boulders, so steep and slippery that we momentarily expected to be pitched over the heads of our mule-loads among the precipices. At the apology for an inn at Las Tibayas we partook of a poorer apology for luncheon, only redeemed from utter failure by some ripe, sweet figs, which, in the desperation of the moment, we went out and stole for the eyes of the proprietor.

"Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease?" remarked poor F., as we again climbed into our saddles. Certainly not to-day, at least, for the rest of the way was to be a regular toboggan slide, 4,000 feet long, into the green and lovely valley of Villeta. To this day I am not able to decide which is most to be dreaded, going up the face of a hill, if, in a momentary peril of slipping over the donkey's tail, or going downward, at an angle of fifty degrees, with every muscle braced to prevent sliding over his ears. Since no beast could possibly go astray on a trail so narrow that we bumped the wall of rock on one side and the other, dropped without a sound into an abyss so deep that tall trees growing at the bottom looked like mere twigs, I abandoned all responsibility, closed my eyes to the fearful view, and clung for dear life to the pommal.

AT VILLETA.

Where the second night was passed, we were fain to lay our weary bones to rest at the first hour of gloaming, but not to slumber, for rats, cockroaches, beetles, deas and goodness knows what other vermin, galloped about the prison-like place in a way that, like Macbeth's conscience, "doth murder sleep." Though feeling generally the effect of our daily shaking up, and already constrained to say our prayers in a "standing attitude, we were not averse to leaving Villeta long before sunrise, having partaken of the inevitable sour bread and muddy coffee by the glimmer of a tall dip. Rain had fallen steadily during the night, leaving every thing clean, cool and dripping; but alas! it had also washed away, for the third time this season, the only bridge across the Rio Negro, leaving us no alternative but to ford the braiding stream. Luckily the river was not high, though running rapidly, and, barring a slight wetting, all crossed in safety.

The ground rises steadily from the river, the first, like a flight of stairs cut in the face of the mountain, which our animals unwillingly climbed. As if to recompense the traveler for that trial, the way would grow, and soon, verdant and high, covered with ferns, mosses, pink begonias and orchids, overtopped with long-armed oaks and drooping palms. But, like every other earthly paradise,

THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT.

Was in it, and the guides forbade us, at the peril of our lives, to touch a leaf or a flower. The comes Chimbi, a village prettily situated on the spur of the eastern cordillera of the Andes, up which we were slowly creeping. All this section is devoted to the raising and exportation of a superior grade of coffee. Alto del Roble was reached, one of the highest accessible points in the Andean chain, some 12,000 feet above sea-level, which, the guides solemnly assured us, was "the very end of up hill." A cart-road from Bogota comes out nearly to the Andes, though horribly bad, with deep gullies washed out by floods that pour down the mountain sides, we were rejected to exchange the wild paths of "the land of the sky" for an unpicturesque, barbed-rod pathway.

At last, however, we were glad to pay for the trouble of the mules or more such our guides and mules were not to go, and lie in bed nursing our bruises during the following twenty-four hours. It was by no means a brilliant party that was finally packed into the clumsy vehicle, and, with a few more mules, we were off, the bowlders, big and little (every job being martyrdom), that strewn the road to Colombia's Capital. Long before our destination was reached its nearness was attested by the crowd of market-wagons going south, and north, and a woman trudging along on foot or on muleback, and beasts of burden totally in eclipse under enormous loads of alfalfa or other merchandise.

Just at sunset we passed the swampy flats that environ Santa Fe de Bogota, black with wild ducks this time of year; when, by a sharp turn in the road, we suddenly beheld the cathedral towers, house-tops and tall eucalyptus trees of the old city, all gilded in the evening light. The respective buildings were high and clustered into town; but the overshadowing hills, whose summits are crowned by churches, each a kind of Calvary, up which penitents go on their knees during holy week, looked gloomy and foreboding, with black clouds hanging above them, as if bearing a frown for the weary wanderers, instead of a welcome.

FANNIE B. WARD.

WHEN ADAM WAS A BOY.

The women didn't wear high hats when Adam was a boy. Nor babies were allowed in days when Adam was a boy. Dudes didn't smoke cigars when Adam was a boy. The papers didn't come when Adam was a boy. There were no patent cure-all ads when Adam was a boy. The youngsters didn't read their dads when Adam was a boy. The mothers-in-law were kind and good when Adam was a boy. They built the fires and saved the wood when Adam was a boy. But things were slipping a cog or two when Adam was a boy. Life wasn't such a chronic "bog" when Adam was a boy. And in the past, when we were tried, we've often thought and wildly cried, Why did Adam die? When yet he was a boy?

A Touching Farewell.

The steamer for Liverpool was about leaving the New York dock. The friends of the passengers were bidding a last farewell. A brisk, elderly gentleman, evidently a merchant, hastily embraced a lady, and hurriedly left the ship. In the crowd on the wharf was a working man, who was leaning against a post looking at the steamer.

CENSUS TAKING.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT CENSUS BUREAU.

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The conclusions of the census are too long postponed. The results themselves are not absolutely correct, even for the time when the enumeration is taken; and for the time when they are made public they have little relation to truth. In fact, need of statistics is contemporaneous with the time when they are taken, and their value is nearly destroyed, or at least seriously impaired before the results become available for use.

The cause is not hard to find. The census branch of the Government is recreated each decade, and perhaps on lines entirely different from the next preceding census. This branch of the civil service, which has the greatest need of trained ability and conscientiousness, is necessarily dependent upon inexperience. The periods of census-taking are so far separated that the lessons gained in one year are nearly forgotten before other periods arrive. In no other branch of the civil government are so many officials called upon to do such an amount of work simultaneously as in the census. Each teacher would keep a sort of intelligence bureau for the district, taking note of all changes, not only of population, but of every thing that would affect the statistics of migration, of acreage, of productions, etc.

6. The people would soon become familiar with the kind of intelligence required, and would regard the importance of accurate returns, and learn to answer more freely and fully. These suggestions will undoubtedly be met with the objection that they are impracticable, and that they are not entirely practical if tried. Even under what little latitude the present census law allows, it might be demonstrated that the plan is feasible, so far as the mechanical execution of it is concerned.

Take, for instance, a State like California, which has a population of 1,000,000 on June 1, which requires annual reports about the time the census is to be taken. Let the Supervisor of Census select one or more counties for each district, and appoint a teacher in each district the enumerator of that district. In one or two days' work the district will be completely covered, and the representative to the supervisor is there to try the experiment? Some teachers would, undoubtedly, refuse to act; but many would not, and the opportunity would be given to show with what expedition and accuracy the reports could be made, and be of value to future trials.

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How senseless does it appear, then, to see the national Government expending great efforts at great expense to ascertain facts of which the local Government is gathering at the same time by means of other agencies, and to see the local Government working for the same object, viz: The education of the people and more intelligent government. Perhaps under no other system of local government is such a condition possible—i. e., of the central Government being prevented by sentiment or prejudice or disconnection from realizing itself of the services of local officers. The teachers are more widely and evenly distributed than the members of any other class or profession. They are better fitted by training for the kind of work than any other class of people. The nature of their work gives them better opportunities and more leisure to perform these duties than any other class.

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GENERALY AT THE START.

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HERE ARE THE REASONS FOR USING SARAPOLLO.

To clean tombstones. To polish knives. To clean dishes. To remove oil-cloth. To wash out stains. To renovate paint. To brighten metals. To scour lath-work. To scour kettles.

EVERYBODY USES IT.

EVERY ONE FINDS A NEW USE.

POLITICAL.

ELECTION NOTICE.

THERE WILL BE AN ELECTION IN THIS CITY Tuesday, March 11, 1890.

When the following city officers are to be elected: First Trustee, Chief of Police, City Attorney, One Fire Commissioner, Five Directors for City Free Library.

The election will be conducted according to the General Election Law, excepting the election returns, which must be made to the Clerk of the Board of City Trustees.

The qualification of voters is that their names are on the great Register of Sacramento county. The polls will open at sunrise and close at 5 o'clock P. M.

The polls will be held at the following places: First Ward, First Precinct—Polls at Rosefield street, between Third and Fourth streets. H. F. Dillman and A. J. Senate, Inspectors; Charles E. Bauer and Frank Nicholas, Clerks.

Second Ward, First Precinct—Polls at Black's Bakery, Front between K and L streets. W. W. Coyne and Alex. Nelson, Inspectors; John Becher and D. H. Young, Clerks. A. A. Dasouly and Henry Sells, Clerks.

Second Ward, Second Precinct—Polls at Fourth and K streets. Charles Rood and William Beckman, Inspectors; H. B. Nielsen and John F. Brown, Clerks. Joseph Frank and J. B. Baldwin, Clerks.

Second Ward, Third Precinct—Polls at Arroyo Hall, Sixth and L streets. T. W. Stevens and M. J. Dwyer, Inspectors; Charles J. Joy and E. Boyer, Judges; Charles Phleger and James Longshore, Clerks.

Third Ward, First Precinct—Polls at Meister's shop, Ninth and J streets. Thomas Fox and F. G. Glick, Inspectors; Joseph H. Ekin, Clerk; F. T. McManus and Walter H. Welch, Clerks.

Third Ward, Second Precinct—Polls at Bakery, southwest corner of Twelfth and I streets. F. D. Brown and M. J. Dwyer, Inspectors; J. C. McLeary and R. O. Craven, Judges; James H. Groth and F. E. Osborn, Clerks.