

South American Letter

The following article was written by Clarence Stoe, who has been home on a visit this winter, from Cerro de Pasco, Peru, where he has been spending several years past as mining engineer:

Of all the railroads in the world, there are perhaps none more wonderful than that which extends from Callao, the chief sea-port of Peru on the Pacific, over the back of the western cordillera of the Andes to the town of Oroya in the interior.

In less than one hundred miles it climbs from sea level to an altitude of more than fifteen thousand feet; from a region of heat and tropical climate, to one of ice and snow; from surroundings of luxurious trees and vegetation, to a scene of barren desolation; and all the way through mountain scenery of fascinating grandeur excelled nowhere.

Starting from Lima, the capital of Peru, which is about eight miles inland from its port of Callao, one boards the train of the Peruvian Central Railroad in a station recently constructed, large, beautiful and up-to-date in every respect.

The regular train for the interior leaves about six in the morning. This is an early hour especially in Lima, where the population is still in its slumbers. There is no place where one can get a morning lunch or cup of coffee. For these and other reasons it is always advisable when possible to take an evening train that leaves at 5:45, and travel as far as Choico, and wait there for the regular train that arrives about 8:15 in the morning. This is the course I followed and it proved very satisfactory.

We left Lima on a beautiful Sunday evening. I had been to a Bull Fight in the afternoon, but had to leave early in order to catch the train. The large crowds were just coming out of the Arena as our train started. Bands were playing, autos honking, street car bells ringing. People dressed in gay holiday attire rushed along the avenue and over the bridge. Altogether it was a merry scene that greeted our departing look at the ancient capital.

Leaving the city behind we enter quickly the valley of the Rimac river. On every hand are beautiful planta-



—Lima in St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

tions. Sugar cane, cotton, coconut, grains, vegetables, fruits, and a vast variety of trees and flowers flourish everywhere. The crops are at every stage of development. On one field planting is in progress while on the other side of the fence they are harvesting. Cotton raised in Peru commands a higher price in the world market than any other. There is no rain west of the mountains and all moisture needed for the crops is secured by irrigation. The water is drawn from the rivers that have their source in the melting of the perpetual snow and ice of the high cordillera. The water for haciendas in the vicinity of Lima is supplied by the river Rimac. The fields are all enclosed with adobe fences; these are built of earth and stand about four feet high and eighteen inches wide. They are very solid and substantial and their top is often utilized by pedestrians as a foot path.

The buildings along the track are all enclosed with adobe fences with mud. The absence of rain and the warm temperature is amply reflected in the construction of these buildings. They are anything but substantial. Still they no doubt serve their purpose which is chiefly protection from the sun during the day.

The Rimac river is at no place very large. Near Lima, it is very small, only a stream trickling over the stones. Practically all the water has been drawn out by the irrigation ditches further up the valley. The city of Lima is located on the delta plain of the Rimac river. There is no broad coastal plain here as is true further north. The foothills of the western cordillera at this point extend clear to the sea. In fact, jutting promontories like those of San Lorenzo island and Chaurillios are simply a part of the foothills.

Above the influence of the water from the irrigation ditches these foothills rise up gray and barren before the eye. In the evening glow as the sun is sinking to rest in the far waters of the broad Pacific, they present a most beautiful sight. It is a picture such as even the years would not erase from the memory of one fortunate enough to behold it.

The climate here is delightful. The evening air is cool and bracing. This is due to the breezes that blow in from the waters of the Humboldt current in the Pacific to the west, or perhaps it comes as it often does from the ice and snow-capped mountains to the east.

Thirty-three miles from Lima, and at an altitude of 2800 feet we reach Chosica. This is a beautiful little place set in among high towering mountains. It is one of the chief resorts of Lima. Trains are frequent and the upper classes of Lima society often come here for the night or over Sunday, especially in the hot season. It is a little city of beautiful homes, summer residences, and in season its streets are alive with gaily dressed people, all out for a good time and

the enjoyment of the fresh mountain air away from the hot and dusty streets of the capital.

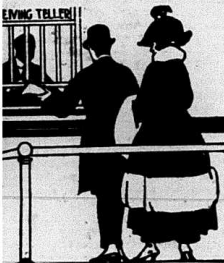
This is the point at which the big climb to the "Roof of the World" begins. In 73 miles we rise to an elevation of more than three miles. We go up in that distance almost 12000 feet. The average grade is about 3 1/2 per cent. Often it reaches 5 and 6 per cent. At no time do we go on a down grade even for a short distance. The train is of five cars and is pulled by a huge four-driver American oil burning locomotive. The heavy grade is all the time evident by the hard pulling of this powerful engine.

At San Bartolome which is 47 miles from Callao, the engine is turned and shifted to the other end of the train and we start upward on a great horseshoe curve which brings us a quarter of an hour later high up on the mountain side hundreds of feet above the town. It is just after leaving San Bartolome that we pass through the first tunnel. From now on they come thick and fast. The scenery continually becomes more wonderful, more rugged, more grand. The valley is never more than a quarter of a mile wide. Often it is only a narrow gorge or canyon a few yards wide, with the river Rimac rushing over the rocks hundreds of feet below. On every side the mountains tower thousands of feet into the air, peak beyond peak, a vista stupendous and magnificent. One moment it is all dark as we dash through some tunnel, the next it is all light again and we hold our breath as the train dashes across some steel girdered bridge. Silently we contemplate the sensation of falling through the air and landing mangled on those rugged rocks far below. But we cross in safety and the next moment we are rounding some sharp curve, plunging thru more tunnels, coming out upon a high grade, and ever it is higher, higher, higher.

Shortly before 10:00 in the morning we cross what is known as the Veruga Bridge. This is an immense steel structure of cantilever type with the tracks carried on top. It derives its name from the valley where it is located in which the Veruga disease, peculiar to Peru and to this vicinity flourishes.

Veruga or Carrions disease is not known in any other part of the world. It occurs only in a few narrow valleys or defiles at an elevation of 3000 to 6000 feet. It consists of eruptions on the skin or mucous membranes principally on the face or limbs, with red colored tumors of varying sizes. Anemia and fever precede the disease and if the eruptions do not take place it often proves fatal. Its real nature is unknown, nevertheless it is considered advisable not to wash in water or drink in places where the disease prevails.

(Continued next week.)



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