IN THE BACKWOODS OF BRAZIL.

Some Strange Features of Life in the Province of Matto Grosso.

The Queer Cities of Corumba and Cuyaba—A Town Where Boys Wash for Gold in the Street—Savage Indians Who are Born Without Hair and Grow Nose Except on the Head—Something About the Chaco and Its Curious Tribes—The Vast Forests and Pastures of Interior Brazil—How Cattle Take the Place of Horses as Riding Animals.

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Asuncion, Paraguay, Jan. 16, 1899.—The wonders of the Parana system grow upon me. I am now on the Paraguay, which flows 2,000 miles from its source in Brazil before it loses itself in the Parana. The Paraguay has a network of tributaries about it, numerous, up thick you can sail for thousands of miles. On some of these rivers you can go in canoes so close to the tributaries of the Amazon that you can carry your boat a short distance and go out to the Atlantic through that mighty stream.

The Parana proper, which I left about 200 miles south, at the town of Corrientes, extends more than 2,000 thousand miles further north, bounding south Paraguay and running on into Brazil. It is navigable for about 1,000 miles by having a part of its course, but it has 18 miles of rocky rapids, and in future it may be one of the great commercial routes of the world. It has waterfalls which are said to surpass those of Niagara. There are on it the beauties of Paraguay and Brazil, and are known as the Sulte Guayra. They are, I am told, far larger than those of the falls of Tayasa, which are sometimes called the Niagara of South America.

OPENED BY AN AMERICAN.

I have already written how in coming to Asuncion I sailed as far as from New York City to Omaha on large river steamers. I can go just as much farther by steam into the very heart of this continent, or further than from Philadelphia to Salt Lake City. The mouth of steam navigation is now Corumba, Brazil, the capital of Matto Grosso, and is antipodes of a vast country of undeveloped resources.

The first man to penetrate this region by steam was an American. His name was Capt. Thomas J. Page. He was commander of the steam launch Alpha of our navy and upon this little ship in 1859 he pushed his way 1,800 to 2,000 miles from the Atlantic. Today Brazilian and Paraguayan steamers go the same route twice a month, and there are steamers having here weekly for Cuyaba. The Paraguay river for half the journey is everywhere twenty feet deep, while its average depth is said to be forty-five feet.

IN THE HEART OF BRAZIL.

In going from Asuncion to Cuyaba you pass through a region which is most picturesque. Crossing the boundary of Paraguay, you enter the great province of Matto Grosso, which is an empire in itself. As you go north the Paraguay river grows in the scenery become wild, and you sleep in and out among mountains upon the banks of which grow fern trees and giant palms. The banks are covered with a wooled mass of vegetation, the trees and shrubs being bound together with vines and creepers. You could not make your way through them with an ax or a knife.

There are all kinds of wild birds, and you get many shots from the steamer. There are alligators everywhere, and if you fire early you may see and then see there wounded among the fish.

Further north if you throw a dynamite cartridge into the water the dead fish will come on and float on the top and you can within a few minutes pick up enough to half fill your boat. Sometimes these fish have blossomed out splendid in the brightest reds and blues. The alligators now seem to have grown, and you can frequently approached by Indians who have tiger skins for sale. A good skin will bring from $5 to $10. In addition to this there is sometimes a bounty paid for such skins. There is one man on the river who has made quite a little fortune by killing tigers. He has killed 195 and has received in the neighborhood of $2,000 for them. He got $10 apiece for the skins and the cattle owners paid him a bounty of $5 apiece.

Other things offered for sale are parrots and monkeys. The prices are low, and you can have them for a little making. You can also buy bows and arrows, Indian baskets and hammocks. The hammocks are quite pretty. Some are made of the brilliant feathers of tropical birds, and cost as high as $200 apiece.

FROM ASUNCION TO MATTO GROSSO.

The province of Matto Grosso is one of the largest in Brazil. It is as large as one-sixth of the whole Brazilian domain, including the outlying possessions. It forms the southern central half of the country. The greater part of it has never been explored, and it is as wild today as it was when Sebastian Cabot made his way up the Paraguay river only a few years after America was discovered.

Matto Grosso is a land of gold and diamonds, of vast pastures, of impenetrable forests, of rubber and cacao, and, in fact, in its possibilities, one of the richest lands of the globe.

This territory is to be reached only by the Parana and Paraguay rivers, or by a long, slow railroad connecting it with the rest of Brazil, and its people rely for their supplies on the steamers of the Parana system. Every bit of imports is brought over 2,700 miles by river boats, and the officials, who as a rule come from Rio Janeiro, must travel a thousand miles further.

Leaving Asuncion on your way to Matto Grosso, you first pass Villa Concepcion, the biggest city of north Paraguay. There is a white cathedral on the banks, and back of this the town. Concepcion contains about 2,000 people. It is made up of stuccoed buildings and tiled roofs. It is a business center, exporting large quantities of hides, of Paraguay tea, and tobacco. There are more Indians and negroes there than in Asuncion, and you find that the Indian and negroes increase as you go north.

At Coimbra, Brazil, 150 miles from Buenos Aires, you see once more the west bank of the Paraguay the first village of any size for a distance of 500 miles on that side of the river. So far all the settlements have been on the east bank of the river, the country to the west being almost entirely wild. At Coimbra there is a Brazilian fort. Further on you come to the little village of Albuquerque, with low, wooded mountains behind it, and about 125 miles further the steamer stops at Coromba.

THE CHIEF PART OF SOUTH BRAZIL.

Corumba is over 2,200 miles from the Atlantic. It is as close as far inland by water as Salt Lake City is from New York by rail. It is the chief port of Matto Grosso. Here is located the only custom house of the province, and the officers come on board and open your trunks.

The steamer stops long enough for you to get a good look at the city. It is situated on a hill, commanding the country for miles. There are seven streets in the city, and the place is picturesque. It has the usual Spanish buildings of stucco and tiles, with palm trees growing here and there in the gardens. There is a beautiful plaza in the center of Corumba, about which are some of the principal stores. There is a great deal of thrift to be observed among the merchants. The city does a large business, much of it which is managed by French, Italians and Syrian Jews.

Goods are sent out from here to different parts of the interior. There is a mule mule to Bolivia, the journey from being four days. Cuyaba is 20 miles away. The journey takes fourteen days, and it is very expensive. Mules are rented for the journey, and a good one for less than $100 in gold. You must lay in a good supply of canned goods for the trip, for there is not the country fare poorly. There are few horses. They are subject to a fly-like pest, which sucks the blood of their nostrils, and their place has been largely taken by oxen and bulls. Bullocks are used for plowing also, for riding a good riding bullock bringing a good price. The bullock is not a bad saddle animal. He gait is a shambling one or nace, and, after you become used to it, it is not at all unpleasant. The animals are directed, say oxen which are tied to their horns. They are often used to pack mules, a bullock taking the place that horses have in our country.

THE BRAZILIAN TOWN OF CUYABA.

It is shortly after you leave Corumba that you pass out of the Paraguay river and enter the San Lorenzo. The San Lorenzo is not so big as the Paraguay. In the Paraguay proper steamers draw as much as nine feet, while those in which you change at Corumba do not draw over five. It takes about twelve hours to reach the San Lorenzo river from Corumba, and you sail up and a half upon it before you enter the Cuyaba river, on which you steam to Cuyaba.

The steamers are always crowded, you often being taken in one little boat. The winds journey from Corumba to Cuyaba requires six days, and the fare is $7 in gold. It is one of the cheapest and roughest trips of the world. This price includes your meals—coffee in the morning, breakfast at 10 a.m. and dinner in the evening.

The scenery of the San Lorenzo and Cuyaba rivers is very tropical. There are many palms growing. There are cotton trees which have balls of cotton upon them as big as oranges. Others have blossoms and a silky fiber which hung down in great vines of white. This stuff is used by the people for making pillows.

Cuyaba has about 20,000 people. It is a surprisingly good city for its location and very much like other towns. It has newspapers, hospitals and schools. It has water works, a street car line and a cathedral. Its colleges French, English and Portuguese are taught, and in its orphan asylum there are 200 boys. The town was founded in 1722, being laid out in Portuguese style with a long parallelogram and back in situated about two miles from the river and you can ride to it on one of the same cars or you may go on a street car drawn by mules.

WHERE THE BOYS WASH GOLD.

The country surrounding Cuyaba is rich agriculturally, and I am told there is much gold in the hills back of the city. The cathedral is said to stand over a gold lode, and on the edge of the town there are placers which are still worked by the Portuguese. I have met several Americans who have been mining gold in the rivers of Brazil, but so far none of them have struck it very rich. It does not need very sharp eyes to see that gold is there, after a heavy tropical rain the boys go out and search for grains of gold in the street. It is said that they do not often sell gold for their trouble. There are also diamond mines not far off in the interior, but I am told that the best diamonds have so far been found much further north.

THE CHACO.

In going to Matto Grosso you skirt one of the least known parts of South America. This is the vast region known as the Chaco, lying west of the Paraguay river and south of Bolivia. The northern part of it belongs to Paraguay and the rest to the Argentine Republic. The part belonging to the Argentine lies south of the Pilcomayo river and comprises a territory larger than Massachusetts and Massachusetts combined, and enough to make three States as big as Ohio.

The only settlements in this vast region are along the Paraguay. They consist of hotels and trading establishments and a few scattering villages. The chief town is the Paraguayan Chaco is Villa Hayes, which is to date from Asuncion and which has now about twenty-one families of foreigners. They are chiefly Swiss, French and Italians, who are engaged in raising sugar cane and sweet potatoes and in manufacturing brandy.

There are two large rivers which run through the Chaco. The Pilcomayo winds about like a corkscrew from the Bolivian Andes to the Paraguay river. It is full of rapids and cataracts and navigable. The Vermejo or the Vermejo river enters the Paraguay far south of the Pilcomayo, and is the boundary line between the two countries. Its waters are so red that they discolor those of the Paraguay for a mile or two. The Vermejo is about 1,200 miles long and is navigable for only a short distance.

Just behind the Chaco rises a range of mountains which shut it off from the Bolivian Andes to the Paraguay river. It is full of rapids and cataracts and navigable. The Vermejo or the Vermejo river enters the Paraguay far south of the Pilcomayo, and is the boundary line between the two countries. Its waters are so red that they discolor those of the Paraguay for a mile or two. The Vermejo is about 1,200 miles long and is navigable for only a short distance.

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THE CHACO.

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HOME LIFE A LA CUBANA.

Scenes and Incidents in a Typical Casa—Daily Routine of the Average Cuban Household—The Servant Girl Problem in Cuba.

Special Correspondence.

Matanzas, Jan. 20th, 1899.—In order to give you an inside look at domestic arrangements a la Cubana, I invite you to spend a day with me, in the typical casa in which I am myself a guest. It is understood, however, that we are not going to impose the hospitality of our kind entertainers by seriously paying or invitation compliments. We will note only those things which lie on the surface that he who runs may read them, remembering that every country under the sun has some peculiar customs of its own. While the ways of our Cuban neighbors appear strange to us, from the angle of vision to which we were educated, our ways may seem equally queer from their point of view; and perhaps a judicious mingling of both might be of mutual benefit.

One frequently hears in Cuba a Spanish proverb which runs:

"Moderar, mal, y la ventana
No se le tiene por la mesma—

meaning, in effect, that music, honey, and seeing out of the windows are pleasures which should not be indulged in to excess, or they will lose their relishing. We will, so, as to take a look from my casa, which is located in Matanzas, while the thermometer is already climbing high in the sighties, the windows flung wide open, gratuitous air, in no small quantity. Iron as the house walls (about four feet) and as hot as the double floors, the numerous rooms—non-barred outside and ventilated within—it affords the coolest kind of a week-day, with a little cool breeze for my easy chair, table, typewriter, camera and big bowl of cocoa. The inner court is of the typical Cuban, second floor apartments—floor of square marble tiles, with no tablecloths to the numerous tables, and the chairs, tables, and brass headed, with a linen quilt on one bare square in lieu of a coverlet, yellow satin hangings, crimson damask counterpane, and long, bare pillows, hard as pretzels—the numerous doors, double door, extending from floor to ceiling and faced with a mirror, the latest high, of lattice work, open upon the marble-paved, vine-trellised courtyard, with fountain and fish pool.

The outlook from the window into a quaint old garden, is a never-ending delight. They are now upon every of banana trees, arching their green umbrellas above flowers and shrubs of countless variety, with a little pool, bordered white, outlined by rose-vines or trellises of Japanese cane; overshoot clusters of oranges, or of other homely vegetables, thornless bees and three among strange each and never become, tobacco-plants and fish—a, is everywhere, and over all the royal palms flaunt their magnificent plumes against the azure sky. Yet in a little bed are a towering group of three monarchs of tropical vegetation, with smooth, round trunks, and ribbed and ominous plumed by set. The wicked mistress of the casa says she planted them there with her own hand, when she came here on her wedding day, more than forty years ago. Then they were scarcely high baby palms, and now they tower fully eighty feet above the housetops, and she tells me that during the darkest days of war, when the once wealthy residents were threatened with starvation, they made all the living not only for herself and several children, servants—who could not be discharged, so faithful were they—were sent to go—but also for several recent contrabandistas, who she shielded from the pursuit of the Cubans, who scattered about the flower garden. Though the tax on tobacco was so high that it almost prohibited its raising in the plantations, there was never any tax on the little that could be grown in purdah. So her sister-in-law plants every "cigar gain" and brought in from Jaucu to her a year. It happened that the contrabandista cutwaters was a perfect cigarette maker, and he dried the tobacco leaves, and made up the cigars, and I disposed of them as Madame could not have done.

An additional charm to the garden, and many more through the garden, not only furnishes necessary irrigation, but gives a very pretty effect to the parterre, is a little stream, which flows in the middle of the garden. The bank is quaint enough, and characteristically Cuban, to the island paved with rained stone and extending from floor to ceiling, it is covered with marble tiles, and the stone is cut in the shape of tall bananas. A flight of marble steps leads up to the elevated marble floor, and the stone is cut and shaped in the form of a small tank of clear, cold water, into which the latter descends by another flight of marble steps. There is a shower bath and all modern accessories—except hot water, which is the only one we miss—and the tub and the water can be changed at will, the refuse being distributed over the garden.

I have not yet been able to make up my mind which is the most delightful part of this old Cuban house—the garden, the patio, or the house itself. The latter is an old, rambling, one-story affair, its walls of brick faced with stucco, and its roof of tiles. The patio is a large square in front of the house, and the latter is an oblong, with the front door in the middle, and the front door, which is a beautifully carved strip at the top of each of adjoining doors, greets each and opens into the patio. It has which shed a soft light through the large apartments. The main hall, large enough for a ball room, is floored with colored crystal chandeliers, which are every bit as fine as those that illuminate the east room, and the ceiling is of Wedgewood blue, and the one is the one of Matanzas that we are fain to be lighted when we are in the city. The dining room is a little smaller, but still quite large, having long which the cook heads are in a high position among the dusky tribe to which she belongs, I presume. The Cubans seldom do, however, beyond pronouncing a blessing, and rising from the table, immediately chatting with friends, thereby artificial light, or the cool of the evening, or the cool of the day, if it is in the morning. The dining room is furnished with rare magnificence, in the Cuban style. Happily, there are no rubber carpets nor oilcloths, but the bare floors and exclude the air. Cabinets, chairs and couches, enough to accommodate a small regiment, range the room, rows against every wall, and here and there in the vast expanse of wall space are hung rows of Angelus in strong relief, and vis-a-vis upon it. Every one is a masterpiece, and the cabinets are filled with rare vases of every kind, and the dining table is loaded with little water saints, glass balls, china vases, and other bric-a-brac. Splendid paintings, mostly sentimental subjects, similar to churches—adorn the walls, and there are no mirrors, massive, elaborately carved pianos of rare mahogany, if I mistake not, from Paris or Spain, which in the United States would be considered of priceless value.

The patio, or inner court, is truly "a joy forever," with its tall fountain surrounding the pool, flowers that surround it, and small fish darting among the turtles in its marble basin. The broad space is shrouded except for the rose-covered trellises and under the cool shadows of its banana and sago palms, which, great, red tiles of pots one day, shaped like the jars of Egypt, contain filtered water for the family tubs.

Most of these big casas have two patios, the second used for stable yard and servants' quarters. Like all Cuban kitchens—so called—of late, it is set to a corner of the back court, flanked by stamping mules and horses on one side, storage and stable yard on the other. Its floor of rough bricks is raised a few inches above the yard, and there is no need of windows and doors, for the entire front is open to the patio. It contains no kitchen range, and not even a chair or table. A long adobe shelf outside answers the latter purpose, and when the servants eat, as they are continually doing, their bare feet and bare form a black frieze along the step (formed by the raised yard and floor. An adobe bench, built against the farther wall of the kitchen, is topped with pots and pans, and there is no need of a table, or chairs, or table. As charcoal is the universal cooking fuel, and charcoal is cheap, and almost every one is economical (Lent therefore does not change the mode of the country, but only the kind of food), American stoves would be altogether out of place, on account of their unsatisfactory as well as the more costly fuel. Gas stoves are out of the question, for the cooking, which must be made to answer, but not nearly so well as the primed methods to-day, nothing of the danger to the life of the mistress of carious servants. When a meal is to be cooked, two charcoal fires are kindled in two or three pots, and the housekeeper is the sutlers of adobe, according to the number of dishes required and the number of whole dinners of many courses may be served over a few handfuls of fuel. Only great care is needed to keep the vessel that surmounts it, and quickly burns out, letting no ashes. The Cuban range is so very good that, if we were to—for the ruddy breakfast and the late afternoon dinner. The early morning cup of coffee—drunk from a cloth lace is cooked over a little clay pot, or a, if we choose, we can have it served in bed, under it, in the dining room adjoined. The Cubans take their coffee into their bedrooms, and, in the morning, also drink that it is not fit to drink unless "black as night, bitter as death and sweet as love." The cup is half a pint of brewed coffee, ground fine, to each pint of water, slowly filtered, drop by drop, and the coffee is to drink with hot milk, a cup two-thirds full of the latter to two or three spoonfuls of coffee. The early morning cup is taken full strength, with the addition of sugar, and maybe cognac.

Whatever else may be the shortcomings and worthy of imitation in Cuban methods, I am sure that dishwashing, or that disagreeable duty is practiced here, will be one of them. Hot water is not absolutely necessary, charcoal are good out so quickly, and soap is so very expensive that many families dispense with it, it is used for toilette and laundry purposes. As every article of food is served in a separate dish, one conceives a change of dishes for the dish-washers duties are by no means light, and the result she or he achieves is wonderful, considering the circumstances. The greasy dishes are much grease enters into the Cuban menu, and, of course, the dishes are heaped upon the adobe shelf in the back patio, perhaps in close proximity to the kitchen. The dishes are not washed in wooden bowls, or shallow earthen pans, generally in some other vessel, and after being well rinsed in more cold water, but being wiped, they are turned on end to drain. And there they remain, in sun or shower, until required for use. Knives and forks are never dried, but are left to drain. Yet they remain in sun or shower, as well, required for use. The tin cups and saucers are never always come to the rain clean and shining. Pantries and dish-cupboards are in this land of sunshine. Tubs of water are not found in Cuba, though the best houses have splendidly carved wooden tubs in the bathrooms, rooms for keeping the best silver and show pieces of table-ware. Notwithstanding the absence of tubs, the best houses which to an seem indispensable, we seldom see an untidy kitchen in Cuba. The dishes are washed, and if necessary are smoked black whenever one sees a—as inevitably he or she sees—a "Chow" dinner, and make them.

Every Cuban household has a great many servants, in proportion to the size of the family, and how they all manage to occupy themselves is a mystery. A family of six or eight, in this land of servants, may seem to worrying after something to do! Out West, they say that Mrs. Wiggins, of Wiggins Hill, has to be awake the Missouri river to get a drink of water, and she is obliged to hire a boy to fan her, by the methods of those good people. Given at least one servant to each member of the family, and a cook and hostlers and gardeners and lavenderers and troops of lackeys, and the mistress of the casa has another in the business of doing nothing. For example, there is one servant whose sole duty in life is to wash up dishes, with a maid or two to assist her. One of the maids finds her entire occupation in polishing the silver, knives, spoons and trays, and although she has no bath bricks, patent soaps or "shinings," she does her work in unsolicited dirt, you may see your face in them at all times. She takes the cut in the morning, sweeps the ground, dips up a little fresh earth, and holding the article firmly as a stone, rubs away at her heavy burden. Servant acts as steward, doing the marketing and hoeing the two or three who each day, are brought in "built by the family washing and ironing, and do it beautifully, too, although the river serves as a bath tub and lines which are never boiled, or hung on lines. Others wash the floors and keep the house tidy, attend the children, brush the inkiness hair and shake the dust out of his skirts which swing in the breeze whenever he walks abroad, and so on to the end of the chapter. Six dollars a month is considered good pay for the best cooks, and the others have little but their food and the rest of their wages. Servants are allowed the privilege to carry to their families at night every morsel of cooked food which they can conceal about their persons, and it is left into Cuba are the servants of Cuba are the most honest, obliging and simple-hearted folk I ever met, and I have lived in Mexico and Japan. Each servant has its own peculiarities, and, of course, the mistress of the family, presides over