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## THE BANGKOK OF ECUADOR.

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Babahoyo, Ecuador, March 23, 1898.—For the past two days I have been sailing along the Columbia river of Ecuador. The Guayas is to this country as the Columbia is to the United States. It is the biggest river of the Pacific coast, and just now, in the rainy season, which lasts here from December until May, it has converted the country for miles and miles and miles into a vast lake. Where we entered it from the Pacific just opposite the island of Puna, where Pizarro landed, the river is sixty miles wide, and as we sailed up to Guayaquil we seemed to be passing through an inland sea. The waters were of the color and thickness of pea soup, and upon the fast flowing flood were patches of green, great trees and other debris which were floating down from the Andes to the sea. At Guayaquil the river is more than a mile wide and twenty-six feet deep, furnishing a good and safe harbor the largest of the Pacific steamers. The river there is filled with shipping, and there are hundreds of dugouts, canoes, great rafts and cargo boats used by the natives to bring their wares from the interior for sale.

## THE BANGKOK OF ECUADOR.

I left Guayaquil two days ago, and in the little American-built steamer Fulgmir took an all-night's sail up the Guayas into the interior. I am now far away from the coast, almost at the foothills of the Andes. Chimborazo frowns down upon me, and I can almost hear the rumbling of the volcano Cotopaxi. I am in the city of Babahoyo, or Bodegas, a city which, like Bangkok, is almost all afloat upon the water. The whole land is flooded, and many of the houses are so built that the people live in the second stories and go from one place to another in canoes. The town proper, which contains about 8,000 people, has streets which are now little more than rivers, and in coming from the boat I hired an Indian to carry me to the high lands of the shore on his back. As I went my whisky flask, which I always carry with me here for medicinal purposes, fell out of my pocket into about five feet of water, and I hired another peon to dive for it. He did so, bringing up first the bottle and then the drinking cup which had slipped off when it fell. I made him happy by giving him ten cents for his trouble. The business part of Babahoyo is a few feet higher than the rest of the place, and just now the stores are free from water, though in crossing the street you must hug the buildings and balance yourself on the logs and bamboo bridges put across from sidewalk to sidewalk. The houses are all of two stories, the ground floors being taken up with the cane-like stores, and the second stories forming the living quarters. There are, of course, no pavements of modern improvements. Babahoyo has not a sewer nor a gutter in it. Its only bath-room is a floating shed upon the wharves of the river with the seri-

ous danger of losing a leg by the nip of an alligator. There is not a fireplace nor a chimney in the whole town. There is not a glass window, for the houses are ventilated on second floors by means of lattice work running about the ceiling. The whole front walls of the stores are thrown back in the daytime, and the ground floors are as open as those of Japan. The houses now on the water, a few weeks ago were dry. The ground floor was then used for the chickens, donkeys and cattle. Now these are either on platforms higher up or are living with the family on the second floor, which is built upon piles so high up that the floods do not reach it.

There are hundreds of houses here which can only be reached in canoes. The children go to school in canoes and the marketing is done in boats. The most of these houses belong to the poorer classes, though I shall describe further on my visit to a millionaire planter, who cannot now walk ten steps from his house without drowning. The poorer houses consist of little more than one room, about six feet square, built upon piles about ten feet above the ground and reached by a ladder outside. The houses are thatched with broad, white leaves, tied to a framework of bamboo cane. The floor is of cane and the cracks in it are so many that the women do not need to sweep, the dirt of the household falling through upon the ground or into the water. As to modern conveniences in the way of water closets, these are practically unknown among the natives of Ecuador. Even in the capital, Quito, a city of 50,000 or more, the streets are used by the common people for such purposes, and every family of respectability, when traveling, carries its own conveniences with it. In the houses of the common people there is no privacy whatever, men and women, boys and girls, wives and maidens, all herd together, sleeping in the same clothes they wear in the daytime, lying indiscriminately upon the floor or in the hammocks which form the chief articles of the furniture of their houses. The cooking is done in clay pots on a fire box filled with dirt. The fuel is largely charcoal, the pots being raised upon tiles or bricks to allow room for the coals beneath. The chief food of the tropical parts of the country is the potato, or the yam, known as the pucca, and plantains or large bananas. Much rice is used, being cooked with lard, the most of which comes from the United States. Though this whole region where I now am is filled with fine cattle, the people do not seem to know anything of butter. The chief customers for it are foreigners and the article most sold is the Italian butter in one and two-pound tins. It sells for \$1 a pound in this money, or about 50 cents in American gold. I am told that at this price there is not a great profit to the Italian butter makers, for the tariff and the selling charges are high.

Landing at Babahoyo, I was for a time at a loss how to make myself un-

derstood by the natives. There was no one about who spoke English, and my pure Castilian Spanish did not seem to be understood. At last, however, I met a German storekeeper, a Mr. Kurger, who told me that there was an American living in the city. This was a Mr. Klein, a carpenter, contractor and undertaker. I soon found him among his coffins. He left his work and devoted himself to me for the day. Together we went to visit one of the biggest plantations of Ecuador. This belongs to Mr. Augustine Barmos, a man who owns thousands of cattle and horses, and who sells something like 300,000 pounds of chocolate beans every year. The plantation is now all under water, and we had to take a canoe to visit it. Our canoe was about thirty feet long and not over thirty inches wide. It was a dugout and was poled and sculled by two lusty brown-skinned gondoliers, one of whom stood at each end of it. Mr. Klein sat in the bottom, and I was given a place in the stern. At last we moved on into the tropical forest. We rowed for miles among the tree tops, now grazing a great black alligator, and again chattered at by monkeys, who made faces at us as they scampered away. The trees were full of strange birds, which fluttered and cried as we went by. Now we get a shot at one, a gallareta, a beautiful thing as big as a pigeon with a bill like blood, long legs of a golden yellow and a plumage of royal purple.

I try a shot at the crocodile, but the canoe trembles as I stand up in it and the ugly monster gets away unharmed. There are wild ducks and other birds which I have never seen before, and Mr. Klein tells me that he often bags a deer on the highlands or has a shot at a wild hog or a leopard. The ride is beyond description. Under us there is twelve feet of water, where a few weeks ago it was all dry land. The trees make a thick arbor-like shade over us, and we wind in and out through them, now making our way along a narrow canal of green and then shooting out into a great green-walled chamber of water, the trees about which are loaded down with orchids, each of which in New York would bring a sum equal to the wages of the average workman. Insects are plenty, bugs and ants of every description fall upon us as we float onward, and Mr. Klein tells me how a great snake once dropped down into his boat from the branches above. The trees are all strange and tropical. There are rubber trees loaded with alligator pears and here and there a great palm has hoisted its green head above the others. Outside of the insects and birds the silence is almost oppressive. The soft air is heavy with peace and rest, and the ripple of the water as our long canoe works its way onward seems to invite us to sleep. Now a canoe with a family of Indians passes us, and again a great cargo boat loaded with cocoa is shoved along on its way to the markets.

Nearly all the land above which we