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THE ROOF OF THE WORLD.

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Guayaquil, Ecuador, March 28, 1898.

Though the equator cuts Ecuador, the bulk of its people have as fine a climate as those of any part of the globe. They are sky dwellers. Nineteenths of them live among the clouds. There are dozens of towns here which are twice as high as Denver, and there are cattle ranches in the Andes at an altitude of 12,000 feet. On about the latitude of the Congo, Quito has a more temperate climate than that of Washington city. Here at Guayaquil the climate is that of the tropics; in some of the Andean valleys it is like an Ohio June all the year around, and on many of the peaks the snow never melts.

Quito is the highest capital city on earth. It is situated on the roof of the world. It is more than half a mile higher up in the air than the City of Mexico, and more than a thousand feet higher than the Mount of St. Bernard, in the Alps, which is the highest point in Europe where men live all the year around. Quito is, I am told, going backward. It is represented as having about 80,000 people. It is a question, whether it has 60,000, and it had its greatest number over 350 years ago, before the country was discovered by the Spaniards. Then it had several hundred thousand people, who had a better civilization, on the average, than the masses of Ecuador have today. There was a town on the site of Quito, according to tradition, a hundred years before Christ was born, and it is known that a city existed there in 1000 A. D. Atahualpa, the Inca monarch who was conquered and murdered by Pizarro, had a palace at Quito, the roof of which, it is said, was covered with pure gold, and of the treasures which were hidden by the Indians at this time it is believed that vast quantities were buried in Ecuador.

Owing to the rainy season I have not been able to make my way to the Ecuadorian capital. The route is flooded and the mails are now fifteen days in coming a distance of less than 300 miles. The city lies over the Andes in a valley between two ranges, and you ride on mules about the precipitous slopes to reach it. In good weather the trip may be made in eight days; now the mules must wade through the mud up to their bellies, and in descending some of the declivities they sit down and slide. There are here, however, many people who have lived in Quito, and my information concerning the city will give you an idea of the place as it is today. Quito is about a mile square. It would just cover four 160-acre farms. The streets are laid out at right angles, but are very narrow and are such that the man who introduced the first carriage into the town had to get a permit to do so. Just back of the city is the active volcano Mount Pichincha, and all about it on the sides of the valley, walling it in as it were, are some of the highest peaks of the

Andes. Mount Pichincha is snow-capped and its peak is so near Quito that the ice used for making the ice cream of the city comes from there. Mount Pichincha has a crater half a mile wide at the bottom. It is a mile higher up in the air than Mount Aetna, and its fires are such that it has been said that Vesuvius would be a portable furnace beside it. The top of this mountain can be reached by horses in a five hours' ride from Quito. Standing on the slope of Mount Pichincha, Quito lies in the valley below you. It is a city of white adobe two story houses covered with red tiles. The houses look low and squatty, and you see among them a large number of convents, monasteries and churches. Fully one-fourth of the town is taken up with church establishments, and there are as many priests and nuns to the square as you will find in the city of Rome. Quito has always been a great supporter of Rome, and its contributions to the Catholic church have been so many that it has been called "The little mother of the pope."

Until lately the government of Ecuador has been largely a union of church and state and today the priests have great influence. Catholicism is the only religion of the country, and by Catholicism I do not mean the liberal religion of Archbishops Ireland and Gibbons, but the Spanish Catholicism, which is as bad almost as that of the days of the inquisition and of the middle ages. Ecuador is, you know, nominally a republic, but voters must belong to the church and must be able to read and write. Not more than one-tenth of the people can do the latter, so the educated whites practically control the elections—I should rather say that the officials control them, and that there is no such thing as a fair election in Ecuador. The land is one of revolutions. The present president, Don Alfaro, has been a revolutionist all his life and has at last gotten into power. He has had a number of narrow escapes, some of which Captain Power, the commander of one of the little Ecuadorian men-of-war, has described to me. At one time when Power was with Alfaro his boat was captured by the enemy and Alfaro escaped by swimming to the shore on a barrel, and at another time he lived for weeks in the wilds of Ecuador and Colombia hunted by the state troops. President Alfaro has limited somewhat the power of the priests, although I am told that he is afraid of them. He is progressive in his views and he is very desirous that foreign capital should come to Ecuador and develop it. The president lives at Quito. He has a salary of 24,000 sucres, or about \$12,000 a year, and his term of office is for four years. He has a cabinet, one of the ministers of which represents the church. In addition to the president the government consists of a congress, a system of courts and of governors of the various provinces, who are appointed by the president and may be removed by him.

Ecuador has a very small national

debt and its direct taxes are low. Much of the government income is derived from the tariff on imports, which covers almost everything, and also from the tax on salt. Salt is a government monopoly here. Every city has its government salt warehouse, where the merchants or private consumers must come to buy, and where they pay several times as much for a very poor article as they would if salt were free. I visited such a warehouse at the town of Bodegas the other day. There were hundreds of tons of dirty salt banked up in large barn-like rooms, and I saw some being weighed out to purchasers on a pair of American scales. It costs the government, I am told, about 60 cents a hundred-weight to make it, and its price at the warehouses is almost 2 cents a pound. The revenue from this source amounts to about \$200,000 a year.

Ecuador has now a public school system, but only about one-tenth of the people, as I have said, can read and write. There are in the country in the neighborhood of 1,000 primary schools and also a number of those of higher grades. The children in these schools all study out loud, and the din is as great as that of the schools of China. Quito has a university, largely managed by Jesuits, and there is also a college at the city of Cuenca. Here at Guayaquil there are two newspapers, both of which get short cable dispatches. The papers are cried by newsboys on the streets. They are printed on old American presses from type made in the United States, although their paper and ink come, I am told, from Germany. Among the other institutions of Ecuador are a hospital here and a hospital, a lunatic and a leper asylum at Quito. The cemetery at Quito is on the pigeon-hole system. You rent a box in the wall for your coffin, and it stays there as long as your relatives or friends pay the rent. When the pay stops the authorities pull out the coffin and dump the remains into a great clatern adjoining the cemetery. A similar custom prevails in the cemetery of the city of Guanahuato, in Mexico, where the bones of the delinquent dead are shoveled away into a great vault, where they lie piled up like so much corn in a granary.

THEY TRADE IN HUMAN HEADS.

The bulk of the population of Ecuador is made up of Indians. There are 150,000 Indians in the republic who have never been subdued, and some of the savages upon the Napo river, which flows through the eastern part of Ecuador into the Maronon, are less known than the people of interior Africa. Some of these tribes shoot their enemies with poisoned arrows, using blow guns made of reeds. They send the arrows at you with great force, and a scratch from one of them is sure death. It is in this same region that dried heads of human beings are cured for sale. As I write these words a human head, cut off at below the chin, lies on the table