

IN THE BACK WOODS OF BOLIVIA

La Paz, Bolivia, July 15, 1898.—Bolivia is one of the least known countries of the world. Even now the geographers are disputing about its area, and the different estimates vary by more than 100,000 square miles. The information I have on the subject comes from Senor Manuel V. Ballivian, the president of the La Paz Geographical society, and one of the best-posted men upon all such matters connected with this country. Senor Ballivian tells me that Bolivia contains more than 597,000 square miles. The same figures are given in the Statesman's Year Book and in the volume on Bolivia published by the bureau of American republics at Washington. This is almost one-sixth the size of the whole United States, including Alaska. It is equal to more than ten states as big as New York, bigger than any country of Europe, with the exception of Russia, and more than Germany, France, Great Britain, Greece, Switzerland and Belgium combined. This vast territory has not as many people as the state of Massachusetts. I doubt if it could figure out as many as Chicago has at this writing, and the Greater New York would give at least one and a half souls to every human being in Bolivia. The population is estimated at about 2,000,000, all told, and of these I believe that not more than half a million have white blood in them. Think of giving a territory one-sixth the size of ours and proportionately quite as rich in its natural resources to less than half the people of Philadelphia, and you have about the conditions which prevail here. The whites practically own Bolivia, and the other three-fourths of the people, who are Indians, are their servants. Of course there are a few exceptions to this classification, but as a rule it will hold good. It is especially so as regards the domestic Indians, who number much more than half of the population, and who are in many cases practically the slaves of the whites. Here at La Paz there are at least five Indians to one white, and the city is more Indian than anything else.

The richest parts of Bolivia have not been surveyed, and there are great provinces here which are practically unexplored. There are some sections which are as unknown as Central Africa, and their inhabitants have as curious customs as the savages along the edges of the Sahara. There is a strip of Bolivia several hundred miles wide and about five hundred miles long, lying between this plateau and the boundary of Brazil, which has resources of great wealth. I have met men here who have traveled overland to Paraguay and the Argentine. They tell me of vast plains upon which cattle feed in herds of thousands. They can be bought for from two to three dollars a head, for there is no means of getting them to the markets. At present Senor Ballivian tells me there is a syndicate formed in London to connect these rich grazing lands with the head of navigation of some of the Amazon branches by means of a railway which will run along the boundary between Brazil and Bolivia, but on Brazilian soil. The road will be on the line of a concession granted to Col. Church some years ago, and its purpose will be to carry these cheap cattle to the rubber camps of the Amazon. There are several other important projects to build railroads in Bolivia. One is to construct a line from La Paz to the Desaguadero river. This line would be sixty-six miles long and Senor Ballivian says it will probably be begun this summer. Another scheme is to extend Central North Argentine railway to Sucre. This road is now near the Bolivian border, and

it would pass through a rich cattle-grazing, agricultural and mining territory, and would furnish an outlet to the Atlantic for Bolivian products. There are several other plans for railroads from the Argentine into Bolivia, and the day will probably come when all of eastern Bolivia will be opened up to settlement.

At present it is extremely difficult to get to any part of this country. It took me five days to come to La Paz from the coast, a distance of not more than 500 miles, and it will require at least six days of hard travel for me to reach the Pacific by the way I have planned. In coming here I had to spend two days on the railroad before I was landed on the shores of Lake Titicaca. It took another day to cross that lake, I had to wait at Chililaya a day, and the fifth day was taken up in the stage ride, which landed me in La Paz. In going back I shall have to take three days of hard staging from here to Oruro, and then have three days upon the smallest long, narrow gauge of the world in traveling for 600 miles over the Andes to the sea. For the same money and the same time I could comfortably cross the United States from New York to San Francisco, a distance almost five times as great. And still this is what they call easy and rapid travel here. The most of Bolivia is accessible only on mules or on foot. The American minister is arranging to pay a visit to the capital, which is at Sucre and about 400 miles from here. He will have to take mules or stage for 150 miles to the railroad, and, after a short ride on the cars, will take mules again for a five days' ride through the mountains to Sucre. I understand that a guard will be furnished him by the Bolivian government, though I should judge that the trip would be perfectly safe without it. From Sucre to the famous mining town of Potosi is about 100 miles by mule and bridle path, and from Oruro to Cochabamba, which is a town of 25,000, it is a three and one-half days' ride on horseback. Nearly all of the large towns, if the half dozen towns of from ten to forty thousands which embrace the largest settlements of this country can be called large, are on the highlands and in the mountains, and in most cases travel must be on horse or mule back. The country hotels are more like stables than anything else, and when on an out-of-the-way road it is almost impossible to buy food of the Indians or to secure quarters in their huts to spend the night. You sleep in the inns on platforms made of stone or sun-dried bricks and eat what you can get. I carry a camp bed with me, for the native beds are lousy and dirty. Other necessities are a rubber coat, heavy boots, a vicuna rug and canned provisions.

This part of Bolivia through which I am traveling may be said to have a temperate climate. La Paz, in fact, is just now a little too cold for spring or fall clothing, and I have on two heavy suits of underwear and the same woolen clothes that I wear at home in December. It snowed this afternoon. Still, a week or so on horseback would take me into tropical Bolivia. The eastern part of this country is one of the richest lands of the world, and I am told that it will be the great Bolivia of the future. I have met several men who have gone from La Paz down the rivers which flow into the Amazon and by the Amazon to the Atlantic. They tell me wonderful stories of rubber forests, of trees of wild cotton, of plants with fibre like silk and of vegetation which is so dense as to be almost impenetrable. They speak also of savages who are cannibals and of other tribes who go about stark naked and regard not the laws of God nor man. At Lima I met a young German

explorer named Kroehle, who had spent three years in traveling about through the eastern provinces of Peru and among the Indians of the faraway branches of the Amazon. He had an excellent camera with him, and I have had the good fortune to get some prints from his negatives. The most of them I dare not publish, for the figures of both men and women are entirely nude, and the curious features of life which they show, while interesting from an ethnological standpoint are hardly fit for a family newspaper. Mr. Kroehle was many times in danger of his life. He was twice wounded with poisoned arrows, and he describes the travel through these regions as dangerous in the extreme. He was for a time among the head hunters of the River Napo in Ecuador and Peru, and the first pictures ever taken of these people were made by him. One of these pictures I published in connection with my letter on Ecuador.

The Napo region is full of queer people. The Indians of one tribe there wear plates of wood or metal in the lobes of their ears as big around as the bottom of the average tumbler. They have their ears pierced when they are children and at first put bits of grass and twigs in the holes to keep them open. A little later additional twigs are inserted and the holes are gradually enlarged, until they are as big around as a bracelet. I have seen in Burmah and in southern India natives who follow the same custom. It is not an uncommon thing in Burmah for a woman to carry a cigar made of tobacco wrapped in corn husks and as big around as a broomstick in her ear hole. These Indians go the Burmese one better, but the extra expenditure they put on their ear holes they save on their dress, for both women and men go about naked. There are other queer tribes on the Napo. The river, you know, rises in the Andes of Ecuador and flows a distance of 800 miles before it empties into the Amazon. It is navigable for 500 miles from its mouth by small steamboats. The Javary river, which flows between Brazil and Peru, is said to be 1,300 miles long, and the Ucayli, another branch of the Amazon, is of about the same length. The Upper Marañon flows through Peru, and it is navigable to Borja a distance of 2,600 miles from the Atlantic. Think of a stream running across the United States from New York to far beyond Salt Lake City, and let this be navigable for small steamers and you have an idea of the possibilities of trade on these Amazon branches. The Beni is another Amazon branch which flows through Bolivia, and the Mamora and Guapon are other long navigable waterways.

All of these tropical districts of Peru and Bolivia contain curious tribes. There are some cannibals among them who eat the flesh of their enemies and do not scruple to serve up baby roasts and woman stew upon occasion. Some of the pictures that Mr. Kroehle took were of the cannibal tribes. He calls them the Cachiro Indians and says they live along the River Pachitea, a branch of the Amazon. Others of the Indians of these regions use blow guns and poisoned arrows. The arrows are made of iron wood, tipped with flints, which are poisoned at the points. The guns are reeds from ten to twelve feet long. The Indians use these weapons for killing their game as well as for their wars. The slightest scratch of the arrow will cause death, and, strange to say, the poison does not injure the meat of the animals killed by it. The making of this poison is kept a secret by the Indians. I am told it is made by sticking the arrows in putrified human flesh which has already been poisoned in some other way. The poison acts very quickly and causes death within a few mo-