

SOME REMINISCENCES OF TRAVEL IN ECUADOR

BY JOSEPH H. SINCLAIR

SINCE the year 1920 I have spent a good deal of time in travelling in one of the most interesting countries of South America, the Republic of Ecuador. I have made considerable research into the history, the bibliography, the geography and the geology of that country and have published occasional monographs concerning one or the other of these subjects. A field of investigation which has interested me very much is that of the periodical literature of Ecuador, from its establishment in 1792 even down to the present time. In connection with this research I have had to examine and describe 3200 periodicals and newspapers published during the last one hundred and forty years. When the Society invited me to speak before this meeting, I considered the presentation of a memoir or bibliography of this literature and hoped to describe all of the many titles and list all of the known files and issues. But the locating or rather listing of the files which are to be found in Ecuador is incomplete and although the memoir itself is prepared we are postponing the final presentation to what I hope is the not distant future when a more complete knowledge is obtained of the whereabouts of the files.

Therefore I have decided to relate, rather in an informal way, some reminiscences of travel in Ecuador. For this purpose I have brought with me a map of Ecuador which was presented to me when I left Ecuador three years ago, by Dr. Viteri, at that time Minister of Foreign Affairs and up to a few weeks ago the Minister of Ecuador in Washington. He will be

pleased to learn that it has found a home in the archives of this Society. I may state that the cartographer has not restrained himself at all in marking the eastern limits of the Republic. If we had a map of Peru, hanging beside this, drawn with the same abandon by a Peruvian, we should hardly recognize that they showed the same territory. Peru claims all the territory east of the Andes to the head of navigation of all streams, whatever that may mean. To them it means the highest point to which a small Indian dugout can be dragged; to the Ecuadorean it means less than navigation by ocean steamers.

When I had the task of writing the article on Ecuador for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* three years ago, I wondered what I should do about this boundary dispute. One day I met the author of the *Britannica* article on Peru and we decided that there was no other course than to accept the boundaries as claimed by our respective countries and at the end of our description add a few words saying "part of this territory is claimed by Peru (see Peru)," or "part of this is claimed by Ecuador (see Ecuador)." So I am really as blameworthy as the cartographer of this map.

It happened that my first glimpse of the shores of Ecuador took in a very interesting spot, viz. the low-lying shore, near the present town of Esmeraldas, where Francisco Pizarro disembarked from his ships in February or early in March, 1531 and began the long overland march which culminated in the capture of the Inca Atahualpa at Cajamarca, Peru, on the sixteenth day of November, 1532. Of this period of twenty-one months, twelve were spent in his progress through the territory of Ecuador beginning with the disembarkation at Esmeraldas and ending with his departure from the Island of Puna.

The present town of Esmeraldas near which Pizarro landed was founded by the Spaniards long after Pizarro's day, but it takes its name "Esmeraldas," meaning emeralds, from the fact that Pizarro and his

companions obtained large quantities of emeralds in sacking the Indian temples and it was believed for a long time that deposits of emeralds occurred in this part of Ecuador. None have been found, however, and it is very probable that the emeralds originated in the emerald deposits near Bogota, Colombia, seven hundred miles to the northeast.

An amusing story is told regarding the efforts of the rough Spanish soldiers accompanying Pizarro to tell which were real emeralds and which were only ordinary green stones. As this story is told of a Dominican Padre and has been repeated by a late member of this Society, Gonzalez Suarez, Bishop of Ecuador, a devout Jesuit who, of course, would not repeat anything untrue about a Dominican, we must accept its authenticity. The Spanish Crown, when it signed the articles granting to Pizarro the royal favor to explore and rule Peru, arranged to have him accompanied by representatives of the Church ostensibly to deliver to the Indians the message of salvation for which they were yearning, but perhaps with an eye to curbing Pizarro. The most noted of the priests accompanying Pizarro was a Dominican named Vicente Valverde. Gonzalez Suarez tells us that when the soldiers asked the learned Padre for a sure test to distinguish emeralds from ordinary stones, he told them to place the specimens in question on an anvil and strike them with a hammer, and while the green stones would be crushed to fragments, the emeralds by their hardness would not be damaged. Gonzalez Saurez adds that it was never noted that the eminent priest applied this test to his own collection.

Pizarro, as he reached the vicinity of Manta and Santa Elena, made another geological discovery by finding fossil bones of huge vertebrates which we now know are those of Pleistocene elephants and horses. In the peninsula of Santa Elena which I visited in 1921 we found many pieces of such bones a short distance below the surface. The Indians, on being questioned by Pizarro, answered that these bones were the remains

of a race of human beings who had come from the sea ages ago and settled in that country, but who, becoming exceedingly sinful, aroused the wrath of God and were destroyed in punishment for their sins. This myth, like many of the interesting myths of the pre-Colombian aborigines, may perhaps bear the imprint of the Spanish hearers.

I have stopped several times at the Island of Puna in the Guayas River, where Pizarro remained a number of weeks fighting with the Indians and from which he crossed in February, 1532 to the mainland. Recently Dr. Max Uhle has been carrying on some very interesting archaeological work in this island, but we have not yet received his reports. He has excavated a good deal of pottery and metal work on this island.

The Guayas River is the largest river on the Pacific coast of South America and ocean steamers ascend this to the city of Guayaquil which is the chief industrial center and seaport of Ecuador. Founded in 1537, the town has suffered repeatedly from pirates, fires, and disease. One wonders how it has any inhabitants at all. About the time I first visited it, the fight to conquer yellow fever was resulting in victory under the leadership of the Rockefeller Institute.

It is a town of about 100,000 population and in recent years has been so improved that it is really an interesting place with its wide, well-paved boulevards, its streets lined with buildings extending out over wide walks, protecting the shopper both from the sun and the rain, with a good water supply and a climate that is healthful and never approaching the heat which we experience in the United States in the summer time.

Among its inhabitants I had the pleasure of meeting the Governor of Guayas the last time I was in Guayaquil. When I began to talk to him in my poor Spanish, I was quite surprised to have him reply in perfect English and to learn that he was a practicing physician and had been educated at Columbia University. I had a very interesting meeting also with Francisco

Campos, one of the great scientists of South America. His work and writings on insects place him in the front rank of entomologists. What finer title could one find than his "La Vida bajo una Piedra" (Life under a Stone)? I also beg to mention Chaves Franco, the Director of the Municipal Library of Guayaquil, a man who under very difficult conditions, continues with enthusiasm the building up of this excellent library. I met also in Guayaquil the old German archaeologist, Von Buchwald, and at the time I first visited Guayaquil, I saw Dr. Goding, our Consul General, whose wife sleeps in the graveyard on the banks of the Guayas, the last victim of yellow fever and whose death caused the acceptance by Ecuador of the offer of the Rockefeller Institute to come and help eradicate this disease.

It is from the bank of the Guayas River opposite Guayaquil that the railway leads into the interior. This great engineering feat is the work of American promoters and engineers. The line terminates at Quito, the capital, 270 miles distant. We leave Guayaquil at 7.00 a. m. in the midst of summer heat and by 4.00 p. m. are crossing a pass of the Andes 10,000 feet above the sea. We spend the night in Riobamba and the next day pass through Ambato and Latacunga, cities in the highlands at from 8,000 to 9,000 feet above the sea, and arrive in Quito at an elevation of 9,236 feet, where the climate is that of perpetual Spring. Here no hot waves or freezing temperatures come to mar the evenness of life. A city of perhaps 100,000 population, it boasts of its age among American cities.

The immediate founding of this city was the result of the appearance of a rival of Francisco Pizarro on the coasts of Ecuador. While Pizarro was busily engaged in executing the Inca ruler, Atahualpa, in the square of Cajamarca on August 29, 1533, Pedro de Alvarado appeared on the Ecuadorean coast and started one of the most difficult expeditions of that or any time, in

marching from the coast of Ecuador straight up the west slope of the Andes through impenetrable forests, facing torrential rivers and cataracts and freezing temperatures in the passes of the Andes. With his ranks almost completely decimated by disease, he appeared in the highlands of Ecuador in the middle of the year 1534 to find that he had been outmatched. Pizarro had started Benalcazar from Peru in the last days of 1533 and when he reached the great highway of the Incas on top of the Andes, his march was swift to the north. Joined by peaceful Indians of southern Ecuador, he defeated the opposition of Indians farther north and arrived at the site of the present city of Quito in May or June 1534, where he found what recent investigators agree could have been at the most only a small Indian and Inca settlement. Continuing north, he received word that Almagro, the associate of Pizarro, had been sent to join him in resisting the advance of Alvarado. Thus to take possession of the territory before Alvarado arrived, these Conquistadores founded the "City of Santiago de Quito" on the twenty-eighth of August, 1534.

The success of the city, chiefly due to its magnificent climate, was immediately assured and for nearly 300 years it was the capital of the Spanish power in Ecuador, known in this colonial period as the "Audencia de Quito," a unit at first of a judicial nature, but which more and more took on the duties of an administrative unit ruled by a President under the Viceroy at Lima.

The Conquistador had no sooner founded the city than the Franciscans and other Catholic orders appeared, to establish great monasteries and churches whose properties even today take up a large part of the city. To these churchmen Ecuador owes the beginnings of its intellectual life, for they immediately founded schools and colleges. To them also it owes the entrance of the only non-Spanish and non-Indian elements of the population, since most of the priests

were from Holland and Germany. De Ricke, for example, a Flemish Franciscan, brought with him from Europe some grains of wheat, and it is claimed that the first wheat grown in America was planted in front of the present Franciscan Church in Quito about the year 1540.

One could talk for hours about the city of Quito, but I shall ask your permission to leave this subject for the moment and join me in a journey into the Amazon jungles, where the most primitive Indians live.

I have made two long and dangerous journeys from Quito into the Amazon region. One took us from July until December 1921, and the other from October 1927 until January 1928. They were both exploration expeditions, the latter being under the auspices of the American Geographical Society. They were expeditions filled with great hardships and dangers of death. For months we followed footpaths through rain-soaked forests where the rainfall attains a maximum of 18 feet per annum. Many times we left these forest paths to embark in Indian canoes, to be for miles in imminent danger of death in the almost continuous rapids.

The expedition of 1927 followed from Quito the route taken by Gonzalo Pizarro in 1540. The dangers of this journey even today make us shudder to think of what Pizarro went through. Lured by the account of fabulous riches east of the Andes, Pizarro crossed the Guamani Pass at 13,350 feet above the sea, descended into the Valley of the Quijos River on the east slope and for months wandered in the jungles. Orellana, one of his lieutenants, became separated from the main expedition and drifted in makeshift rafts downstream to the Amazon and eventually to the Atlantic, making the first crossing of the South American Continent. Pizarro, in rags and near death, returned to Quito almost alone, leaving most of his companions in unmarked graves in the Amazon forests.

Like Pizarro, we crossed the Guamani Pass, the elevation of which we determined to be 13,350 feet,

and descended the east slope by the Quijos River until at about 10,000 feet elevation we left the treeless uplands and entered the Amazon forests. From that moment till months later, when we emerged from these forests many miles to the south, we were in dense jungles broken here and there by small clearings around an Indian habitation or by the wide swath of a great river. From the freezing temperatures just below the glaciers of Antisana and Cayambe, we descended to the burning tropical heat of the Amazon tributaries, at 850 feet above the sea, at a point which steamers and small boats can reach in their 3000 mile journey from the Atlantic.

The route from the Guamani Pass brought us, in a hundred miles to the Rio Napo which we descended another hundred miles to the Rio Coca. We then ascended this river by dragging our dug-out canoes through nearly continuous rapids to a point seventy-five miles upstream. Then finding our advance impossible through a region of canyons with walls 2000 feet high, we turned back down the Coca and then dragged the canoes a hundred miles back up the Napo and proceeded south overland through the jungles to the Rio Upano, where the return up the east slope of the Andes cost us another week of arduous travel on foot.

This region is nearly uninhabited and is interesting because in the jungles between the Pastaza and the Upano Rivers we passed through the territory of the head-hunters or Jivaro Indians. The Quechua Indians who carried our packs to the Pastaza River had to be forced to stay with us until we got in contact with the Jivaros; and the diplomatic negotiations which followed, when we got some timid Jivaros to come near us, were extremely complicated. All interest was lacking until one of the Ecuadoreans with us thought of some poison which we had bought from a Peruvian trader far down the Napo a few weeks before, and which is highly prized by the Indians for their arrows

and for poisoning fish. When this was brought out and shown to the Indians, we reached the treaty-making stage and soon, accompanied by about fifty Jivaros, we swept across the rapids of the Palora and plunged into the forests. The Indians carried our packs for fifty miles to the Upano and each felt well rewarded with less than a teaspoonful of this poison.

The Jivaros speak a language entirely different from the Quechua language of the great majority of Ecuadorean Indians. In this they show that they were not conquered by the Incas and have been comparatively uninfluenced by the Spanish missionaries who used the Quechua almost entirely in their missionary work.

These Indians are noted for the practise, still being carried on, of cutting off the heads of their enemies and reducing them to the size of an orange. With the long black hair still hanging to the scalp, they are curious things. My companion, Theron Wasson, had by the time we reached the Pastaza, grown a long black beard and looked exactly like a Jewish Rabbi. As we gazed across the Pastaza River and were informed of the fondness of these Indians for heads of human beings, I politely suggested to Mr. Wasson that a little work with the scissors and razor might lessen the temptations of the Jivaros. He said that he had been through the Argonne and would take a chance on the Jivaros. As a matter of fact, his appearance was probably an asset, and I know his character was, for the Indians all came to like him very much, and we had no difficulty in keeping our heads on our shoulders. I may say in passing that this barbarous custom is now encouraged by traders who offer good prices for these heads, and after I passed one of the Jivaro huts, I was told that they had a human head being prepared for sale.

It is strange to find so little trace of the missions which Jesuits and Dominicans and Franciscans planted in these forests. Not even a gravestone can be seen to mark the resting place of Padre Fritz, for example, who labored for over fifty years in these forests. But

even the Indian himself has largely disappeared. Three missions are found in these forests at the present time, one a Dominican mission at Canelos, another a mission of the Josephine Padres at Tena, and a Protestant mission at Macas among the Jivaros. The Indians both of the highlands and lowlands have not progressed since the days of the conquest. Max Uhle tells me that he thinks they have degenerated from even their low state at the time of the Spanish arrival in 1532.

In closing I may say a few words regarding printing in Ecuador. While in Peru the printing-press was established in 1584 at Lima, no printing was done in Ecuador until about the year 1750, when the Jesuits managed to obtain permission to install a printing-press at Ambato for printing religious papers and books. Knowing the difficulties that the first printer at Lima had to undergo to get permission to practise his art, I am inclined to believe that the Viceroy preferred to have any such dangerous instrument in Lima where they could control it. Our late member, José Toribio Medina, has written a paper on early printing in Ecuador and I shall not at this time discuss this question further. The Jesuit press was moved to Quito about the year 1760 and other printers soon followed.

It was in Quito in 1792 that the first Ecuadorean periodical was published. Ecuador was at that time still the capital of the Audiencia de Quito. While Espejo, the editor of this periodical, called "Las Primicias de la Cultura de Quito," restricted himself in it to literary efforts, he became a member and perhaps the chief spirit of a group of men playing with the idea of freedom from Spanish rule. Espejo was suspected of being the author of some seditious papers which were posted in the public squares of the city, and he was thrown into jail, where he soon died, the first martyr to the cause of independence in Ecuador. To the influence of Espejo, I believe, is partly due the tre-

mendous development of periodical literature in Ecuador, for he was one of the leading patriots of his time, and is revered even today as one of the leading figures in Ecuador history.

Few countries in South America, or even in the world, have produced so many periodicals in proportion to the population, as Ecuador. When one considers that 1200 periodicals can be listed between 1792 and 1899 (and only four of these before 1821); and that 2100 are listed between 1900 and 1931, this total of 3300 periodicals means an average of twenty-two different periodicals each year for 140 years of publication. Most of these periodicals were political, some were literary, and a few scientific or historical and, of course, some were manifestly newspapers. But if students could locate files of all these periodicals for research and study, what a vast mass of important material we should have to illustrate the history and life of one of the most interesting countries of the Western Continent.

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