

The Editor Writes Home From---

SOUTH AMERICA

(Number Six)

At Dock Callao, Peru, Feb. 22, 1939.

We had our first view of the Andes early in the afternoon Monday. It was a scene of utter desolation. The sand shading from cream color in the sun, to a dark tan in the shadows, runs back to bleak mountains, without a sign of water or of life anywhere. Along the water's edge the shore is precipitous in many places, and when, with the aid of binoculars, we located a town, it was almost white and looked unspeakably hot, with nothing but mud roofs to break the heat of a burning, tropical sun. Later in the

day we saw hundreds of oil derricks. They covered the low-lying land, extending to the water's edge, and formed curved lines over the rolling hills. The fields are owned by foreigners as are mines and some of the railways. The natives seem neither to have the wealth, nor executive ability to develop their natural resources.

The real history of Peru began with its conquest by Pizarro. Ruins indicate pre-Inca civilizations, but they had no written, nor picture language, and their highest mental accomplishment seems to have been the inventing of an understandable system of accounting thru the tying of knots. Pizarro found a peaceful people with an abundance of gold, which had no particular value except for the making of utensils, or for decorative purposes. That they were many in numbers and that their lives were hard, is evidenced by the terraces which formerly ran nearly to the tops of the mountains. These terraces had first to be built of rock and then filled with soil carried from hundreds of feet below. Each day they had to be watered in order to produce crops, and the water was carried in pots, from the stream below. No laborer in any land had harder work to perform.

They had developed textiles, and dyes so permanent that they retained their brilliancy for centuries. They used gold and silver and perhaps other metals. They knew nothing of wheels, and didn't even have a potter's wheel upon which to make their pottery. They made interesting and beautiful pottery and had even developed portraiture in pottery in which faces were reproduced on bowls, pots, pitchers, water jugs, etc. The faces show as great variety as the show cases of the modern photographer. In fact, they not only indicated facial appearance, but gave an idea of race and of intelligence.

These early people were skillful engineers and built bridges, and permanent roads. They knew nothing of the Roman arch and openings in walls slanted toward the center at the top in order to be covered by a lintel. They built terraces and water courses. A great deal of their construction was with huge sun-baked blocks of mud, but where stone was used, the stones were so carefully fitted together that they have stood for centuries, altho no mortar was used.

Their mummified remains show a knowledge of surgery, and they had drums, and flutes with a scale of five notes. They evidently knew little, or nothing, of astronomy, and left few great buildings.

This nation, great in expanse, wealth, and population, was so poorly organized for defense that they were overpowered and cruelly enslaved by a handful of men under Pizarro. Yet with this information, and practically this only, a theory has been built up showing the existence of an ideal communal system in which each worked for all and all for each. A system in which the products of the fields were stored in good years, to carry the population over in times of distress. The history of the Conquest of Peru, written years ago by Prescott, is still an authority without a peer.

Pizarro could neither read nor write and occupied a humble position as a laborer in Spain before he came to the New World. That he possessed remarkable bravery, ability and leadership no one will attempt to deny, but he found no records and too much confidence cannot be placed in the modern efforts to present ancient Peru as a model and ideal communistic state. The truth probably is that ancient Peru was a nation in which labor was conscripted by those in power and forced to perform back-breaking work.

Peru is twice the size of Texas, but two-thirds of it is mountainous. Most of the Indians live in the mountains and on the high tablelands. Airplanes are largely used even for the transport of livestock and machinery, and mining products.

Peru produces cotton, sugar and coffee, and also some tropical citrus fruits. There are not over one million whites in the country, and no one knows just how many people

there are because no census has been taken for seventy years. One hundred sixty thousand tons of guano are exported annually and from 27 to 35 per cent of the nation's imports come from the United States.

Roman Catholicism is the state religion, but curiously enough divorce laws are very liberal. Divorces may be secured by mutual consent, and for many reasons including absence from home for fifty days. In order to vote one must be 21 years old and able to read and write, or else be married. Those who are married may vote at any age. In Ecuador, the nation to the north, there is a law prohibiting the entrance of clergymen, while in Venezuela a missionary must become a citizen before entering on his mission. This little requirement frees the nation from liability for damages should the missionary meet with death at the hands of savage tribes.

It is interesting to know that Peru contributed to the world the potato, the staff of life for multitudes. Ireland, whose early dependence on the potato, gave to it the name Irish potato, in an earlier period lived on wheat and barley.

In seeing Peruvian Indian dances we find that they dance flat-footed like the Indians of North America. In fact their dances are quite similar to those we have seen at Haskell.

We have enjoyed the lectures we have heard, but find that the interpretations do not always square with our own studies of this great and interesting country. W.C.S.