

The Editor Writes Home From---

SOUTH AMERICA

(Number Seven)

Callao, Peru, Feb. 23, 1939.

When we arrived here last night, an hour or two ahead of schedule, we learned there was a carnival at Lima, but one familiar with the good old Peruvian custom, said that the use of squirt guns filled with perfumed water was the most ecstatic thing a Peruvian could do on such occasions, and that when the perfumed water ran out—well, there

wasn't much use to predict just what might be thrown but to be on the safe side one should wear his old clothes. We didn't go.

After looking things over, we are convinced that there is a pretty wide gap in Peru between the rich and the poor. There is none of the dovetailing that we have in America where the rich man may feel poor and the poor may feel his oats. In Peru the cleavage is so distinct that you cannot be fooled. Peru had nearly a hundred years start on New England, but it has not used the years to particularly good advantage.

We had a ride yesterday on the Central railroad, a road built about ninety years ago, engineered by a man named Mason, owned by British interests and losing money. Distances being measured in meters we reckoned that there were for all practical purposes about 1.6 kilometers to the mile. We chugged up the mountains for seventy-five miles to Tamboraque, where we looked at a small herd of llamas, and at the roof of a smelter. After taking pictures we raced our way back to Callao like a Model T, without brakes, going down hill. We made it, but the engineer was either heavily insured, or was an unusually brave and reckless man.

We like the Peruvians because they treated us so kindly. We were told that some of the men who served as guides on the train to explain things in English, were business men of the city, who take time off to be courteous to tourists.

At first the mountains had the appearance of great piles of dirt, and we are inclined to believe that this is the result of lack of rainfall. Perhaps a good rain would wash them up, but we don't know. Farther up they become rocky, and still farther up they become green, at least in part. All the way there is a swiftly flowing mountain stream, which still carries on despite the water diverted for irrigation.

The land is fenced and cross fenced with walls of huge sun dried blocks of mud. Just why the fences seem to never run in straight lines we do not know. It is extremely difficult to tell a modern ruin from an ancient one. The dried mud blocks all look the same. Here and there we saw great piles of earth and blocks, and were told that they dated back to the Incas and that from such piles were dug the pottery and other artifacts which enrich the fine national museum at Lima.

While the land that is tillable has been farmed for ages it seems to have retained its fertility, and all that it needs to make it produce liberally is a supply of water thru irrigation ditches. Very little land remains uncultivated, and many of the ancient terraces are still farmed. As one goes up the mountains, the fields appear greener.

Scattered here and there are attractive homes, surrounded by beautiful flowers, and thrifty looking orchards of citrus and other fruits, but the homes of the workers are very poor, most of them having roofs that will furnish a little protection from the sun only. As water must be carried from the irrigation ditches, or from the swiftly flowing stream, it is used sparingly. The people and the homes look dirty.

However, we went thru several attractive summer resorts where there were beautiful, well kept homes, and at Chosica, there is an attractive hotel with a dining room patio that would appeal to most everyone. It was here that the hostess permitted me to buy a bouquet of magnolia blossoms, that afterwards was a center of attraction on our table in the magnificent dining room of the Nieuw Amsterdam. The buds were six inches long and about three inches in diameter.

The cars had seats for 64 and were of the old fashioned type used before the advent of chair cars. One toilet on each car sufficed for both sexes. Last year the Holland-America boats put up box lunches for this trip, but this time it was necessary either to pay duty on the food brought ashore, or buy it from the Country Club, so they did the latter. Each individual had a box containing a bottle of water, which naturally was warm, and a paper cup. Four sandwiches cut fine enough to suit the most fastidious, two boiled eggs, a piece of fruit cake, a piece of fried chicken, an apple and an orange.

Few, if any, ate all of their lunches, and afterwards took a lot of pleasure of giving either the rest of their box, or certain things

from it, to the poor little children at the stations, who seemed happy to get them.

All kinds of our so called "New Deal" legislation has been enacted here, but the Sol, or dollar of Peru, is worth about twenty cents in our money, and I have never anywhere seen men wear as ragged clothing as I have seen here, both in the mountains and in the cities. As I have said in a previous letter the only laws that can really benefit all, are laws to protect a man in his right to work, free from the dictation of racketeers; and laws that will make capital feel secure in creating new jobs. We must produce if we are to thrive.

Most of the fine improvements in the way of new public buildings, fine highways etc. in Peru and in Chile were financed thru the sale of bonds to the citizens of the United States, which have been defaulted both as to interest and principal. The recommendation of these bonds by financial interests in the United States to investors, was undoubtedly one of the causes for the break in 1929. These same countries are now trying to find new suckers in the states.

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