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978-1-108-07878-8 - Cuzco and Lima: A Journey to the Ancient Capital of Peru, and a Visit to the Capital and Provinces of Modern Peru

Clements R. Markham

Excerpt

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## CUZCO AND LIMA.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### INTRODUCTORY.

THERE are few more attractive periods of history, than that which treats of the adventures of the lawless conquerors of the New World, who shattered at a blow the fabrics of stately empires, and so utterly prostrated the once thriving civilised communities of Peru, Mexico, and Bogota, that a century after the arrival of the Spaniards, scarce a vestige of them remained.

Their origin, obscured by the mist of ages, their rise comparatively rapid, and their fall sudden, and for ever.

In the masterly pages of Prescott have been recorded, in glowing language, the deeds of those stony-hearted warriors who uprooted them ; and every one knows the history of Cortez and Montezuma, of the courageous Quatimozin, of Pizarro and his strangled victim, and all the wonderful, almost incredible tales of Spanish prowess.

Surpassing in wonder the tales of Amadis de Gaul, or

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Arthur of Britain, yet historically true, the chronicles of the conquest of the New World, the voluminous pages of the Inca Garcilasso, and the simple record of the true-hearted old soldier, Bernal Diaz, are the last, and not the least wonderful narratives of mediæval chivalry, and commemorate that brilliant interval which ushered in the modern spirit of enterprise and improvement.

But in the eager search for information with regard to the conquest of America, the deeply interesting history of its anterior civilisation has been comparatively neglected; and the blood-thirsty conquerors have been deemed more worthy of attention than their unfortunate victims.

Volumes have been devoted to the deeds of the blood-stained Pizarro, the fanatic Valverde, and their greedy followers; while a few pages suffice for a record of the Incas whom they destroyed, of their mythical origin, their wonderful career, and the beautiful episodes in their history, whose interest is enhanced by the majestic scenery amidst which their valorous deeds were performed.

It is a field of investigation which has been left almost entirely untouched; and the sketches of the civilisation of the Incas by Robertson and others, are only collected from Spanish chronicles, as introductions to the bloody history of the conquest which follows; and are composed by students who, though masterly in their powers of collecting the gold from the dross in the old chronicles and manuscripts of Spain, have never themselves gazed with rapture on the towering

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Andes, nor examined the native traditions of the country they described, nor listened to the sweet but melancholy Inca songs, nor studied the beautiful language in which they are written.

Of the few English travellers in Peru who have, in modern times, given their narratives to the world, none with whom I am acquainted have visited the once splendid and imperial Cuzco,\* the city of the Incas, and the surrounding country, that charming land whose lovely valleys abound in the most interesting architectural remains.

It was therefore to be expected that much which would assist in elucidating the former condition of this remarkable country, might be learned in a visit to the actual scene of the deeds of the Incas, by any one who would be at the pains to undertake such a journey.

With that object in view, the writer of the following pages sailed from England in August 1852, and on the 2nd of October arrived, by way of New York, at Aspinwall, the lately erected American city on the Isthmus of Panama.

Aspinwall, so called in honour of one of the directors of the Steam Navigation Company, consists of a long line of wooden houses facing the sea, and is surrounded by dense tropical vegetation, springing out of a marshy

\* In the military memoir of General Miller, who visited it in 1824, there is a short account of Cuzco. Mr. Pentland fixed its geographical position, and reported it in the Royal Geographical Society's Journal. Count Castelnau, who was there in 1846, notices it in his work, as also does Lieut. Gibbon, U.S.N., who passed through it in 1851. With these exceptions, I know of no modern account of it, in the English or French languages.

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swamp. It is situated between the old towns of Porto Bello and Chagres ; the one famous in the days of the Buccaneers, as the great emporium of the trade of America ; the other, at the mouth of the river of the same name, was the usual place of disembarkation, before the rise of Aspinwall. Both are now wretched and deserted places, the abodes of leprosy and fever.

A motley crowd of passengers landed from the New York steamer, and hurried to the railway cars under a broiling sun.

Here was the owner of a Californian saw-mill, tall and haggard, with a wife and large family ; there a learned judge ; in other spots might be seen a crowd of rough lumber-men from the forests of Maine, going to seek their fortunes in California ; New York tradesmen ; broken-down soldiers who had fought in the Mexican war ; all bustling to and fro on the platform, in the broiling heat, some with luggage, others with none, and jostling each other most unceremoniously.

At length all was ready, the cars started, and crossing a shallow arm of the sea by a causeway on piles, we plunged deeper and deeper into the thick, pestilential forest, whose rank vegetation rises from a black unwholesome morass. Lofty trees, creepers of every description, flowers of all hues, palms, plantains, and every variety of tropical plant, crowd close upon either side of the railway in dense masses ; and as they fall or decay, others spring up, while the vegetable matter sends up a fever from the black swamp, which has cleared off the unhappy labourers on this fatal line by scores and scores.

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At high noon our destination was reached, at the spot where the railway then terminated, on the banks of the river Chagres.\*

This place was called Barbacoas. Here we were surrounded by a host of most truculent looking Indians and Negroes, the owners of boats; and after struggling for luggage amidst the shrieks and execrations of unprotected females, long-bearded adventurers, and men with large families—under a blazing sun, and in a swamp of black mud, which served as the platform of the Barbacoas station—we at length assembled a party of nine men, three women, and seven children, in a long flat-bottomed boat, with a wooden awning.

The current runs with great rapidity, and the men punt the boats up the river with long poles, by walking along a ledge round the gunwale, in a state of complete nudity.

Six of these conveyances left Barbacoas, and began to work their slow and weary way up the river, which is bounded on either side by thick tropical forests, among which, thousands of humming birds and butterflies of the most brilliant colours are seen disporting themselves in the rays of the sun, and flocks of noisy parrots fly about among the higher branches of the trees.

Having stemmed the current for six miles, we reached Gorgona, a wretched village of huts, with high conical palm-leaf roofs, situated at a bend of the river. Here the night was to be passed, as it was hazardous to face the rapids after dark. All the

\* The railway is now completed to Panama.

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boatmen got drunk, the Californians prowled about among the huts trying to pick quarrels, the dogs yelled, the negroes fought each other with long knives, and nobody slept.

As the early dawn appeared, a thick mist teeming with yellow fever arose from the forest. Again the boatmen handled their poles, and again we began to advance up the river, with heavy dews falling around us, and wetting everything through.

At length we arrived at Cruces, where the river ceases to be navigable, and whence a mule road of twenty miles concluded the journey to Panama.

Cruces consists of about a hundred huts, arranged along a dirty street crowded with mules, and steaming with liquid filth. The road from this place to Panama is about the most execrable in the world. In many places sloughs of violently adhesive black mud, five feet deep, embarrass the mule and his rider; to the mud succeed great stones, a few inches apart, with sharp edges, stuck on end, all over the road. Now the way would wind up steep acclivities, then it would follow the bed of a torrent about three feet wide, with rocks rising up perpendicularly on either side, and the whole road passes through a dense tropical forest.

Gradually, however, that which for several miles had been the bed of a torrent, or a slough of black mud, became a bridle-path; fields of Indian corn and pasture land made their appearance, the bridle-path became a road lined with huts, and at length the blue Pacific burst upon our view, with many verdant islets

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bosomed on its unruffled surface. We trotted through a suburb, passed under an old archway, and entered the city of Panama.

Panama is bounded on three sides by the sea, and surrounded by a wall, with ditch and bastions on the land face. In its centre is the *plaza*, with the old cathedral, and through the town runs the Calle de las Monjas, which is called by the Americans *Main Street*. The town consists of old-fashioned Spanish houses, with broad verandahs, and heavy folding-doors instead of windows, which a few years ago looked sedate and drowsy enough; but a strange metamorphosis has come over the old town. Now flaring red and gilt sign-boards swing across the street in every direction. On one house a blue sign-post inscribed "American Hotel," hangs from an upper story, "American Hotel" in red is daubed across the one below, and "Ice, Egg-nogg, Good Lodging, Brandy-smashes, Cheap Board," are painted up all over the ground floor.

There are six other hotels\* in this street for the accommodation of passengers to California, besides three restaurants, and as many newspaper offices; all of which are covered with sign-boards of all colours and dimensions.

Here the young American world is treading hard and close on the heels of the old one; and this once quiet old-fashioned city looks strange indeed, decked out in its new and flaunting dress. In the year 1846,

\* Viz., the New Orleans . . . . Aspinwall (the best).  
Louisiana . . . . Franklin.  
New York . . . . Western.

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there was not an inn or hotel in the place—so great has been the change wrought by the discovery of gold in California.

Panama, however, is not the same city whence the swineherd Pizarro sailed to the conquest of the empire of the Incas. That adventurer did not here equip his expedition, nor was it here that he, Almagro, and Luque desecrated the sacrament by their infernal compact. Old Panama, now a miserable ruin, about six miles down the coast, was deserted after Morgan with his buccaneers had crossed the Isthmus, sacked the town, and murdered every soul within its precincts. Now a heap of ruins overgrown with rank vegetation, in a pestilential swamp, is all that remains of that proud city—the key of the Pacific, and one of the brightest jewels in the Castilian crown; from whose port those vessels sailed whose leader overthrew the most civilised empire in the New World, added the viceregal province of Peru to the overgrown dominions of Spain, and loaded a happy and industrious people with the bitter chains of slavery.\*

From Panama a line of English steamers runs along the whole western coast of South America; and thus the shores of Peru, which took Pizarro and his little band so much toil and trouble to arrive at, are reached in a few days.

\* After the destruction of old Panama by Morgan—a buccaneer of infamous notoriety, who was rewarded for his villany, by our Charles II., with knighthood, and the government of Jamaica—the former site was deserted, and the new town built where it now stands.

The anchorage is bad and inconvenient for shipping, so that vessels usually lay at *Toboga*, an island about ten miles distant.



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We passed the Isle of Gorgona, so famous as the spot of the stern conqueror's deed of desperate devotion—the Cape of Emeralds—the mouth of the Guayaquil, where he first landed, and whence the towering summits of Cotopaxi and Chimborazo are visible, and reached Callao, the port of Lima, in six days from Panama.

The present republic of Peru extends along the coast of the Pacific for a distance of 1,235 miles, in a straight line from point to point—it is much more including the windings of the coast—from the river Tumbez, which separates it from Ecuador on the north, to the river Loa, which separates it from Bolivia on the south. Lima, its far-famed capital, is situated about half way between these two points.

This beautiful country, embracing every variety and description of climate and scenery, producing, or capable of producing in abundance every kind of vegetable that is known to the world, and yielding from its mines, rich stores of gold, silver, copper, lead, tin, coal, and mercury; and from its herds and flocks, an endless supply of hides, and fleeces of silky texture, is divided into three very distinct and well defined regions.

I. *The Coast*, extending from the feet of the maritime Cordillera to the ocean, contains a numerous succession of rich and fertile valleys, separated from each other by sandy deserts. These valleys enjoy a warm though not oppressive climate, rain is never known to fall, but refreshing dews descend in abundance during the night. In these valleys immense

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crops of sugar and cotton are raised ; while extensive vineyards produce wines of delicious flavour, and a spirit called *pisco*, which is consumed in great quantities by all classes, and also largely exported.

II. *The Sierra*, the region of the Cordillera of the Andes, is about 300 miles wide, and contains the most stupendous mountains, whose scenery is unequalled in beauty ; vast plains and pasture lands, and warm and fertile ravines and valleys. The Sierra is the native place of the potato, the abode of the vicuña and alpaca, while in its recesses lie concealed the far-famed and inexhaustible treasures of Peru.

In the midst of the Sierra, and in the centre of Peru, stands Cuzco, the ancient city of the Incas, to whose former history and present state a charm is attached, which enhances the enjoyment of a journey to this beautiful country, and adds new interest to a land overflowing with historical associations.

III. *The Montaña*, or tropical forests skirting the eastern slopes of the Andes, and extending over two-thirds of the Republic of Peru, are comparatively unknown ; but they abound in products of the greatest commercial value, and will, at some future time, be the principal source of Peruvian wealth.

The government of this country, so highly favoured by nature, is centred in the city of Lima, whose site was chosen by the conqueror Pizarro, a little more than three hundred years ago. On the shores of the Pacific, in 12° 3' south latitude, a broad and fertile valley extends from the foot of the Cordillera to the sea. The river San Mateo, rising among lofty mountain peaks, after a