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A TRAVELER IN NORTHERN COLOMBIA

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A TRAVELER IN NORTH-ERN COLOMBIA¹

HUNDREDS of feet above the shimmering expanse of Cartagena Harbor, which in picturesque topography rivals the Bay of Naples, rises the precipitous cliff known as La Popa. Upon its summit stands the ancient monastery a huge white structure which is a landmark for ships 50 miles or more at sea. From this historic mission edifice, perched upon the lofty eminence like some great feudal castle, tradition has it that devout nuns, terrified at the approach of pirates upon their sanctuary, flung themselves to death, falling almost into the blue waters far below. Whether the tale, suggesting a like tradition in more ancient history, is true or not, it is certain that the frowning peak rising from the very outskirts of the city of Cartagena is the magnificent outstanding feature of a surpassing landscape. From its apex one commands a sweeping vista of the inner and outer harbors of Cartagena, of the walls and battlements of the heavily fortified city, of the vivid green inland country, and even of the delta of the mighty Magdalena River.

Beneath La Popa, and before us, gleaming under the brilliant tropical sun, rose the spires, church towers, and domes of the historic walled city. Like some fabulous city of the far Orient, it seemed a dream city, a metropolis in ancient Persia at its zenith. Riotous, gorgeous blendings of color, tints of ocher, blue, vermilion, and brown, glinted as the hues of the rainbow in the golden midday light. The stalwart, moss-covered city walls, upon whose summits an eight-horse team can be driven, rose from the inner harbor, giving place, at intervals, to steps down to the water's edge, somewhat suggesting Venice.

Cartagena is not alone one of the most picturesque cities of the Western Hemisphere; it is perhaps the finest specimen of a fortified city of the seventeenth century to be found in the New World. It is one of the principal seaports of the great Republic of Colombia which, with an area of approximately one-half million square miles, is more than twice the area of the German Empire, and nearly twice the size of Texas, the largest of the States of the United States. It is an important commercial city and distributing point, being close to the mouth of the Magdalena River, which drains north through the Republic for more than 1,000 miles. And, more than all, it is a typical Colombian city, proud of its achievements in education,

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Photographs by Hamilton M. Wright.

VIEWS OF CARTAGENA, COLOMBIA.

Top: A distant view of Cartagena, showing the dominating La Popa Hill. Middle: A bit of the harbor, showing some of the smaller vessels engaged in coastwise shipping. Bottom: The railway approach to Cartagena.



Photographs by Joseph H. Bagley

THREE VIEWS SHOWING SOME OF THE FEATURES OF THE WONDERFUL WALL OF CARTAGENA, COLOMBIA.

The city in ancient days was surrounded by a great wall, and even to-day this splendidly constructed masonry, in many parts, is in a fine state of preservation.



Photographs by Hamilton M. Wright.

VIEWS OF CARTAGENA, COLOMBIA.

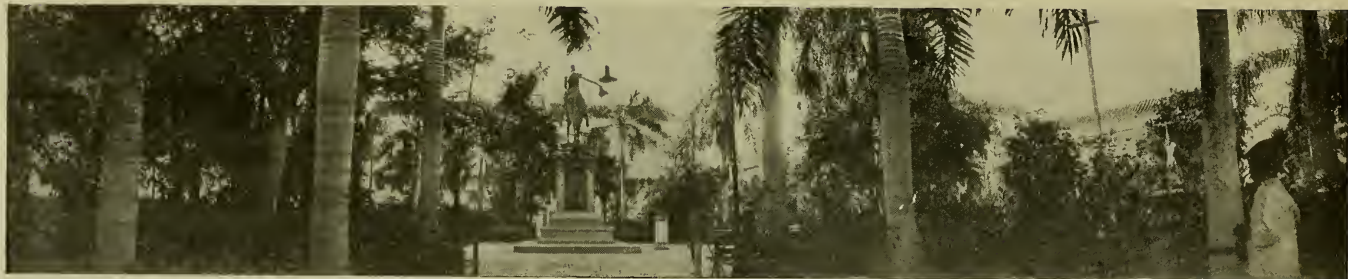
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proud of its people, and proud of its eventful history, which has been characterized by thrilling and victorious struggles for independence.

As cities go in the Western Hemisphere, Cartagena is ancient. It was founded by Don Pedro de Heredia, in 1533, 243 years before the United States of America signed its Declaration of Independence. Philip II, history records, commanded that the city be made impregnable to assault and vast sums were expended upon its fortifications. Soon it became a repository of the treasure collected throughout the Andes and Central America to await shipment to Spain in proud galleons convoyed thither by heavily armed frigates. It was a lure to freebooters. In 1585 Cartagena was sacked by Sir Francis Drake who, under threat of firing the city, extorted a heavy ransom. It resisted an assault by combined British land and sea forces in 1741. It was captured, however, by the Spanish, during the War of Independence in 1815. But it was retaken by the patriots in 1821.

To-day Cartagena is, emphatically, a city of the present. Trading schooners, steam launches, and long, narrow craft with picturesque lateen sails, crowd the magnificent yacht harbor outside the city walls. Just beyond the fine escarpment rising from the water the beautiful plaza or prado, a park and boulevard combined, ornamented by many commanding sculptures, is at all times crowded by vehicles and motor cars. The market place next to the prado and separated from the city by the yacht harbor is a hive of industry. Through the mighty arched gates of the walled city, and across the prado, run crowded automobile busses to the newer suburbs near the base of La Popa. A contrast between ancient and modern is given by the steel freight cars lying on tracks close to the massive walls built more than three centuries ago.

The scenes inside the city walls abound in interest for the lover of the beautiful and quaint. Cartagena has no rival in its architecture, to my mind, among any of the old Spanish cities I have known in Latin-America or the Orient. It has splendid examples of the ecclesiastical architecture of the Spanish renaissance, tinged with the picturesque Mooresque blendings that bespeak the influence of the Crescent in Spanish architecture. The close block grouping of the buildings gives the city the appearance of singular massiveness and solidarity. The imposing cathedral and monastery, the fine churches, the densely shaded parks with their statues and tropical shrubbery, the streets with their overhanging balustrades, and the shops displaying the finest wares of North American, European, and local manufacture are worth a visit of many days. Nor must one forget the university, for Cartagena has long been recognized as a seat of learning. Indeed, the city is held to rank as an educational center second only to Bogotá, the capital. It is not out of place to observe here that



Photographs by Joseph H. Bagley.

PHASES OF CARTAGENA'S DEVELOPMENT.

Upper: On the left we have a glimpse of the new city market. In the center stands the type of vehicle long popular and cheap all over Latin America, but now giving place to the modern automobile. Center: The Plaza Bolivar, with a glimpse of the beautiful palm trees surrounding the statue shown in the center. Lower: Another plaza, showing on two sides the arcade style of architecture which offers the pedestrian protection from sun or rain.

Columbia has long been celebrated for her academies, universities, and scientific schools, as well as for her literary achievements, the writings of her novelists, poets, historians, naturalists, and travelers.

Cartagena itself rises almost from the water with the curling waves of the Caribbean Sea upon one side and the inner harbor upon the other, the harbor and ocean almost meeting at the railroad embankment that extends from the pier. The depot of the modern railway which runs to Calamar, about 60 miles distant upon the Magdalena River, is just outside the three arched gateways that give entrance to the city. In the old days bells were rung each night at 8.30 o'clock to summon the inhabitants within the walls and the gates were closed at 9. Although the gates are never closed now, Cartagena still keeps up the quaint custom, a modern factory whistle replacing the bells of old. Through the gates are said to have passed billions of wealth representing the treasure mined for centuries up and down the Andes. Colombia alone has produced more than \$700,000,000 in gold since the coming of the Spanish, the production now ranging between five and six million dollars annually.

The Magdalena River is the great artery of Colombian commerce. It is a majestic stream suggesting the Mississippi. Fine steel river boats, electrically lighted, run up and down the river between Barranquilla and La Dorado, 600 miles up, connecting with Cartagena at Calamar. At La Dorado passengers take the train around the rapids to Beltran, thence by train to Girardot, an important coffee district, whence the train is finally boarded for the capital, Bogotá, 8,300 feet above sea level. The trip on the Magdalena River is one of the famed journeys of the world. There are two large competing fleets of river steamers and a number of smaller craft running out of Barranquilla, which is at the delta of the Magdalena River and about 10 or 12 miles from the Caribbean Sea.

The delta abounds in strange sights. The giant river, which has a shallow bar across its mouth, prohibiting the entrance of large steamers, separates into innumerable channels seeking exit to the sea. I once took the picturesque 75-mile delta trip between Ciénega on the Santa Marta Railway and Barranquilla, traveling through the inlets that seem like narrow canals and are bordered on either side by dense forests or by occasional clearings where woodcutters are engaged chopping cordwood for the distant city factories. The delta channels serve as feeders for Barranquilla traffic. Through them are transported the products of the land. Modern steel dredgers keep the principal channels cleared for travel. Much of the country that is not periodically inundated or densely forested is rich in agriculture.

Fish are abundant both along the seacoast and in the inland streams and estuaries. At Santa Marta the fishermen catch very fine sea



Photographs by Joseph H. Bagley.

CARTAGENA AND ENVIRONS.

Upper: A view looking from a point on the great wall. Center: La Popa, a well known hill, as seen from a distance. Lower: Closer view of La Popa Fort, its massive walls and lookout tower.

mullet, bass, and other large edible fish. Fishing is a very considerable industry. In the inland lakes and estuaries, in addition to the fishermen with their nets, baited drop lines, and fish traps, great flocks of loons and pelicans are to be seen busied with similar intent. This is not surprising, for in flora, fauna, and mineral wealth Colombia is a land of plenty. It is destined to become one of the most productive countries of the Western Hemisphere. Glance at a map of Colombia and you will see why this is so. The giant Andes, which inclose on three sides a great broken table-land in the southern and south-central part of the Republic around Bogotá, separate into three distinct mountain chains as they come north—the western, central, and eastern Cordilleras. The western Cordilleras, following the Pacific coast, continue on into Central America. The eastern Cordilleras, terminating in the lofty, snow-clad Santa Marta Mountains, run north almost to the Caribbean Sea, sending great flanks and ridges out into the waters. Between the central and eastern Cordilleras lies the great valley of the Magdalena River, one of the richest valleys in South America. Between the central and western Cordilleras lies the valley of the navigable Cauca River, flowing into the Magdalena about 200 miles above its mouth, and descending from an elevated plain 5,000 feet above sea level about the busy, modern city of Medellin.

Colombia thus possesses every climatic range from the subtropical, through the successive stages of the Temperate Zone to that of the lofty region of glaciers and eternal snow. For the artist, the lover of color, of majestic mountain masses, appalling gorges, roaring torrents, primeval forests of luxuriant tropical growths, flowering vines and delicate orchids, Colombia is a paradise. Moreover, the climate of northern Colombia, which is warmer than that of the southern highlands, has a peculiar charm both upon the seacoast which is cooled by the sea breezes and in the foothills which are cooled by the proximity to the mountains and also by the monsoon. The monsoon, as I have known it, is a wind that comes up about 3 o'clock each afternoon, subsiding, for a time, at sundown, and is felt in greatest intensity between 9 and midnight. And Colombia has plant life as varied as its climatic zones. There is perhaps no country in the world which has a greater diversity of fauna and of birds and insects.

The vast valleys in themselves constitute empires in area. The huge Magdalena Valley produces the finest cotton, corn, and sugar cane. The fertile uplands are no less productive of other crops, and wheat will some day become an important staple. There is, too, a tremendous future for Colombia in cattle raising. It exists not only in the lowlands and foothills of the Cordilleras, but in the high llanos or pasture lands. On the eastern slopes of the Cordillera Oriente



THE CATHEDRAL IN CARTAGENA.



MONASTERY IN CARTAGENA.



Photographs by Hamilton M. Wright.

THE CATHEDRAL IN BARRANQUILIA.

following the tributaries of the Orinoco River eastward, there are more than 250,000 square miles of fertile grassy pasture and plains in eastern Colombia and western Venezuela capable of pasturing more than 100,000,000 head of stock. This is affirmed to be one of the largest areas of fertile, open, unoccupied land in the world. While in Colombia I heard that a railroad would be built out from Bogotá to reach the southern part of this country. In the foothills and lowlands of the Cordillera Oriente I have seen as fine cattle as I have ever seen anywhere in the world. A cattleman from the western plains of the United States, whom I met in Colombia, told me that, in his judgment, no country in the world has such almost illimitable areas of vacant pasture adapted to the raising of vigorous stock. A wealthy Colombian gentleman who has gone extensively into stock raising said that it did not cost him over \$1.75 per head, American currency, to raise his grazing steers up to the butchering point. The Government of Colombia encourages responsible livestock men. A bill has been introduced into both branches of the Colombian Legislature favoring the establishment of meat packing and refrigerating plants.

The climatic conditions that produce luxuriant grasses give glorious foliage. In the lowlands everywhere were beautiful morning-glories in bloom and other flowers of infinite variety and hue, cloaking the country in a riot of lovely color—blue, yellow, white, red, and golden—acacia trees, too, burst into bloom, presenting at a short distance the effect of a single great mass of color. In the world there are not more beautiful ornamental flowers, palms, trees, and shrubs than are grown in Colombia. Grass flowers, too, are abundant. Small star-shaped flowers they are of red and blue, everywhere adorning the foothills. And I recall lovely groves of blossoming trees, much like peach trees, near the coast, with a profusion of pink blooms of fragrant scent. Japan itself in blossom time, with all its gorgeous cherry orchards blooming, does not surpass Colombia in the blossoming season in early winter and for many months thereafter. Indeed, a number of plants bloom throughout the year. Moreover, the flowers are fragrant, for Colombia is not a land where the blossoms have no scent and the birds no song.

Of birds there are many, brilliantly colored, audacious, familiar, busy songsters by the thousands. Particularly do I recall a saucy brown and white Chupa Huevo, egg robber, that came under my observation during some pleasant days at Rio Frio, near the foot of the Santa Marta Mountains.

The little whistler was never disturbed by my presence, for the song bird in Colombia does not know the small boy with the gun. Another brilliant whistler is a yellow and black oriole which can easily be taught to carry a tune and is very popular in captivity.



Photographs by Hamilton M. Wright.

SOME OF BARRANQUILLA'S BUSINESS ACTIVITIES.

Upper: Rafts of logs on the way down the Magdalena to the Barranquilla market. Center: A section of the inner harbor at Barranquilla, showing a few of the small craft that ply the Magdalena or are used in local traffic. Lower: Scene near the city market, where many traders have their booths outside the market buildings.

When I first heard one of these birds I thought it was some clever boy whistling. Canaries, linnets, humming birds, long-tailed black-birds, and pigeons are abundant. Of the latter the most plentiful is the small brown plump partridge-shaped pigeon that is found in great droves on the country highways and will flutter ahead of the traveler only when he comes very near.

Rabbits, conies, partridges, and other game familiar to sportsmen in more northern latitudes are to be found in the foothills. The tapir is found in the thick woods and brush, through which it beats deep trails. The animal has been shot by coffee ranchers at an elevation of 5,000 feet above sea level and is said to range up as high as 8,000 or 9,000 feet above sea level, crossing the loftiest of the lesser ridges.

I met an American gentleman who, while hunting some 20 years ago in the Santa Marta Mountains, came upon wild coffee, with the result that he established a thriving coffee plantation upon which he now lives. Originally he had gone down to install electric lighting plants at Santa Marta and Barranquilla. Most of the coffee, Colombia's greatest agricultural crop, is raised in the far interior and reaches the coast via the Magdalena River.

But let us return to civilization, to Barranquilla, the most important seaport of Colombia. The city has a population of between 55,000 and 60,000 persons and is reached by the 17-mile railroad line from the deep-sea wharf at Puerto Colombia upon the Atlantic. It is the chief point of transshipment for freight, coffee, gold, hides, Panama hats, platinum, rubber, tobacco, and all the varied products that come down the Magdalena River and are sent by rail for export via Puerto Colombia. In a single year Colombia has exported as much as \$16,600,000 worth of coffee to the United States. Total gold exports run normally over \$6,000,000 (American currency); platinum over \$600,000; Panama hats close to \$1,000,000; hides over \$2,900,000, and this represents but a part of the cattle slaughtered, as Colombia consumes much leather in the manufacture of harness, saddles, shoes and for other purposes.

Barranquilla itself is located three-fourths of a mile from the Magdalena River, but steamers and steel and wood freight carriers come directly to town through several deep channels leading from the river. The main channel skirts one side of the city past mill and factory, by the picturesque evercrowded market place, past still more manufactories, returning to the river by another course. Barranquilla is one of the fastest-growing cities on the Caribbean Sea. It is a solid, substantial, even beautifully built community, of which the finest architectural feature is the broad central plaza and very ornate modern cathedral. From the summit of one of the two towers of this fine edifice one may obtain a good view of that portion of the



Photographs by Hamilton M. Wright.

ON BARRANQUILLA'S STREETS.

Upper: An ordinary street scene. Center: One of the public automobiles introduced in recent years. Lower: A very attractive garage.

city that lies toward the Magdalena River. Parts of Barranquilla are built on higher land and beautiful, shaded grounds. There are a number of interesting manufactories in the city, including a large cotton-spinning mill and a match factory, in both of which Colombian girl operatives are employed. There is an ice factory, a modern electric power plant; there are chocolate factories, a flour mill, underwear and stocking manufactories, sawmills on the canals—for Colombia produces magnificent commercial timbers—and other enterprises. I went through almost all of them. The proprietors were very obliging and agreeable. They spoke with satisfaction of what had been accomplished and freely of their plans for the future. Up to the time of the entrance of the United States into the war, all the flour milled was from wheat imported from the United States. It did not pay to undertake the heavy transportation to bring the wheat from the highlands of the far interior. However, there are smaller flour mills at Medellín, Bogotá, and in many other districts through the highlands. The grade of wheat is constantly being improved and, no doubt, Colombia will produce more and more of her own flour. The fine cotton-spinning factory at Barranquilla obtains its product from the cotton fields along the Magdalena River. The cotton yield is heavy and of fine quality. While the Barranquilla mill does not weave any cloth, there are a number of textile mills in the Republic.

Colombia is progressing in many directions. The present mining industry, superseding the former, is not a score of years old, for mining had languished before modern methods were introduced. Yet modern hydraulic elevators are now at work upon the great placer deposits in Antioquia province. Quartz mines are being opened up. In the opinion of many engineers Colombia is one of the coming gold countries of the world. There is also much coal, iron, and copper. The greatest development for Colombia would be found in a railroad line up the Magdalena Valley to Bogotá. It would, in the opinion of representative Colombians with whom the writer talked, be a most profitable undertaking, for it would open up some of the richest agricultural country in the world, and the people are frequent travelers. Too, it would feed from a thousand points, the water traffic on the Magdalena.

There are, in Barranquilla, several clubs, for social life is highly developed. Banquets, balls, parties, and picnics at the seashore or other outings are of frequent occurrence in the pre-Lenten season. Some of the homes are admirably equipped for dancing. The home of one of my Colombian hosts was finished in green and white Italian marble, with spacious marble courts and large rooms opening out on balustrades on the upper floors. The people are very musically inclined. One of the leading import houses is that of a large piano



STREET SCENE, BARRANQUILLA, COLOMBIA.



Photograph by Hamilton M. Wright.

ONE OF BARRANQUILLA'S MODERN STREETS.

Here we have a glimpse of the modern edifice, together with the motor car which is gradually taking the place of the horse-drawn pleasure vehicle.

dealer, and the finest of pianos are imported. Among the fêtes that display the Colombian love of sociability is the annual pre-Lenten masquerade. The fête was in progress during my visit in Barranquilla. Hundreds of boys and girls and young men and young women danced en bal masque. The fête resembles, in many ways, the celebrated *Mardigras* carnival of New Orleans. Grotesque masks are worn and brilliant colors. Motion pictures also are a popular form of amusement in Colombia, and Barranquilla has several fine theaters devoted to their exhibition. The best American, French, and Spanish films are shown.

While in Colombia I had the coveted opportunity to visit the former country home of Gen. Simon Bolivar, the great South American patriot. It is no exaggeration to say that no measure of devotion could exceed that in which the memory of this truly great statesman and warrior, the first President of the Republic of Colombia, is revered. Nor is it hyperbole to state that there are no people in the world who are more proud of the principles of democracy, who are more patriotic, or who have a greater love for their country than the people of Colombia. Consequently the old country home of Bolivar, the liberator of South America, is much visited. The well-kept estate is near a lovely stream about 6 miles from Santa Marta and is reached by a good highway. A great court, shaded by magnificent trees, contains a statue of the patriot, and the spacious exhibition apartments where mementos of his career are displayed. An inner tiled garden connects the exhibition apartments with the home beyond. The swords and uniforms of the patriot, executive decrees and manifestoes issued by him, recall the revolt against the Spanish in Venezuela and his defeat of Gen. Monteverde at Caracas in 1813, and the successful campaign resulting in the Republic of Venezuela in 1819. There are also mementos of Gen. Bolivar's campaigns to help the Peruvians in their struggles for liberty several years later as well as of his career in Colombia, and of his early student days in Europe.

No more charming spot than this, at the side of a purling stream, set off by mighty shade trees, abounding with song birds, and within the shadows of the mighty snow-capped Sierras, could have been selected by Gen. Bolivar for retirement and quiet after his eventful career.

Santa Marta, population 12,000, is the third most important city of northern Colombia, the first and second cities being Barranquilla and Cartagena, respectively. Bogotá is the largest city with 120,000 population; Medellin next with between 70,000 and 75,000; Cartagena, the fourth city in size, has 35,000 inhabitants. All told Colombia has a population of 6,000,000. Santa Marta bears the distinction of being the oldest Spanish city on the mainland of the Western Hemisphere to occupy the site upon which it was founded,



Photograph by Hamilton M. Wright.

A BUSINESS HOUSE IN BARRANQUILLA, COLOMBIA.

The attractive window display is composed of umbrellas imported from the United States, an article in universal demand in sunshine as well as during the tropical rains.



Photograph by Hamilton M. Wright.

INTERIOR VIEW OF A LARGE TEXTILE PLANT IN BARRANQUILLA.



in 1515. The location of Santa Marta upon a beautiful crescent-shaped harbor where large ridges plunge precipitously into the sea on either side of the crescent is most picturesque. The city is built upon a broad sandy flat, and steamers may almost tie up at the shore. The Santa Marta Railway terminates here with tracks to ship side. The line runs back toward the Magdalena River for 65 miles and with branches has a total trackage of 85 miles. From Santa Marta one may make rail and steamer connection with the Magdalena. Back of Santa Marta 15 miles rise the foothill peaks 9,500 feet above the level of the sea. Still farther in the background may be discerned the white summits of the snowy mountains, ascending perhaps to an altitude of between 14,000 to 16,000 feet, possibly more. So rugged is the country that it would take three months, I was informed, to make the round trip to the summit of the loftiest peak, some 80 miles distant in an air line. Access is gained by proceeding from the direction of Venezuela. But one man, a French explorer, is actually known to have reached the top. The feat was accomplished about 15 years ago.

Santa Marta is a great fruit center. Bananas do wonderfully and cacao thrives. It has a record of having exported 7,000,000 bunches of bananas to the United States and England in a single year. Banana plants planted by French growers more than 25 years ago are still springing up from the first planting. An important American company is engaged in banana growing in the district and also buys bananas from the planters, so that the industry has been greatly extended. The company has here a very fine hospital, one of fourteen or fifteen, I think, that it has around the Caribbean, besides a great many dispensaries and medical stations. It is doing a wonderful work in this respect and one about which very little is generally known. The hospital, which is entirely in charge of Colombian doctors, has the most modern equipment, operating room, sterilizing apparatus, etc.

But I fear I have not given sufficient attention to the most important feature of Colombia, the people themselves, the inhabitants of the favored land whose unvarying hospitality and courtesy, wide interest in affairs and appraisalment of human nature render them the most engaging of companions. The hospitality given to the stranger is akin to the friendliness and helpfulness the people exercise toward one another.

Colombia to-day is a land of the future. It has everything in resources of nature and in human resources, in wise, far-seeing leaders and a responsive patriotic public to establish one of the greatest seats of civilization in the world. For charm of scene, climate, and incident, no land holds out greater allurements to the traveler and tourist.

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