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From the Washington Union.

THE AMAZON AND THE ATLANTIC SLOPES OF SOUTH AMERICA.—No. I.

"The policy of commerce," and not the "policy of conquest," is the policy of the United States.

The spirit of the age, animated by private enterprise, is every day seeking new fields for its peaceful triumphs, and commerce can accomplish throughout the world no achievements like those which note its coming, and its marches up and down the Amazon, and other great rivers of that greatest of water-sheds, the Atlantic slopes of South America.

Men may talk about Cuba and Japan, but of all the diplomatic questions of the day, the free navigation of those majestic water-courses, and their tributaries, is to this country the most valuable and important. It surpasses them all. It is paramount.

The country that is drained by the Amazon, if reclaimed from the savage, the wild beast, and the reptile, and reduced to cultivation now, would be capable of supporting with its produce the population of the whole world.

It is a rice country. The common yield of rice is forty for one. It is reaped five months after planting, and may be planted at any time of the year. Thus the farmer may plant one bushel of rice to-day—in five months hence he will gather forty from it. Planting these forty, he may, in another five months, gather sixteen hundred bushels. In ten months the earth yields an increase there of a thousand-fold and more.

Corn, too, may be planted at any time, and in three months is fit for gathering.—Thus the husbandman there may gather four crops of corn a year. Its seasons are an everlasting summer, with a perpetual round of harvests.

It is the policy of commerce, and commerce is the policy of these United States, to open that river to steam, and its valleys to settlement and cultivation, and its earth, air, and waters to the business and wants of trade and traffic.

There, upon that Atlantic slope of South America, in the valley of the La Plata, and in the valley of the Amazon, Nature in all her ways has been bountiful.

There the vegetable kingdom displays its forces in all their most perfect grandeur and in all their might; and there, too, the mineral kingdom is most dazzling with its wealth.

In that region of country wagon-roads are few, turnpikes unknown, and the first railway has yet to be built; and though the La Plata drains a country nearly as large and many times more fertile than our own Mississippi valley, and though that of the Amazon is twice as great, and its tributaries many times longer, more navigable and numerous, yet the steamboat upon those waters is a problem almost untried. In the valley of the Amazon the plough is unknown, and the American axe, the great implement of settlement and civilization, is a curiosity.

For more than three hundred years the white man has been established in that Amazon basin, and for more than three hundred years it has remained a howling wilderness. The European has made no impression—none—no, not the least—upon its forests. How long shall this continue to be so?

Has diplomacy, no arts, commerce no charms, by which its rivers may be opened to navigation, its forests to settlement, its pampas to cultivation?

What commerce has done for South America is nothing as to what it will do.—It has fringed only the sea-coast of that continent with settlement and cultivation. The great interior has never been touched. The heart of the country is a commercial blank; nor is it to be reached except through the powers of steam, and the free use of its majestic water-courses.

It is of this country—of the importance of settling it up, of sending there the emigrants, the steamboat, the axe, and the plough, with the messengers of commerce—that I wish to speak.

Let us, therefore, first see where it is, how far off it is, and what is its actual condition, and then we will be the better enabled to judge as to the true course of policy which it would be best for the commercial nations of the earth to take with regard to it.

The semi-continent of South America is very nearly in shape to that of a right-angled triangle. Its hypotenuse rests on the Pacific, one of its legs extends from Cape Horn to Cape St. Roque. Here the right angle is formed with the other leg, which extends from Cape St. Roque, in latitude 5 deg. south, to Cabo La Vela, of the Caribbean sea, in latitude 12 deg. north.

The longer leg is that between Cape Horn and St. Roque; it is 3,500 geographical miles in length. The other leg has only 2,500; but the hypotenuse, which stands on the Andes and rests on the Pacific, is more than 4,000 miles long.

This configuration exercises a powerful influence upon the climates of South America, especially as regards its hydrography. The great rivers of that country, the mighty Amazon and the majestic La Plata, are resultants of this configuration. In consequence of having the sea-front which rests upon the short leg in the northern hemisphere and looking to the northeast; and in consequence of having the sea-front which rests upon the long leg in the southern hemisphere, to look southeast, the northeast and the southeast trade winds, as they come across the Atlantic filled with moisture, go full charged into the interior, dropping it in showers as they go until they reach the snow-capped summits of the Andes, when the last drop that that very low temperature can wring from them is deposited to melt and feed the sources of the Amazon and the La Plata with their tributaries.

The northeast trade winds commence to blow about the Tropic of Cancer, and coming from the quarter they do, they blow obliquely across the Atlantic. They evaporate from the sea as they go; and impinging at right angles upon the South American shore-line, that extends from Cape St. Roque to Cabo La Vela, they carry into the interior the vapor that forms the clouds that give the rain which supplies with water the Magdalena, the Orinoco, and the northern tributaries of the Amazon.

The volume of water discharged by these rivers into the sea is expressive of the quantity which those northeast trade winds take up from the sea, and, carrying in the clouds, precipitate upon the watershed that is drained by these streams.—they are but pipes and gutters which Nature has placed under the eaves of the great water-shed that has the Andes for a ridge-pole, the Caribbean Sea and North Atlantic for a cistern.

The trade-wind region of the North Atlantic affords the water-surface where the evaporation is carried on that supplies with rains, dews, and moisture, New Granada, Venezuela, the three Guzanas, and the Atlantic slopes of Ecuador.

On the other hand, the southeast trade winds commence to blow about the parallel of 30 deg. or 35 deg. south. They come, too, obliquely across the Atlantic, and strike perpendicularly upon the South American coast-line which extends from Cape St. Roque towards Cape Horn.—They pass into the interior with their whole load of moisture, every drop of which is wrung from them before they cross the Andes. The quantity of moisture which is taken up from the sea and rained down upon this wonderfully fruitiful country may be seen in what the La Plata and the Amazon discharge back into the sea.

Now, there is no tropical country in the world which has to windward, and so exactly to windward of it, such an extent of ocean in the trade wind region. Consequently there is no inter-tropical country in the world that is so finely watered as is this great Amazon country of South America.

Along the Atlantic coast of the United States, along the coast of China and the east of New Holland the land trends along the direction of the trade winds of those regions. These winds with their moisture, travel along parallel with the land. They do not blow perpendicularly upon it, nor push their vapors right across it into the interior, as they do in South America.—The consequence is, none of those inter-tropical countries can boast of streams and water-courses like those of South America.

The shore line of eastern Africa is arranged like that of the South American water-shed; but it has not sea enough to windward to supply the vapor to feed springs enough to make large rivers.

The southeast trade winds, when the monsoons of the Indian ocean will permit them to blow, strike perpendicularly upon the east coast of South Africa, as they do upon that of South America. In the American case, they blow perpetually—in the African case, for not half the year.—They, therefore, cannot give Africa half as much rain as South America receives.

At Cape Guardafai the right angle of the American coast line is formed, as it is at Cape St. Roque for America; but the winds which cross this line between Cape St. Roque and the isthmus have traversed the Atlantic ocean and Caribbean sea—hence they reach the land dripping with moisture; whereas, in Africa, the northeast trades, which cross the coast line from Cape Guardafai to the isthmus of Suez, have sucked up vapors from the Red sea only—therefore the quantity of moisture which these winds carry into the interior of Africa is not by any means so great as that which those of the Atlantic carry over into South America. The difference is as great as is the difference of the evaporating surface exposed to the northeast trade winds by the Atlantic on the one hand, the Red sea on the other.

The too systems of trade winds—the northeast and the southeast—meet in the interior of South America, somewhere between the equator and the isthmus. This place of meeting is a place of calms, and where it is there it is rainy.

This and other meteorological agents divide the seasons in the northern portions of South America, especially the valley of the Oronoco, into the rainy and the dry—six months of constant rain, six months of blighting drought.

Not so in the valley of the Amazon.—There the weather is agreeable all the year round; and though more rain falls there in some months than in others, as it does here with us, still there, as here, it may rain, and does rain, any day in the year.

Now, I think that any one who has followed me with a map will perceive why this inter-tropical region of South America, or that part of its water-shed which from Panama to the parallel of 30 or 35 deg. S. slopes towards the Atlantic, has, and ought to have, the most remarkable climate in the world. We have seen that Eastern Africa, and Eastern Africa alone, resembles it in configuration of shore line alone; for the evporating surface and the supplies of vapor are wanting, and therefore South Africa cannot be nearly so well supplied with rains, and consequently with rivers, as is South America.

In all the other inter tropical regions of the world—in India, in Western Africa, New Holland, and Polynesia—the year is divided out into the rainy season and the dry; during the latter of which little or no water falls, springs go dry, and cattle perish, and dead bodies pollute the air. Then, too, stalks forth in those countries the "pestilence that walketh in darkness.

In the valley of the Amazon no such condition exists. There the fall of water, though copious—the river Amazon is the rain-guage—is not compressed within a few months, nor accompanied by the terrible hurricanes and tornadoes which rage at the change of seasons in India. Here, in America, gentle and fruitiful showers fall daily, and tornadoes are unknown.

Because the Amazon is a tropical country, the public is disposed to judge of its climates by comparing them with the climates of other tropical countries—as India, for example. But, for the reasons stated, and because there are no monsoons or other conditions to cause the valley of the Amazon to be parched with drought at one season, and drenched with rains at another—as India is on one hand, and the Oronoco country on the other—there is no more resemblance between the climates of India and the Amazon than there is between the climates of Rome and Boston; and any one who would infer similarity of climate from the fact that Boston and Rome are in the same latitude would not be more out than he who infers similarity of climate between India and Amazonia because they both are tropical countries.

Now, what ought to be the condition of an inter-tropical country whose plains are watered with frequent showers, unaccompanied by a single drought during ages of perpetual summer? Why, fertility and salubrity; for in such a climate anything and everything will grow. The rapid production and constant decay of vegetable matter that have been going on there for thousands and thousands of years must have made the soil rich with vegetable mould.

The fact that vegetation there is in perpetual activity—that there, there is no period of vegetable repose—that as fast as one leaf falls and begins to decay other leaves just putting forth absorb its gases—makes the valley in the Amazon one of the most salubrious and delightful of climates.

Having shown that the climate of the La Plata and Amazon country is a climate without droughts, and that it is a moist and warm climate, I have established enough to satisfy any one that the soil there, whatever be the substratum, must have upon it a rich vegetable mould, which the decay of the most rank vegetation during ages must have formed.

In my next I shall proceed to show what travellers and men of science, who have explored various portions of this wonderful region of country, say, as to its productions, its commerce, and the navigability of its water-courses.

INCA.

(*To be continued.*)

A BEAUTIFUL MISS IN MALE ATTIRE.—About a week since, a smart looking lad in appearance, entered an extensive clothing warehouse in the city of Boston, and applied for employment. The intelligent, honest look of the applicant instantly procured a favorable answer, and the supposed lad was set to work folding and packing goods, filing papers, &c., and remained in such employment, boarding at a "quiet" house at the north-end, until Monday last, when in consequence of some suspicion which had been excited, the pretty lad acknowledged herself a lass of eighteen. She is the daughter of an official, an excellent gentleman of New York city, and was induced to leave her father's house by one whom she loved, but who had since abandoned her. Being left alone, she sought employment as above. She is said to be a piquant, dashing, bright eyed girl, full of life and swimming in romance. Her excessive smartness, and glibness of tongue, at first led the proprietors to believe they had found a model clerk, and of course they were no litte astonished on learning he was a girl. Her hair was cut man fashion, as were her manners, as may well be believed by passing unsuspected, through nearly a week's clerkship among some fifty men.

From the Illustrated Family Friend.

DARKNESS AND DEMONS;
OR, AN UNEXPLAINED MYSTERY.

BY GEORGE S. RAYNOND.

Twenty years ago, one of the most prominent objects that met the eye of the lake voyager as he entered the mouth of Grand River from Lake Erie, was a large brick mansion situated on the very bank of the lake, some five hundred yards to the eastward of the little cluster of houses dignified by the name of Fairport, a favorite resort of steamers to procure wood, and quite a favorite port for sail vessels in a storm, and the harbor was far more easy of access than others on the southern shore of Lake Erie.

For more than two years previous to the spring of 1852, this brick mansion at the mouth of Grand River had borne the reputation of being haunted. Almost every night, strange unnatural sights and terrible noises had been seen and heard in and about the house, and although several investigations had taken place by men who claimed that it is all a hoax, skilfully managed by human agency, yet nothing that gave any clue to the mystery had been elicited, and the people of the village, a great many farmers in the neighborhood, and hundreds of travelers, became as firmly convinced that the deserted mansion was really the haunt of goblins, ghosts, and demons, as they were aware of the fact that the house had stood there for more than two years uninhabited.

It was in the latter part of July, 1832 that the schoonor to which I belonged made a harbor in Grand River, about sunrise, and before noon there were full thirty lake craft put up like ourselves for shelter from a severe northeast storm which was raging outside.

Most of us were familiar with the many ridiculous stories current respecting the haunted house, many of the number believed them all, and some few—myself sup among the number—scouted the idea of there being anything at all supernatural about the matter.

We were discussing the subject pro and con, thirty of us perhaps in an old warehouse on the wharf, when one of our number—Capt. Birney, the commander of one of the vessels in port, proposed a visit to the mansion by daylight, for the purpose of making a thorough examination of the premises. The motion was instantly seconded by a majority of the party, and off we went at once to put our resolution in practice.

We found the house, which in those days was considered a fashionable modern built structure, standing a little back from the road where the bank began to slope off towards the beach, so that the mansion, which was three stories on the street front, was four next the lake, the lower one being an open light basement of about half the width of the house, with a great dark cellar separated by a brick wall from the kitchen in the rear.

The house had been built for a hotel, and the whole length of the street front, there was a balcony witha porch and seats all round it except at the entrance, capable, altogether, of seating forty or fifty people comfortably. The original proprietor of the house had gone with the Mormons after inhabiting it about two years but whether he still owned the place, or whether there was any owner for it or not, no one pretended to know. One thing however, was very certain. No one had lived there—at least no mortal tenant, for more than two years, and the people shunned it as the abode of evil spirits.

Within, the house presented an appearance much like that of other buildings under the same circumstances, and the only mysterious features we could discover were that on every door, from the cellar to the attick, and on both sides, just about the centre, was traced a St. Andrew's cross, and upon a close examination, the material used for the purpose, proved to be blood The other mystery was, that on the floors, were an infinite number of tracks made by naked human feet—some of them slim and delicate like those of women, while by far the greater portion were those of stout, full grown men.

All these tracks resemble exactly those made by a person coming out of a clay pit, or mortar bed, and walking over a smooth surface leaving the prints of the toes and the whole shape of the foot outlined by a deposit of mud; the material in this instance, being identical with that used for the manufacture of brick.

After many arguments and suggestions as to the origin, design, or meaning of these mysterious tracks and crosses, Capt. Birney, gave it as his positive conviction, that they were the handiwork of demons.

"Then they are decidedly the most bloody, dirty devils I have ever been on the track of," said Ralph Eastman, a stout, fearless fellow.

"Look here, Captain Birney," I put in, "Devils can't make crosses, and all the saints that I've ever heard or read of, have one cloven foot. No, no; these customers are not devils. If they are I'll eat 'em."

"You!" exclaimed the captain in a tone of contempt. "You! I'll bet twenty dollars that neither you or Ralph will dare to come here after dark."

"I'll take that bet on Sil," replied Ralph.

"And I'll go my twenty on Ralph," I shouted. "Must we come alone or both together Captain?"

"Just as you please about that. But hold on—I was rather too fast. I meant after midnight."

"All right Captain," answered Eastman, "I don't care how long after midnight it is. It may be sunrise and suit me just as well; but if I don't come here and dance a hornpipe on this very floor within fifteen minutes of midnight, my name's not Ralph."

At this moment several of the doors opened and slammed to again with a crash that fairly made the building quiver, and at the same time there was heard a low monotonous howl in the chamber directly overhead.

"What's that?" enquired several of the party gazing about them with looks of wonder and awe.

Five or six of us rushed up stairs and searched every part of the chamber, but all was hushed, and when we returned to our friends we gave it as our opinion that the strange noise and slamming of the doors had been caused by a sudden gust of wind coming in through the broken windows.

"Very likely," said Capt. Birney, with a peculiar look that had more of meaning in it than his words conveyed.

"Come, let's adjourn out of this old rookery," observed somebody, and the motion was carried without a dissenting voice, and we returned to the old warehouse on the wharf where, after having placed the amount of money bet, in the hands of stakeholders, Ralph and I repaired on board the vessel to which he belonged, to talk over the intended night venture; leaving our friends to pass the remainder of the day as people usually do who have nothing on earth to do.

It was arranged between Ralph and myself that we would turn in at sundown so as to get a few hours sleep, before we set out. The cook of Ralph's vessel was to call him at eleven o'clock, when he would rouse me and we would start off so as to reach the haunted house about midnight.

I went on board my vessel and turned in, after which I have no knowledge of anything that passed till I was aroused from a sound sleep by a tremendous peal of thunder that seemed to rock the very earth, and leaping to my feet, I felt the cool night breeze blowing upon my bare head and I knew in a moment I was not in the cabin of the schooner.

A moment more and the pitchy darkness was lit up be a vivid flash of lightning, and judge, if you can, of my astonishment at finding myself standing there bareheaded and without any coat, in the porch of the haunted house. How I came there, or what the hour was I could not tell; yet there I was—alone, and all around me on the seats of the piazza sat strange uncouth beings, with bare feet and legs, and hideous masks on their heads, laughing and gibbering at each other, while in the open door-way stood a giant figure bearing in his left hand a common tin lantern, and on his right arm what appeared to be a shield with a blood red cross like those on the doors, upon its surface.

Were I to say I was not frightened, I should be guilty of a falsehood; but my fear was more of that kind naturally engendered by the dread of something unreal, than apprehension of any bodily harm from the horrible things about me, which I firmly believed to be phantoms, with no power to do me any injury. Still I was most terribly frightened; my hair seemed to stand erect, the warm blood felt like an ice bath, as it was freezing through my veins, and I would have given the coined wealth of the universe had I possessed it, for the power to fly from the horrid scenes of devlish enchantment.

The seat from which I must have risen when I was aroused by that crash of thunder, was unoccupied, and staggering forward, I sunk down on it with my head back against the window, through the broken pains of which a bare arm protruded, and scarcely had I touched the seat when a cold clammy hand was laid upon my face.

Uttering a yell of terror I attempted to spring up, but I could not, for another had graspad my hair and drew my head back against the sash of the window so that for a moment I was a prisoner. But seizing the hand with both my own, I first broke its grip upon my hair, and drawing the person to whom it belonged up against the sash I recognized by a flash of lightning, which lit up the porch at that moment, a farmer's daughter whom I had known two years previously in the state of N. York.

She had left home to visit a married sister living in Cleveland, after which nothing had ever been seen or heard of her till that night, when I met her there in the company of goblins at the haunted mansion.

In my surprise, I relinquished my grasp upon the girl's arm, who instantly vanished from the window and a peal of unearthly laughter, which seemed to ring out from the interior of the house, up from the grim phantoms on the porch, and from ten thousand invisible demons in the black night.

The fiendish laughter died away, and there was a few moment's silence broken only by the low muttering thunder, till at length eight clear and distinct strokes from the bell of a revenue cutter in the harbor, told the hour of midnight, upon which the giant in the door shouted, "In! in to the dance!" and up from the benches in the porch, leaped the whole company of spirits and went skipping, frisking and waltzing into the two great front rooms, where they joined hands and went whirling around in giddy circles, their bare feet which I could see by the united glare of a dozen antic shaped lanterns, were all covered with mud, went pattering along the floor leaving fresh prints like those we had seen durng the day.

Some strange infatuation, which had it been to gain my soul's eternal salvation, I could not resist, seized me, and in with the rest I rushed, seizing the mysterious farmer's daughter, with whom I joined hands, and round we whirled amid the waltzing demons, my heavy boots clattering strangely among the rapid patter of bare feet all shuffling and leaping in that wild midnight revel.

Faster and more furious grew the infernal dance, and I was almost entirely bewildered, when in among the wierd crew rushed Ralph Eastman, shouting in a voice of thunder:

"Ho there! devils and devil's imps, witches and wizards, have at ye. Round you go, old Belzebub! I'm your partner!" and grasping the man with the tin lantern, he dashed him to the floor, tore a mask from his face, and revealed the features of, *Capt. George Birney.*

In an instant all was confusion, my partner slipped from my grasp and disappeared, half the demons vanished and the remainder gathered around the prostrate captain, flung aside their masks and appeared as—captains, mates and sailors from the various vessels in port gathered there for a night lark, and to frighten Ralph and I. So far as I was concerned they had done it most effectually, for the next morning my hair was as gray as a badger.

As to the mystery of my being there on the porch fast asleep, I never found that out. The cook and two or three of the men said I got up in my sleep and went off there, and it may have been so. In fact I don't see how it could have been otherwise.

But there was other demons than the sailors at the haunted house that night.—But who they were, where they came from, their business there, or whither they fled so suddenly has ever remained a mystery, as has those bloody crosses, the foot prints on the floor, and the secrets of the haunted mansion, and the appearance there that night of Lydia May, the farmer's daughter, who I can swear was no ghost, or a strong one to pull hair as she did.

Captain Birney gave up his money like a man and made up his mind like another, never to attempt frightening Ralph or myself again. I never told him how very near they had come to scaring me entirely to death that night; but the people often wondered what made my hair turn grey so young.

A Quiet Man Disposing of an Insult.

Lord Mark Kerr, who distinguished himself at the battle of Fontenoy, was a good but eccentric officer and a terrible duellist. His *debut* was remarkable. He was a lad of slight, effeminate appearance, apparently void of spirit. His father, the Marquis of Lothian, when he brought him up to London to join his "regiment—the Coldstream Guards—requested the colonel, who was his particular friend, to watch over him and see, that he submitted to no improper liberties, and to instruct him in the way he should go, in case he had the misfortune to be insulted." Those were the days of hard drinking, "prodigious swearing," according to my uncle Toby, and much brutality of manners. This pacific young scion of nobility soon became a but at mess, a stop-peg to hang their practical on, until at last a captain of a year's standing actually threw a glass of wine in his face. He still said nothing, but wiped his face with his hankerchief, and took no further notice of the insult he had received.

The Colonel thought it was high time to interfere, and invited him to breakfast, *tete-a-tete*, on the following morning at 9 o'clock. Lord Mark arrived punctually, ate his breakfast with perfect composure, and spoke but little. At length the commanding officer broke ground. "Lord Mark," said he, "I must speak to you on rather a delicate subject, but as your father's friend I am compelled to waive ceremony. Captain L——— yesterday morning publicly passed an affront on you, which both your own honor and the credit of the regiment require you to notice." "What do you think, sir, I ought to do?" inquired Lord Mark. "Call on him for an explanation," rejoined the colonel. "It is, I fear, to late for that," replied the young ensign. "*I shot him* at eight this morning, *and if you will take the trouble to look out of the window you will see him on a shutter!*"