

Through Darkness and Dawn on Toboggan

(Copyright, 1914, by Frank G. Carpenter.)

LIMA, Peru.—A toboggan slide down the Andes!

Coasting on a gravity car from the highest mountains, over the steepest railroad of the world to the level of the sea!

Dashing out of the clouds to find clouds below you!

Now in the blizzard, where the hail and snow are so thick you cannot see a stone's throw in front, and now under the blue sky with the air clear all about you!

Hanging to precipices, flying on spider-web bridges of steel over frightful chasms, whirling about curves in the midnight darkness of winding tunnels and coming out into the light of day with a shudder as you look at the depths far below you.

This, in a nutshell, is the story of my trip from the glacial snows, three miles straight above where I am writing. It gives only a faint idea of the journey. The dangers were awfully real, and as I look back it seems a miracle that I am here today to describe them. It is a miracle. The ordinary ride of this kind, taken with a dry track and the sunlight, is so dangerous that travelers who risk it are made to sign a paper, swearing that their heirs will claim no damages if they are killed on the way. I signed such a document before I got on the car; and an hour later it seemed to me that the railroad authorities were sensible to require such protection.

Three Miles High.
We started at Tiello, at the very top of the pass, where the Andean waters divide, some running down the western slope into the Pacific, and others making their way across the continent through the Amazon, into the Atlantic. We were almost at the level of 16,000 feet. We were fully three miles above the surface of the ocean, and we were to slide down over the rails, through a winding distance of 100 miles clear to the sea.

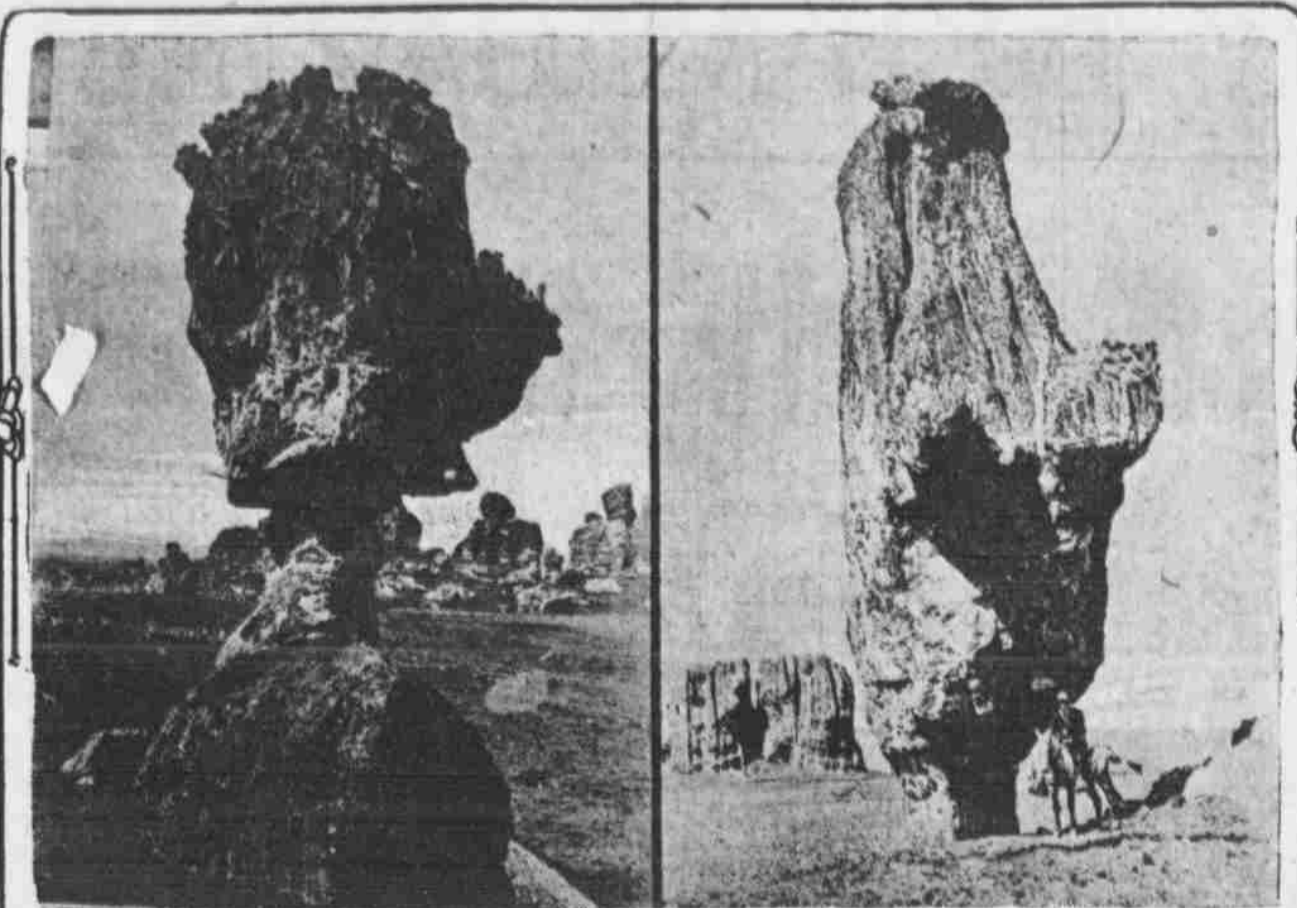
The Central railway goes to the top of the Andes without one inch of down grade. The most of the way the ascent is about four feet to 100 and you can start a car at the glacier, and it will fly straight to the waters of the tropical ocean.

Our toboggan was the private gravity car of Mr. Feehan, the general manager of the Central railroad. It was a low platform on wheels about two feet in diameter. It had no motive power, and it was controlled only by two brakes, one on each side of the front. Upon the platform were seats wide enough for three persons, and as we took our places I sat in the middle, with my stenographer at the left and Mr. Russell of the operating department of the railway at my right. We had also a Peruvian Cholo who understood the business to act as a brakeman. We had to run upon schedule time, for the track is a single one and we had to pass trains going up and down on the way. We were to get our orders from the telegraph operators at the principal stations.

Is Thrilling Trip.
We started amid the glaciers. The sky was clear, and we could see the great masses of ice as they were imperceptibly moving down the mountain. Just above us was Mount Meiza, over 17,000 feet high, and all around were mighty peaks kissing the clouds. The sun shone brightly. The rails were dry, and Mr. Russell said we would have no trouble controlling the car, as the only danger came from the rain or the snow, which make it difficult for the wheels to hold to the track.

This was the case at the start. We were shot out of Tiello, and flew at the rate of twenty miles an hour down the road. We had hardly started, however, before the sky changed, and the winds began to roll up the gorges. The air grew cold, and within five minutes we were in the midst of a snowstorm. A moment later the snow turned to hail. The stones were as big as marrowfat peas, and they bounced like rubber as they fell on the track. With the hail came thunder, and flashes of lightning. The air was so rare that our ears fairly cracked with sound, and the lightning made more visible the dangers about us.

Storm Brings Hazards.
As we went on the rails became white and the rocks were hidden in snow. Our car was half full of hail, and the wheels were flying over slippery tracks. Then the wind increased to a blizzard, and Fioekher, who was sitting beside me, taking his notes on wet paper, notwithstanding the storm, all at once cried out that his hat had blown off. Very foolishly we stopped the toboggan, and started our Cholo conductor back up the track. At this time we had only ten minutes leeway of a train that was coming behind. We waited five minutes and the Cholo did not appear. Then Fioekher went back and had on the edge of a cliff 400 feet high and about 200



The King and the Sentinel from the Andean Garden of the Gods

yards from the toboggan. The Cholo had disappeared. We waited for him two minutes longer, and then, hearing the whistle of the down-coming train, we knew we should have to manage the toboggan ourselves. Mr. Russell took hold of one brake and Fioekher grabbed tight on the other, and we began to coast down through the storm. The cold was piercing. The winds went through our bones and the great hail-stones cut our faces. At times when the clouds were the blackest we could see only a few feet at the front, but could look down the sides of the cliff to which the track hung and see the snow-clad walls far below us. Now we would go flying into a tunnel, and here were the safest of places, for the rails were dry and the brakes made the wheels grip the track. Indeed, we almost prayed for the tunnels and were glad when we dashed over a bridge through the blinding sleet into the darkness.

Meet Trains.
We had made eight or nine miles when we met two trains standing at one of the switchbacks on a siding. They were waiting for us, and the engineers said another train must pass coming up before we started down. At that time we were chilled to our bones. Mr. Russell's face was blue with the sleet and the cold, and Fioekher's hands were frozen holding the brake. We climbed out of our car and into the cab of one of the oil-burning engines. The heat of the boiler soon thawed our blood, and within a short time our clothes, which had been wet by the snow, had dried off.

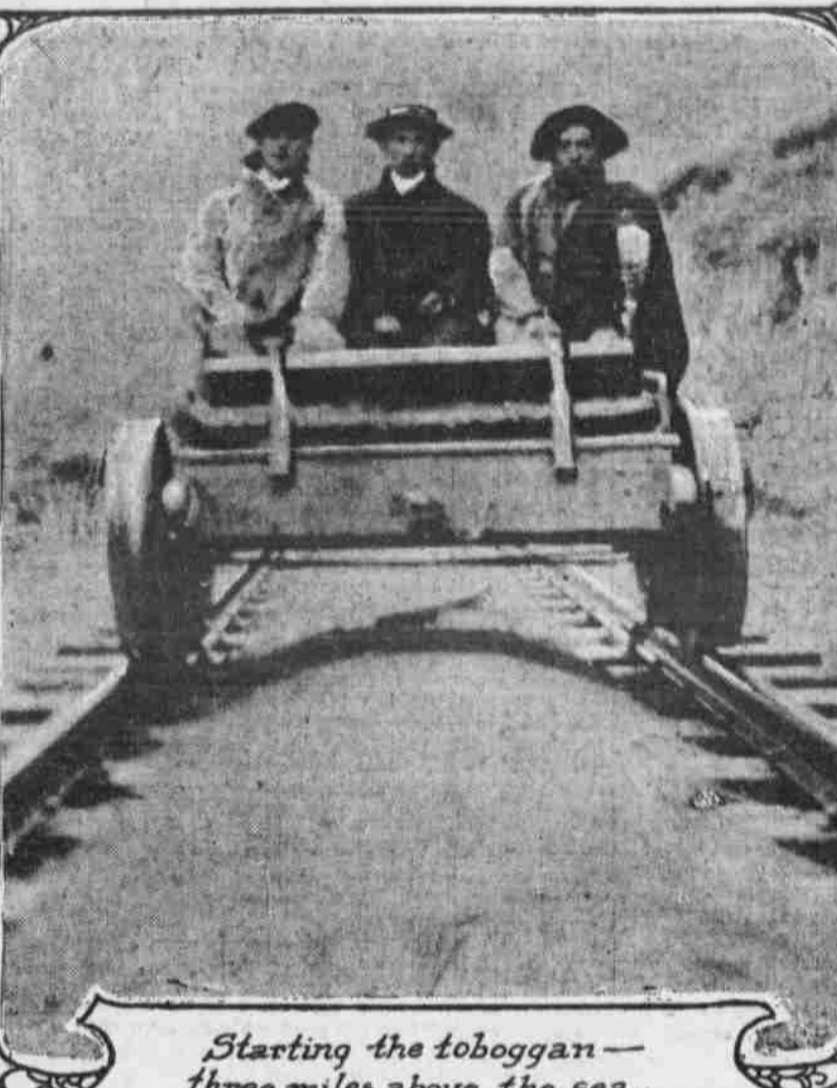
We were still in the storm when we left the switchback. The rails were covered with sleet and we could not be sure of the tracks. At one place we passed a gang of trainmen who were working on the road, and at another time narrowly escaped a drove of llamas that was crossing the track in the storm. As they saw our toboggan the animals began to run and they went along on kansaroo jumps with their Indian drivers trotting behind.

At every hamlet along the way we had to look out for the dogs. The scurvy curs ran out and barked at the car and snarled at us as we flew by. The great danger was that a dog might get in front of the car and by being run over throw us down the sides of the mountain.

We were going too fast to watch out for slides. When it rains in the Andes this track has to be watched daily for the masses of earth and rock that fall down upon it, and for this reason a hand-car is always sent five minutes in front of the engine to flag it for slides.

Scenery is Wonderful.
By and by we passed Casapaica, and there lost the storm. The sun came out, and the sky straightway was blue with white clouds. We could now see for miles. The track dried, and we coasted along at great speed through some of the most wonderful scenery on earth. Now we would ride for miles between walls of rock that extended upwards for thousands of feet, and now hang over gorges, below which a thousand feet down, the rushing Rhine flowed foam-ting. Now we would enter a tunnel high up on the side of a cliff and, looking down, see another tunnel almost directly below us. We rushed out of one tunnel into the Infernillo, a slender bridge of iron which joins two great walls of rock. On the other side of the bridge we would see the black hole pierced by the track. Above us, through the narrow slit of the rocks, was the blue sky of heaven, and below was the gorge which these people call the Little Hell. The bridge there spans a chasm which is 2,000 feet deep, and we trembled at the thought that there might be a train in the tunnel beyond.

The whole of this wonderful road seems blasted out of the sides of the mountains. Here it hangs to the cliffs, there it bores through the rocks, and again it zigzags in great Vs as it climbs. Some of the tunnels are so close together that they make me think of the road between Monte Carlo and Nice, which has been described as riding through a flute and locking out of the holes. The only difference between that and this road up the Andes is that each of these holes gives you a moving picture show of magnificent grandeur.



Starting the toboggan—three miles above the sea.

high above all its surroundings. There is another rock known as the Turtle, a gigantic rock the shape of a tortoise, that is believed to uphold the world. A third looks like a great steinbock perched on a pedestal, and a fourth is a mighty tower chiseled out by the gods. In this same region is the Rock Forest, consisting of hundreds of acres of columns which stand individually out on the plain and which in the distance look like a great wood.

Anything the Heart Desires.
And then there are castles, palaces and grand fortifications. With a little imagination you can find almost any kind of architecture or the model of any great structure. I have seen a table rock which hangs over the harbor at Cape Town in South Africa. There are table rocks of marble here in the Andes which look as though they had been cut by a sculptor.

Going to Cerro de Pasco I saw rocks like those of the Giant's Causeway, although they were not of hexagonal shape, and in riding through the mountains I have seen castles of the purest white marble, which in their grandeur excel those mighty ruins, the work of man, on the Rhine. These mountains have all the colors of the Colorado canyon. Now the rock is blazing white above and a marble palace seems to have risen out of the golden rocks below, which in turn remind one of the raised marbles of the Parthenon at Athens. Here the rocks are brown, further on they are blue, red or gray. The gray is the most prominent color close to the sea. Much of the formation is limestone. Here the mountains are ragged and rough. Further on they rise into ruined cities. I saw some of the color of old sandstone.

Vegetation is Extraordinary.
The vegetation of the Andes is wonderful. I have already written of the Rimac valley, which broadens out into an irrigated plain at the sea and climbs its winding way through narrow gorges, with patches of soil here and there to the top of the coastal range to a height of almost three miles. This has sugar cane, cotton and orchards at the base. Higher up are alfalfa and grass, and higher still are small grains of various kinds. Fruits can be grown all the way to the top. For the first two miles of altitude the mountains about are almost altogether a desert. Then comes a sprinkling of green, with many wild flowers. Higher still the green deepens, and, after going over the pass and reaching the high plateau which is upheld by the two mighty ranges of the Andes nearest the coast, you come into a land which seems to be a bed of green moss with tufts of grass here and there. This is the vegetation of the high plateau, which covers millions of acres and supports vast herds of llamas and sheep.

Some of the sheep are owned by rich capitalists. There is one firm which has 36,000 and another near Cerro de Pasco which owns 60,000 and more. There are also hundreds of squatters, Indians or Cholos, who have small flocks. They live in little houses about fifteen feet square, away out on the plains. Their houses are of mud or sod, with thatched roofs held down by rocks. Near their houses are corrals for the stock. They are fenced with stone, and each pen contains an acre or so. Some of these squatters have great flocks of llamas and others of donkeys. Now and then you see a double corral with donkeys in one pen and llamas in the other. All of the stock is herded. Every flock has its man or woman, who stands and keeps or aims as she watches it. Some of the herdsmen are children, little boys and girls of 10 or 12 years of age, who knit or spin as they care for the sheep.

Yield Good Profits.
The great haciendas of the high Andes yield considerable money. There is one near La Foudelion, which produces tens of thousands of pounds of wool every year. It belongs to Duncan, Fox & Co., of Lima, and it is managed by a Scotchman whose name is McKenzie. The farm has 3,000 sheep, which are kept in fenced fields and handled by shepherds from Scotland. The manager is making many experiments in introducing new blood into the flocks; and he has Scotch collie dogs, which he has imported and is crossing with the native dogs of Peru to produce a breed especially fitted for sheep raising on the high Andes.

I see many cattle feeding on the plateau. They are comparatively small and not very fat. There is an Italian named Ferrasidini, who is experimenting in bringing in fancy stock. He has a number of large haciendas and expects to supply the meat market of the coast. This same man is said to own thousands of llamas and donkeys and to largely control the freighting about Cerro de Pasco. I understand that the government is experimenting with the grasses of the high Andes and that attempts are being made to improve them.

Climate is Not Cold.
The climate at 12,000 feet is not cold in comparison with that of some other sheep countries. It is warm during the day and even in the coldest weather the nights do not fall below zero. The sheep and cattle can feed out of doors all the year round. The snow falls but the sun is so hot that it never lies more than an hour or so at a time. About the most dangerous features of the weather are the big thunder storms, with the accompanying lightning. The latter often strikes, killing people and sheep. As to the general features of the climate, the plateau has two seasons, dry and wet. The wet season begins in September or October, and lasts until April or May. At that time it is usually clear in the morning with rain or snow in the afternoon. The dry season, which is from May to September, is delightfully clear. The sky is always blue and the tropical sun makes the weather much like Indian summer in the Virginia mountains, which I believe is the very best weather on earth. FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Best Known Cough Remedy.
Dr. King's New Discovery is for coughs, colds, hoarseness and all lung troubles. First dose helps. 50c and \$1. All druggists.—Advertisement.

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