

Life and Work of the Quichua Indians

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 UZCO, Peru, May 24.—For the last month I have spent the great part of my time on this mighty plateau which in places is 100 miles wide, running north and south from Ecuador to Bolivia. The valley is walled by snow-capped mountains. It has many peaks that are three or four miles above the sea, mighty volcanoes that have poured out ramparts of lava that has congealed, as it were, in its flow. This great valley winds in and out.

The most of it is over 12,000 feet above the sea, but there are great depressions here and there in which the land slopes down to the altitude of a thousand feet, giving it all the crops of the tropics and the temperate zone.

This plateau is one of the most thickly populated parts of South America, and it has some of the strangest people of the new world. The majority of them are Indians, and several of them are the descendants of the Quichuas, the subjects or slaves of the Incas. The Inca empire extended from beyond Quito to far down into Chile, and its people were in many respects more civilized than the Spaniards who conquered and enslaved them. When Pizarro came they were numbered by millions, and it is said that there were 5,000,000 of them in Peru alone. They were civilized farmers and herdsmen. They were excellent farmers and their irrigated vast tracts which under the Spaniards soon went to waste. It is of the descendants of these people that I write you today. By terrible oppressions their number has been cut down to at least one-third of what it was in the past, but there are still in Peru perhaps 2,000,000 of them, nearly all of whom live on this high plateau of the mountains.

Heart of Ancient Empire.
 I saw the Quichuas first in the northern part of the Andes. They populate the high valleys of Ecuador and are still to be found all the way from there south to Bolivia, where the Aztec Indians begin. Right here at Cuzco I am in the heart of their ancient empire, and in the center of the population of today.

I have seen the Quichuas by hundreds in every town at which I have stopped, and I have photographed their little huts, scattered over the pampas; I have seen them toiling along the trails with enormous loads on their backs, or going barefooted, driving their llamas and donkeys loaded with the crops of their masters to the markets of the cities. I have watched them as they sat on the stone floors of the plazas with their little stores of vegetables, grain or fruit spread out before them, and have observed them in the streets carrying great barrels of water and other burdens from house to house as the servants of the Cholo and whites. These Indians, who were formerly among the most civilized peoples of the world outside of Europe, are now about the most degraded and miserable of any on earth. Since the Spaniards came they have been practically the servants of the whites and the half-breeds. Their intelligence has been ground out of them, and through generations of abuses and of exploitation on the part of their masters, added to the use of alcohol and coca, they have become nearer pure animals than any race now borne as a burden on the shoulders of white men.

In the short time I have been in South America I do not pretend to pass judgment as to the present status of the Quichua civilization. The above opinions are the gist of those I have gathered from men who have lived in South America for many years. Some of the views come from natives, and some from foreigners who have been long in the country. Let me give you a few of the talks I have had on this subject. The first is from a mining operator, who is at the head of the company which in the last decade had operated quartz mines here in the Andes, yielding more than \$7,000,000 in gold. He is a man of close observation and a large employer of Indians. He is, moreover, open-minded and fair. He really believes what he says.

Lack of Intelligence.
 "The Quichuas of today appear to lack ordinary intelligence. You tell a man to fetch you a broom and he will bring you a shovel. You send him for a hat, and like as not, he will come back with a glass of water. If you knock him over and make him go back he may bring you what you have asked. The shock starts his brain to working and is only then that he understands. I believe that the cause of the deterioration of the Quichua is due somewhat to the oppression he has had on the part of the whites, but more to the alcohol and coca, with which his brain is soaked from the time he reaches young manhood until the day of his death. The chewing of the coca leaf begins almost at birth, and boys and girls, young men and young women, as well as the old must have so much coca per day. The Indians expect to be supplied with a certain amount of coca in addition to their wages. They mix the leaves with the ashes of a certain tree and chew them. The ashes furnish the alkali that loosens the alkaloid of the coca, giving them the effect of the cocaine. These ashes are made up in blocks and are sold in the market. Every Indian carries his coca pouch with him and he chews all the time. When his jaws stop you can see his cud, the size of a walnut, bulging through one of his cheeks. The coca takes away hunger and enables him to endure fatigue, but it also dries up the brain. As to alcohol, both men and women drink great quantities of aguardiente, or sugar brandy. This has an alcohol grade of about 52 per cent.

Bright When Young.
 Another American who is a large mine operator in Bolivia tells me that the Indian boys are bright until the age of 15 years. Up to that time they have plenty of coca, but their brains have not been sodden with liquor. One reason for this is that their parents want the liquor themselves. It is only after 15 years of age, when they begin to work independently of their parents, that they can get alcohol in any great quantity. After that their brains materially deteriorate, and they are on the downgrade for the rest of their lives.

A native Peruvian of Spanish descent said to me: "The Quichuas have but little ambition, and they live from hand to mouth. They seem to have no spirit and their brains appear to be atrophied."

As to alcohol, the extent to which it is used among the Indians is beyond conception. You may see drunken men and women by scores at any feast, and at the railroad stations, and in every part of the country there are Indians who go reeling along with red faces and bleared eyes. During my stay in Cuzco I have gone into some of the alcohol stores, and I am astonished at the vast quantities sold. There is a wholesale and retail liquor establishment just opposite my hotel in the heart of this city. It con-



Indian Children



An Indian madonna from Sicuani

An old Quichua man

sists of a number of large rooms running around a patio. The storeroom facing the street is walled with tin tanks, each twice as high as a man, and as big around as the boiler of a 100-ton locomotive. I counted twelve of these tanks standing upon platforms against the wall of that room. Each was marked as containing 2,000 liters of alcohol, and when I tapped upon them with my knife I found they were full. There were 24,000 quarts of that terrible brandy in this one room alone. Every tank had its faucet, and the brandy was drawn out by the gallon, the liter or bottle.

Proud of His Business.
 As I looked the store keeper came up and I asked him some questions. He seemed proud of his business and told me that he made 1,500,000 pounds of the liquor each year. He sells it to the Indians at about \$10 per quintal or 100 pounds, shipping it not only to the city of Cuzco, but to other towns throughout the province. He describes his estate where the brandy is made. It is called the Hacienda Pachachaca and it consists of four great farms, and it takes from 800 to 1,000 Indian families to run it. The owner took me into the court upon which the liquor store faced and showed me how the stuff is brought in from the plantation. It is packed in goatskins containing 100 pounds each and is carried ninety miles upon mules to Cuzco. He opened one of the skins and gave me a taste of the liquor. It went down my throat like liquid fire, and he took an alcohol gauge and showed me that the stuff was 53 per cent fine.

I saw other alcohol stores, though not so large, in Sicuani. There are scores of them in Arequipa and in almost all of the towns of the mountainous districts. The alcohol sells for about 10 cents a quart. The Indians usually buy it by the bottle, a number getting together and treating each other. The women drink quite as freely as the men, and on saints' days both sexes get together and have a grand spree, at which time there is music and dancing and love making, irrespective of the marriage relation. Sometimes an Indian will drink a whole bottle right down and his limit is generally gauged by the amount he is able to purchase.

All Drink Chicha.
 In addition to alcohol, the Indian men, women and children drink chicha, a beer made of corn. This is to be found everywhere in the mountains of Peru from one end of it to the other. The ordinary way of making chicha is to take the grains of ripe corn and throw them into tanks in the earth. The grain is then covered with straw and sprinkled with water. It is kept wet until it swells and sprouts, after which it is taken out and boiled for a season. When set aside, so the liquor begins to ferment, and within a short time it is beer.

In some villages I am told the old custom of making chicha still prevails. In that case the fermentation is started first in the mouth. The girls come together and have chewing matches. They shell off the ripe grains, and grind them to powder between their teeth, working their jaws until the saliva flows freely. In the midst of the party is a great wooden trough, in which from time to time each girl spits out her mixture of saliva-soaked meal. The spittle brings about fermentation, and after a short time the mush, with some water added, has turned to a beer that will make the drunk come. I am told this is the best form of chicha yet known, and that its manufacture dates back to the days of the Incas.

The use of the coca leaf, which con-

tains the active principle of cocaine, is universal. It is chewed every day and there are certain fixed times during the laboring hours when all stop for a recess, during which they chew coca. The farmer gives his Indians a handful of coca leaves every morning, and the mine owner has to supply a fixed amount of coca in addition to the ordinary wages. The coca takes away hunger and it keeps out the cold. It enables one to breathe better in the high altitudes of the Andes and it is claimed the its use enables the Indians to work longer and endure more fatigue. It also deadens the brain, destroys the will power and takes away all forms of intellectual activity.

The Indian not only chews the coca, but he makes a tea of it. It is said to be good for the stomach and the chewing of it keeps the teeth white, and I am told it preserves them. Nearly all of the Indians I see have white teeth, and it is said they seldom have toothache, this fact being attributed to coca.

Coca leaves are sold in all of the stores here in Cuzco. They come from a shrub which is cultivated and which grows from four to six feet in height. The leaves are much like a rose leaf or like our wintergreen. They are picked green, dried and put up in packages of twenty-five pounds each. Such a package sells for \$2.50. I bought 10 cents' worth today and took it home in order to try it. The senorita who managed the store brought out a pair of old brass scales, balanced on the end of a beam, and weighed me out a full pound. I chewed some, but it had no perceptible effect, probably because I had not the ashes or lime to go with it. I then made some into a tea. It tasted like a concoction of hay, and made me feel good.

Climate is Disagreeable.
 As I see how the Indians live and work on these cold highlands of the Andes, I do not wonder that they are driven to coca and alcohol to keep off the blues. Let me describe some of their houses, scattered over the pampas. They are huts made of mud, so rude and squalid that they would hardly be fit for a hog or as a stable for a good American cow. The typical dwelling is about eight or ten feet in width and perhaps ten or fifteen feet long. It is so low that as you stand outside it your head reaches above the thatched roof beams. This building has walls made of sod or mud, and its roof is straw, tied to poles or canes. It has no windows and the only door is a hole in the wall, so low that you have to stoop down to go in. In some of the huts there is a framework at the back, upon which the family sleep at night, but in the most of them both grown-ups and children lie down on the ground and huddle together to keep themselves warm. There is no furniture to speak of except a few llama skins, which are spread on the floor. The people sleep in the same clothing that they wear in the daytime, and they cover themselves with their ponchos or with the coarse blankets the women weave for the purpose.

The cooking is done on a little clay stove in one corner of the hut, and the fuel is the droppings of llamas and cattle, which are gathered up and dried for the purpose. Sometimes a kind of peat is used, and sometimes the stunted vegetation of the pampas is chopped out and burnt. The stove has no chimney and the smoke blackens the roof of the hut and gets out through the door. There is no sign of comfort about such a home. There are no tables or chairs. It is, in fact, about as bad as any dog kennel or

pioneer stable we have in America. Indeed, it is difficult to believe that hundreds of thousands of human beings are born, live and die in these squalid huts of the Quichuas. Their dwellings are the same now that they have been for generations, and the only difference of conditions among them is that some families have several houses, while others have only one. Where a man is rich he may have an extra hut to store his produce and his implements for the farm, but as a rule he has no more comforts than the poor.

Many of the huts on the pampas have small corrals, made of stone or mud, about them, into which the sheep, llamas and donkeys are driven at night. Some have little patches of potatoes and barley and quinoa nearby. Quinoa is a kind of grain about as big as the head of a pin, that is grown to make mush or gruel. It is a second cousin of the ordinary pigeonweed of the United States, and our Department of Agriculture expects to experiment with it, as a staple American plant.

And this brings me to the food of the Indians. They live very simply, their diet consisting of mutton or llama meat and potatoes, barley and corn, which they soak and mash and cook in a stew. They have also cholons, which is frozen mutton, so dried that it will last for years. Now and then they have a chicken to eat, and sometimes beef and pork. In most cases the chickens and sometimes the pigs sleep in the hut with the family. The Americans who employ large numbers of Indians at Cerro de Pasco and furnish quarters for them at low rent have to order a general cleaning out of the hogs from the huts every few weeks, in order to keep the dwellings sanitary.

Use Frozen Potatoes.
 Another food that is used largely by the Quichuas is chuno, or frozen potatoes. Chuno looks like bits of bleached bones, but it is really potatoes which have been frozen and dried so that they can be kept for years without spoiling. The potatoes so used are a special variety of about the size of a baseball. They are first soaked in water. This is done at night. Early in the morning before the sun rises they are taken out and they freeze. They are then covered with straw to keep off the sun. The next night they are soaked again and allowed to freeze. This process is continued from night to night. After a time they grow very soft, and the skins are trodden off with bare feet. They are now white as snow, and after being dried will keep a long time. They have to be soaked before cooking and are usually served as a soup or a stew. Sometimes they are sliced and eaten with cheese, between the slices in the form of a sandwich.

I wish I could show you these Indians as I see them by the hundreds about me. They look as though they had stepped out of the middle ages. The men wear low-crowned hats with brims that turn up. They have on bright-colored ponchos or shawls, with their heads stuck through a hole in the middle. Below the ponchos you can see the short breeches. These extend to the middle of the calf and are slit up at one side as far as the knee. The Indians are either barefooted or have untanned cowskin sandals. Some are without ponchos, and you can see that their vests are gayly embroidered. Not a few have a kind of a nightcap of red, blue or white wool under their hats, and this has flaps that so fit down over the ears that they look as if they were really the ears of the owners.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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