

CHAPTER XIII.

Navon—Mariviña—Cumbi—Cuenca—Quinoas—Guaicuasé—Mollatura—Yerba Buena—Cave of Chacayaque—Naranjal—Arrival in Guayaquil.

THE village of Navon contains about two hundred inhabitants, and the whole parish scarcely more than a thousand, chiefly Indians. The climate differs little from that of the other places through which our route lay. The wet season commences in December and lasts until the beginning of May, but the rains are not continuous, and during the so-called dry season showers are not unfrequent. From May until December there are strong gales of wind. Wheat is sown in February and March, and ripens towards the middle of August, and, as in all elevated regions in South America, it grows scarcely more than two feet high; potatoes are planted in December.

We observed near the houses a number of sticks piled together, and on inquiry found that they had been placed there to enable the poultry to take refuge from the con-

dors, which descend with great rapidity upon their prey. From these enemies the inhabitants have a good mode of freeing themselves. An old horse, mule, or other large animal, is killed and left in the fields. A condor, perceiving the dead body, descends, and devours so much of the flesh as to be thereby prevented from flying. The natives then throw over its head a poncho, a square piece of cloth with a hole in the centre, and thus, with the help of the *lazo*, make a prisoner of "the king of birds."

On the 7th of September we continued our march. The muleteers we had hired were so drunk that we were compelled to send them back, and take two boys instead; the mules also were inferior, and in crossing a river one of them stumbled, wetting two boxes containing some of our most valuable specimens. We hastened to reach a habitation; evening however overtook us on a grassy plain, with isolated *Bromeliaceæ*. We bivouacked under some bushes (*Macleantias*), but as it rained and blew very hard we could not dry our specimens. To a naturalist there can be nothing so distressing as to see the collections which he has formed with such care, at great expense, and often at the peril of his life, on the point of being spoiled. We were thinking the whole night of our wet boxes, and started at the first sign of day. The night had been a most miserable one, and we were exposed, without a tent, to the full influence of the inclement weather. Fortunately we soon reached the tambo of Mariviña, and, making a good fire, we set to work drying our papers and plants—a task which occupied us several hours.

We had great difficulty in obtaining mules and horses to take us to Cuenca, having to catch them ourselves, which, as the animals were very wild, was not accomplished without considerable trouble. However, before dark we succeeded in getting to Cumbi, a village pleasantly situated in a large valley. The cura of the place, a fat, jolly priest, received us hospitably, and invited us to partake with him of an excellent supper. He was astonished at our not drinking the liberal allowance of spirits which it is customary to place before a stranger; indeed all with whom we came in contact were surprised that we did not drink spirits, that we abstained from smoking, and that we washed every morning in cold water. They told us that it was imprudent to wash the face and hands so early in the day, as rheumatism would be the consequence. They still remembered an Englishman, Mr. William Lobb, who had passed through the country a few years previously, and who, the inhabitants said, had been as fond of using cold water in the morning as we were. The natives themselves are very reluctant to touch water, and do not wash themselves regularly,—perhaps but once a week, or even at still greater intervals.

Soon after supper our host went to bed, and we were conducted into a room destitute of all furniture. In Ecuador, as indeed in most parts of Spanish America, a traveller is expected to carry his bedding with him; hospitality, though including food and lodging, does not extend to a bed. As we dispensed with that article, we spread out our *pillons* (the coverings worn over the saddles) on the floor, lay down upon them, and wrapped ourselves

in our blankets. But as soon as the candle was extinguished we were visited by a number of rats, which ran about the room and over our bodies, and began to gnaw at our boxes. Fearing they might injure our collection, a part of which we had scarcely dried again, we got up and drove them away; they returned however the moment we lay down, so we determined that while one of us was sleeping the other should watch—an expedient which was the more necessary, as, from not having slept the night before, we were both extremely tired.

The following morning we started for Cuenca. The country was perfectly flat,—an agreeable change after descending and ascending so many mountains rendered slippery by the rains. There were some fine meadows, and herds of cattle—goats, horses, cows, and oxen—grazing. We had the good fortune to join company with two ladies who were riding into the city; they were very communicative, and pointed out everything curious on the road,—the place where the mail had been robbed of a large amount of money (an unusual occurrence in Ecuador), now indicated by a large cross, and the localities where some of the skirmishes of the Revolution had been fought.

We reached Cuenca at an early hour, and went to the house of Dr. James Taylor, a Scotchman, who received us with the greatest possible kindness. We found there a letter written by Captain Kellett, which, directing us to rejoin the Herald as soon as possible, compelled us to take the nearest road to Guayaquil, and abandon our plan of visiting Quito. Her Majesty's Consul at Guayaquil, Walter Cope, Esq., had also sent

letters to different friends of his in Cuenca, begging them to forward our views—a request to which they acceded most cordially.

On the 12th Dr. Taylor invited a number of friends to an evening party in honour of our arrival. Many healths were drunk, and dancing and singing were kept up until a late, or rather an early, hour. The three Englishmen living in Cuenca, Colonels Harris and Talbot and Dr. Jervis, were with us. The two former had fought through the whole war of independence, having been amongst the first volunteers who swelled the ranks of Bolivar's army. Dr. Jervis was the nephew of the Earl of St. Vincent, and, although seventy-three years of age, he was very active; some of his anecdotes of the sea-service in which he was engaged were most amusing. The Doctor had been a long time in South America, but had never learnt to speak Spanish fluently, and his conversation was a strange mixture of English and Spanish, occasionally varied by a few words of Quichua.

Cuenca is considered the finest town in Ecuador; it is situated in a plain near the river Matador, and its churches and convents impart to it an air of grandeur. According to Herrera it was formerly called Bamba, and was founded by the Marquis of Cañete, when he was Viceroy of Peru. Like most towns built by the Spaniards in America, Cuenca is divided into regular squares. The streets are of moderate breadth, and paved; the principal ones have a footpath for passengers, and through each there runs a stream of water. It has twelve churches, including those attached to the convents. In the centre of the city there is a large

public square (Plaza Mayor) with a fountain in the middle, and at the sides the government offices and the Cathedral; three smaller squares (Plazuelas) are situated in different parts of the town. The houses are built of adobes, and are generally of one, seldom of two stories; the walls are, on account of the earthquakes, of great thickness. The windows are secured with iron bars, like those of our prisons, but as the people bear an excellent character, this is done more because glass is too costly to be accessible to all classes, than on account of house-breakers. None of the public buildings are deserving of particular description: the convents and churches are remarkable neither for their style, size, nor wealth. In the college there were at the time of our visit about five hundred students, who were instructed in theology, Latin, and Spanish. In approaching Cuenca from Cumbi, the traveller passes a fine stone bridge with two arches, leading over the Matador, a deep and rapid river. A short distance from the town are the remains of a bridge (Incachaca) built by the Incas across the river Talqui, or, as it is also termed, Chaguarchimbana.

The population amounts to about 20,000, but no accurate census exists. They are chiefly of Indian descent, only one-third of the inhabitants being white; they call themselves Murlacos, a name the derivation of which is obscure. The inhabitants have a fine healthy colour, even the Indians having red cheeks. Diseases are few, and those prevalent seem to be caused more by uncleanness than by the effect of climate. The costume of the white men is European; the women wear the mantilla, which, when walking in the streets, is thrown over their

heads, and sometimes topped by a Panama hat. Cuenca, being the see of a bishop, and having several convents, swarms with priests of all grades. Shopkeepers are also a numerous class, every man seeming to take a pride in having something to sell. However, the town cannot boast of any great commerce: there used to be a considerable trade in blankets and flannels, the produce of native industry, but since foreign goods may be had cheaper, and at the same time better, it has ceased. The Indians still manufacture a cloth which appears to be in use among all ranks. A few hides are occasionally sent to Guayaquil, and many other raw products might be taken to that port if the traffic were not rendered impossible by the want of good roads. Wheat the people of Guayaquil are obliged to buy from Chile, although the highlands of Ecuador produce an immense quantity. Coal is abundant in the neighbourhood of Cuenca, and if there was a highway it might be sold at the port of Naranjal at five or six dollars a ton. A new road was being formed to the coast; the part completed was little better than a gravel walk in an English garden, but for Ecuador it might be called excellent, and if finished would be of incalculable value.

The people of Cuenca, like those of the other places through which we passed, eat more vegetable than animal food, and take several meals during the day. Early in the morning they drink coffee or chocolate; at ten o'clock they have breakfast, composed of made-dishes, soups, eggs, etc.; and at two or three o'clock in the afternoon, dinner, which is much the same as the breakfast. Guinea-pigs form a favourite dish with every class,

and, among the Indians, to place them before a guest is considered as a mark of honour. Supper is taken at an early hour. The courses are brought on the table in as many plates as there are persons eating—every one gets a plate to himself; *locro*, a kind of soup made chiefly of potatoes, concludes every meal. If any one finds on his plate a good piece, and desires to be polite to his neighbour, he hands it to him, accompanying the action with some complimentary phrase. The women are not allowed to take their meals with the men, but have to wait until the latter have finished. There are besides several other customs too trifling to mention, but all indicating a rather primitive state of civilization.

There are no places of amusement; the people seem to pass their time in siestas, lounging in the streets and plazas, smoking cigars, and talking scandal. The Quichua language is in general use, and even spoken by the whites among themselves; it occupies about the same position as Platt-deutsch does in Northern Germany. Most of the people are able to read, especially those born since the independence of the country, but their general knowledge is limited, and of great men they hardly know any besides Bolivar, Humboldt, and Napoleon; in geography they make sad blunders, calling France, for instance, the capital of Paris.

The Indians of the neighbourhood of Cuenca, and all those of Ecuador speaking the Quichua language, have changed so little in appearance, dress, customs, and manners, since Pizarro's invasion, that the best account of them would be a transcript of that which the old Spanish historians have handed down to us. They still

speak the language of their forefathers, and the vocabulary which we collected agrees well with the earliest specimens of Quichua published; the men still wear a shirt, knee-breeches, and a poncho, all of wool, and made by their own hands; the women still dress in petticoats reaching a little below the knee, short body-coats, and a scarf worn like a shawl and secured on the breast with a large silver pin. They have changed their religion, and perhaps in many instances are sincerely attached to the Roman Catholic Church, but at heart many of them still venerate the *inti* (sun), and the part they take in religious processions—dancing before the images of the saints, and dressing in fantastic garments—would seem to be more deeply rooted than in mere usage. Indeed it is not likely that a people who in other respects cling to old customs with such pertinacity, should have so easily been induced to change what is dear to most men—their religion; for the Spaniards, after conquering the New World, did not adopt the course which is pursued with so much zeal and ability by missionaries at the present day. That instruction must precede conviction was a maxim the Spaniards were not prepared to uphold: they were satisfied if the natives could be induced to become nominal converts. Hence we find that the spirit of Christianity was seldom comprehended by the Indians, and that in many instances they worship the Roman Catholic saints, believing that they are doing homage to their own gods merely with another name.

The Indians are strong and hardy, and are very numerous in places where they have avoided connections with the whites or negroes,—for this, after all, appears to be

the great secret to preserve them from destruction. We have been told repeatedly, that when a race becomes extinct after having become civilized, it is because it has acquired all the vices and few or none of the virtues of civilization. This assertion however must be regarded as mere cant; closer investigation shows that even if the highly refined European desired to instruct the savage in new vices, he would be unable to carry out his intention. Those who read old historical works and journals will find that most nations, before they came in contact with us, were as demoralized as man can possibly be. Even ardent spirits were by no means new to most savage tribes; intoxicating drinks far more noxious than ours were known to them: the Mexicans had their *pulque*, the Peruvians their *chicha*, the Sandwich Islanders extracted a beverage from the Ki and the Ava plants, while the Kamtchadales were skilled in obtaining a strong drink from the roots of the *Spiræa Kamtschatica*.

The Indians are well aware that they have been the lords of the country, and they are often heard to say that if they steal anything belonging to a white man they are not guilty of theft, because they are taking what originally belonged to them. How injurious such reasoning must be to society at large may easily be imagined; it proves that the consequences of a foul deed—as the conquest of Peru must be pronounced to be—are felt even after the lapse of centuries. That the Indians entertain a hope of freeing themselves from their oppressors, by “driving them into the sea,” seems to be a well established fact. Whether they are sufficiently united

to act in concert for carrying out this plan is difficult to determine, but it has been ascertained that there is an alliance between all the Indians speaking Quichua, called Los Gentiles by the Spaniards, and the more barbarous tribes living in the fastnesses of the primeval forests. Should they persevere in their intention, they will find it every day more easy, unless the face of the interior of Ecuador and Peru is greatly altered, for the white and mixed population, since immigration has ceased, or at least been less numerous, is decreasing, while the Indians, wherever they have kept themselves free from intermixture with other races, are steadily increasing.

The climate of Cuenca and its neighbourhood is agreeable: during our stay the temperature in the middle of the day was not higher than 70° Fahr., and we were told that slight night-frosts are not uncommon in September. The wet season begins in November and ends towards the middle of May. The soil is fertile, producing abundant harvests of Indian corn, wheat, potatoes, and Alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*, Linn.). The Aracacha, a root like that of the Dahlia, and considered by some the finest esculent tuber existing, thrives well, and is the more valuable because it is not subject to so many diseases as the potato and the cassava; in Cuenca two varieties of it are grown, the one has a yellow, the other a white root. Those who take an interest in agriculture will remember that prizes have been offered for the successful cultivation of the Aracacha in Northern Europe, but that hitherto all attempts to naturalize this valuable vegetable in our latitudes have proved abortive. In Ecuador the tops of the tubers are cut off and left on

the field; their vitality is so great, that after they have been thus exposed for months to the influence of the weather, they will grow as soon as they are put into the ground. One would think that a plant of such a nature, and a native of the same country as the potato, might be acclimatized with us, although experiments made seem to lead to a contrary conclusion. With the exception of the different kinds of cabbage, which cannot be grown except from European seeds, all kinds of vegetables—turnips, carrots, lettuce, peas, etc.—succeed well. Of fruit there is a great variety—oranges, chirimoyas, bananas, plantains, apples, peaches, chamburos, and many others. The gooseberry-shrub was introduced a few years ago, from England, by Don Horacio Alvarez. At the market provisions may be obtained in profusion and extraordinarily cheap: a bullock may be had for 24*s.*, a fat pig for from 10*s.* to 20*s.*, a sheep for 4*s.*, twenty-four eggs for 3*d.*, and a cream-cheese, nine inches long and three inches in thickness, for 6*d.* Vegetables, both native and European, are offered at low prices; indeed such a quantity do the people get for the smallest piece of money, that, if they want to buy the provisions necessary for the day, they purchase eggs, and then barter with them for the articles required.

All our domestic animals thrive exceedingly well, and the prices of meat mentioned above will show that the rearing of cattle must be very easy. The llama is used as a beast of burden, but not frequently; Guinea-pigs are kept in great numbers, especially by the Indians. Indeed, not only at Cuenca, but in all the towns and villages of Ecuador through which our journey lay, pro-

visions were plentiful. The country only requires to be in the hands of an active population to be one of the most flourishing on the face of the earth. Providence has lavished upon it not only high mountains, extensive meadows, and valuable Quina-forests, but a healthy and temperate climate, inexhaustible mines of all kinds of metals, and a fertile soil, and moreover placed it in the centre of the inhabited globe, between one of the largest rivers in the world, the Amazon, and the great Pacific Ocean. Ecuador presents a vast field for enterprise, and if the tide of emigration which has now set in with such force towards North America and Australia could but be directed for a few weeks to Ecuador, the political and social condition of the country would be altered in a short space of time. It is now so thinly peopled, and inhabited by so limited a number of whites, that about twelve thousand immigrants would effect surprising changes. They would not only exercise a most salutary influence upon the elections, by placing the supreme power in the hands of superior men, but they would also be able to destroy the omnipotence of the clergy, who have hitherto resisted the public exercise of Protestant worship; and they would have no difficulty in keeping in order the negroes and zamboes of Guayaquil, the chief promoters of most of the revolutions that have disgraced the annals of this republic.

On the 18th of September we bade adieu to Cuenca, where we had met with such a warm reception. Our English friends gave us nearly a mule-load of provisions, and Dr. Taylor and Colonels Harris and Talbot accompanied us some distance. The road was up hills which

were mostly well-wooded, but after surmounting the last of them the country became open and grassy. A ride of four leagues brought us to the tambo of Quinoas, where we remained for the night, and, as there was nothing to be obtained, the provisions with which our friends had presented us were of the greatest use. The building was full of holes, exposing us to a fresh breeze. Early in the morning it was excessively cold; hoar-frost lay thick upon the ground, and we were obliged to run about in order to get warm.

On proceeding the country became very interesting, being covered with grass and almost destitute of trees; rocks towering to a tremendous height, and in some places overhanging, imparted an air of grandeur to the whole. About noon we arrived at the Punta de Caja, considered to be about 14,000 feet above the level of the sea. On our right was a mountain covered with snow: from the summit we had a view of about fifty lagoons; there were some fine shrubby *Compositæ* growing near the top, among them the curious *Baccharis thyoïdes*, Pers., which looks at first sight like the arbor-vitæ. After passing the Punta de Caja we began to descend, and found the temperature on the western side of the mountains considerably higher than on the eastern. The ground for some distance was covered with skulls and other bones of men, horses, and mules: a body of troops, coming from the coast to attack Cuenca, had been overtaken by a snow-storm, and, escape being impossible, nearly all perished. In the afternoon we entered a thick forest, chiefly composed of *Podocarpus*-trees, and at sunset we were glad to reach the tambo of Guaicuae,

to dry our clothes, several showers of rain having wetted us thoroughly.

The next morning we passed Mollatura, a village containing only fourteen inhabitants, but having a neat little chapel. On the following day we arrived at the tambo of Yerba Buena, which is about 5000 feet above the sea, and takes its name from a plant (*Mentha*, sp.) growing in abundance in the neighbourhood. Several passengers from Guayaquil were stopping at the place, all complaining of the frightful state of the road from Naranjal. A lady who had just arrived was nearly exhausted by the fatigue of the journey, having had to sleep in the forest the previous night, and to ride on horseback all day; we assisted her as much as we could, and, having plenty of provisions, we were able to give her and her husband a good supper.

We had to remain a whole day in Yerba Buena, two of the mules having strayed during the night, and probably returned to Cuenca, and, to make matters worse, one of our Indians was taken ill with fever. There was a thick fog, but, although we could see only a short distance before us, Pim and I discovered some fine plants, —among them was the *Fuchsia spectabilis*, Hook., one of the most beautiful species known. In the afternoon the sky became clear, the fog rose like a curtain, and a magnificent view, including the Pacific Ocean, the river Guayaquil, numerous lagoons, and the Chimborazo, presented itself.

On the 23rd, about noon, the muleteers returned without having succeeded in finding the animals; but as they left their own goods behind, we were able to

depart. As we were starting a party arrived who had lost two mules over a precipice. The state of the roads had not been exaggerated: they were so muddy that the mules fairly plunged through; afterwards, as we commenced descending, the poor animals had to slide down the side of the mountain at least a hundred yards at a time in a zigzag direction: it was frightful. The mules were left to their own sagacity, and it was wonderful to see them, in parts which ran by precipices, slide past, keeping their balance with the greatest nicety.

Rain was pouring, and, the ground being a perfect swamp, it was impossible to stop for the night. However, although it was difficult to drive the guides on, as it was indifferent to them whether they were wet or dry, yet we were determined to reach the cave of Chacayaque, the usual resting-place of travellers. We had to cross several rivers after dark: none of them were deeper than the mules' saddle-girths, but they were so rapid as almost to occasion the loss of one of the boxes; the utmost strength of the men was required to urge the nearly exhausted mule through the water. We reached the cave about ten o'clock at night: it was little better than the ground outside; the rain had been blown into it and wetted it thoroughly. We were unable to light a fire; and being very wet, and disturbed by bats, mosquitoes, and sand-flies, we did not sleep.

The river Chacayaque we found to be of considerable size; its banks, as also the pathway, were thickly strewed with mica, so that our boots and leggings became covered with it. With the first streak of daylight we left the cave: our road lay through a dense forest, in which

palms and tree-ferns abounded, and we crossed several swamps, partly caused by the decay of vegetable matter; the effluvium they emitted was sickening. After about two leagues' ride through these unhealthy places, the ground became drier, and we observed a great number of chameleons, presenting a beautiful spectacle as they were running between the stones and roots of the trees. At noon we entered Naranjal, a small town of about 400 inhabitants, chiefly negroes. Its houses are built upon poles, like those in the Bay of Choco. In the vicinity there are extensive plantations of cacao, for which the moist climate is very favourable; orange-trees (*naranjos*) are not very much cultivated, although the name of the place would lead one to expect large groves of them.

Don Manuel Pico, the *teniente* of the place, to whom we had a letter of introduction, and who moreover had been informed of our arrival by Walter Cope, Esq., the British Consul at Guayaquil, behaved with great kindness towards us. At his house we found a note from our surgeon, Mr. John Goodridge, who had been there with the Consul, hoping to meet us. In the afternoon we went to the port of Naranjal, a distance of two leagues: there were only two houses, which were situated on the bank of a ditch, with several canoes on it; we could see the masts of some larger craft a little further down, where the river widens. Colonel Talbot, in his letter, had requested the *teniente* to supply us with mosquito-curtains, which were indeed a luxury; without them the mosquitoes would have tormented us most terribly; even the negroes have their beds thus protected.

At one of the houses we found four ladies from Guaya-

quill waiting for their horses to proceed to Cuenca; the mother, having just recovered from a severe fever, was to be taken to the elevated regions of the Andes, to enjoy the benefit of the mountain air. We heartily pitied these travellers; and as they anxiously asked us about the state of the roads we were obliged to tell them the truth. The next morning we embarked on board a *chaté*, a small vessel which was loaded with cacao. The river, as we descended it, widened considerably, until at its mouth it could not have been less than three-quarters of a mile in breadth. The banks were clothed with mangoes; alligators abounded, but although we fired at them repeatedly, we did not succeed in killing any. At the mouth of the Naranjal we got a fine breeze, which, with the tide, took us rapidly up the river Guayaquil. About sunset it became calm, with heavy rain, compelling us to anchor for the night. When the tide turned, the *chaté* was once more got under way, and early in the morning came alongside the wharf of Guayaquil.