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MOUNTAIN SCENERY IN SOUTH AMERICA.

THE recently-published work of our accomplished President, Mr. James Bryce—"South America"—is a somewhat diversified one, descriptions of South (or, as he frequently terms it, Spanish) America being accompanied by dissertations on its history, material resources, and political conditions, sketches of natural scenery jostling accounts of the people and speculation as to their future. It appeals at one and the same time to quite different classes of readers, providing material interesting and attractive to each, appreciation of its varying contents depending of course on individual taste and temperament. The book records observations made and impressions formed during a journey through western and southern South America, from Panama to Argentina and Brazil *via* the Straits of Magellan. The first eleven chapters are devoted to what Mr. Bryce saw of the scenery and the social and economic conditions of the seven republics of Panama, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil; and these chapters deal with the aspects of nature, the racial and other characteristics of the inhabitants, and the natural resources of the several countries, attention being directed also to the relics of pre-historic civilisation, notably those which still exist in Cuzco and the land of the Incas. In the remaining five chapters Mr. Bryce treats mainly of the relations to the white population of the aborigines in

the Spanish countries and of the negroes in Brazil (which is Portuguese, not Spanish), of the conditions of political life in the several republics, and of the prospects for the development of industry and commerce.

The bulk of the subjects just enumerated are, of course, outwith the range of the *Cairngorm Club Journal*, but mountaineers are always interested in mountains, even mountains so remote and so little known as those of South America, and, accordingly, Mr. Bryce's new book, so far at least as it deals with these, appeals to our readers with very special force. Though dedicated "To my friends of the English Alpine Club," it is not a "mountaineering" book in the ordinary sense of the term—it is not a narrative of climbs or of climbing experiences. But if, in this instance, Mr. Bryce did not climb mountains (or climbed comparatively few, at all events) he travelled amongst them—many of them about the highest in the world. He has much to relate of them, thus seen at first hand, that is new and highly informative, and he furnishes exceedingly graphic descriptions of them that at least bring them very vividly before the mind's eye. Charming, indeed, are some of his delicate touches of the picturesque views he encountered—such, for instance, as his felicitous suggestion of "the magnificent snowy mass of Illimani, towering into the sapphire blue sky with glaciers that seem to hang over the city (La Paz, in Bolivia) though they are forty miles away, its three pinnacles of snow turning to a vivid rose under the departing sun;" or that vista at Santiago of "a long, straight street closed by towering mountains that crown it with white as the sea crowns with blue the streets of Venice." The effect of not a few such word-pictures is heightened by the comparisons with other mountains or mountain ranges, or scenic views, which Mr. Bryce occasionally introduces. The Andes are frequently contrasted with the Alps, and even with Scottish mountains; and at Coillelfu, in Chile, it seems, there is "a rapid river, broad and bright like the Scottish Tay, but with clearer and greener water." The accuracy of observation and tenacity of memory thus

indicated inspire confidence in Mr. Bryce's delineation of the striking and superb spectacles that met his gaze in the Andes.

How splendidly he can depict mountain scenery, however, will best be realised by citing some illuminative passages from the work; and in view of Mr. Bryce's relation to the Club we feel justified in making larger extracts than would ordinarily be the case.

FIRST VIEW OF THE ANDES.

Mr. Bryce, having paid a visit to Panama and inspected the Canal works, sailed down the Peruvian coast, landed at Callao and visited Lima, and then resumed the voyage to Mollendo. Here he took train on the principal railway in the country (the Southern Railway of Peru), which climbs the Andes, traverses the central plateau, and sends out branches to Cuzco on the north, and on the south-east to the frontier of Bolivia, on the shore of Lake Titicaca. When the train has climbed to a height of over 4,000 feet, it stops at a spot called Cachendo.

We step out (says Mr. Bryce) and have before us a view, the like of which we had never seen before. In front, looking eastward, was a wide plain of sand and pebbles with loose piles and shattered ridges of black rock rising here and there from its surface, all shimmering in the sunlight. Beyond the plain, 30 miles away, is a long line of red and grey mountains, their sides all bare, their crags pierced by deep, dark gorges, so that they seem full of shadows. Behind these mountains again, and some 50 or 60 miles distant, three gigantic mountains stand up and close the prospect. That farthest to the south is a long line of precipices, crowned here and there by spires and towers of rock, 17,000 feet in height. This is Pichu Pichu. Its faces are too steep for snow, save in the gorges that scar them here and there, but lower down, where the slopes are less abrupt, every gully is white with desert sand blown up by the winds.

Next to the north is a huge purplish black cone, streaked near its top with snow beds, and lower down by lines of red or grey ash and black lava. This is El Misti, a volcano not quite extinct, for though there has been no eruption for centuries, faint curls of steam still rise from the crater. It stands quite alone, evidently of far more recent origin than the third great mass, its neighbour on the north, Chachani, which, though also a volcanic rock, has long since lost its crater, and rises in three

great black pinnacles divided by valleys filled with snow. Both it and Misti exceed 19,000 feet. They are not, however, the loftiest ground visible. Far, far away to the north, there tower up two white giants, Ampato, and (farther west) the still grander Coropuna, whose height, not yet absolutely determined, may exceed 22,000 feet and make it the rival of Illampu in Bolivia and Aconcagua in Chile. It stands alone in a vast wilderness, a flat-topped cone at the end of a long ridge, based on mighty buttresses all deep with snow and fringed with glaciers. These five mountains belong to the line of the great western Cordillera which runs, apparently along the line of a volcanic fissure, all the way north to Ecuador and Colombia.

CROSSING THE ANDES.

Having visited Cuzco in northern Peru, Mr. Bryce sailed down Lake Titicaca, in the heart of the Andean plateau—"a great inland sea lying between the two ranges of the Cordillera almost as high above the ocean as is the top of the Jungfrau"—and traversed Bolivia. Next to the Germans, he says, the most ubiquitous people in the world are the Aberdonians, and so he was scarcely surprised to meet one at Oruro in the person of the principal doctor of the place. Chile was afterwards visited, and then the Andes were crossed by the Transandine railway. This railway runs from Valparaiso to the Uspallata Pass, the central ridge of the Cordillera being pierced by a tunnel 12,000 feet above sea-level; and then the line descends the Argentina side of the range to Mendoza. Describing the journey, Mr. Bryce says—

From the hotel at the station (Santa Rosa) we looked straight up a long, narrow valley to tremendous peaks of black rock 30 miles away to the east. How they stood out against the bright morning sky behind them, a few white clouds hovering above! One felt at a glance that this is one of the great ranges of the world, just as one feels the great musician in the first few chords of a symphony.

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The railway turns north and mounts along a narrow shelf cut out in the side of the great black ridge. The slope rising above the line and falling below it to the valley is of terrific steepness. The grade is also steep and the locomotive toils and pants slowly upward by the aid of the cog-wheel, passing through tunnel after tunnel till at last it comes out, 2,000 feet above Juncal, into

a wide hollow surrounded by sharp peaks, those to the north streaked with beds of snow, those on the south of bare rock, because the snow has been melted off their sunward-turned slopes. The bottom of this hollow is covered with enormous blocks that have fallen from the cliffs, and its northern end is filled by a small lake, part of whose surface was covered with ice. The fanciful name of Lago del Inca has been given to it. A scene more savage in its black desolation it would be hard to imagine. Compared to this frozen lake, the glacier lakes of the Swiss Alps, like the Märjelen See on the Aletsch glacier, are gentle and smiling. The strong sunlight and brilliant blue of the sky seemed to make the rocks blacker and bring out their absolute bareness with not so much as a moss or a lichen to relieve it.

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Whoever crosses a hill on foot or on horseback, sees the surrounding landscape change by degrees, and is more or less prepared for the view which the hilltop gives and what lies beyond. But when carried along in the darkness through the very core of a great mountain range, expectation is more excited and the burst of a new landscape is more startling. So when, after the few minutes of darkness, we rushed out into the light of the Argentine side, there was a striking contrast. This eastern valley was wider, and the peaks rose with a bolder, smoother sweep, their flanks covered with long slides of dark sand and gravel, their tops a line of bare precipices, not less lofty than those on the Chilean side, but shewing less snow. The air was drier, and the aspect of things not, indeed, less green, for there had been neither shrub nor plant visible since we passed Juncal, but more scorched and more aggressively sterile. There was far more colour, for on each side of the long valley that stretched before us to the eastward, the declivities of the ridges that one behind another dipped towards it on both sides glowed with many tints of yellow, brown, and grey. A great flat-topped summit of a rich red, passing into purple, closed the valley in the distance. The mountains immediately above this upper hollow of the glen—it is called Las Cuevas—though 19,000 or 20,000 feet high, are imposing, not so much by their height, for the bottom of the hollow is itself 10,000 feet above sea-level, but rather by the grand lines with which they rise, the middle and lower slopes covered by sloping beds of grey ash and black sand, thousands of feet long, while at the head of the glen to the northwest, glaciers hang from the crags that stand along the central range, the boundary of the two countries. In the presence of such majesty, the grim desolation of the scene is half forgotten.

A second journey over the Transandine line was made, Mr. Bryce returning from Mendoza to Chile and subsequently reaching Argentina by sea, through the Straits of Magellan. When he arrived at the Argentine end of the tunnel at Las Cuevas, he quitted the train in order to mount to (on mule-back) and cross the top of the pass—the Cumbre, as it is called—which is 1,500 feet above, and over which, until the tunnel was pierced, all travellers walked or rode. On the level summit of the pass stands the Christ of the Andes, a bronze statue of more than twice life-size standing on a stone pedestal rough hewn from the natural rock of the mountain, set up to mark the peaceful settlement by arbitration of a long and bitter controversy between Chile and Argentina over the line of their boundary along the Andes. The figure is turned northward so as to look over both countries and bless them with its uplifted right hand. Mr. Bryce thinks it dwarfed by the vast scale of the surrounding pinnacles, but profoundly impressive “when one reflects on the feeling that placed this statue here and the meaning it has for the two peoples.” The opposite side of the pass was descended on foot in the teeth of a raging blast, and the descent of the Chilean line was made on an open trolley in the moonlight, Mr. Bryce writing enthusiastically of the “thrills” of the ride, “one passing into and out of the shadow of black crags as one spins along the ringing lines of steel.”

ANDEAN SCENERY.

In some observations on the scenery of the Andes, Mr. Bryce comments on the lack of water, wood, and verdure in Andean landscapes. “Green, the softest and most tender of hues, is almost wholly absent from the great ranges and the plateau.” Grandeur and wildness, not beauty, are the note of these lofty regions, and so they offer a much less favourable field for the landscape painter than do the lower mountains of European countries. But they have their alluring aspects nevertheless.

What redeems the scenery of the high Andes is the richness and delicacy of the colours which the brilliant desert light gives to distant objects. A black peak becomes deep purple ; a slope

of dry, grey earth takes a tender lilac ; and evening as it falls transfigures the stones that strew the sides of the valley with a soft glow. The snow sparkles and glitters at noonday and flushes in sunset with a radiance unknown to our climates. This is what replaces for these regions the charm of the thick woods and marshy pools of New England, of the deep grassed river meadows of France, or the heathery hillsides of Scotland, and brightens the sternness of those vast prospects which the Cordillera affords. Yet it cannot make them inspire the sort of affection we feel for the mountains of temperate countries, with their constant changes from rain to sunlight, their fresh streams and bubbling springs, and flowers starring the high pastures. So the finest things in the Andes are either the views of a single giant peak, like that of Aconcagua, or some distant prospect of a great mountain group or range, such as that of the snowy line of the Cordillera Real as it rises beyond Titicaca, or the volcanic peaks of Arequipa seen from the desert of the coast.

Mr. Bryce also visited Uruguay and Brazil, and comments no less interestingly on the Brazilian mountains, the average elevation of which, however, is from 2,000 to 3,000 feet only ; few exceed 7,000 feet, and the loftiest summit is Italiaya, about 50 miles to the south-west of Rio de Janeiro and nearly 10,000 feet high. The scenery of the richly-wooded eastern side of the mountains, where they break down steeply towards the Atlantic, is, he says, as beautiful as can be found anywhere in the tropics, and he is loud in his praise of the mountain wall, in most places clothed with luxuriant forests, which rises up behind Rio de Janeiro. Other cities there are with a noble background of mountains, "but in Rio the mountains seem to be almost a part of the city, for it clings and laps round their spurs just as the sea below laps round the capes that project into the bay."

Mr. Bryce has also something to say on the question whether a lover of nature in general and of mountains in particular can be advised to take the long journey to Western South America for the sake of its scenery ; but on this point, as well as regards many other particulars, we must refer readers to the book itself. Travel in the Andes, which is mostly on mule-back, is slow, and has become expensive ; and those who contemplate it ought to satisfy themselves that their hearts and lungs are sound. Mr.

Bryce did not suffer in any way from the thinness of the air in the high altitudes he traversed, save that it proved desirable in climbing hills to walk more slowly than he is accustomed to do at home. But many persons suffer from the mountain sickness which prevails all over the region exceeding 10,000 feet above sea-level, and even experience it at lower elevations ; and, in a general way, people with weak hearts and narrow chests are cautioned to avoid the stupendous heights of the Andes.