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The Athens Of South America



Primate Cathedral of Colombia in Bogotá.

THE name with which Licenciadou Gonzalo Jimenez de Quesada and his warring hosts christened the Andean plateau was Santa Fe. To that nobleman nothing seemed more fitting than to give to the land he had discovered the name of his birthplace—that classic Santa Fe founded upon royal command of Ferdinand and Isabella opposite the opulent Granada, to vex the multitude of heretic Mohammedans who aroused the jealousy and resentment of the Spanish by their fiestas and tournaments, the valor of their sons, the Moorish beauty of their women, and the unequalled romance of their arched windows, stone lacework, and balconies adorned by expert goldsmiths.

And what a thrill the conquistador must have felt, yet what homesickness must have been awakened within him as he gazed upon a plain watched over by two somber hills, so like that of his own land, with the Moorish Granada guarding the Castilian city, writes W. F. Anzola Samper in the Bulletin of the Pan American Union. But the Valley of Castles (Valle de los Alcazares), the Teusquillo or recreation spot of Zipa de Bacata, its rightful possession, was renamed by the new lords in mail and gorget. Bacata fled, abandoning his dominion, to die in the heart of the forest, never knowing that after centuries justice should be paid him; that the "very noble and loyal city" should bear his name, slightly modified, as decreed by the Emperor Charles V in 1540. On December 3, 1548, it was given a coat of arms portraying a black eagle on a gold field, with an open pomegranate in each claw, and bordered by golden branches on a blue field.

Old and New Are Mingled.
Bogotá, the intellectual and cultured capital city, molder of thought, home of savants and thinkers, is a metropolis which, while offering to the tourist no startling display of New York or Parisian skyscrapers, boulevards or Broadways, claims attention by reason of the gifts with which nature endowed it. Spring to there eternally; the climate is ideal; the fertility of the soil surrounding is extraordinary. Bogotá conserves vestiges of her colonial period. Over the portals of rambling old houses which defied the ages are to be seen coats of arms. The century-old churches, venerable relics of the past, guard beneath panels of gold and costly wood collections of masterly paintings; Byzantine carvings of arabesque designs about the granite pillars which support arches, and under dais of wrought gold and silver the choir lofts are to be seen; long spiral staircases, massive towers, and lofty spires stand out against the clear sky, just as they did centuries ago.

On the other hand, the tendency toward twentieth century building is irresistible, and the most up-to-date talent is displayed in the erection of luxurious homes or public buildings in Bogotá today.

The national capital situated on the southern side of the Plaza de Bolívar, resembles the Church of the Madeleine in Paris, and is considered one of the best stone edifices in South America. Along the entire western side of the plaza extends buildings, monuments of pure French style, and along the northern side modern buildings occupied by banks and commercial houses; the eastern side is occupied by the cathedral, a massive structure, the towers of which rise 80 meters, and some few old houses.

In the heart of the plaza there is a small park which attracts notice principally because of the statue of Bolívar the Liberator, which rises upon its marble pedestal in the center of the square, being one of the finest works of the Italian sculptor, Tenerani.

From the Plaza de Bolívar the main thoroughfares extend in every direction, almost all paved with asphalt and kept in excellent condition by the municipality. Calle Real, the principal business street, and Florán street are the most bustling of the city. The former, a wide thoroughfare, merges into Republic avenue (Avenida de la República), flanked by modern buildings and traversed by electric cars.

Called the Athens of the South.
The Colombian capital has long been the patron of science. The astronomical observatory, National Library, the academies, museums and universities form a group of institutions which maintain the right of Bogotá to be considered the "Athens of the South," the name with which a European scholar christened her.

The observatory owes its existence to the efforts of the naturalist, Jose Celestino Mutiz. It is octagonal in form, 2,400 meters above sea level; hence, is one of the highest of the world and possesses a valuable set of instruments for taking observations.

The academies were established by devotees of science and art. The language academy recently took possession of a new building. The Museum of Bogotá contains objects of beauty and considerable historic worth. A Museum of Natural History, founded by the Christian Brotherhood (Hermanos Cristianos) possess exhaustive collections.

The universities happily own adequate buildings. Recently the building to be used for anatomy lecture halls was completed, equipped much like the corresponding building of the University of Paris. Public instruction is becoming constantly more widely diffused and Bogotá is the center of secondary schools supported by the government.

Cultured and Prosperous.
Bogotá, by the refinement of its inhabitants and the luxury in evidence, might be taken for a European city. Culture is marked; foreign news is received promptly; desirable features of Paris and London are imitated to stimulate progress. Unfortunately, owing to the extreme narrowness of the streets, many of the architectural features of the city cannot be appreciated; nevertheless, upon contemplating the constant progress of the capital and its development, one is forced to the conclusion that Bogotá will become an imperial city in the western world, the heart of the plateau which extends 16 leagues from north to south and 8 from east to west.

Economically Bogotá is on a sound footing, being a commercial and banking center of constantly growing importance. There are five banks of large capital, the American Mercantile bank (Banco Mercantil Americano) having been established last year, and at present the establishment of another is under consideration. Several insurance companies contribute to the success of financial enterprises. Large export houses have founded headquarters there and importation is conducted on rather a large scale. Foreign credit companies in the United States and Europe are active factors in Bogotá's development. Industry also is being expanded. Thread and textile industries compete with foreign establishments in the production of fabrics and cloth. Stock raising is increasing considerably on the plain, the strange having been carefully selected from stock brought from England, and the wool market is plentiful.

No Room for the Incompetent.
Much of the work done in this world has to be done. Incompetency is the greatest drawback to progress. Incompetents are the most costly members of society, and always will be. That is why there is always a premium on brains and skill, which combine to produce efficiency. Exchange.

Mistake Made by Many.
Too many people take themselves too seriously, and can't understand why their estimates of themselves are not accepted by others. Consequently they "blow it out" on others when they don't do much better by taking some things out of the lives. There's too much personal "inflation."

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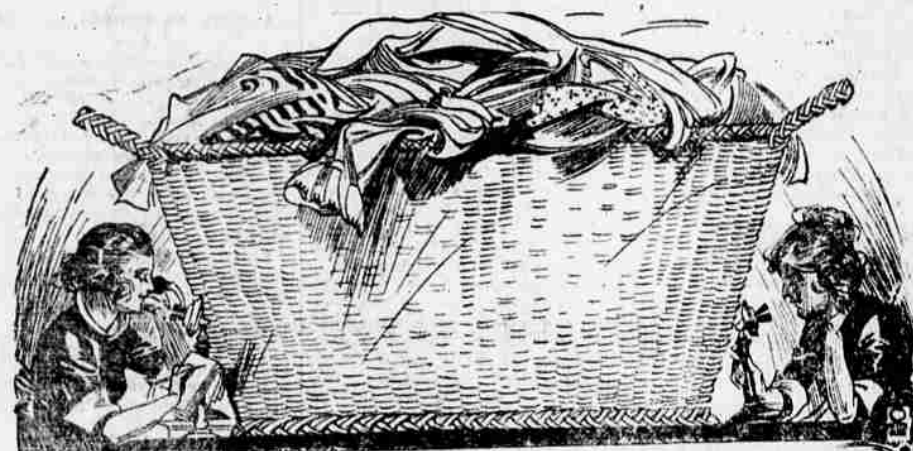
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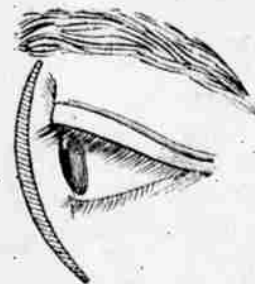
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