

## The Rockwood Review.

paved with colored cement, while its centre is filled with beautiful banana and plantation plants, roses, orchids, and mountain flowers, in blooming beauty and profusion. Hung about from its verandah ceiling are dozens of bird cages, and the morning songs of their occupants are a waking delight. Parrots of gorgeous plumage are there, with songsters from the Andes, and the tropical birds from the Orinoco, whose whistle is superior to that of the mocking bird. To give a present in Caracas is to bestow another bird upon the object of your respect or admiration, and it is given to the care of the domestics who live around the kitchen patio. The kitchen fireplace is a circular mound of cement raised in the middle of a large paved room. I have yet to learn its peculiar mechanism, but am told that charcoal, and that brought across from Liverpool alone, is used as fuel. Passing to the rear of the kitchen, we find yet another paved court, thirty feet square, on the cement floor of which the laundry work of the household is done by naked negro women. Thus the apartments are ranged around three courtyards, the whole house occupying about fifty of one hundred and twenty-four feet of ground. From the first court rises a winding iron staircase, by which my companion and I reach our upper storey over the diningroom. Our balcony looks upon the red-tiled roof of the parlor, and over the whole city beyond to the magnificent Andes. So deceptive is the rare atmosphere that it seems possible to walk upon the parlor tiles and step on to the mountains. But their grand mass lies two miles away. Our room is the largest and best furnished sleeping apartment in the house. There are twenty-nine boarders and lodgers, and nearly all of them sleep upon cots or "stretchers," of canvas, their cots being the only furniture in their rooms. We, however, have iron bedsteads,

dressing tables and other little "comforts." Others use candles, but we have not forgotten our northern habits, and asked for a lamp, by which we could study, and were furnished with it and a small piece of carpet. They use gas downstairs, but very sparingly. We rise each morning at seven—a late hour for the tropics—and take coffee, which means hot water, and an orange, and sometimes if we specially ask for it, are served with delicious chocolate cocoa, or cacao. To drink their coffee is to us a sheer impossibility. Oranges are plentiful, of course, and sell at the market for five cents a dozen, while bananas can be got for ten cents a hundred. Out in the country, in this same valley, the people are of a Paradisaic frame of mind, live on bananas all the year round, and never wear clothing unless they enter the city. Then they don their shoes of cord with leather soles, their skirts or trousers, and a cloak to hide their shoulders.

Few negroes of full blood can be found here, but all the lower class are half-breeds. The best people—the four hundred—have no negro blood, but are handsome, cultured, attractive Venezuelanos of Spanish descent. The people of all classes smoke incessantly, and cigarettes are a common property. After an introduction invariably comes the offer of a cigarette. The people are excessively demonstrative, and the foreigner from North America is astounded at the embrace he receives from the Spaniard. He pats you on the back, clasps your hand tightly, holding it with firm grasp during his conversation with you, and you must, if possible, look as if you regarded all this as proof of interest in your welfare. Add to the cost of your cigarettes, that of cocktails, punches, brandies and sodas, champagne, sherry, vermouth, aggrops, and absinthes daily required to cement friendships new and old, and you can form a slight idea of a position in society here, for the better classes