

## The Rockwood Review.

miles long, three broad, and is undulating throughout. It is completely surrounded by magnificent mountain scenery, capped by clouds formed from the mists which rise in from the sea. To the north, the mountains rise some four thousand feet above the level of the valley, and we are looking upon them under aspects varying with every hour. When covered by the clouds of silver and grey which crown them, or roll down their green steep sides, or where torriential forces have grooved and wrinkled the slopes, you have a picture which the northern eye surveys with delight. Ever and anon a cloud sits on the peaks, then lowers to the bosom of the Andes, leaving the pinnacles open to the fierce sun of the tropics. In the centre of the valley lies the low flat-housed city of Caracas, stretching from cliff to cliff at its broadest, but not extending eastwards and westwards far enough to occupy more than half of the available space. To the west are beautiful green plantations of banana, coffee, cocoa, cocoanut and oranges; to the eastward are parks, drives, plantations, race course and cemeteries. The population of the city is 90,000. Half of the inhabitants are negroes, while a third are Venezualean, Spaniards, and the remaining portion are of various origin, but it would be safe to say that negro blood tinges the whole. The earthquakes, which are frequent and destructive, have taught everybody caution, and the houses are nearly all of a single storey. The walls are about two feet thick, and built to crumble rather than to tumble, and are composed of sun-dried bricks, mud, stones and clay, plastered over with a smooth mud concrete, and painted in various colors, a gloomy grey predominating. The bars of the windows project to the peril of passers by, and the doorways are yawning and forbidding. Few openings are on the street, and frequently but one solid line of gloomy low walls

greets the eye of the stranger. The roofs are covered with red, dirty, rusty clay tiles of a hundred years ago. To a northerner, the aspect of the city is flat, ugly, dense, dirty, forbidding. Some of the streets are narrow enough to prevent people to shake hands across them, while the sidewalks are of concrete, just wide enough for two passengers, until a window projecting, as all do, or an obtrusive lamp-post bars or narrows the way. But notwithstanding these apparent obstacles to all comfortable progress, tram-cars, of Curacao size and appearance, thread the city on many of the streets, and foot passengers and carriages throng the highways. Negroes clad in calico or unbleached cotton, bearing burdens upon their heads, and incessantly smoking cigars, elbow each other and talk in loudest tones. Richly, even if not tastefully dressed Spanish *senoritas* and *senoras*, are occasionally met coming from mass. Every woman paints her black or olive face in a disgusting manner, an inch thick, from the bridge of the nose downwards. Some of the *senoritas* are pretty, and luxuriously arrayed in silks, satins, laces, diamonds and Parisian shoes. But these are rare. Spanish Dons, with negro blood, fine handsome fellows, very often intelligent, polished and companionable, are frequently met in society, turn out dressed in the height of last year's European fashion, with silk hat, Prince Albert coat, patent leather shoe, collars, ties and cane all complete. Carriages by hundreds, nay thousands, pass and repass, filled with these finely dressed, darkly handsome men and women.

Every person is polite and well behaved, and none is seen in an intoxicated condition upon the street. All are honest, agreeable and cheerful in appearance, but beneath this pleasant exterior there is a hot-blooded discontent that is worth fearing. In another letter I hope to tell more of the people.