

BOYS AND GIRLS

Among the Waters of Colombia.

On a beautiful day in August two scientific men of the French navy, Dr. Crevaux, a member of the Legion of Honor, and M. Lejannes, sailed from St. Nazaire for a tour of exploration in South America, which they have recorded in a charming diary. Reaching the mouth of the Rio Magdalena, in Colombia, they ascended the river to Honda, pausing en route, near the mouth of the Nare, to change vessels and to sketch the Bodega, which is the solitary port of that river.

Honda they found one of the most ancient

nel, the reason perhaps for the name it bears — Honda, 'a deep place.' The architecture of the houses bears even here a Spanish stamp.

Above Honda the islands and alluvial shores of the Magdalena are covered with plantations of bananas, which enter largely into the food of the inhabitants. Ripe bananas are eaten fried, green they make cau-cacho; they are also an article of commerce by no means unimportant, and banana trunks serve for making rafts.

Bamboo clumps stand successors to the primeval forest on the river banks, and the poor remnants of forest which partly cover the neighboring mountain sides are daily

Guayabero, which no man had yet explored near its source, hoping to make the descent in safety. To reach it a spur of the Andes had to be crossed, and in October they began the journey, climbing their first mountain by an incredible footpath, while everywhere about them yawned gorges and crevasses. An attempt had been made to construct a road over great spaces, which had, however, given way. At noon one day they reached the summit of the Cordilleras; and from thence every stream flowed toward the Orinoco.

The river was reached in safety, but after their raft was built they were deserted by all the natives, except the faithful Apatou. The most extravagant offers of recompense did not tempt them to brave the terrors of the 'unknown.' And their fears seemed justified by the event, for scarcely were the explorers embarked upon the mountain torrent, when their raft was torn asunder in the first of the numerous and dangerous rapids through which they were whirled at lightning speed. Clothing and baggage had then to be dried, and the strong withes that bound together the logs of their frail transport were replaced. Their voyage in the upper part of the river was a succession of perilous descents of rapids, and of hazardous escapes. Stinging insects, more venomous than the mosquito, often robbed their nights of sleep, and as the current became less continuously violent, the great caymans made their appearance, basking on the rocks.

No South American journey is complete without an adventure with these reptiles, and the scientists met theirs promptly. A piercing shriek from Apatou froze their blood, and their hair rose as they saw him disappear under the water. For an instant there was breathless silence, then a hand appeared clenched on a line that dragged from the end of the raft. This was seized and hauled in, Apatou's face appearing an instant, expressing extreme agony. His faint voice could utter only, 'Caiman! Caiman!' (alligator). Instantly he was seized by the shoulder, but the alligator held him still. Lejannes, armed, waited an instant before firing at the creature, but just as Apatou was free, and the monster in the act of snapping the doctor's hat that had fallen into the water, a ball entered at last. Happily the poor fellow's leg was seized only by the alligator's front teeth, and at its least fleshy part; a little firmer grasp and no human force could have freed him, and at best he would have been crippled for many weeks.

No further excitements arose until the voyagers found themselves in a gorge hemmed in at each side by sandstone walls. Submerged rocks project in places from the bank, and force back the water boiling and seething in eddies that roar like so many caged beasts. From time to time the raft struck the crest of a submerged block, and was hurled back many feet. Once they were dragged toward a projecting rock. Everything on the raft must be swept off or crushed under the roof of stone, and the voyagers were on the verge of being swallowed by the horrible whirling flood, when Apatou, admirable in his coolness, bracing his pole against the rock above his head, by a superhuman effort swung the raft far away.

After this the Guayabero proves one long scene of monotony. There is always the same regular curve; always the same herons, swans and ibis dwell on the banks, the latter pacing the sand with measured tread, bearing themselves like Spanish monks and grave signors clad in black with white waistcoats. Legions of gulls live on the edge of the shore in the neighborhood of huge all-



A DROVE OF PECCARIES.

cities of Colombia, built on a hill protected by the Magdalena, flowing in swift rapids before the city, and by two torrents that pour beside it in parallel lines into the Magdalena; a city almost girt by rushing floods, from which resounds perpetually the savage roar of their headlong course. To the southwest, mountains with steep, bare sides of sandstone stand like ramparts, with their walls of stone, and crowns of earth and shrubbery. Other mountains make almost a circle around the hill on which the city stands, seeming to rest in the base of a fun-

attached by fire. The natives seem to have sworn to burn them to the utmost tree to get ploughland. At night the scene is imposing, the sky glowing red from countless fires. Fortunately the Andes are immense, and their rich forests are scarcely hurt. Further yet, above Honda, prickly pears large as our apple trees, with woody trunks a foot through, make a bizarre forest the thorniest that can be imagined, and other cactus plants bearing great rose-colored flowers swarm over the ground.

From Neiva the travellers started for the