

It was still early when we continued towards the coast. First we passed through a high forest and then rode out among low bush and grass clad hills. We had to cross several small streams, and, as was to be expected, one of the horses could not miss the chance of getting bogged. We pulled and pushed and at last had to unload him. But he did not seem to want to stir until our men, and we too, for that matter, opened up on him with a shower of profanity. That helped.

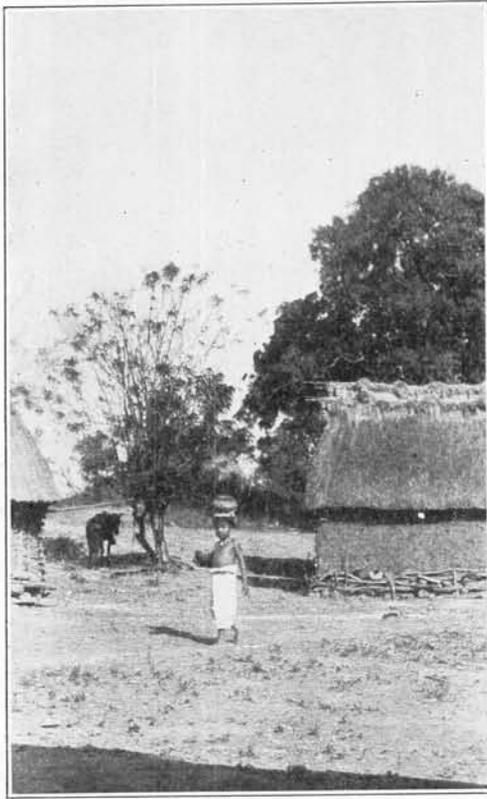


FIG. 36—Tatahuicapa, Ver. Indian child carrying clay pot on her head.

Soon we could hear the waves breaking against the shore; a distant murmur that grew to thunder when we rode over a sand dune, and saw the Gulf lying before us.

Following the sandy beach towards the west we came to a wall of lava projecting far out into the sea, and at its end lay an isolated rock looking like a sentry of lava thrown there by his majesty, the volcano. A crack leading up to the back of the lava stream was found, and we then rode along on an open grass plain for some time, winding in and out in order to avoid large cracks in the cliff. Then we scrambled down again to the sandy beach, and followed it. The sun was now high, and the glittering white of the sea and sand pained our eyes. Another lava stream had to be crossed but thereafter, the beach lay before us unbroken as far as we

could see. To our right lay the blue Gulf showing white teeth of foam-tipped rollers, and to our left, a belt of forest out of which rose the volcanoes, San Martín and Santa Marta. It was a place of rare beauty.

While we rode along, it entered our minds that four centuries ago a small band of Spaniards, some of the "Conquistadores," had followed this same strip of coast going towards the east in search of a port where the great Captain, Cortes, could land his ships; and