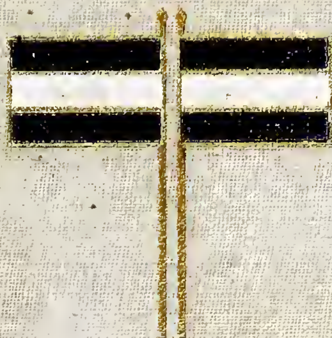
THE ARGENTINE THROUGH ENGLISH EYES

J·A·HAMMERTON



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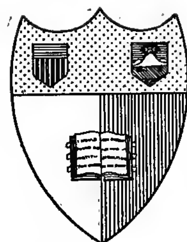

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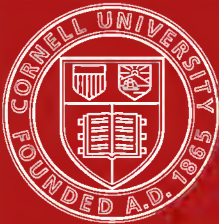

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THE ARGENTINE THROUGH ENGLISH EYES

A Vanishing Figure.

A "Gaucho" in full costume, wearing the "chiripá," or loose over-trousers, and carrying the "bolas" around his waist.

Frontispiece.]

THE ARGENTINE THROUGH ENGLISH EYES

AND A SUMMER IN URUGUAY

BY

J. A. HAMMERTON

ILLUSTRATED

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

A489785

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY MORRISON AND GIBB LIMITED, EDINBURGH

INTRODUCTION

So many books have been written on South American countries within recent years that the addition of one more to the already formidable list calls for a word of explanation, if not apology.

So far as English writers on the Latin-American Republics are concerned, many of their works are based upon the statistical returns of the respective Governments, or on topographical and historical data, easily obtainable at the British Museum. Others, more popular, but perhaps less valuable, are the hasty records of fleeting visits. These latter are so apt to be informed by a spirit of indiscriminate admiration that they present misleading and untrue notions of the countries described.

The present writer may be stating what is already known to the reader, when he mentions that among both of these classes of books a considerable percentage have been subsidised by the Governments of the respective Republics of which they treat. Many are but glorified advertising pamphlets, put forth in the guise of serious books the better to fulfil their office of propaganda. To look to them for any dispassionate and well-studied view of the countries illustrated in their pages would be as natural as to expect the advertising agent of Somebody's Soap to publish an entirely impartial opinion of the article he had been employed to "boom."

Several French and German authors have written admirable works on the Argentine, entirely free from bias, depicting the country as it is, alive to its merits and

its demerits alike; free both from the charge of "log-rolling" and from that of hasty observation. But similar works by English writers are not many. Nay, due to the difficulties of ensuring the conditions essential to the impartial and open-minded study of the country, even writers of such international distinction as Viscount Bryce and Mr. Theodore Roosevelt, with the best will in the world, are liable to give false impressions. Often have I seen the system at work, whereby "distinguished visitors" to South American capitals are so entirely taken in hand by Government, entertained royally, and shown only such things as Governments particularly wish them to see, that it would be expecting too much of human nature to look to them for an unbiased opinion of the country. I have not read Lord Bryce's book on South America, nor anything that Mr. Roosevelt may have written concerning his tour there, but both these eminent men so suffer from the disability of their eminence, and from the official hospitality showered upon them during their brief sojourns in South America, that, try they never so valiantly to speak nothing but the truth,—and I esteem them, different as they are in many ways, two of the frankest and most honourable of modern statesmen,—their impressions will be coloured by the peculiar conditions under which they were obtained—conditions of official tutelage, and tempered furthermore by reason of the warm hospitality extended to them by the respective Governments. As for the things they see in their rounds of inspection, it is notorious that they are shown only what official discretion would have them see. All this, mark you, in no depreciation of the brilliant work which these and many less distinguished visitors to South America are capable of doing, but merely to remind the reader that the conditions in which a work descriptive of any particular country has been evolved ought to be borne in mind in the reading of it.

The chief fault of English writers on the Argentine is the indiscriminate praise they shower around; their fulsome flattery of the country. Only two hours ago I received from Canada a newspaper with most of its front page devoted to an illustrated article entitled "Buenos Ayres—the Paris of the New World." An estate agent, describing the attractions of some property for sale, might have been beggared for superlatives in comparison with the flood of uncritical "gush" which the writer of this article lets loose on Buenos Ayres. He may have spent a week in the town, or he may never have seen it, but a more untruthful or misleading account of the city could not have been penned, though it is typical of many that have come to my notice. I feel that the influence of such writings is to create in the minds of the public who do not know the scenes nor the conditions described an impression entirely mischievous.

So thinking, I have set myself in the present work to make "a try at truth." I have lived long enough on the River Plate to revise and correct my impressions. I mastered the language of the country, so that I came to converse in it as readily as in English. And during the whole of my stay I wrote not a single paragraph of this book, lest I should record impressions and ideas which in the end might be misleading. I deliberately refrained from note-taking, so that when, fully a year later, I came to the writing, I should be able to secure a truer perspective, only the things that mattered disengaging themselves from the multitude of impressions that crowd in on one during a year of active life in a strange land.

The writing of the book was begun during a period of residence in Santiago, the capital of Chili, and has been completed in London. I have eschewed statistics, which enter so largely into most other works on the Argentine, and can be made to prove whatever a writer most wishes

to establish. What I have sought for, rather, has been the human interest of these great cities of the River Plate ; to present an honest picture of the life that is being lived in them to-day, and to convey, in as interesting a manner as I know how, some general notion of the Republics of Argentine and Uruguay as they really are. I carefully avoid the official point of view, having studiously refrained from putting myself at any time under any obligation that might tend to make me echo an official opinion instead of stating that which I had honestly formed from personal and independent study.

J. A. H.

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CHAPTER I

OLD DREAMS AND NEW REALITIES—FROM LONDON TO LISBON

When I was a boy in Glasgow many a time did I roam among the docks, inspecting with the eager, romantic eyes of youth the great ships assembled there from the far reaches of the seven seas. There were always to be seen some big East Indiamen, with their coolie crews, picturesque " windjammers " that had roughed it round the Horn, and all sorts of odd craft that traded as far away as Australia and South America. For me the latter had a peculiar attraction.

Often have I watched them loading up with mighty crates of sugar-crushers for Tucumán, or agricultural machinery for the vast *estancias* that lie beyond the River Plate. I fancy it must have been an early delight in the tales of the buccaneers and " the Spanish Main " that awakened in me this interest in all things South American, for the mind of youth makes as little concern of the thousands of weary leagues that stretch between the Argentine and the Spanish Main as does that of the average ill-informed person of mature years who might be sorely pressed to distinguish between Rio de Janeiro as the capital of the Argentine and Montevideo as the capital of Brazil !

Naturally, I had my dreams of visiting that enchanting land which lay so far across the seas and held such possibilities of romance. In maturer years, when I thought I knew it better in the stories and sketches of Hudson and of Cunninghame Graham, and when I had read much of its sanguinary history, I still cherished some remnants of these boyish buccaneering fancies,

and somehow the river down which Candide reached his Eldorado seemed in my mind to issue far off in Argentina. The very name of the River Plate was potent to stir one's imagination. Thus, when in time I became the counsellor of youth, I was much given to recommending young men to learn Spanish so that, buccaneering being no longer popular and "pieces of eight" out of currency, they could still fare forth across the Spanish Main and make fabulous fortunes in *pesos*!

It is many years since I proffered these counsels, and I trust I may have misled none, though now that I have myself adventured in that land of fortune, I shall in future qualify my advice. Yet, it may be, that in this I builded better than I knew.

Having persistently disregarded a gipsy's warning given to me "umpty years ago," that I should have to seek my fortune abroad because my teeth were somewhat widely set, I had long settled into the snug content of London life—surely the most interesting and satisfying in all the world!—with no least little notion that the gipsy was right and that I should set out myself in quest of Spanish gold. How or why the occasion arose is of no interest in the present narrative, but it sent me hurrying back to school, to pick up as quickly as I could the very language whose usefulness I had so often in the past impressed upon ambitious youth. Endowed with a certain faculty for acquiring languages, this proved a very simple and altogether delightful occupation, the wisdom of which I shall never have reason to call in question.

But I was to be no "emigrant." I had always entertained a lurking and perhaps unreasonable contempt for the man who cannot fight his battle in his own country and is driven abroad to find an opening he is unable to make for himself in the fierce competition at home, and I have often declared that I should prefer to be a moderately successful citizen of London—as indeed I am proud to describe myself—than a wealthy rancher of Texas, a millionaire of the Pampa, or a sheep-farming magnate of Australia, if any of these involved

my having to live away from London. And this I reiterate to-day, after having refused in cold blood several offers and openings which would have led to very considerable fortune if I had cared to turn my back on London Town for a period of years.

Thus, in that month of March when my wife and I set out for Buenos Ayres, *via* Paris, and thence by the Sud Express to pick up the ocean liner at Lisbon, we left our home as though we might be returning in a week or a month; our address remained, during our year on the River Plate, "Highgate, London," and so continued while I went farther afield alone through Chili and the West coast republics before returning to London, after the lapse of nearly another year, by way of Panama and North America.

I wish to lay some emphasis on this, although it may seem a trivial and purely private matter. In reality it makes all the difference in one's point of view. Sell or let your house, part with your furniture, store it even, before leaving for the other side of the world, and you have taken a fatal step towards cutting adrift from the old life. Your thoughts will no longer orient from your home, but from the new environment in which you find yourself. Given two men of very similar temperament who had both come to the Argentine on the same boat: the one under contract to carry through a certain undertaking in a given time and return home, the other to manage a great Argentine enterprise for a period of years, tailing into an indefinite future; the one having his home in London still bright and waiting for the happy day of his return, the other having left an empty and desolate house, sold or stored his household gods, and looking forward to making himself as comfortable as possible in the new land which might yet claim him for its own; is it reasonable to suppose that the outlook of these two men would be the same? I believe the impressions of the former will be the more unbiased, because he looks at everything dispassionately, knowing that in a few months, a year or so, nothing that is happening in this foreign country will greatly concern him,

and he will be snug again within the four walls of his own established home. The other will excuse this and that to himself, knowing that the sooner he gets used to this and that, however he may hate them, the better for his ultimate comfort. He will become a biased witness, struggle he never so bravely to convey a truthful impression.

But with what a load of preconceived opinions one steps aboard the ship that is to carry him into a far land, where he will have to get rid of these impedimenta as quickly as he is able. In my case the accumulations of years of reading had to be jettisoned at a much more rapid rate than I took in my new load of Spanish lore.

We left London on a raw and rainy day. It had been raining off and on for many weeks, and, as enthusiasts of the car, we had been grumbling, my wife and I, a good deal at the weather. But we were going to the land of sunshine! And when we bade good-bye to our chauffeur at Charing Cross, rather nervously watching the old grey car that had carried us many a thousand mile, for the last time roll away among the traffic and the drizzling rain, we comforted each other with simple words about the sunshine waiting for us far off by the River Plate. We were not downhearted! We knew no better then.

Even Paris was dirty. I am an inveterate lover of Paris, and must have made some thirty different visits, but seldom out of season, so that I have rarely seen her draggle-tailed. But in that rainy March she looked as miserable as London, and next day only the luxurious accommodation of the Sud Express made the journey through a sodden France agreeable. Floods everywhere. In the neighbourhood of Orleans the geography of the country seemed to have changed, and this land of few lakes was studded with sheets of water that more than rivalled those of Bouchet or Gerardmer.

Entering Spain we suffered a change in railway accommodation. The carriages were no longer so princely in their appointments, they were smaller and not quite so clean; but we were still on the Sud Express, the

train de luxe, and were (but guessed it not) more comfortable than we were ever to be again for many moons. So in the darkness through Northern Spain, awakening in the morning as we were nearing the borders of Portugal.

Thus far the journey had mostly covered ground long familiar to me, but Portugal was a new land, and romantically beautiful it appeared, with its stony uplands, its green mountains, and leafy valleys, seen in the clear, rain-washed air of that golden day that followed the passing of the floods. We were due in Lisbon at eleven o'clock at night; but, a bridge on the route having been washed away, the train had to make a long detour. We arrived at one of the morning; but the town was as wide awake as if it had been no later than 10 p.m. It evidently goes to bed about 3 a.m., as we soon found to our cost when we sought to sleep in one of the luxurious chambers of the Avenida Palace Hotel. And here again we were unconsciously bidding good-bye to genuine comfort.

An interesting little incident on arrival at Lisbon threw a gleam of light on the manners of the degenerate Portuguese nobility, about which we were to learn much from a friend who had resided there since the flight of King Manoel. At the Quai d'Orsay in Paris, we noticed that the next compartment to ours was occupied by a tall and handsome lady and her little daughter. Elegantly dressed, her natural but waning beauty aided artificially, her hair of false gold, this painted lady offered a strong contrast to the group of relatives who had come to see her off. At best, one might have judged these to be ugly people of the artisan class; at worst, gentry who traded less honourably in the obscurer byways of Saint Lazarre or Montmartre. In any case, the lady showed no physical resemblance to any of them; she might have been a changeling daughter. Her own child was a charming little creature despite her plain features, and it was clear the mother could command more cash than any of the shabby group of relatives who had wished them *adieu* and *bon voyage*. All the way to Lisbon the lady kept closely to her com-

partment, but the tricksy little daughter made free of the car. On arrival at the Portuguese capital one began to piece together the scraps of a typical modern "romance," as the pair were met by an undersized, flabby, and slightly deformed young gentleman, on whom the child gazed with all the interest of a first encounter. A great motor-car was in waiting and conveyed them to our hotel, a distance of about a hundred yards! We were fated to see much of the curious trio on the voyage to Rio de Janeiro. The gentleman, a Portuguese nobleman, was evidently making for the safety of Brazil, and had planned to keep bright his memories of Parisian Nights in company of one of the pleasure-givers.

One meets queer ship-mates on the South American trip. It would be the height of indiscretion to inquire too closely into the relationship of many of the couples who sit with you at table. Somehow I always thought of "the distinguished member of the Jockey Club, with his niece, h'm, h'm!" in *Tartarin sur les Alpes*, when the Portuguese nobleman, with his lady, h'm, h'm, sat down at table with the rest of our oddly assorted company.

There is a brightness and a sense of gaiety about the picturesque and beautiful capital of Portugal that are most engaging to the fleeting visitor, but after a short time the foreign resident finds it one of the dullest of towns, and has a lurking sympathy with the old and fallen nobility who sought distraction in pursuits that drew the poison only from the pleasures of London and Paris, and eventually made of them the most corrupt aristocracy in Europe. From all one heard, the revolution did not come a day too soon.

The mingling of the negro blood with the European, which is so marked a feature of the Portuguese, strikes a Britisher with something of a shock, and is doubtless responsible for the low ebb of morality in Lisbon. The Jewish type is very noticeable among the people one passes in the streets, and especially in the women. Altogether I felt that the breath of the place was somewhat unwholesome, and Republicanism cannot possibly

make matters worse, though national decay may have gone too far for any sort of government to re-vitalise the character of the people. Old Portugal's adventurings abroad, which made her powerful for a time, brought to her the canker of luxury and the lowering of her virility in the admixture of the blood of alien and vicious peoples, so that to-day in her decadence she is really paying her final debts of empire.

One sign there was of hope in what we saw—the admirably conducted orphanage that occupies the splendid buildings of the old monastery of Belem, hard by the memorial of Vasco da Gama, with its memories of Portugal's golden age. Nowhere have I seen a finer institution of its kind, with more evidence of wise charity and tender care of the young. It was a good act that cleared out the droning monks and confiscated their building for its present humane and profitable use. The boys are taught all kinds of trades, including agriculture, and some of them to whom we spoke during their play-hour were much ahead of the scholars of any English orphanage in their knowledge of foreign languages. French was the favourite, although one of the lads, who had strong evidence of negro origin, spoke both French and English admirably, and told us he was studying German.

On the way to the monastery we spent some time examining the extraordinary collection of old royal carriages and sedan chairs housed in a plain modern building. These relics of the gorgeous past are even more remarkable in their prodigal ostentation than the famous collection at Versailles, and will probably be carefully guarded by the Republic as evidence that the spendthrift kings who so long oppressed the country went to sinful extremes in their love of ostentation and luxury, though all the same I would not swap a sixteen horse-power car for the whole collection, if it were comfort I was after!

The driver of the motor-car we had hired should have been kept in solitary confinement in any peaceful country, for he was a public danger, yet when we had

loaded up with our luggage at the hotel we came near to missing the ship as "something went wrong with the works," and the reckless driver proved so incompetent a mechanic that we had eventually to transfer ourselves and our light luggage (the heavy having been shipped in England) to another taxi, and so reach the quay, where, for a mere trifle of 2000 reis (8s. 6d.) two brawny rascals put our bags on board the tender with more fuss than an English porter would have made over shifting a car-load.

In a few minutes more we were aboard the liner that was to carry us across the seas of my old desires. Somehow it did not look so fine and nowise so romantic as the ships I used to watch sailing away to "South Ameriky" from the sullen river Clyde, in the days when I dreamt dreams by that "long black river of the night."

CHAPTER II

SAILING INTO SUNSHINE—OUR VOYAGE TO THE RIVER PLATE

We had laughed at the story of some Englishmen in Lisbon, told us by our friend there. He overheard a group of typical John Bull tourists, who had been "doing" a fortnight in Portugal, discussing their experiences on their way to the boat. The weather had been superb all the time; they had been steeped in sunshine; yet the reflection which seemed to find most favour was the remark of a burly Yorkshireman, "Thank 'eaven, boys, no more of this damned glare for a while!"

But we were seekers of the sun, prepared to accept all that came our way, so it was with light hearts we heard the engines throb and felt the vessel resume her voyage into the sunshine. The Franco-Portuguese couple with the little girl and ourselves were all who came aboard at Lisbon, which looked a veritable city of dream as we steamed out of the beautiful estuary into the Atlantic. Seen from the water, there are few finer prospects than the long and diversified coast-line of Lisbon, culminating in the castled height of Cintra. A soft haze of heat blurred the outlines of the hills and touched them much in the manner of those feathery old landscape engravings that used to adorn the art books forty or fifty years ago.

There was a fairly large number of passengers aboard, but we soon discovered that the majority were only bound for Las Palmas, excluding the second-class and some three hundred Spanish and Portuguese emigrants herded in the steerage like cattle. The dinner-bell rang soon after we had settled in our new quarters, and for two weeks or so our days now slipped away, punctuated by the ship's

bells. This orderly division of time speedily produces a mental condition that makes for calm and good health. With nothing to do but engage in an occasional game of deck golf, or lounge in your canvas chair reading a novel, and be prompt to answer the summons of the bells that ring you to your meals, the days fade into each other, like the old-fashioned dissolving views, and with never a suggestion of weariness. Indeed, I often wondered if it might not be that a term of imprisonment would be almost as efficacious in bringing calm to the troubled spirit and health to the wearied body. Certainly a spell of monastic life would be as good a "rest cure." But, on the whole, I felt the steamer chair had its advantages, and although I had taken with me the notes for a book I had had in hand for years, intent on advancing that in my days of idleness, it was with a great content that I found it impossible to fix my mind on any thought of work in those serene days of sailing over sunny seas. Nothing seemed to matter, even the frequent ticking of the "wireless" was somewhat of an intrusion on our ocean peace.

But what of "romance"? Alas, not a gleam! There is more that is romantic in a bus-ride from Hornsey Rise to Chelsea than in the long voyage to the River Plate, and if you like to look into "the bright eyes of danger," you will find more stimulus in steering your motor-car from Hampstead Heath to Brighton. A more hum-drum, a safer, or less exciting voyage could not be imagined. You could put a child of seven aboard at Liverpool or London with as much sense of security as you could see him on the tram to be met by his mother at the terminus a mile away. The seeker after adventure is hard put to it in these steamship days to get a taste of the old spirit he imbibed from Marryat, Clark Russell, and Kingston.

In a voyage of so little incident, when the chief excitement is contrived by arranging sweepstakes on the day's mileage of the vessel, there is plenty of time to study one's fellow-passengers, and for this a small company, such as we were after leaving Las Palmas, is probably more

interesting than a large one. There were only some thirty saloon passengers, and naturally there was much interchange of gossip, the ship's officers proving especially companionable. A small company has the disadvantage, however, that the chronicler cannot well describe his companion voyagers with that easy frankness he may safely bestow on a crowd. The possibilities of mutual identification are enormously increased.

The extraordinary littleness of the world calls for caution in speaking of living persons, although one never expects to meet them again or knows they are ten thousand miles away at the time. This is impressed on the traveller through South America very strongly. The old country woman who thought that a friend on a casual visit to town was sure to meet her son Tom "in t'street in Lunnon," would have been more justified if she had been speaking of South America. Colonials are apt to smile at the insularity of ignorants in England who ask if they know So-and-so "who went to South Africa ten years ago," or to Australia. With a sneer of colonial superiority, they reply, "Do you know that we have got farms in Australia as big as Yorkshire?" And that is supposed to settle the matter. They have farms or *estancias* in Argentina as big as any in Australia, and if you bunch the Argentine, Chili, and Uruguay together, and throw in Peru, Bolivia, and Paraguay, you will have an area of old earth alongside of which England is little more than a dot and London but a speck; yet I will wager that the chances of "running up against" any particular person in all that mighty waste of land are twenty to one as compared with the chances of a similar encounter in London.

In the little handful of voyagers with whom we sailed there was a remarkable mingling of character, potentialities of tragedy and comedy, a microcosm of the social world, and one could find much to say of them. I must content myself, however, with a few vague touches.

Apropos of the world's littleness, I found that one of the passengers who had made himself most eminent in the companionship of the saloon was an intimate of one of my oldest friends in that "dark, sea-born city," where my

earliest dreams of South America had been dreamt. He was a gentleman in whom there survived something of the spirit of Mr. Pleydell in his Saturday evening "high jinks," and maintained that character in the smoking-room (where every night was Saturday) with a small but admiring audience whom he addressed as "My loyal subjects." "Tell me," he would say, "what thou would that we, of our royal will, might do this evening for our own and thy diversion." And with varying qualities of the lamely jocular they would give their suggestions. It was a little pathetic, if the truth must be told, but, somehow, before the journey's end, he of the ruddy visage and I had become good friends. A voyage of this kind teaches one tolerance, and it is surprising how the most apparently incompatible units may draw together by the practice of even a little toleration. As our worthy observed in his soft Scots voice, "Mun, I was even beginning to like Brixton," naming a young man who joined us at Pernambuco, and who, by reason of a most pronounced tendency to "swank," made a bad first impression.

Mention of this passenger, by the way, reminds me that his unfortunate habit of capping every story, going one better than everybody else, kept most of us at arm's length for a day or two. If one said he had yellow fever, Brixton had had it twice; if another had made two voyages to Africa, Brixton had made five or six; if a third had shot a deer, Brixton had shot an elephant. Everywhere he had been he had met with hair-raising adventures. In Pernambuco, he had to use his revolver every night to scare away the burglars. How many had he killed? "I winged one of the devils anyhow!" And in proof he passed round his revolver. Yellow Jack was raging in the town when he left, he assured us; but somehow he had been allowed to come on board quietly, and make us shiver with recital of the horrors he had escaped. Of course we doubted every word that Brixton said, and yet on many points I have since had occasion to test his statements, and never once have I found that he lied. He told the truth as he saw it, and

he was an entertaining and good-hearted Englishman, who had forgot in growing up to cast off certain habits of thought and talk which are delightful in Tom Sawyers and Huck Finns, but are apt to convey wrong impressions of handsome, well-groomed Mr. Brixtons !

There was no English lady among the saloon passengers, but we had Scots, Irish, Danish, French, Spanish, and Peruvian. Of none that were ladies shall I speak, but two who were something else deserve a note. 'Tis ever thus ; virtue is so lacking in the picturesque. As a connoisseur of dancing, I was interested to discover that we had on board a famous *danseuse*, most charming of all the pupils of the great Loïe Fuller, who was on her way to the Casino at Buenos Ayres—a resort of sinister fame, according to current belief among English music-hall performers. But as I had many a time been charmed by the exquisite art of the said pupil of La Loïe Fuller (whose name is as widely known as that of her teacher), I had no difficulty in deciding that the plain and vulgar Spanish contortionist who was going to stamp her heavy feet and twist her decidedly shapely body before the *jovenes distinguidos* of the Casino was merely trading on the name of a celebrity. Her luggage bore the famous name in huge letters, and I afterwards saw it " billed " widely in Buenos Ayres. Where most that one eats, or drinks, touches, or looks upon, is a spurious imitation, it is only natural that many of the " artistes " who entertain a public at once beneath and incapable of criticism should also be base coin passing itself off as gold. On the whole, the conduct of this Spanish dancer during the voyage was so openly without sense of shame that there was little one could object to ! Sometimes she appeared in gorgeous raiment and an enormous " picture hat," ready for the Bois or the Alameda ; even, on one occasion, sporting a huge muff in the tropics ! Again she would pass the day in bedroom slippers, her corsets put aside, her lithe body draped only in a dressing-gown, and her golden hair of yesterday completely doffed, leaving only a shabby little nob of faded brown. She entangled at least one of the male passengers, a Chilian who later found

another flame in an attractive *demimondaine* of the second-class, and it afforded us some amusement to watch the rivalry which now ensued, but there was little sympathy when the gay Lothario came to the end of his cash and attempted to borrow.

The other "interesting lady" of the saloon was of quite a different type. A French *chanteuse* of the smaller café concerts, she was extremely plain by nature's wish, but the art of make-up and some potent hair-dye effected a magical change the day she left us. She behaved herself modestly enough, and passed most of her time with her crochet needle, sitting side by side with the honest women aboard, yet I was told that her songs would have brought a blush to the cheek of a stevedore! She sang to us several dainty and harmless little French and Spanish verses in the familiar *café chantant* manner, and altogether left the impression of a poor woman laying out her small gifts to the best advantage.

There was little or no intercourse between the saloon passengers and those of the second-class, although it seemed to me that among the latter were many worthy people and a good-hearted companionship. They certainly showed to advantage in the diverting ceremony observed when Father Neptune held court on crossing the line. Included among them were a number of minor "artistes" bound for the music-halls of Buenos Ayres, not to mention several young women with a still less attractive journey's end in view.

We heard much from the old South Atlantic voyagers on board about the doings on other and more popular lines than that to which our vessel belonged. The garbage journals of England or the muck-raking magazines of the United States might work up a spicy stew of scandal about life on the South American liners if they gave themselves to the task. Wealthy Argentines and Brazilians travelling with their wives in the saloon and two or three concubines in the second-class, offer quite attractive material for the journalist in search of the spicy, while the traffic in "white slaves" must, in the past, have provided a goodly percentage of passengers for certain profitable steamship

lines which, doubtless, never wished to handle such traffic, but could not avoid it. How difficult it is to keep one's hands clean in this soiled world !

From all that I have been told, and also from personal observation, the perils of the deep may have a curious resemblance to the perils of Piccadilly. And even those who ought to be the protectors of innocence may prove to be its assailants. A young married lady, lately arrived from England, was under the pain of having to travel alone from Buenos Ayres to a Brazilian port where her husband was lying in hospital with typhoid, and her plain story of how the purser, under cloak of sympathy for her in her distress, first ingratiated himself by talking sentimental slop about his wife and bairns at home, getting her to go into his cabin to look at the treasured photographs of his "dear ones," and there, without more ado, attempted to assail the honour of the young wife, whose mental sufferings at the time were, to my knowledge, almost beyond endurance, is one of the ugliest I have heard. This was an English officer, note you—none of your sensual Italians !

It is to be feared that much co-mingling with pimps and procurers may have tended somewhat to blunt the native honour of the Englishman in these southern latitudes, for, up to a day so recent that it seems but yesterday, nothing had been done to dam the foul stream that has flowed so long from the human sewers of Europe into the still more noisome *mares stagnantes* of Buenos Ayres. Now there is at least some pretence of stemming it, and from time to time one reads in the Buenos Ayres papers about the latest raid on the "apaches," who are deported with much pomp and circumstance, or about the rejected of Paris, in the shape of womankind, who are refused admission to the city of good airs !

But to return to a pleasanter subject, our voyage deserves at least a few words of description. We seemed to be lying off Las Palmas before the beautiful picture of Lisbon in sunshine had quite faded from our vision, and at this distance of time I would not undertake to say whether it was two or three days that had passed

between the two ports, so dreamy was our progress. The sight of Las Palmas, with its grateful greenness of hill and valley, and far southward, cloud-high in a gorgeous flood of sunshine, the mighty mass of Teneriffe, thrusting itself boldly into the sky from the heaving wilderness of water, gave to the beholder one of those rare moments of spiritual exaltation which a first sight of such natural grandeur must always awaken in the thinking mind.

St. Vincent was a different story. Fully two days more steaming brought us thither to that vile haunt of malaria and all things unlovely. The Cape Verde Islands, of which St. Vincent is the principal, dishonour the name they bear, as there is scarce a speck of verdure to be seen upon them. Presumably there must be some natural reason for the naming of the Cape itself on the African coast, off which, nearly five hundred miles north-westward, these scabby isles show their horrid heads above the blue Atlantic. They are of a dirty red colour, and at a distance resemble some humpy monsters of the deep wallowing in the sunshine. The port is useful as a coaling and cable station. A town of shanties, it swarms with negroes and ships' pedlars. Here a small colony of young Britons are marooned in the cable service, and a less attractive destiny could not be imagined for a bright young Englishman. At first the young cable operator is no doubt delighted to find how much more picturesque he has become than he was at home. To *have* to wear white duck suits and a pith helmet, and look like Stanley on his way to discover Livingstone, is extremely attractive to the mind of youth! Even the gentleman who sells coals to the liners comes on board looking for all the world like a colonial governor or the leader of a mission to Timbuctoo. But when the debilitating effects of the climate make themselves felt, when the novelty of the life has gone, what remains? The harbour swarms with sharks, but the negro boys who dive for the amusement of the passengers on the ships that put in there, make light of the sharks for a sixpence, or even for a humble penny thrown into the water.

St. Vincent gave us our last glimpse of the Old World.

Its very ugliness sent our thoughts zestfully forward to the undiscovered beauties of the New, then so full of promise, now so—— but that's a later story. It was pleasant to hear again the long soft swish of the water running past the vessel's sides as it resumed its tranquil voyage into the sunset. Now succeeded many days of idle lolling in the deck-chair, watching through the binoculars the swarms of flying fish skimming over the surface of the ocean like tiny aeroplanes. It was my first sight of these little marvels of the story-books, and I recalled the anecdote of a sailor friend of my youth who, telling his grandmother of the wonders he had seen in his travels, was pointedly informed by her that she was listening to no "sic nonsense as fishes that could flee."

"Will you believe, then, that when we were going through the Red Sea the water was so clear that we could make out many of the chariots lost there when the hosts of Pharaoh were overwhelmed by the Lord ?"

"Oh, I'll believe that ready enough, for it's in the Bible."

Bird life in these ocean solitudes is rare, yet we not only saw several journeying on confident wing several hundred miles from land, but for two or three days we were forcibly reminded of "Nature red in tooth and claw," by witnessing a little drama in feathers. One day out from St. Vincent a bird, about the size of a pigeon, gorgeously coloured and sporting a plume of orange-red, alighted on the rigging of the ship, pursued by a larger hawk-like creature. Evidently the pursuit had lasted for a long time, as both were land birds and seemed very exhausted, for we were now some hundreds of miles from the African coast, whence hunter and hunted had no doubt flown. For two or three days a strange game of cross-purposes ensued, the hunted, with the skill of desperation, cleverly selecting different positions in the rigging or on the smoke-stacks, which offered no opportunity to the hunter to swoop down on him from above. There were violent chasings at times around the ship, when the essential cruelty of the Spanish

emigrants was displayed in their efforts to strike the pursued bird with all sorts of objects hurled at it as it swept past the bows. Eventually the hawk gave up and disappeared, and soon afterward the bird of brilliant plumage took wing away.

Seldom did we sight another vessel ; now and again we signalled a tramp or a collier heading south with its cargo from Wales, to be sold eventually in Buenos Ayres as high as £4 or £5 per ton—it was during the time of a coal strike. What do our ships bring back from the Argentine one-half so precious as the goods they take ? One of the old windjammers did we pass, and my heart warmed to it when I found it was an old " Loch " liner from mine own familiar port of Glasgow. In full sail it looked no bigger than a toy boat on Hampstead Pond, and an object of such appropriate grace and beauty that it was sad to think a day would come when no ship that goes by spread of glistening sail would cross those far waters again. I liked to think that this was one of those very vessels I had seen clearing from Glasgow for South America with my dream-self aboard, in the eager days of youth.

Early on the sixth day out from St. Vincent, on going on deck before breakfast, we were not a little surprised to find that we were steaming close to a long and narrow green island on which many signs of careful cultivation were evident. In a cove the white houses of a township showed clear and inviting in the morning air, the blue smoke curling from some of the chimneys giving one an intense pang of home hunger. With the binoculars it was easy to make out people going about their tasks in the fields, others walking towards what seemed to be a signalling station. The surprise at this sudden coming upon a bit of the habited globe in what, for all we had supposed the night before, was still mid-ocean, sent us questioning to the officers of the ship. The island turned out to be Fernando de Noroña, notable chiefly as a Brazilian penal settlement. A Brazilian—the only one among our company—told me a story about Fernando de Noroña which, speaking in Spanish, he

considered *muy graciosa.* An Englishman in Pernambuco killed a native in a quarrel and was sent to the penal isle, but in the course of a year or less he was granted his liberty, that being a matter of simple negotiation ; a little influence and a modicum of money can always save a criminal in that happy clime. But the Englishman, having long suffered a shrewish wife, found so much peace in prison that he refused to quit the island, and there remains. Fernando de Noroña lies some two hundred miles off the north-eastern shoulder of Brazil, and by that token we were soon to be touching at Pernambuco and hugging the Brazilian coast for the rest of our voyage.

One felt almost sorry that the sunny days of serene steaming over shoreless seas were coming to an end and that presently we would be picking up the coast of the new world. By now we had grown so used to the companionship of the boat that we began to look forward to leaving it with something of regret.

At Pernambuco we had our first sight of a South American town, and I should be departing widely from the truth were I to say that the "Venice of Brazil" tugged at my heart-strings. It is a town of evil-smelling waterways, half-finished streets, at their best no better than a London byway, with cut-throat quarters that harbour all uncleanness. The task of going ashore, first being lowered into a bobbing dinghy by means of a rope and basket, is attended with a sensation of nausea which the merry assurance of the old skipper by your side, as to the water being a favourite haunt of sharks, does little to counteract, especially when his trained eye enables him, a moment or two later, to point out several of these hunting for garbage around the ship ! It is fair to say of Pernambuco that it was undergoing transformation; the *avenida* craze had taken root, and at the time of our visit innumerable shanties were being demolished to make way for wide avenues and new buildings. But it is likely to remain for some time a fever-haunted city, densely populated by an uninviting mixture of white and black.

The first sensation of crossing a great sea and making

land on its farther shore once experienced—and it is a "thrill" that never comes again—we sank back into the half-indifferent contemplation of the long, indented coast-line of this prodigious land of Brazil. For hundreds of miles it is unchanging in its character of palm-fringed shores, with great dim mountain masses inland, a soft blur of heat overhanging all. There is plenty to suggest mystery and romance, and yet, somehow, beauty is lacking: I mean the wild beauty of peak and crag which we find along the coasts of Scotland, where the conformation is continually changing. These mountains of Brazil have that volcanic sameness which only becomes magnificent when you can ascend to some commanding pinnacle and look down upon a veritable wilderness of mighty earth mounds, as it was my good fortune once to look upon from the tower of the ancient castle of Polignac in the volcanic heart of France.

For many nights the tropical skies had been a revelation of stellar glory, and often though I have gazed at the friendly skies of home on "a beautiful clear night of stars" (to quote the haunting phrase of "R. L. S."), little had I imagined the glories that awaited the beholder of the heavens in a clear, tropical night. The stars appear much larger and incomparably more brilliant than I have ever seen them in our northern latitudes, nor do they "stud" the sky so much as hang dependent from the dense dark blue. I had many starlight talks with the old skipper who was travelling to a "shore job" (the dream of every sailor !) on the Pacific, and who spoke of the stars which had guided him so long on his voyages with that familiarity of the worthy old Scots minister "wha, ye micht hae thought, had been born and brocht up among them." Yet I have failed on many occasions since to rediscover the interesting relationships of the constellations which he so clearly explained to me. I confess, however, to a keen sense of disappointment in the much vaunted Southern Cross. It is a lop-sided and unimpressive group of four stars, and those who live beneath it are welcome to its monopoly.

The sight of Bahía, about one day's steam from

One of the Crowded Docks in the Port of Buenos Ayres.

Friends of Emigrants awaiting the Arrival of a Ship.

THE FIRST FAMILIAR LANDMARK FOR THE VISITOR TO BUENOS AYRES.

Part of the Paseo Colón, with the Government House on the right, and the tallest of the new commercial buildings on the left.

Pernambuco, was peculiarly pleasing. It might have been a bit of the French or Italian Riviera, with its rich verdure and bosky hills, while the residential suburbs looked quite European as seen from the ship. We made no closer acquaintance than a stay of some three hours in the beautiful bay, but I could well believe that much that looked most alluring in the picturesque sea-front of the town did not bear too close inspection.

Two more days brought us to Rio de Janeiro, full of expectation and curiosity for the pearl of South America. For once we were not disappointed. The bay of Rio has been so often photographed, so fully described, that anyone who has read much must have a good mental picture of the place, which fortunately squares very neatly with the actuality. Here, indeed, is something entirely unlike any bay we have in the Old World. The fantastic islands of volcanic origin which peep up through the broad waters of the bay, or impudently flaunt their grassy cones high above sea-level, in the most unexpected places, give to Rio, as seen from the bay, an aspect that is unique. The town spreads itself out with picturesque irregularity among the gentle valleys that lie between the many hills, trending swiftly upward some little way inland from the shore, the noble height of Corcovado crowning the whole lively and diversified scene. These hills being mostly tropical in the richness and character of their vegetation, the art of man had no great task to transform the situation into one of the world's most beautiful cities.

On the whole, man has here done his work well, although it has to be confessed that much of the architecture is paltry and all of the plaster variety. The marine drive will match almost anything of the kind in Europe, and the Avenida Central is admirably devised at once to beautify the town and drain the pressing traffic of the narrower side streets. The suburbs are also spacious and well-planned, so that one could imagine life being very pleasant here—when the weather is a little cooler than the norm. Although the summer was supposed to be over at the time of our visit, the atmosphere was enervating

in the extreme, and even on the breezy heights of Corcovado, to which we ascended by the funicular, and whence one of the grandest prospects man may look upon rewarded us, we perspired at every step. Everywhere there was the moist, oppressive smell of the hot-house, so that one could guess what it meant to be afoot in Rio in the summer-time, if this were autumn.

As for living here: when we were charged twenty *milreis* (26s. 8d.) for a dish of fruit that might have cost as much as three or four shillings in London, at a very ordinary hotel, where all other charges were proportionately appalling, we had our doubts, even granted a change of weather. One of our party paid the equivalent of sixteen shillings for a tooth-brush, a cake of soap, a small tube of lanoline, and some shaving powder! Utmost value in England—three shillings and sixpence.

Paying a uniformed madman, who was plying for hire with a motor-car, a few thousand *reis* (a *milreis* or one thousand *reis* go to 1s. 4d., so that you part with them in tens of thousands in a forenoon), we drove all round the city and the Marina at fully thirty miles an hour, turning busy corners at that speed. I myself can claim some dexterity at the wheel, having threaded the mazes of London traffic at all times and seasons, and scaled the awesome heights of many mountain passes with my car, escaping scathless; but I confess that I sat in terror in that maniac's car as we sped wildly through the highways and byways of Rio. Yet he was perfectly sane, as motorists are accounted sane in that town, his performance evoking no remark. The speed-limit is, I believe, eight or ten miles an hour, but, like all the laws of Latin America, that is laid down merely to be ignored. The municipal authorities, however, use the by-law as a supplementary tax, and regularly fine all the motorists of the town, in rotation, for exceeding the limit. A well-known English resident, who owns a speedy car, told me he had been fined a month before for exceeding the limit on a certain date, when he had been on the high seas returning from Europe. He protested, lodged his plea, and was fined all the same, on the ground that if he

did not exceed the limit that day he had done so in all certainty before or after.

Altogether our impressions of Rio were favourable. Every prospect pleased us ; only man was vile, and none viler than the scum that haunt the sea-front to plunder visitors by getting them aboard their small boats for conveyance to the liners in the bay, then, with sundry sinister threats, endeavour (too often successfully) to make their victims disgorge a payment large enough to purchase the boat. The gentry who ply this trade at Naples are mild and benevolent by comparison.

About noon of the day following our stop at Rio, we were steaming up the picturesque estuary of Santos. A Frenchman on board had promised me that here I should see something *tout à fait original*, and much though I had been charmed with the actual sight of Rio, so long familiar to me in picture, the approach to Santos proved even more interesting, due perhaps in some degree to the charm of the unknown and unexpected. There is also a touch of romance in slowly approaching a town that lies up a river, instead of coming upon it suddenly from the sea. A negro pilot took command of the ship up to Santos, somewhat to the disgust of our captain, who had never before stood by a " nigger " on the bridge, and seemed none too sure of his pilot, for he never let go the telegraph handle until his vessel was berthed.

The country through which the river runs (it is more an arm of the sea than a river) is undoubtedly " original," abounding in low volcanic hills, with abundance of verdure, broken now by palm groves and swampy flats. Here one is conscious of being in a strange land, and it is easy to imagine with what tense interest and straining eyes the first bold adventurers sailed up this narrow and beautiful waterway to found the city that has become the second port of Brazil. The city itself stretches by the riverside around the foot of a great green hill, disfigured by a monstrous advertisement announcing to adventurers of a different kind and a later day that somebody's biscuits are the best ! A considerable part of the town lies on land that still looks suspiciously swampy and used to be

an ideal haunt of Yellow Jack, though I was told that to-day it would be difficult to find a healthier spot. That may be so, but I think I could succeed if I tried very hard. As for the town itself, a short ramble revealed one of the deadest and most uninteresting cities it has been my lot to see, and I gladly returned to the friendly shelter of the ship and the livelier locality of the quayside, where were congregated many vessels from British, American, and European ports.

Two days more and we found ourselves at anchor in the roads outside Montevideo, which presents a most engaging picture from the sea, the town covering a lumpy tongue of land that juts seaward, with a rocky shore rambling inland in many directions and along the bay, which culminates in the conical mass known as the Cerro, crowned by an antique fortress and a modern lighthouse. At night, when the myriad electric lamps are lighted, the Cerro throwing its broad and regular beams athwart the bay, innumerable red and green lights blinking on the buoys in the harbour, much flitting of motor launches, and brightly illuminated liners lying at anchor, there is no scene I know that better suggests one's juvenile fancies of fairyland.

The town itself delighted us, seen in generous sunshine, with refreshing breezes blowing from the sea which, at first sight, as we pass along the streets, seems completely to enclose it. As I shall have something to say of my later stay in the Uruguayan capital, I shall not occupy myself with it further at the moment.

We bade good-bye to the ship that had been our most pleasant abode for so many days, and made our first acquaintance with things Argentine by transferring ourselves to a musty river-steamer on which the crudest elements of courtesy had still to be acquired by officials and stewards, who were all too conscious of being employed by a firm which then monopolised the river trade. It is small comfort to discover that your bug-haunted cabin, like the rest of the vessel, has been fashioned on your native Clyde, or that the refreshments you pay for at Argentine prices bear familiar English

labels — which, by the way, may be copied very dexterously by Buenos Ayres lithographers.

Still, although we realised what a change for the worse we had made in transhipping, we comforted ourselves with the knowledge that to-morrow we should awaken in the port of Buenos Ayres, in that genial land of sunshine to which we had so long looked forward with eager anticipation. The passage up the river—which, seaward of Montevideo, is some 150 miles in width, narrowing suddenly to 60 opposite the city, and to the eye has no farther shore, so that only the discoloration of the water distinguishes river from sea—was made in the roughest weather we had experienced, the steamer tossing like a cork and its paddle-wheels beating the waves with feeble irregularity.

It was an early autumn morning when we walked off the gangway at the Dársena Sud to suffer the passing of our impedimenta through the customs. The wind bit as shrewdly as on a midwinter's day in London, and, believing in this land of sunshine with a simple faith that had yet to suffer rudest shocks, we had to remain there, an hour or more, clothed for summer, chattering with cold.

But we were actually in Buenos Ayres, and soon all the marvels of the "Paris of South America" were to reveal themselves to us starveling Britishers who knew nothing better than our own London and the Paris of France.

Vamos a ver, as they say in Buenos Ayres.

CHAPTER III

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF BUENOS AYRES

OUR ship's doctor, with whom I had passed many agreeable hours, and whose efforts to practise the Spanish speech added not a little to the gaiety of our voyage, was a plain-spoken young man, who assured me, when he heard I was bound for Buenos Ayres, that I was going to "the rottenest place in South America." This was a blow that struck my puffed-up admiration of the place under the belt. I had read in the papers before leaving home that no fewer than fifteen Glasgow "keelies" had reached the splendid city on the River Plate as stowaways on a merchant liner, and of these, thirteen were discovered on the same vessel when it was making its homeward trip. Now, Glasgow is noted for its rain, but it had rained in such an appalling manner all the time the vessel was discharging and loading at Buenos Ayres, that these sodden thirteen were home-sick for the milder rains that wash the Trongate and the Candleriggs! Doubtless, if the truth were known, the other two had stowed away too much of the vile liquid sold as "Eskotsh weeskee" in Buenos Ayres to be able to stow themselves away a second time, and remained to swell the ranks of the Scots and Irish rascals who pester their fellow-countrymen for alms in Florida and San Martin—the streets where most of the Britishers may be encountered.

But I had made light of both the doctor's dictum and the experience of the Glasgow keelies. Nobody, nothing, was to rob me of my ideal city on the glittering River Plate!

The dirty porter who conveyed our hand bags to a dirtier *coche*, with a driver in the full regalia of an English tramp and two horses that ought to have been taken

straightway to the knacker's yard, did his best to rob me of five *pesos* (value 8s. 9d.) for a task which in any part of Europe would have been well paid at sixpence and the money gratefully received. I had given him one peso only (1s. 9d.), and so loudly and volubly did he denounce me for a mean, dirty German, that I gave him one more for peace, and the sorry nags were whipped up and we drove away on our great adventure.

The coach, typical of many I was to see and not greatly inferior to scores it was to be my fate to ride in for many months, was of the "victoria" style, so pleasantly familiar to the frequenter of Paris; but it was battered and tattered, the splash-boards broken, the mud-encrusted wheels repaired with odd spokes, the upholstering faded and torn, while the sight of the driver in his greasy rags and the poor worn horses with projecting ribs, broken kneed, and raw flesh showing in patches along their scraggy backs, mortified me that in such manner I should enter the city of my dreams. The tattered ruffian on the box-seat lashed the moribund nags so unmercifully that I had to insist on his refraining, but then, and often afterwards, it was clear to me that only by thrashing could the hapless creatures be made to go.

And what a journey! The roadway reminded me of the Chinese saying, that in China the roads are good for ten years and bad for ten thousand. With a briefer history than China's, it may be said of Buenos Ayres that its roads are good for ten days and bad for ten years. We had evidently arrived on the eleventh day! Made of cobble-stones, the highway was as choppy as the river on a windy day, the tram lines now projecting half a foot above the level, now dipping into baked-mud hollows. Everywhere the cracking of whips, the clanging of bells, the shouting of drivers, the screeching of ungreased axles, and the slipping and straining of sweating horses harnessed in threes and fours to uncouth and overladen waggons—a scene of brutal ugliness and sordid brute strife that filled one's mind with horror. We had plunged into the hell of the horse and the mule. It was heart-rending to see the wretched creatures cut

and bruised, with open sores and swollen fetlocks, the cruel chain traces at which they were straining often running in grooves which they had cut in the creature's flesh, and ever the relentless whips descending on the suffering backs with stings that touched the heart of any man of feeling. And in all that strange, noisy medley of man and brute there was no sign of feeling; nothing but a dull, blear-eyed urge forward. Forward to what? Ah, he were a bold man who answered that.

As for my first impressions of the city, I comforted myself with the reflection that the neighbourhood of docks is in all great seaports the least favourable point of view. Everything that met one's eyes was mean, or makeshift. The shops along the Paseo were of the lowest class; most of the buildings were crumbling plaster shanties. The people trafficking in them were the dredgings of a lower life than one sees in the New Cut or in Petticoat Lane—incomparably more villainous in mien. It is true that the gardens which adorn the Paseo de Julio, and make that appear (in a photograph) one of the pleasantest thoroughfares in all the world, looked beautiful, yet none but foul Italians and Semitic scum were to be seen walking there.

It would be all right when we got into the city itself, for had we not feasted our eyes times out of number on alluring pictures of the imposing buildings of this wonder city sent broadcast to the ends of earth by official propagandists? An immense pink-painted plaster building, with the "sham" flaking off in places, showed its many-windowed back to the green palm-dotted gardens of the Paseo. Was it—could it be?—the famous Casa Rosada, the official home of the president? It was. A little cold shiver zig-zagged down my spine. Then I remembered that time was when I had to apologise for Buckingham Palace to foreign visitors to whom I had been showing the sights of London, so I merely ticked off in my mind the Casa Rosada as one of my dream-pictures of Buenos Ayres that had not come true.

Presently, up a side-street, crowded with struggling waggons, coaches, and clamorous tram-cars, where small

THE NARROW STREETS OF BUENOS AYRES.

The left illustration shows Calle Florida, the busiest thoroughfare of Buenos Ayres, the right is a bird's-eye view of Calle San Martín, looking towards the Plaza Hotel. These are typical main streets.

THE CHANGING HEART OF BUENOS AYRES.

Plaza de Mayo, looking westward along the Avenida towards Congreso. The appearance of this square has recently been modified, and two great diagonal avenues are now in construction, the one starting from the right-hand corner of the square and running north-west, the other from the left-hand corner south-westward.

buildings were being torn down and large steel-frame ones were being stuck up, we came to our hotel.

The roadway in front was so narrow, the traffic so insistent, and the tramways so continuous, that the mere act of stopping our coach for a minute blocked the whole ill-regulated, restless mass. Nor in the hotel did we find peace. It was in the hands of repairers, who, as we afterwards learned, had been repairing it for three years, and in all that time did no more than could have been achieved in London inside of two months. As to the moderation of this statement, not only can I vouch from a careful and intimate study of the work of those blundering incompetents, through eight long months of residence there, but I could call a cloud of witnesses whose fate it was to live through a considerable part of the weary years of alteration, as the discomforts we had to suffer were a frequent topic of the "stayers" in what, with all its faults at that time, was doubtless the most comfortable and reasonable hotel in Buenos Ayres.

In the small and crowded lounge, where we humbly waited for the privilege of securing accommodation, there was a mingling of the coming and the parting guests. The former one could recognise at a glance by their creased clothing, the latter notable chiefly for their bucolic touches. The room was uninviting, the shabby wall-paper in pendulous bulges, mouldy with damp, every item worthy only of a third-rate "temperance hotel" in one of the smaller provincial towns of England. The gentleman in the temporary office, who carried out his duties amidst plasterers' ladders and plumbers' tools, was willing to concede us a small room with a bath for twenty-six pesos (£2, 5s. 8d.) per day, including "board" but excluding certain "extras." The terms would be the same for a stay of one night or for a stay of one year. I accepted with a feeling of disappointment, after discovering that a bedroom and a sitting-room of the most ordinary description were to cost me three pounds ten shillings per day. And had I to stay again for eight whole months in Buenos Ayres I should most willingly return to the same conditions which at first I regarded

with frank contempt. It is a sadder and a wiser man that writes these lines than he who stepped hopefully into the best-recommended hotel in Buenos Ayres that chill morning of autumn.

The window of our room looked upon a street so narrow that when all the high buildings then in process of erection are completed, no faint ray of sun will ever enter it. At the corner immediately opposite stood one of the old single-storey structures of the colonial type, which, in the centre of the city, are giving way to the multi-storeyed edifices of steel and concrete. This old shanty-like building was a centre of swarming life—Turks, Greeks, Swedes, Syrians, Italians—in short, the off-scourings of all nations were to be our neighbours, and their babel of tongues sounded from the little drinking den into which our window looked as though the brawlers were in the hotel itself. A nice quiet neighbourhood! Being so near the corner, we had the advantage of two sets of tramways, and with the windows open it was almost necessary to use a megaphone to make one's voice heard in the bedroom. The narrow streets intensified all noises to an extraordinary degree. Bedlam must be peaceful compared to that corner—and that is but one of thousands similar.

"We *must* clear out of here as soon as possible," said my wife. But a woman's "must" dwindles into the meekest acquiescence when pitted against the "must" of Buenos Ayres. "There *must* be quieter places in the centre of the town, away from these cramped and crowded back streets," she opined. Alas, there are no back streets in Buenos Ayres. Or, rather, with few exceptions, they are all "back streets!"

As soon as possible I went forth to find the great open avenues where, perchance, I could move at my ease and enjoy the spectacle of the myriad life of the great metropolis. I half-hoped that we had entered the hotel by a back-door and would find on turning the corner that it had a noble frontage to some spacious highway. Vain hope of a "Gringo"—as the native dubs the foreigner in South America. I found myself in a

buzzing thoroughfare where there were no tramways, but where coaches and motor-cars were dashing along with quite superfluous speed, as at nearly every corner they had to pull up suddenly in muddled mobs to allow the streaming traffic of the cross-streets to pass. The street was lined with splendid shops, many displaying the most luxurious articles of furniture, jewellery, or wearing apparel, and reminding one of Bond Street in this respect. It was about the width of Chancery Lane. It was the Calle Florida, the very core and pride of Buenos Ayres!

As I went along, stepping off the narrow pavement every few yards to pass any two people inconsiderate enough to walk side by side, I recalled the one spark of wit I had heard from a youth of the "nut" variety who had been a shipmate of ours. We were having dinner on board the river steamer and had reached the fifth or sixth course of the weirdest mixtures, when he said, "I wonder when they are going to bring us something to eat." I wondered when in all this network of thoroughfares I was going to find a street. I had heard much of the famous Avenida. That at least would not disappoint me.

The sun was now strong, and the temperature must have risen fifteen or twenty degrees since the bitterly cold morning. Horses were sweating and giving off an offensive odour—the result, I fancy, of their "alfalfa" feeding—and were covered with a thick white lather along the parts of their bodies where the harness rubbed. I, too, was perspiring, though I was conscious of a brisk buoyancy in the air as I continued southwards towards the Avenida.

Near the end of Florida I noticed among the throng an acquaintance of mine who lives a few streets from me in London and whom I had not seen at home for more than two years. He was only on a short visit to South America, but I was soon to find that Londoners who have business anywhere out there and may never see each other for years at home are certain to meet in Florida, which is a sort of funnel through which the whole stream of South American traffic must pass.

The Avenida at last! Except where the narrow cross-streets debouched into it, every inch of the splendid

roadway was boarded up, and only the pavements, crowded with jostling humanity, remained. They were making the underground railway from the Plaza Mayo to the Estacion Once. In this state for many months it continued, an eyesore and a source of illimitable dust and dirt to all the centre of the city. No more than a scrap of the dome of Congress, away to the west, was visible above the earthworks and barricades, while the Plaza Mayo, with the historic Independence monument, was a scene of shapeless confusion.

I ventured along Maipù, where the ceaseless rattle of traffic is almost as disturbing as the battle from which it takes its name could have been. Longing for a quiet corner to rest—the " island " opposite the Mansion House loomed up like a haven of peace in memory—I regained my hotel, where my wife reminded me of a certain old Scotswoman who came to visit her daughter in London and was taken to Westminster Abbey. She had got as far as the choir and stood looking quietly at the massy columns and noble spring of the arches, the iridescent beauty of the windows, before she spoke, and then she said, " Weel, do ye ken, Jeenie, I'm awfu' disappointed ! "

The afternoon was unpleasantly hot and enervating, but the evening was cool with a fresh and pleasant breeze. We were in a Latin city—the Paris of South America, we had heard it called—we were both lovers of Paris, my wife and I ; so we sauntered out after dinner to take our ease at " some café, somewhere, in one of the squares." But all seemed dead. A mere handful of stragglers in Florida ; in the Avenida a few soft-hatted loungers, who stared at my wife with a rude animal interest ; no café anywhere in any square, where we were tempted to linger for a moment. So a *coche* rattled us back as quickly as possible to the already friendly hotel, going by way of Esmeralda and Corrientes, where the bright exteriors of some cinemas and other places of amusement punctuated the dulness with points of brightness.

It was no later than half-past nine, and we thought once more of that old Scotswoman in Westminster Abbey.

EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR OF THE "CASA ROSADA."

The upper illustration shows the façade of the Government House towards the gardens of the Paseo Colón ; the lower, the vestibule entering from the main door in the Plaza de Mayo.

Statue of San Martín in the Plaza named after that Hero of the Republic.

On the left, the domes of the Art Gallery are to be seen, and on the right a portion of the Plaza Hotel.

CHAPTER IV

PICTURES OF STREET LIFE IN BUENOS AYRES

It is a reasonable proposition that there are at least as many ways of studying a strange town as Mr. Kipling allows in the writing of tribal lays—" and every single one of them is right." I claim no more than that for my own particular way.

My first concern is to gain a general impression by wandering the streets and letting the spirit of the place " soak " into me, almost unconsciously. Later, I assume an attitude of mind more critical and less subjective, becoming an active observer, open-eyed for everything that is strange or unusual ; finally, I compare all that has especially appealed to my mind with impressions long since etched thereon by visits to other cities.

In this way I should probably describe the same town somewhat differently in the varying stages of my observation, and each would be a true description so far as I was able to convey any notion at all. But after passing from the impressionary stage to the critical, and eventually to that of the comparative observer, it is difficult to recover the first impressions once these have been overlaid, like some palimpsest of the memory, with later records. In the preceding chapter I have made some slight attempt at this, simply because it seemed to me worth trying and the progress of my narrative suggested it. A book of first impressions, however, would be of small value, no matter how interesting it might prove, and I have deliberately refrained throughout my stay of twelve months in the cities of the River Plate from keeping a diary, even from making notes, except on two subjects, to wit : the price of commodities, and cruelty to animals, which I shall discuss in special

chapters. In what I now proceed to describe, I shall be guided by my last and abiding impressions of all that I saw or experienced, and for this purpose a continuous narrative is no longer feasible.

My way, then, in studying a foreign city is first to observe the panorama of its street-life so closely that I can ever after recall it in minute detail; then to store away finished pictures of its characteristic buildings in my memory; next to watch narrowly the ways of the people, as expressed in all forms of their social life and business activities, gleaning on every hand from others and exchanging opinions even with persons with whom I should hate to agree. In such wise, or as nearly as may be, I shall now continue.

We have nothing in our homeland, nor do I know of any town in Europe, that can be compared with Buenos Ayres as to its planning, though North America can produce many examples. It is simplicity itself, the planning of the city. And out of simplicity has come confusion. The buildings are in "blocks," as the Yankees say, or in *cuadras* (squares), as they call them in South America. These squares measure one hundred and fifty yards each way. Thus a plan of the city looks like a monstrous checker-board, with here and there a larger square, where two or more cuadras have been thrown into one to admit a little more air into the congested mass. For the streets are narrow beyond a Londoner's belief. The average width allows three coaches to stand abreast, with a clearance of some twelve inches between them. A walking-stick and a half gives you the measure of the pavements. These are the standards for nearly all the thoroughfares in the older part of the town, and were the ample ideals of the Spanish colonisers, who required no more than single-storey houses and a track between for their horses or their bullock waggons. Thus, in great measure, Buenos Ayres is an anachronism, and such it will long remain, as the abnormal development of the country and its capital city—the world's most prodigious mushroom—has made this central part a veritable Eldorado of the landowner.

What served a century ago is to-day a legacy of evil, and these narrow colonial streets have made of central Buenos Ayres an inferno of human strife such as I hope exists nowhere else on our globe. For within these myriad squares of one hundred and fifty yards there is no entrance or exit for wheeled traffic, and it is a pathetic sight to witness the unloading of goods on the narrow pavements in the early morning. Let the Londoner conceive a great "department store" well-nigh half the size of our mammoth "Harrods," situated in a street as narrow as Chancery Lane, utterly devoid of any back-way for the entrance of a cart, with a pavement in front that measures a walking stick and a half; and let him picture what it means to stock that great building with all sorts of goods, from massive suites of furniture to tons of shoes and neckties! If his imagination will stand the strain let him further imagine what would happen if a tramway line were laid within two feet of the pavement in front of the door, and an endless stream of cars was passing, the bodies of them flush with the kerbstone! Yet the Harrods and the Selfridges of Buenos Ayres have to stock their premises under these conditions. In this city of miracles there is none more extraordinary than the task of moving goods from the street into the shop, and it is small wonder that a large part of what one pays for any article in Buenos Ayres has been incurred in getting it into the place where it is bought. It is infinitely easier and cheaper to carry a piano from London to the port of Buenos Ayres than to take it from the ship a mile away to the shop where it will be sold!

Often have I marvelled at the patience and energy of the Italian *peones*, struggling with enormous cases of merchandise in the middle of the street, dodging them across the tram-lines, while a dozen drivers were clanging their bells for them to clear the line. And it is a daily incident to see wardrobes, suites of furniture, desks, sofas, mingled in the gutters with the fretting traffic, in front of the warehouse doors.

In almost every street there is a tram-line on one side, and all the traffic has perforce to move in one direction—

down this street, up the next—for which purpose an arrow on the wall indicates the direction. To saunter along any one of these streets in the business hours is impossible ; progress afoot is only to the strong.

In such streets motor traffic seems out of place, yet motor-cars abound. It is a safe assertion that nine out of ten of them are used for no purpose other than ostentation. And your Argentine *nouveau riche* will have none of your modest 15–20 horse-power affairs. His mark is 40 horse-power, and the biggest, bulkiest, most cumbersome body money can buy. Thus at certain hours of the day when the ladies go a-shopping, many of the streets are stuffed with monstrous cars which have brought their owners a good mile or perhaps two, and while the ladies are about their diversions in the shops, the chauffeurs sit making filthy remarks about every woman who passes, and ogling the girls. These motor men, uniformed expensively, are one of the most offensive elements in the life of the city. Lazy, pampered loafers most of them ; they deliberately place themselves in the near front seat of the car while waiting for their owners, the better to " amuse " themselves.

With a cautious municipal authority, the motor-car would be prohibited in most of the streets in the centre of Buenos Ayres. It is a century or so ahead of the conditions. In streets that are mere back-lanes, the horse-carriage should suffice, and, as a matter of fact, the horse-driven traffic can move as quickly as the motor-driven, owing to the innumerable stops that have to be made in even the shortest journey. In the whole vast country of the Argentine there are not more than a hundred miles of really good motoring road, and automobile owners in Buenos Ayres seldom venture farther afield than the Tigre, an excursion of barely twenty miles. The road thither is the best in the country. It would rank as " bad " in the guide-book of any European touring club, and it is the ruin of many a car. Yet ostentation insists upon the automobile, and almost every notable firm of motor-car makers in Europe or the United States is (or was) catering for the craze with branch establishments in or around the Calle Florida.

The papers abound in accounts of motor accidents, and one seldom passes a car that does not bear some trace of a collision, many of the drivers being as reckless as they are unskilled. The motor-car is indeed one of the city's problems, and no obvious effort was being made to solve it during my stay.

If the streets were only narrow, matters might not be so bad. But they are also villainously paved and continually out of repair. The pavements consist chiefly of slabs of rough-hewn stone, so badly laid that one is constantly tripping over their inequalities. Moreover, holes are merely covered by a piece of sheet-iron laid loose over them, and in Florida alone (it is the universal custom in South America merely to give the name of a street, seldom adding the word *calle*) I have noted about a dozen old gas pipes left protruding some six inches above the pavement, a menace to all who do not walk with their eyes to the ground. As an American lady said to me, " If you don't watch where you're putting your feet you'll fall into a hole, or trip yourself, and if you do look out for your feet you'll get run over ! "

The streets are laid variously with asphalt, wood, and cobbles. But no matter what material is used, the result is equally deplorable. Thanks to the excessively heavy traffic, borne in waggons with immense narrow wheels, an asphalted street is cut up into ruts in a few days after it is laid, wooden blocks are destroyed with amazing rapidity, and cobbles are daily dislodged in hundreds. Thus stones innumerable are lying in the cobbled streets, to the danger of all sorts of traffic ; in the wood-paved thoroughfares there are ruts several inches deep alongside the tram-lines, and the asphalt roads are cracked and broken as though some wandering earthquake had passed through them on its way from Chili. In the centre of the city a drive in a motor-car is an agony —there is no " rule of the road," it is merely " devil take the hindmost "—and in a *coche* it is little better, as the motor-cars make the progress of the horse-vehicle a hazard of terrors.

In such narrow and congested thoroughfares, building

operations are carried on with great difficulty. To me it was a source of constant interest and admiration to watch those in progress. And as there is no street where the builders are not busy, I had ample opportunity. In Florida, where a huge arcaded building was being constructed through to the next street, San Martin, the work of digging out the foundations went on all day, and all night long the earth was removed when the street was quiet. The scaffolding fashioned for the purpose was the most ingenious and complicated I have ever seen. To the narrow street there was a barricade of corrugated iron (wood is too expensive to use for that purpose) and above towered a weird framework of timber, with " tips " or " chutes " projecting into the street. Seen from behind the corrugated iron, it was a magnificent spectacle of industry. Hundreds of labourers were digging down into the loamy earth some thirty or forty feet, and the material taken out was hoisted up by a lift and dumped near the tips, so that through the night great-wheeled waggons came along fashionable Florida and were loaded up, leaving the street strewn with spilled earth next morning. I recall the night when some of this scaffolding collapsed and precipitated over thirty labourers into the excavations fifty or sixty feet below. Such accidents are very common, there being no rigorous supervision of building operations, and many labourers are sacrificed every year to the carelessness of their employers and their own ignorance.

But, on the whole, it would be impossible to find more inspiring examples of human energy and ingenuity in the face of extraordinary difficulties than in the erection of these great buildings. To watch the low colonial house fall to the pick and shovel in a few days, the crazy scaffolding quickly reared for mining out the earth, the mighty steel uprights and girders arriving on huge waggons, each drawn by three or four sweating horses, the labourers swinging them into position, the frame of the ten or twelve-storey building presently disengaging itself where so recently stood the shanty, the bricklayers clothing it with their handiwork, the plasterers finishing its exterior

with graceful decorative touches—all this was to me a source of endless interest.

There is no evidence of an elementary regard for human life in the streaming streets of riotous traffic. Often have I seen buildings in course of demolition with no better guard against falling bricks and blocks of cement than some rough pack-sheet stretched in front. Sometimes not even that dubious courtesy is shown to the passer-by, and the demolishers stand aloft knocking down the walls inwards without the slightest protection against the fragments that rebound and land in the middle of the street. On several occasions I have escaped by half a yard or so a falling brick that might well have closed my account. Even when blasting with dynamite old foundation walls of brick and mortar, a few yards from the pavement, nothing will be done for the safety of the passers-by. The casualty columns of the daily papers are eloquent evidence of the risks the ignorant labourers run who are employed in this work of demolition.

In effecting repairs to the exteriors, painting, and the like, the workers are confronted with many difficulties, for the simple expedient of erecting ladders, as in England, is denied to them. A ladder would block the whole pavement. So they have to reverse the old order, and instead of placing the ladder firmly on the ground and leaning it against the wall, they plant the foot of it in the angle of the pavement and the wall and lean it away from the building, securing the upper and projecting end by ropes to a window. The worker on the ladder is thus between the ladder and the wall. And from this coign of vantage he drops paint or wet plaster on the passers-by with a cheerfulness and impartiality which must be seen to be duly appreciated.

Naturally the beautiful detail and the imposing appearance of many of the finest buildings in the city are greatly discounted by lack of space to view them. Hundreds of thousands of pounds may be said to be wasted in this way ; for there is widespread effort to render the façades of the buildings artistic, the cement or plaster with which they are covered lending itself to all sorts of

decorative treatment. But anything over two storeys in height is above the line of sight in the narrow streets, and there are prodigalities of decoration in the third and fourth and higher reaches of the new buildings which have never been noticed by anybody since the day they were uncovered. A barn-like structure would have served the purpose equally and given as good an effect—except in a photograph, taken from one of the upper storeys on the opposite side of the street. Thus one has a curious feeling of disappointment on seeing many of the more notable buildings of which he has first seen photographs,—the famous Jockey Club, for example. You are conscious that if you could get a hundred yards away from the front of it, you might find it a very handsome edifice. But the actual effect is that of a full-length photograph out of focus, in which the boots and the lower part of the legs dwarf all the rest.

I recall very vividly the impression of my first walks in those strange streets. The scarcity of women was very noticeable in the earlier part of the day. Such streets as Bartolomé Mitre, Cangallo, Sarmiento, Maipú, and San Martin, where the tide of business flows strongest, were crowded with men; the odd women who passed seemed out of place. But, later in the day, women and children may be seen in considerable numbers in Florida and the vicinity, though at no time are they ever relatively so numerous as in the streets of London. And what never ceased to irritate me was the rudeness with which the passers-by stared at me and at each other. I was prepared for them feasting their eyes on the odd women, but man scrutinising man was new to me. They inspect your necktie, study the style of your hat, stare at your boots! They gape at you, so that you wonder if you have forgotten your collar or if your suspenders are hanging down! You are reassured, however, by their gaping at each other from no obvious reason. It is merely a vulgar habit, probably acquired by the gapers when first they arrived from the hill villages of Italy or the desert towns of Spain, when any person decently clothed was a novelty to them.

Some of the half-breed policemen at the street corners, trying to imitate Robert o' London, are a source of infinite joy. Armed with white batons, they wave these about in a way so bewildering that it is a puzzle to know whether they mean to hold up one of the streams of cross traffic or invite the two opposing processions to mutual destruction. On the whole, although some of these policemen, shamefully underpaid, indulge in a little robbery to keep the pot boiling—one, whom I had rather grown to like, mounted guard one Sunday while a gang of thieves, with carts and motor-cars, plundered the newly-opened branch of Harrods' Stores in Florida—I came to form a very favourable opinion of them, and many showed real courtesy and good sense in controlling the traffic, under the most trying circumstances, as every *cochero* and chauffeur looks upon them with contempt and pays a minimum of respect to their authority.

I have been told by old English residents of Buenos Ayres, who are prepared to perjure their souls on behalf of the city that has given them the opportunity to grow richer than they were ever likely to become at home, that "there are no poor and there are no beggars in Buenos Ayres." Both statements are untrue. There are lots of poor, and there are some beggars. It could not be otherwise in a vast metropolis, abnormally larger than the country behind it will warrant for many years to come, to which the poor of the poorest countries in Europe—Spain and Italy—are flocking in daily ship-loads. No poor in Buenos Ayres, forsooth! Thousands of poor are dumped down at the docks every month, and poor they remain, many of them, for ever—poor *and* criminal—though many more, with energy and application, escape from the ranks of poverty, and not a few grow rich.

Poor there are in abundance, and very much in evidence. Take a walk along the Paseo de Julio and you will see as many of the tattered army of Poverty as you will encounter in London, and in London you should see exactly five times as many to maintain a proportion relative to the size of the cities. Beggars are less noticeable chiefly, I fancy, because there is less room for them

in the streets; yet I have often been asked for alms in Florida, while looking at a shop window—the only chance the beggar has of practising his (more often her) profession, as to stand in the gutter for more than a minute would be to invite a violent death. To Britishers, a saddening sight is presented by the gin-sodden Irishmen and abandoned Englishmen who pester their fellow-countrymen in Florida and San Martin with the old familiar yarn about losing their job as ship's carpenter and the certainty of getting a new start if they can only raise the money for a suit of clothes. Scores of times have I had to turn these British rascals away, and some of them became as familiar in my daily walks as old friends. If ever one saw a face that had been made repulsive by drink, a nose that was reddening with malt, it was invariably the guilty possession of a Britisher.

Mention of familiar faces reminds me of one of the most unexpected features of the Buenos Ayres streets. In this matter I am a thoroughly prejudiced witness, so I must explain my attitude. To me, one of the abiding charms of London is that I can walk its dear, familiar streets with their ever-changing throngs without having momently to raise my hat, or to stop every few yards to endure the idle chatter of some acquaintance. I love London for itself, and I know where to find my friends when I want them. To have them bumping up against me at every corner would come between me and my London. It would destroy completely that feeling of immensity, that sobering sense of the greatness of humanity, which London imposes on the reflective mind. But in Buenos Ayres, if you have noticed a man in a railway train, if you have spoken to a passenger on the river boat, if you have been introduced to somebody at a Belgrano dinner-party, you will surely see them all in Florida next day. This parochial condition is the result of the central part of the town being confined to a few narrow streets. In all Latin countries there is also a sheep-like flocking to certain beaten tracks, as in Paris every *boulevardier* and almost any visitor is sure to be "spotted" if you but sit long enough at the Café

de la Paix. Although the admirably planned and imposing Avenida de Mayo was opened more than twenty years ago to give Buenos Ayres a new heart, it is still comparatively unpopular, while the congested Calle Florida is more congested than ever.

Other faces that grow familiar to one in the streets are those of the porters or *changadores.* Brawny Italians, or Gallegos usually, these lazy and exigent vendors of unskilled labour stand in braces at the corners of many of the central streets, a nuisance to passers-by. They are armed with a rope or with a large piece of packing-cloth folded and laid across their left shoulder. This is at once their instrument and their insignia. If you want anything removed, you send out for one of these gentry, and if he is feeling strong enough he may condescend to oblige you for a fee which would command a visit from a skilled medical man in England. They will fuss and blow over a little job which an English porter would regard as a mere incident in the day's work. Once I was so fortunate as to get one to carry a box of books for me up three flights of stairs, for a trifle — five pesos, or eight shillings and threepence—which he pocketed without a word of thanks. They must be prosperous villains these street porters, and the malorganisation of labour gives them their opportunity, as nobody sending you any moderately heavy article will undertake to do more than leave it at the foot of the stairs. If you happen to require it three stairs up that is entirely your affair.

Turning from the people in the streets to the shops, one is struck by the extraordinary preponderance of chemists and druggists. Almost every other corner-shop is a *farmacia.* And it is pretty certain to be a *farmacia inglesa* or *francesa,* or *alemana,* or *italiana*—rarely *española* ! But all the same the " English chemist " may be a wily Italian who knows no more than " zank you ver' mooch," which he will utter with a self-satisfied smile after you have conducted all your business in the native tongue. And he ought to " zank you " in half a dozen languages at once for what you have to give

him in exchange for what you get. The farmacia is to Buenos Ayres, and indeed to the whole of the Argentine and Uruguay, what the public-house is to England—the "corner shop." In the country towns it actually takes the place of the village inn, and is the rendezvous of the local gossips. Magnificent establishments are these farmacias. London has nothing to show in the line of artistic shops that will excel the best of them. Indeed, I know of no English chemist's shop to be compared with certain of these drug-stores, in respect of the grandeur of their carved-wood adornments and the completeness of their equipment. Their numerous assistants usually wear long white linen coats, after the style of our hospital doctors, which give them a pleasant air of cleanliness they might otherwise lack.

With a drug-shop at every corner, buzzing with customers, you will be told Buenos Ayres is "the healthiest city in the world." As a matter of undiluted fact, it is a paradise of the doctor and the patent-pill-man, largely due to the sudden changes so characteristic of its climate. One often comments on the abundant evidence of the patent medicine seller in England—in the advertising columns of our newspapers, on the hoardings in the streets—but nothing we have amongst us in that respect equals the insistence with which you are reminded of your aching stomach at every turn in Buenos Ayres—if, by lucky chance, your stomach itself has forgotten for a moment to remind you of its troubles.

Next in proportion to those offering the *Argentino* a myriad cures for his *estómago*, come the shops that are dedicated to cleaning his boots. Indeed, one might reasonably suppose this to be the national industry. The abundant energy devoted to this lowly calling, if turned to other channels, might go far to fortify the republic. The busy statisticians of the Government have not, so far as I know, issued a return of the thousands of able-bodied men who polish the boots of *el gran pueblo Argentino*. But there must be many thousands engaged in the shining industry. Even in the Calle Florida, where land-values and shop-rents rival the highest known to

central London, one finds certain enviable positions occupied by nothing better than *salons de lustrar*, and in all the central streets such establishments—often employing upwards of a dozen men—abound. Nay, go where you will, even to the outer suburbs, you will never fail to find a druggist's or a boot-black's shop.

A real Argentine citizen must have his boots polished several times a day, else these slaves of the blacking brush could not be kept so busy. The saloons are sometimes fitted up in quite a luxurious manner, with long platforms on which are raised padded chairs with high foot-rests in front, and, while you sit in this elevated position, the polisher performs the most elaborate operation on your shoes, using a bewildering variety of pastes, brushes, and cloths. When you think he has done, he begins all over again, and not until he has completed what must be the tenth or eleventh stage of the operation, which consists in taking a piece of silk from his trouser pocket, where it has been lodged to absorb the warmth of his body, and working it with furious friction over your shoes, are you free to step down. Meanwhile you have been listening to Caruso or Tetrazzini on the gramophone,—I have even heard a customer insist on a tune being stopped and his favourite substituted !—so that when you step out with shining feet you feel the threepence or fourpence you have paid has been well-earned. But you won't have gone twenty paces along the street until a bawling door-man shouting, "*Se lustra! se lustra!*" will point to your feet and invite you into his shop with "Shine, sir?" Then it comes to you in a flash that boot-polishing in Buenos Ayres is less a means to an end, than the end itself.

Many of these boot-blacks run their prosperous business in conjunction with an agency for lottery tickets, and most of them sell cigars and cigarettes as "side-lines."

The shops devoted to the sale of lottery tickets present at first a very unusual sight to the Englishman. Their name is legion. All the numerous money-changers deal in these tickets, which are spread out in their windows so that the passer-by may scrutinise the numbers and

see if his lucky combination is among them. Many tobacconists also sell them, and there are numerous street-hawkers to offer you the chance of a few thousand pounds for a few shillings—a thirty-thousand-to-one chance. It is a study in Hope to watch a poor workman outside the window of one of these lottery-ticket vendor's pointing out the particular ticket which he trusts may bring him a sudden fortune and take him home to Italy or Spain by the next steamer—the ultimate hope that flickers in so many breasts.

There is much parade of luxury in the barbers' shops, which form a good third, in point of number, to the druggists and boot-blacks. Mirrors gleam along the walls, and the basins and pipes for performing the mysteries of an Argentine's " shave and haircut " are many and glittering. The assistants seem almost as numerous as the customers at any hour of the day, and all wear the white jackets that cover a multitude of sins. A simple haircut in an establishment of just middling style—*regular, no mas*—costs you eighty *centavos*, leaving twenty out of the *peso* as *propina* for the artist who has treated you. One shilling and ninepence for a mere haircut is moderately " stiff " ; but have a shampoo, a singe, and a shave at the same time, and you will find that, like Samson, your strength has oozed away with your hair—when the barber names his price ! You cannot, however, revel in all that luxury of gleaming glass and resplendent metal, and the pungent aroma of *agua de Coloñia*, any more than you may enjoy " the comforts o' the Sautmarket " for nothing.

CHAPTER V

MORE SCENES FROM THE STREETS OF BUENOS AYRES

WHAT fascinated me most in the streets of this motley town were the book-shops. Who says there is no culture in Buenos Ayres has to reckon with the evidence of these, for London itself has no more than you might count on the fingers of one hand that excel the *librerías* of the Argentine capital. Many pleasant hours have I passed inspecting their wonderfully varied stocks of books from all the countries of Europe where the art of printing flourishes, as well as from North and South America. In proportion to their populations, Buenos Ayres far excels London in the number and character of its book-shops. There is a reason for this obvious disparity,—the Argentine booksellers occupy to-day the position of the book-sellers in London and Edinburgh two or three generations ago, when those who sold literary wares over the counter were also makers of books. Our modern system of the publisher dealing only through a middleman who places his productions in the hands of the public has no doubt tended to reduce the outward show of our book-selling, as the London publisher does not require a brilliantly lighted shop in the Strand or Oxford Street. But the John Murrays and the Macmillans of Buenos Ayres are shopmen in Florida or Maipú, and, like all the tradesmen in these streets, have a shrewd appreciation of the advertising value of electric light. Yet one London publisher of first-class standing will produce more books in a year than all those of Buenos Ayres put together; though, relatively, his books will be sold in the retail shops for one-third of the price.

It was very encouraging to a literary worker to note

how every country has sent of its best (though Spain chiefly of its worst) to keep alive the taste for letters in those whom the eternal quest for the elusive dollar has taken to far-away Argentina. There are many German book-shops, stocked with wonderful collections of the classic literature of the Fatherland and the latest works of its indefatigable authors of to-day in every branch of thought and activity. Several admirable French shops there are of which the same may be said; a few Italians—extremely few in proportion to the vast Italian population—and several well-known British shops, where cheap fiction unfortunately outnumbers the books of serious value, though practically no new book of real note that saw the light in England did not have at least a brief showing on the shelves of the British book-shops during my stay. There is even a book-shop where the strange literary products of the Turk and the Syrian are sold to the Oriental community.

But the native book-shops have nothing to learn from the foreigners, unless it be a better taste in displaying their wares, which are usually thrown into the window with all the *abandon* of a book-barrow in Farringdon Road. In point of variety, they are as richly stocked as any of their colleagues from overseas, and it is clear from the most casual examination of their shelves that all the principal French and German publishers are vieing with each other in catering for this rich and ready market of golden South America. I could fill pages with lists of "libraries" which are being produced specially for Latin America (but chiefly for Buenos Ayres) by famous continental houses, who publish Spanish translations of all their important new books as well as of a bewildering number of old books that first found popularity in French or German. Spanish publishers are among the least enterprising in Europe, hence Buenos Ayres, where printing is excessively costly and is used chiefly for business propaganda, has to get its most worthy books by way of France or Germany. Britain, too, is awakening to the possibilities of the market, and prominent in every book-shop throughout Spanish America are the cheap and

THE COLON THEATRE, BUENOS AYRES.

A general view of this fine cement-covered building, where a short season of State-aided Opera is given each year.

EXTERIOR OF THE JOCKEY CLUB, BUENOS AYRES.

A good photograph of this famous building cannot be made, the street being too narrow to admit of focus, even from the upper storeys opposite. In the right bottom corner part of a window-sill, or ledge of roof, on the opposite side of the street, appears in this photograph.

beautiful Spanish reprints of an Edinburgh house. Unlike the continental publishers, who show a closer knowledge of the South American mind, these Edinburgh publishers offer their wares too cheaply. The Argentine judges the merit of everything by the price its maker puts upon it, and to offer him good handiwork at a low price is to decry it. Just as the camel, from age-long cruel treatment, has come to resent any touch of kindness, so these Americans of the south, from generations of "paying through the nose" for every item of commerce, cannot understand a really well-made book being sold at a less price than the atrociously printed Spanish works and crude native productions that have set their standards. Yet they are as keen as a London housewife, during the season of "sales," on snatching a "bargain"—by which I mean something bought at what is supposed to be a loss to the seller, though the seller knows better. They have derived through their Spanish origin that Eastern habit, which, perhaps, Spain had in turn from the Moors, of the seller asking as much more than he expects to get and the buyer offering as much less than he is really willing to pay. Even their intimate European intercourse has not yet entirely cured the Argentine ladies of what is, to us, the most unladylike habit of haggling.

I have said Spain sends of its worst—with, of course, notable exceptions in the publications of Señores Montaner y Simón, the firms of Espasa, Sopena, and a few more. Most of the trash comes from Barcelona and Madrid publishing houses. It consists chiefly of atrocious translations of English and American detective tales of the crudest "penny blood" variety, badly printed, and stitched within a gaudy, though often well-printed, coloured wrapper, with some preposterously sensational picture thereon. These are sold, not at a penny, but nearly fourpence (twenty centavos), and are read by young and old alike. There are many shops that show nothing in their windows but this gutter literature, while the kiosks on the Avenida — pale and shabby ghosts of the interesting Paris kiosks these !—are stocked with them, and also with translations of the pornographic French

books which the shameless shopmen of the Palais Royal display for the concupiscent foreigner.

Of old bookshops, alas, there are none. To the literary man, a city without its dusty haunts of the bookworm lacks something that all the loads of "latest books" cannot quite replace. Old books there are to be found in the general bookshops, and they are usually offered at prices so excessive that when I set about the formation of a library of South-American works, I was eventually forced to discontinue buying any but the most essential, as they are to be picked up in Paris at a fifth the price, and with much less searching. I also found that I could secure in London more and better photographs of Buenos Ayres than in the city itself, and at less cost! One day, requiring urgently a print of a certain aspect of the statue of San Martin, I had all the likely shops and photographers searched in vain, yet in London I could have got it immediately.

The English booksellers have the habit of hanging out a notice when the mail has come to hand with its load of new books and the latest periodicals. And once a week the exiles from Old England must feel a quickening of the pulse when they see the announcement in good bold letters "MAIL DAY" or "MAIL ARRIVED" at the doors of the thriving bookshops of their fellow-countrymen in the Calle Cangallo.

If horseshoes brought luck, they might all be millionaires, for nowhere else have I seen so many cast shoes in the streets. You could wager on gathering a cart-load of them in one day! The workmanship of the smiths is evidently so crude, or so little care is taken of the horses, that their shoes are allowed to loosen and fall off without any serious attempt to preserve them. Whatever the reason, they are in all the streets like "common objects of the seashore." But the electric bulb is to Buenos Ayres as the seaweed or the limpet to a rocky shore. Outside of Earl's Court or the White City, no Londoner ever looks on such prodigality of electric lamps. All the public buildings are permanently outlined with them, so often have they to use them on anniversaries or centen-

aries; for the Argentine dearly loves to celebrate the centenary of any old forgotten battle in his country's history and the anniversaries of all the "epoch-making" events and great men's birthdays, by illuminating nis public buildings and getting some great living Argentine to declaim a typewritten speech to an assembly of *distinguidos.* Even the Cathedral is garlanded with rows of electric bulbs, so that it may take its part with the public buildings and the retail shops in these extremely frequent electrical celebrations. No wonder the electricians love Buenos Ayres! And very beautiful is the city with its millions of little coloured lamps aglow. I saw it many times thus in the course of eight months.

While electricity is comparatively cheap, and the supply of glass lamps evidently inexhaustible, the plate-glass used for lighting underground warehouses from the pavement is evidently at a premium, as I noticed that whenever one of these pavement lights was broken it was not replaced by a piece of thick glass, but by wood covered with a layer of cement!

Having thus far dealt with the streets of Buenos Ayres in general terms, let me now glance at certain of the more famous thoroughfares in particular. Florida must naturally come first, for Florida is a microcosm of Buenos Ayres. It is a tramless street, in so far as the *electricos* only cross it at every 150 yards. It is, moreover, a "two ways" street, traffic being allowed to pass along it in both directions. It is, as I have already indicated, an extremely narrow street. But it is the great highway of the city; its peculiar pride and joy. There throbs the great heart of *el gran pueblo Argentino,* as they are modestly called in their *Himno nacional.* On a dry day the motors churn up the dust and line the broken asphalt roadway with long tracks of oil, on which the horses "slither" and fall. On a moist day the dust is converted into a pasty coating, which makes progress on pavement or roadway a peril to quadrupeds and bipeds alike. On a really wet day—and often it rains in torrents for days on end—the windows of all the shops become obscured with mud, and pedestrians

are bespattered from head to heels. The habit of wearing waterproofs with hoods, which they flap over their hats, gives a curious aspect to the men on wet days, and you will see more waterproofs in Buenos Ayres than in London. This was a sad come-down for us seekers of sunshine! I had been told in London that the Englishman was "spotted" in Buenos Ayres by his umbrella. My experience was that the first things a newcomer bought in the month of May or June were a waterproof and an umbrella, and it was comic to see the poor immigrants disembarking, each clutching a real old "gamp," for which he was to find abundant use. The *coches* being built for fair weather, offer little protection when it rains, a crude apron of leather being stretched in front of the "fare," but leaving his head and shoulders exposed to the deluge. Yet one is lucky indeed to secure so much protection on a rainy night, and often have I had to walk to my quarters in the drenching rain after shivering for half an hour in a doorway in the vain hope of getting some condescending *cochero* to accept my patronage. At other times, when I have secured a *coche*, I have regretted I had not boldly footed it in the rain, as there would be a painful interlude in the journey while the driver struggled to raise up his fallen steeds. They tumble about on the slippery streets like beginners in a skating rink.

But let us think of Florida at its best—*cuando hace sol*—when the sun is shining. Its shops are full of interest to the curious. The jewellers' are especially numerous, and vie with the best in London or Paris. And their contents are of the most beautiful, for the Argentines have real taste in jewellery. The furniture shops are equally prodigal in beautiful and unique wares, with perhaps too marked a tendency to the *art nouveau*, which has not yet grown old in Buenos Ayres. Comfortable chairs, luxurious lounges, no—their preference is for "style" rather than comfort. The milliners and *modistas* display the most tempting hats—I have seen one ticketed at 500 pesos—and dresses which are the last word in Parisian ingenuity. They have also a childish delight in grouping life-sized and very lifelike female figures arrayed

THE NEW COURTS OF JUSTICE.

The "Tribunales" photographed just before the completion of the cement work on the top storey. In the foreground, the fine monument to General Lavalle, standing in the plaza named after him.

THE PALATIAL HOME OF "LA PRENSA."

Façade of the great newspaper office on the north side of the Avenida de Mayo. Different interior views of this building are given at pages 60 and 61.

in these vanities in their windows. A waxen lady displaying her startling corsets and snowy underwear has a peculiar fascination not only for the women, but even for the men. One evening I overheard a little ragged urchin, who was standing before such a revelation, pressing his hands across his heart, like Caruso in a love scene, exclaiming to the wax idol of his adoration, "*Ah, mi querida señorita* !" They begin young in Buenos Ayres !

Florida is so much a Vanity Fair that the shops devoted to the more sober necessities of life seem out of place. Some of these still present a "Wild West" aspect, in the motley assortment of their wares, cooking ranges, oil stoves, baths, cork-screws, infants' foods, boots, bedsteads, and travelling trunks being mingled together in pleasing disorder. But such establishments are gradually being elbowed out by the pompous jeweller, the pianoforte seller, whose chief business is in pianolas and musical boxes—crowds will stand around a shop door to listen to a musical box at work or an automatic organ, in the evening when the street has been closed to wheeled traffic —the furrier, the high-class stationer, the *modista*, the chemist, *and* the optician. Nowhere will you find such opticians. The use of glasses is widespread. There is one establishment in Florida which is a veritable palace of optical appliances, employing many scores of assistants. A considerable part of this business is also associated with land-surveying, and the most expensive instruments of that science may be seen for sale in many shop-windows in Florida. A peculiarity of Buenos Ayres (and Montevideo also) is the public display of surgical appliances. Brilliantly lighted windows present you with the latest things in operating tables, glass service stands for the instruments, and all sorts of uncanny inventions for cutting you up.

The craftsmen of Florence send much of their marble handiwork to Florida, and some of the art shops are stocked with beautiful statues and bronzes, while every variety of gorgeous inkstands may be seen in them. The inkstand is an important item of the *chic* Argentine home. But the taste for graphic art is still undeveloped, and the pictures offered for sale compare very unfavour-

ably with the sculptures. I recall in particular a hideous daub, which was alleged to represent two or three members of a certain *familia distinguida* (any family that can pay its way and afford a seat at the Opera is so described), being the centre of admiration in a Florida shop-window for some days, while the newspapers gave reproductions of it. In London or Paris, no art-dealer would have allowed it to be seen on his premises.

As I have already indicated, Florida has every day a brief surcease from the battle of motors and coches. From four o'clock until seven no vehicles are allowed to pass along it, and only at the crossings is there any traffic. These are the hours of the evening *paseo*. Ladies and children are now at liberty to saunter along the pavements or in the roadway, while the gilded youth of the town struts by and gazes at them, or more often stands in stolid rows and admires. The ladies are almost without exception well dressed, the children perhaps a trifle too well dressed. But this is their "life." This paseo is one of the things they live for, so they strive to appear at their best and to display their possessions of silks and satins, while the *jovenes distinguidos* have all had their boots polished to the *n*th degree just before they came into the street. And the scene is undeniably enchanting, when the electric lights blaze out. There are hundreds of projecting shop-signs, in which changing electric lights are now revealed and now occluded, and the great warehouses are all illuminated as though it were another *centenario* (and probably it is, for they have centenarios almost weekly), newsvendors are calling *La Razon*, *El Diario*, or *Caras y Caretas*, and the whole has the atmosphere of some brilliant bazaar, rather than of the highway of a great city. It is a feast of light, but not of gaiety, for the Argentines are not given to joyousness, and are strangely lacking in humour; everybody is frightfully formal, and all are obviously conscious of being well dressed. It is Vanity Fair with the fun left out!

Towards the river, the street of San Martin (inescapable national hero who pursues you everywhere in statue, in street- and place-name, in "cocktails," in every con-

ceivable connection) runs parallel to Florida and bears no resemblance to it except in being equally narrow. It is essentially an earnest business thoroughfare, lined with many fine office buildings, and choking perpetually with traffic. But, by the way, many of these business buildings that look so "up-to-date" from the outside are antiquated within. It is a fact that up to the time of our stay in the city builders were in the habit of erecting large tenements which they well knew would be utilised for nothing but offices, yet they built them deliberately for "flats," or *departamentos*, as these are called, fitting each with its kitchen and bathroom and disposing the apartments as for bedrooms and salons. Thus you will find to-day hundreds of business firms using such modern flats as offices,—in some cases the bathrooms remaining, in others converted into "inquiry office," or the like—all extremely uncomfortable in conditions entirely foreign to their requirements. But San Martin contains several imposing blocks of real office buildings, and will presently contain more, for the builders are busy here, as everywhere else, with their work of transformation. A friend of mine, when I called on him at the beginning of May 1913, had just received notice to quit, by the demolishers arriving and starting to unroof his office! That was his first intimation that the landlord purposed clearing away his old property and putting up a great new business building. Argentine methods are not ours.

One "square" nearer the river runs Reconquista, dignified by the presence of the principal bank buildings, many of which are real ornaments of the town, and all suggest a sense of opulence and financial solidity it would be hard to match in London or New York. Yet the best of them, the richest and the most substantial, are no more than the branches of the Tree of English Gold which has its roots deep-struck in London. It is a street of all nations this Reconquista. England, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and the rest have their banking-houses here, and there is no more encouraging sight in this remorseless city than to witness the many ill-clad Spanish and Italian labourers going through the long

and intricate operation of sending drafts home to those they have left in the old country. Let no one tell you the poor Italian or Spaniard is less worthy of your compassion than the labouring Englishman. Many hundreds have I seen with eager, straining faces scanning the pink or green slips of paper that would mean so much to some one far away in Lombardy or in Catalonia, and represented so much of the sweat of his brow to the poor sender.

The practice of keeping a bank account is very general, even among the labouring classes, as the poor *peon* has nowhere to hide his little hoard, living as he does in the most shameful conditions, where a square yard of living-room is more costly than a cottage would be in his native village, and among people who do not hesitate at murder to gain a few pitiful pesos. Thus you will often see a lean and hungry labourer, dressed no better than an English tramp, scrutinising his bank-book in the corridor of one of the great banking-houses, and the sight is a strange one to English eyes. Turks, Polish Jews, Norwegians, Russians, Cingalese, Swedes, Armenians, all the nations of the world are represented daily in the teeming throngs that flock to the banks in Reconquista, where the innumerable clerks are puffing steadily at cigarettes and attending to their clients with a charming ease that has in it a pleasant suggestion of eternity. For the simplest banking operation will eat away twenty minutes of your time, your account being balanced whenever you withdraw or lodge any sum; and to secure a draft on London at ninety days calls for the patience of Job and three-quarters of an hour. Much of this formality is the result of the system of issuing open cheques, which makes swindling delightfully simple, and the bank always stands to lose, as there is extreme difficulty in bringing a swindler to book.

The last of the narrow streets riverward is Calle 25 de Mayo, so called from the day in the year 1810 when the movement for Independence began, although the actual date of the Declaration of Independence was 9th July 1816. They have a curious habit of thinking in dates in Latin countries. Both Paris and Rome give us

examples of famous dates as street-names, but in South America dates are honoured to a degree that is comic. One of my friends in Montevideo has an office in 25 de Mayo, a showroom in 18 de Julio, and warehouses in 21 de Agosto and in 15 de Octubre! By some odd chance he always found what he needed most in one of the streets named after Uruguay's historic dates. There was another such, 1 de Mayo, but it offered him no accommodation else he should have taken premises there also, just to complete the series. Calle 25 de Mayo in Buenos Ayres has long been one of the degenerate parts of the town, entirely unworthy of the historic event it commemorates. But it is being gradually reformed, and may yet take on an aspect of decency. Near the Plaza de Mayo it contains some fine new buildings, but westward it is still the haunt of undesirables, although the English pro-cathedral stands there, a plain and not undignified structure with which I made no close acquaintance.

From 25 de Mayo the ground falls quickly to the Paseo de Julio, the former street occupying the level of what, no doubt, was long ago the bank of the river. This is the only semblance of a hill in all the district. Inland for leagues, the city lies flat as the proverbial pancake, while below towards the river, the Paseo and the gardens beyond, with the buildings of the port in the farther distance, occupy a lower level of land reclaimed from the river. If anybody wants an enemy "put out of the way" for a matter of five pounds or so, he will have no difficulty in finding a villain ready for the job somewhere along the arcaded haunts of the Paseo. In one respect the Paseo de Julio resembles Princes Street, Edinburgh, which, as the Irishman said, "is no more than half a strate, as it has only one side to it." The Paseo has only one side to it, and it is a bad one. The second storeys of the buildings that stand between the Paseo and 25 de Mayo are on the road level of the higher street. Thus it might be possible, for aught I know, to enter one of the low dens on the Paseo and mounting two or three floors within its evil and mysterious interior emerge on the level of 25 de Mayo. The lower storeys

of these buildings on the Paseo side are arcaded, and these arcades are the haunt of "all things perverse, abominable." According to the local press, after nightfall no man dare appear there wearing a collar, and any one who requires the aid of eyeglasses must not venture thither. Often have I wandered among the stinking peones and cosmopolitan criminals who throng the arcades by day, but I know not the Paseo by night. The shops are kept by all sorts of cheap clothiers, general dealers, and many cutlers, whose windcws are exclusively given over to the display of long knives or daggers. Probably sixty per cent. of the frequenters of the arcades carry one of these dirks, like the old Scottish Highlander, and the other forty per cent. are armed with revolvers, of which hundreds are exposed for sale in the arcades. There is no lack of "cheap Jacks" with "special lines" to clear at a sacrifice. There are many filthy-looking restaurants and provision shops; and more *librerías*, which expose nothing but the filth of the continental press translated into Spanish and Italian. If you look at one of their windows for a minute, out pops the greasy owner, spider-like, to inquire if by any chance you would like to inspect his more secret stock of *fotografías muy curiosas*, while youths will thrust under your nose an envelope of obscene photographs, with a particularly offensive one exposed. The whole atmosphere is vile. The cinematographs and raree-shows that also abound in these arcades may be no more pernicious than many in the East End of London, but that is a matter on which no decent Englishman can speak, as none such could risk the contamination of entering therein. It is a male crowd that is always circulating in the Paseo. Never have I seen a decent woman there, and indeed no more than half a dozen hatless sluts are ever to be noticed under its arcades.

This abomination must pass. It exists merely because landowners have preferred to hold their old rotten properties, and allow them to be used by the scum of the population, until such time as it would pay them to sell out. The transformation has already begun; the pestiferous old buildings are giving way to

modern ones, devoted to cleaner purposes. Some day the haunts of the criminals may be utterly wiped out and the Paseo de Julio become, what it might well be, one of the pleasantest thoroughfares of a great city.

Up the little hill from the Paseo, one gains the Plaza de Mayo, whence stretches for a mile and a half in the most approved Haussmannesque straightness the Avenida de Mayo, ending in the massive palace of Congreso. Lined with many handsome buildings of six, eight, or even a dozen storeys, whose shadows are falling athwart the broad and teeming roadway, while the westering sun is making iridescent the white marbles of the great domed Congreso in the far distance, here in the new land of South America is at least one fine city highway that may hold up its head among the world's best. That said, let us eschew comparisons, out of real kindness to Buenos Ayres. Yet it is difficult to do so, as many Argentines, and those foreigners whose interest it is to flatter them, insist on thrusting this city, hopelessly handicapped as it will be until the crack of Doom, into competition with incomparable Paris. There is a suggestion of a Paris boulevard in the Avenida; a suggestion of form, but assuredly not of life nor of atmosphere. And there the rivalry between the two great Latin cities begins and ends!

The great Avenida of Callao runs at right angles with the Avenida de Mayo from the Plaza Congreso. It is badly paved, but contains many attractive buildings of cement. Some day perhaps it may become the central thoroughfare of the city. There are those who believe it will, but in my judgment it will call for a greater revolution than they have ever known in Argentina to shift the centre of gravity from the Calles Maipú, Florida, and San Martin to Callao. Between Florida and Callao there are eleven parallel streets. All are incessantly busy from early morning till nightfall, while Maipú, Esmeralda, and Suipacha, in the order given parallel to Florida, are busy even through the night. All sorts of shops abound in these thoroughfares and business offices innumerable, as well as many places of entertainment, restaurants, and cafés. But, apart from Florida, all these streets that lie to the

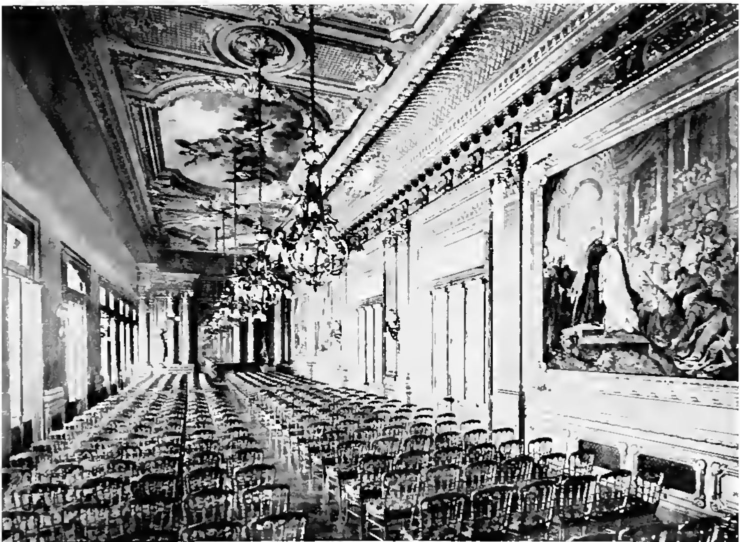
north of the Avenida de Mayo are so characterless that after many years of residence it would puzzle even those with an abnormal " bump of locality " to say in which street they found themselves if they stepped from a cab in any one of them without having noted some landmark on the way. In the suburbs it is even more difficult to realise at a glance where you may happen to be, and the policeman often cannot tell you the name of the street he is patrolling. I remember asking a policeman in a street near the Plaza Libertad for Frank Brown's Circus (Brown is an Englishman who has made and lost fortunes in circuses throughout South America). " Oh," said he, " you are going the wrong way. It is at the corner of Florida and Córdoba." Now, I knew that some eighteen months or two years before it had stood there, but was deliberately burned to the ground by the jingo youths of the city, who were offended by some quite innocent action of the unfortunate Brown. This policeman, some eight or ten squares away from the scene, had not yet heard the news, and meanwhile a magnificent pile of ferro-concrete architecture, the Centro Naval, had been reared on the spot! I found the new circus by describing to another policeman, who at first denied all knowledge of it, a big building to which thousands of people had been flocking for two or three nights past. Then a light dawned on his Indo-Spanish soul. " *Entonces, señor,*" said he, " *está sin duda, a la esquina de ésta misma calle y Paraná, porque se ha concurrido mucha gente, por alla, éstas ultimas noches.*" It was even so, three squares away at the corner of the street in which I had speech with the " bobbie."

There is no end to what I might write about the streets of Buenos Ayres, but there must be speedily, if not already, to the interest of the reader. I who have tramped them, in fair weather and in foul, on busy week-days and on the deadest of dull dead Sundays, mile upon mile, seeking for interest and finding but little, now discover many forgotten impressions coming up on the films of the mind, and these, so to say, I have been putting into the developer, but while they might amuse me indefinitely, I fancy I have already "fixed" as many of them as may be worth preserving.

A Princely Sanctum—Room of the "Prensa's" Chief Editor.

A Corner of the Medical Consulting Room of the "Prensa."

Bedroom of Distinguished Visitors' Suite in "Prensa" Office.



The Gorgeously Decorated Salon in the "Prensa" Office.

CHAPTER VI

WHAT WE THOUGHT OF THE WEATHER AND THE MOSQUITOES

I CANNOT go further in the story of my stay in Buenos Ayres without saying something very definite about the weather. Passing references have already been made to that all-important topic ; but it requires a chapter to itself, and it insists on having it here and now.

As I have said, we were seekers of sunshine. Well, we found it—and also some fine samples of all sorts of weather known between the equator and the poles.

We arrived early in April, which is the beginning of autumn in the Argentine. As the reader has heard, the morning of our arrival was a "perisher." Next day I found my hands, for the first time since boyhood, sore and "chapped." The cold wind was so keen that it had instantly roughened all exposed parts of the skin, and I had recourse to lanoline to soften my hands and to heal my cracked lips. But on the third day the sun came forth again, and for nearly a fortnight the heat was as trying as in the height of an English summer. Everybody was mopping his forehead ; men who, a day or two before, had been going about in greatcoats, were walking the streets with handkerchiefs tucked inside their collars to absorb the sweat. And suddenly it would change to a bitter night ; or perhaps one went forth in the sunny morning in summer clothes, and by noon the temperature had precipitately dropped fifteen or twenty degrees, so that one went shivering hotel-ward for lunch and a change of clothes.

Yet a Scotsman, long resident in Chile, told me that I would find Buenos Ayres had the finest climate in the world ! I wonder where he will go to when he dies.

For eight months I had occasion to comment on the weather, and seldom in terms of congratulation. The expatriated English and the few *porteños* of British parentage with whom I came into frequent contact were strangely prone to ask me what I thought of the weather, whenever, by some odd chance, it happened to be a really fine day.

"Compare this," they would say, "with your weeks of fog in London, when you have the gas lighted all day long and can't breathe."

"My dear sir" (or "lady," as the case might be), I would timorously make answer, "you speak of what is as much a tradition as the red wig and beard for the part of Shylock, and moreover you speak to one who has seen as great a variety of weather in your beloved Buenos Ayres in three or four months as in London in as many years. Your memory is so short that you forget it rained monstrously for three days last week, and for the other four days there was a white chilling vapour over all the town, so that you could not see the length of two squares in the forenoon, and when the vapour had cleared it was as though you were walking on vaselined pavements."

"Oh, but that was exceptional."

"And so, I am glad to say, are London fogs. But I'd much prefer a real old London 'particler' to this marrow-searching, flesh-chilling, white plague that comes up from the River Plate in your winter-time and gets one by the throat."

That fine line of Tennyson's—

> "All in a death-dumb, autumn-dripping gloom"—

comes to mind in Buenos Ayres on one of these days, but, alas, the autumn-dripping is not from branchy trees to fragrant, leaf-laden loam, nor is it "death-dumb"! It drips from gaunt iron frames, from broken, plastered walls, from tramcars, from horses' harness. A billiard cue taken from the rack will feel as though it had been lying in the bath, and the boots which you have not been wearing for a few days will show patches of white and green mould.

But it is true that between April and November there may be many days of sunshine, even a week or two of it at a stretch. And these days are delicious. There is a tang of freshness in the air such as comes to one on a fine frosty autumn morning across Hampstead Heath.

Then towards the end of November the sun begins his yearly revel, and till the end of March Buenos Ayres swelters in the most oppressive heat imaginable. Not that the barometer often touches a much higher reading than has ever been registered in London, but we never experience such long-sustained periods of heat, and the humidity—due to the mighty volume of the river, to which the Thames is no more than a trickling brook would be to the Thames—makes the life of man and beast a burden. The nights bring no surcease. Horses die in the streets by the score every day, and you will see their carcases in all parts of the town, awaiting removal. Lucky are the inhabitants who can escape to Mar del Plata, to Montevideo, or to the Hills of Córdoba, but they are few compared with the myriads who must remain in the monstrous stew-pot. "Long drinks" and two or three cold shower-baths are now the order of the day. But even the cold douche has its snares. I was once severely scalded by taking one, as the cistern was exposed to the sun, and the water had been brought near to boiling-point without the aid of a "geyser"! There is nobody in Buenos Ayres during the summer who attaches much importance to the scientific wiseacres who tell us the heat of the sun is diminishing.

There was no doubt about it—we had found the sunshine at last. And like so many of the quests on which mankind sets out, our find was no better than Dead Sea apples. What could we do with it? Why, we shut it out of our rooms by every means in our power; we wore smoked glasses so that we should not see it. We thought of the Kentucky nigger who was knocked down by an autumnal blast and got up and shook his fist at the invisible force, saying, "Wind, wheah wuz you dis time las' July?"

It will be gathered from what I have said that the

Argentine has no lack of "weather," in which it resembles old England, and like our own dear land it has no "climate." It has all the essentials of the finest climate in the world, but no wise Providence has blended these with any discretion. In the course of one short day you will pass through all the seasons of the year, and though it never snows I have experienced cold in Buenos Ayres equal to the severest frosts of London in my fifteen years of residence there. Nay, I will roundly assert that no wind that blows in England has a tooth so keen as the *pampero*. One has to be out in Buenos Ayres when the wind from the boundless pampas strikes the town, to know how cold can rake through to the marrow. Over the thousands of league of plains it blows, direct from the snowy Andes, and stirring up the clammy effluvia of the River Plate it breathes rheumatism, bronchitis, consumption over the city—the hateful *pampero* !

Nor have the people learned how to combat their changeful weather. All their houses are built for summer. They are excellent for four months of the year, and uncomfortable for the best part of eight. The ceilings of the rooms are usually five feet or more higher than the English standard, which gives one a sporting chance of a breath of fresh air in the torrid season, but when the wind blows and the rain pours, such lofty rooms, tenanted by myriad draughts, are veritable haunts of misery. For they have no fireplaces, and steam-heating is in its infancy. There are actually modern houses in which "dummy" fireplaces have been built for show, but a real, genuine fireplace is a thing which most Argentines have only seen on a visit to England. A well-known steam-heating expert from North America, who was sent on a special mission of study to Buenos Ayres, told me that in many of the new *departamento* buildings which offer the attraction of *calefacción central* the steam-heating installation is no more than make-believe for selling or letting purposes, but never calculated to supply the tenants with warmth. No, the Argentine either goes to bed earlier or puts on

extra clothing in the cold weather, lounges about his house with an overcoat or a shawl above his winter suit, and tries to warm his toes at an oil stove. The ironmongers make great display of these stinking abominations at the first cold-snap, and the papers carry many advertisements of their merits, their "odourless" quality being insisted upon in every case. Electric stoves are largely and successfully used, and as electric current is cheap they form the best substitute for a coal fire—although we English know there is really no substitute in all the world for a real glowing fire of coal.

"Weather" is indeed a staple of talk in the Argentine, just as at home. Indeed, to an even greater degree does one hear people discussing the weather in Buenos Ayres than in London, and with very good reason. The fortunes of all hinge on the state of the climate. Too much rain and the harvests are spoiled; too much heat and horses, cattle, and sheep perish in their tens of thousands. And year after year the Argentine suffers either way. Tell an *estanciero* that you have seen two or three locusts flying about in the street, and his face will blanch, his lip quiver, for already in imagination he sees the dreaded plague of these insects devastating his crops. He is ever in a state of nervous fear as to whether there is going to be too little rain or too much, and, poor man, he will tell you with glee when he meets you on the beastliest of rainy days that "it's raining dollars." If you meet him a fortnight later and it is still raining, there will be no smile on his face, for he fears it is to be the old, old story. "Last year and the year before the crops were nearly in the bags for putting on the rail, and yet we lost them through the rain." Raining dollars, forsooth! For a day or two that may be so, for a week, perhaps; but later on it rains bankruptcy. *Que lindo país*, as a dear old self-deluded lady used to say when telling me the most atrocious untruths about her adopted country. I repeat her words, but, like Artemus Ward's, they are "writ sarcastic." What a lovely country!

The uncertainty of the Argentine weather is really

incredible to anyone who has been fed on the pap of interested hack-writers. In the year 1911 the great national horse-race at Palermo was three times postponed on account of the course being dangerously heavy from excessive rain, and in 1912 it was postponed once for the same reason, being run on the succeeding Sunday on a course that was still sloppy. Was the Derby ever postponed because of rain? I have no Derby lore, but I should be surprised to learn that such a thing had ever happened in rainy England, though I seem to have heard that it was once run in a snowstorm!

It had been represented to me before I went to Buenos Ayres that, so reliable was the climate, one could make engagements for outdoor sports months ahead, with the certainty of weather conditions being favourable. During my stay there numerous lawn tennis, golfing, boating, and picnic engagements were postponed from time to time because of the rain. At home I am something of an "outdoor man" and always keep an eye on the weather, so that I write out of my own knowledge when I state that during some eight months in Buenos Ayres I heard of more outdoor "events" being delayed by the bad weather than would have been possible in London, where I have played golf on forty Saturdays in one year without being stopped by rain.

In short, Argentine weather is either too much of a good thing or too much of a bad thing. The dear old lady, already mentioned, told me that she had to live in Buenos Ayres during the winter because the roads to her estancia were quite impassable whenever it rained, but it was lovely there for a few weeks in the spring, though she had to clear out as soon as summer came, as the place was so infested by flies and mosquitoes that the family had to live in darkness, never daring to raise the blinds! Buenos Ayres being equally obnoxious in summer, she went to the Hills of Córdoba, and came back to town with the autumn. Thus she was able to spend a few short weeks of each year at her home in the camp, and the rest of the year, from a chair in the hotel drawing-room, she sang the praises of the glorious

Argentine weather and of the country that blossoms as the rose.

To the English eye the final touch of unloveliness is the loss of autumn glory. In the province of Buenos Ayres especially, there is no gorgeous funeral for King Summer; no shimmering gold of hedge and bough. The leaves rot on the trees suddenly, wither into pale, colourless things that to-morrow's wind sweeps away, and, behold, so many gaunt and shivering skeletons of trees. When a man dies in Buenos Ayres they coffin him and consign him to his corner of Chacarita within twenty-four hours. Summer dies and is buried with similar dispatch, but Nature relatively provides less pomp at the funeral of Summer than the experts in *pompas fúnebres* supply for the average Argentine who yesterday was and to-day is not.

Insect life is of course conditioned by the weather. Yet the Argentine mosquito has a wonderful power of surviving into the winter. It is a worker. Its industry is unquestionable, and it goes about its task in a manner worthy of emulation. It should figure in the Argentine coat-of-arms. It is symbolic of the tradesmen of Buenos Ayres: at work early and late—blood-sucking. I shall not readily forget how I was plagued by this small product of a great country. On various occasions I had to limp about my affairs with absurdly swollen feet, thanks to the attentions of these tiny pests. An afternoon *siesta* could only safely be indulged in under a mosquito net. Even as I write I still bear traces on my right foot of a particularly venomous bite that dates back more than eight months!

"Haw, yes, the mosquitoes always get the Gringos," said a pimply-faced young Englishman to me, when I was mentioning my experiences nearly a year later in Montevideo.

"How long have you been out here?" I inquired.

"Oh, nearly three years now," said he.

"So that you are a three years' Gringo, I suppose."

He was silent; but he was a representative ass. The English youth makes haste to range himself with the

"old timers," and will lie to you abominably to convey the impression that he is no longer a tender-foot (though a Gringo he must ever be), and tell you that the mosquitoes never touch him, while you can see him scratching his latest bite! The fact is that some people are more subject than others to mosquito-bite, and there are many thousands of native-born who never outgrow the susceptibility. I sincerely sympathise with all such, as the mosquito has the power to make their lives a misery for at least six months of the year. Fleas and bugs (the loathsome bed-hunter) also abound in the City of Good Airs. A gentleman of my acquaintance who took lodgings in a native doctor's house was told by the housekeeper, when he complained about the bugs in his bed, that she couldn't help them—"they were natural." That was his complaint; he would rather they had been artificial. The *bicho colorado* is another busy little fellow, the size of a pin-head. He haunts the grass, and as you walk over the grass he removes his *habitat* to your foot, bores a hole in your skin, burrows merrily into your flesh, and produces a sore which you will have cause to remember for many a day. The chemists do brisk business in selling innumerable "preventives" and "cures" for the bites of mosquitoes and *bichos colorados*, but all that I tried were failures, until I discovered in that familiar English product, liquid ammonia, a really effective banisher of the pain.

On the whole, I do not seem to have formed an extremely favourable opinion of the weather in Buenos Ayres. Like that famous little girl, "when it is good it is very, very good; but when it is bad it is horrid." And I have a notion that the little girl in question was none too often "good." As for the insects—well, Stalky's pet aversions, the "bug hunters," can always be sure of a busy time in and around Buenos Ayres.

CHAPTER VII

A SPLENDID CITY OF SHAM

" Of course we all work in sham," remarked a prominent Argentine architect to me, one clear, still night, as we leant together over the rail of a river steamer discussing the pros and cons of Buenos Ayres—a subject as infinitely interesting to River Platers as the weather to the Englishman.

The " of course " was a kindly concession to some criticism of mine, and showed an open and liberal mind. The architect was no self-deluding *porteño* to whom Buenos Ayres was everything good, true, and beautiful. He was prepared to admit the warts. It was as though a Cockney, lauding his native city to a visitor, were to say, " Of course the New Cut, Lambeth, is not the most beautiful street in London."

He were indeed the blindest and most incompetent of observers who failed to notice at the end of his first hour in Buenos Ayres that it is a city of sham.

Its buildings are of no intrinsic value architecturally—nay, not even the most notable. Without exception they follow European models in exterior treatment, no matter how widely they may differ from them interiorly. That many of the public buildings are imposing, and at first glance look like " the real thing," no one will deny. Besides, he who were foolish enough to deny this could be confronted with the evidence of the official photographs which have conveyed to an envious Europe the idea that Buenos Ayres eclipses our worn-out old cities in its architectural glories. A photograph makes lath and plaster to look like granite and porphyry. Through the camera the graceful buildings of London's " White City " appear as enduring as the pyramids.

It is truly a city of sham. Nor is this to its shame. For it costs more to erect its steel-frame and cement structures than it does in London or Paris to rear solid piles of masonry. The country is destitute of workable stone, and the bricks made in the Argentine are so unsightly and spongy that they can only serve as a base for plaster. Wood, also, is scarce, and the gorgeous doors, without which no fine building in Buenos Ayres would be considered complete, have to be imported at great cost from Europe. Many of these are beautiful, and in this one respect the city may be said to outvie Paris, whence comes this taste for grandeur in gates.

It may be a mere old-world prejudice on my part, but I have never been able to look with real interest on a building that has not been made of brick or stone. In Europe we are accustomed to historic buildings that have been reared by competent workmen with the idea that they were to last for ever, which, as Ruskin reminds us, is the only true way to build. To come to a new land and find that the most pretentious efforts of the builder's craft are only stucco copies of European stonework, leaves the beholder cold. At least that is my feeling in the matter. I know it is not universal. For I recall the eminent Yankee who was surprised that Ruskin would not visit America "because there were no old castles there." "Old castells," said the Yankee, "don't amount to a row of beans in my opinion. Gi'me a nice, noo, sanitary buildin'." I had frequent meetings with a near relative of that North American genius, who lived in Buenos Ayres, and it was vastly entertaining to hear him enlarge upon the beauties of the gingerbread architecture of the city to the discredit of such time-stained trifles as he had seen in London.

The Congreso has been trying for some years to become the pride of the town. It is the great marble veneer palace where the legislators sit—in a literal sense, for they deliver their speeches seated—and it is effectively situated at the western end of the spacious Avenida de Mayo. It has been many years in course of construction, and I am afraid to say how many millions

of money have been spent upon it. At least, it has cost more than three times the amount originally voted for it. No man knows when it will be finished, for it is said that as much material as would have built two such palaces has gone in at the front-door of the works and been mysteriously absorbed. The explanation is that many a fine residence for a legislator with a "pull" has been built of the said material, after it had gone out at a back-door! Meanwhile, the gorgeous Palacio del Congreso presents a noble marble front to the great Plaza Congreso, and stares eastward along the Avenida without a blush for its ulterior nakedness. It is like the noble savage "whose untutored mind clothes him in front and leaves him bare behind"; for when you have turned the corners from the plaza you discover that only the front part has been covered with marble slabs; behind there is naught but dirty naked bricks. So it has been for four or five years, and so it is like to remain for some years to come; but meanwhile a photograph of the front does good service for sending abroad as evidence of the architectural grandeur of the capital city.

All this notwithstanding, the Congreso, as seen from almost any point of the Avenida, is an imposing building. Dignity and elegance are combined in its graceful proportions, and its elongated dome soars above the surrounding buildings with a fine sense of confidence. The Corinthian column is used very effectively in the façade, and there are many—rather too many—statuary groups, in which winged figures and ramping horses are prominent. Grand stairways sweep up to the central door, and inclined planes make possible the near approach of carriages. But immediately one steps inside there is disappointment. The central hall is of mean proportions, and in a few minutes all is confusion, as there is no real dignity of treatment, and certain inner courtyards are actually built with painted iron pillars hopelessly out of harmony with the prevailing style of the building. The Chamber of Deputies, in the form of a horse-shoe, is businesslike and handsome, but no more imposing than some of the council

chambers of our great provincial cities at home. The Senate is a smaller and more elegant chamber, richly furnished with ample seats of ease and commodious desks for each of its distinguished members. There is another luxurious room, dedicated to special ceremonies, and the deputies' lounge is immense and well-appointed, much after the style of some of the big London clubs. It is, indeed, at once a club and an exchange, for here many of the " deals " by which some men make money in the Argentine, and others lose it, are consummated.

On the first floor are ranged all the different ministerial offices and committee-rooms, and I think there were only two of these to which I did not gain admission. But there was little of interest to note in them. The fact that the rooms devoted to the affairs of the Army and Navy were about one-tenth the size of those required for the department of Public Works was eloquent and reassuring. But although I explored the whole building, high and low, I find I have retained only a very blurred impression of the interior with its bewildering passages, through which liveried servants bearing trays of tea-dishes were constantly passing, as the Argentine deputy is a firm believer in getting all he can out of his country in addition to his annual salary of 12,000 *pesos* (£1050), feeding, at public expense, not only himself but as many relatives and friends as have the good sense to find important business to transact in the lobbies of Congress at meal times.

A very handsomely furnished library is a notable feature of the palace. It is small, but admirably designed for the enshrinement of many books. One of the proudest possessions of the library, pointed out to me with much satisfaction, is a complete set of the *Hansard Debates*. There are standard works on all sorts of social subjects, and books of statistics enough to give a mere literary man a headache. I noted most of the books had a suspicious air of newness. There was a deputy busy consulting a volume of *Hansard*, but no other thirster after knowledge in the library at the time of my visit.

" You may come here often," said the official who

was showing me over the building, "and you will seldom see more than two people using the library—perhaps three."

The restaurant is much more popular with the deputies, but there is no doubt that if any of them ever by chance should wish to "verify his references" he should find no difficulty in performing that most laudable and un-Argentine task with the aid of this well-stocked and well-managed library.

On the whole, the impression of the Palacio del Congreso upon the visitor from Europe is of a piece with the capital city. It is all so new, and all so unfinished, and promises to be all so shoddy when eventually it is finished. The tall, strapping doorkeeper who showed me over the great rooms in the basement of the building, where are stored in iron chambers many official records, said, "When they've finished the building they will have to start all over again repairing it."

I went outside on a balcony at the back to examine the still uncovered brickwork. It is of a quality which would not be used in the poorest buildings in England, though once it has been hidden under plaster with thin slabs of marble imposed thereon, it will doubtless present a brave appearance for some years. But not for all time!

At the eastern end of the Avenida stands the more historic "Pink House" (*Casa rosada*) or Government Building. It occupies the whole width of the Plaza de Mayo and extends backwards to the Paseo Colón beyond—a mighty pile of plastered brick. Lacking in distinction and of no established style, it is chiefly notable for its abundance of windows. I remember counting about one hundred and twenty in the east front alone, so that the whole building probably contains upwards of six hundred, and, with so many piercings in its walls, it will be understood little opportunity was left for architectural ingenuity. An immense group of statuary surmounts the central part of the building, and this, too, is most likely a stucco masterpiece, for if it were solid stone it would surely bring down the roof. The whole exterior

is painted pink, and on a bright day its appearance is undeniably pleasing, if you are content to take it as a whole and some little distance off, for a too close inspection will reveal many shabby patches and innumerable corners that are calling aloud for plaster and paint. Indeed, so large is the Pink House, it would only be possible to give it a coat of paint that would be fresh all over by employing an army of painters, for, ordinarily treated, the paint on one side has become old ere the painters have reached the other.

The interior of the Government House—*Casa de gobierno* is the official designation of the *Casa rosada*—contains many fine apartments richly furnished. The great ballroom where the President gives his grave and stately entertainments from time to time is a very gorgeous chamber. It is indeed a memorable sight to witness one of these functions and to note the extraordinary gravity of the guests, whose display of wealth in personal adornment is only equalled by their self-consciousness.

At the north-west corner of the Plaza de Mayo stands the Cathedral, an extremely unimpressive and uninviting structure. Although I passed it daily for some eight months, I never mustered up sufficient interest to go inside —I who have spent so many months of my life among the musty old cathedrals and churches of France! I felt there was nothing historic about this common and defective imitation of a Grecian façade, vulgarised by wreaths of electric bulbs around its Corinthian columns. At first glance it suggests a stock exchange rather than a place of Christian worship. There is a dome of glazed tiles, so far away from the low and squat entrance colonnade—which faces due south—that it seems to have no relation to it. I do not remember noting the material of the building—so little did it attract me—but I fancy it consists of the usual plastered brick. One day I did seek to enter but could find no door that was open, and never do I remember to have seen the main door open on a weekday. This is characteristic of the churches of South America, where one misses that generous invitation of the fine old fanes of France. Mainly the Cathedral of Buenos

Ayres will stay in my memory as a provincial stock exchange building gone wrong, or—illuminated on any of the numerous national feast-days—as a municipal theatre on a *noche de gala.*

A stone-throw from the Cathedral stands the Municipal Building, or *Intendencia,* at the corner of the Avenida and the Plaza de Mayo. It is of no account, and does not compare in interest with the splendid palace of *La Prensa* adjoining it. I confess that, as a journalist, I had more desire to inspect the famous building of the great Buenos Ayres daily than any other sight in the city. During my stay I had frequent business with the management of *La Prensa,* and was privileged to examine every corner of its wonderful home, on one occasion spending some hours in the building after midnight, when the sight of Buenos Ayres from the globe on which stands the *Prensa's* Goddess of Light, who holds aloft her flaring torch over the restless city, is surely one that can be rarely equalled in the world. No doubt if one were to look at Paris by night from the apex of the dome over the Sacré Coeur, or London, say, from the Clock Tower at Westminster, the sight would be more beautiful, but it could scarcely be more impressive, as the extraordinary flatness of Buenos Ayres permits the observer on the *Prensa* tower to survey the whole vast city to its utmost limits and even to distinguish the twinkling lights of La Plata, the provincial capital, twenty-four miles away. I shall not readily forget that starry night when, at two o'clock, I stood up there in the look-out beneath the Goddess of Light and saw the great, noisy, cruel city as a prodigious map of stars. The prodigality of Buenos Ayres in electric light was evident even at that hour, for mile upon mile the eye could follow the main streets with their double lines of radiant dots, thinning gradually as they flickered into the boundless plain beyond, while on the fringes of the mighty metropolis appeared numerous constellations betokening the suburbs which the Federal Capital threatens to engulf.

The interior of the *Prensa* building would require a chapter to itself to describe it with any attempt at detail. That is not possible here, and a mere glimpse at it must

suffice. It is almost everything that our English ideas would expect a newspaper office not to be. If you enter from the front, there is nothing in the business department to strike your attention. We have newspaper offices in England by the score quite as imposing. Nor is there anything particularly worthy of note in the reportorial rooms, the library, or any of the workaday departments, though the note of luxury is probably more pronounced in the apartments of the editor and the editorial writers than in most English offices, excepting only Lord Northcliffe's suite at the *Daily Mail.* The machine-room is splendidly equipped, and I was pleased to notice that the assistant overseer was a fellow-countryman. The overseer, I was told, was an Argentine, but I suspect he was of British or German parentage, for the native has little aptitude for mechanics.

There is a series of " show " rooms which makes it hard for one, like myself, whose life has been spent in newspaper offices at home amid the well-loved odour of printer's ink, to imagine himself within a building devoted to the production of a daily newspaper. At two o'clock in the morning what a scene of hustle is a daily newspaper office in Fleet Street! Here everything was as quiet and orderly as a museum when the visitors have gone! And in truth it reminded me not a little of a museum. There was a magnificent concert hall superbly decorated with painted panels, for the doing of which artists had come especially from France. Here many of the most famous operatic stars who have visited Buenos Ayres have appeared before select audiences invited by the *Prensa*; celebrated actors have tried new plays, and illustrious visitors from foreign lands have addressed privileged audiences in many different tongues. The value of such a hall to a newspaper is so obvious that it is surprising none of our London journals has yet attempted anything of the kind. I think the *Prensa* salon accommodates an audience of some five hundred, and it is smaller than the very charming little theatre of *Femina*, the Paris ladies' journal, in the Champs Elysées.

Then there is a suite of living-rooms, fronting to the

Avenida, worthy of a prince. These have been placed at the disposition of distinguished visitors to the Argentine with a liberality that has not always been duly appreciated, for I was told that this very pleasant custom of honouring the country's guests has more than once been abused by a visitor staying so long that he threatened to become a permanent boarder of the *Prensa.* Hence, it may be, that the custom is no longer to be maintained, and I can imagine the business side of the newspaper can make even better use of the space. A sports-room for the staff includes appliances for every variety of indoor sport and exercise, from billiards to fencing; nor need one ever be at a loss for a cooling bath in the hot summer days, as the bathrooms and lavatories are worthy of a first-class London club. But, most curious of all, perhaps, are the medical and dental departments. The rooms for the physicians and surgeons on the staff of the *Prensa* are supplied with all the latest medical and surgical appliances, and readers of the paper can come here free of charge for advice and treatment. There is also a legal department, where skilled lawyers look into the troubles of the newspaper's subscribers !

In short, the *Prensa* building is one of the few really interesting and distinctive sights of Buenos Ayres, and a notable ornament of the Avenida. It is an epitome of Argentine progress, for a matter of fifty years ago the journal was a humble little four-page sheet, issued from some scrubby little shanty, while to-day it is one of the wealthiest, as it is one of the largest, newspapers in the world, housed in a palace that cost some £300,000 to build. Its enterprising founder, the late Dr. José Paz, died at Nice a week or two before I left England, and I was later present at the ceremony of receiving his remains in Buenos Ayres for interment in Recoleta, the last resting-place of the Argentine's aristocrats. He had built another palace for the whole Paz family in the Plaza San Martin, one of the most magnificent buildings in the city, and one of the most princely private residences I have ever seen in any land, but he was not spared to see it occupied.

If we cross the Avenida and go some four squares down the Calle Defensa, we shall come to one of the few historic buildings in the city—the church of Our Lady of the Rosary—*Nuestra Señora del Rosario.* There is nothing worthy of note in its architecture, but in the tower which surmounts the front entrance—to the north—a number of cannon balls are embedded in the mortar of which the church is built. These are said to be relics of the British bombardment of 1806.

There are indeed few churches in Buenos Ayres that will repay a visit. All are edifices of little note, and, almost without exception, are stuck rather shamefacedly among other buildings, where you may pass a dozen times and never notice them once. Buenos Ayres has other business in hand than matters of the soul. No one could describe it as an aggressively religious city. The Jockey Club is more to its taste. It stands rather more than half-way along the Calle Florida, going from the Avenida towards the Plaza San Martin. That admirable English word of recent invention, "swank," was surely coined by some one familiar with the Jockey Club of Buenos Ayres. But, for the moment, I shall not seek to illustrate this by attempting to describe the spirit that animates this bizarre and curious institution. In this chapter I am concerned only with its outward appearance. That is by no means unpleasing, though the façade of the building is constricted and the narrowness of the street prevents one from obtaining a satisfactory view of it. It is covered with an infinity of electric bulbs, and no occasion to light these is ever allowed to pass unregarded. Often have I seen the building aglow like Aladdin's palace in a Drury Lane pantomime, and scarce a soul within sight to feast his eyes on the outward magnificence of this great national institution which exists for the maintenance of the best breeds of man's devoted servitor, the horse (*no me parece*, as they say in Buenos Ayres, or "I *don't* think," as certain vulgarians say in London).

Westward, some six or seven squares from Florida, one encounters in the Plaza Lavalle several noteworthy

buildings. On the west side of that fine plaza the new *Tribunales*, or Law Courts, have just been completed, and Buenos Ayres has nothing finer in the way of architecture to show. Conceived on a massive scale and carried out with unusual thoroughness of detail, this is a magnificent palace for the housing of Justice, and, as Justice is by no means blind in the Argentine, she will find much in her palace to occupy her attention, even to distract it from those duties which in other lands she is supposed best to perform with shut eyes. The Law Courts in London, vast though they are, are not so roomy as the Tribunales, nor yet so imposing. Why a style that is reminiscent of Assyria and Byzantium should have been chosen, I know not, unless Argentine Justice is of Oriental origin, but the effect is undoubtedly imposing. The six massy columns of the central façade spring upwards to the height of five tall storeys, with a large sense of strength and permanence, though it is true they begin in noble stone and soon become ignoble cement. The five entrances are generously inviting, but every Argentine knows that when he enters there to lodge a suit Heaven alone can guess how old he will be, how grey his hairs, when he comes out again with a verdict. Three more storeys tower above the great plinth over the pillars, and above the entrance runs a fine, spacious colonnade of Ionic columns.

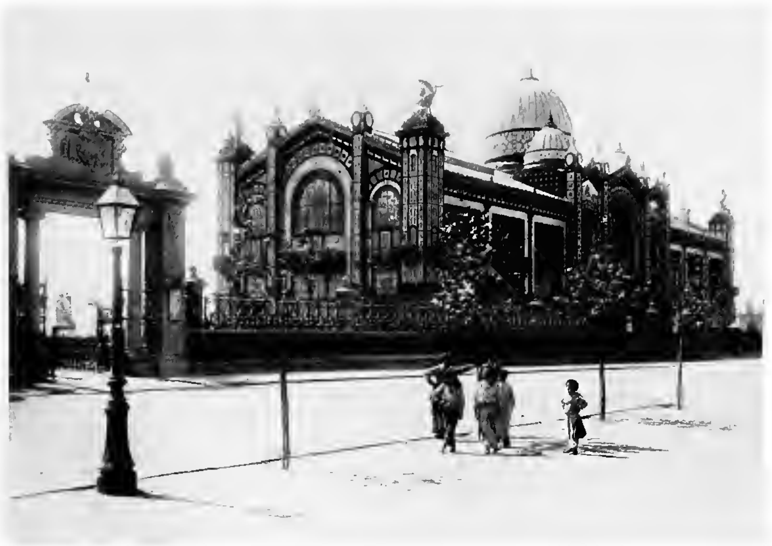
The building of the Tribunales is, in truth, one of the finest palaces of justice in any great city of the world, exceeded in sheer bulk, so far as I can remember, only by the Palais de Justice of Brussels, which is colossal beyond all reason. Even though a vast deal more cement than enduring stone has gone to its making, it will long remain the most noteworthy architectural effort in Buenos Ayres, and one cannot look upon it without feeling a certain reverence for the intentions of its builders. If Argentine Justice will only endeavour to "live up to" her new home, the citizens of the great young republic will have reason to congratulate themselves.

On the opposite side of the same ample plaza stands

the *Teatro Colón* (Columbus Theatre), the home of the state-aided opera. The citizens are immensely proud of this fine building and with good reason. Always allowing for the difference between stone and cement, neither Paris nor London has anything finer than this palatial theatre. Admirably situated, it is no less admirably designed. It seems large enough to contain half a dozen opera-houses, and, indeed, the theatre proper occupies less than half of the great building. Near the Colón rears its more modest head the *Colegio Sarmiento.* Sarmiento was one of the greatest men the Argentine or any other country has produced in modern times. No one did more than he for the advancement of his native land, and while I would have preferred to see the Colón dedicated to the memory and the educational ideals of the famous president, it is perhaps only in accord with the lessening ideals of our day that amusement and social pretentiousness should outvie the merely intellectual and useful.

The old *Teatro de la Opera* still stands and thrives under private management. No doubt when it was first built it was thought to represent the last word in architectural grandeur, but a glance at its rococo façade, wedged between two other buildings in the Calle Corrientes, after having looked at the Colón, will show how rapidly Argentine ideas have expanded in recent years.

It is scarcely possible to continue an orderly commentary on the public buildings of Buenos Ayres until one has passed them all in review. There are too many for that, and many are too similar. Others that I call to mind particularly at the moment, are the great offices of the Waterworks (*Aguas corrientes*) and the Board of Education (*Junta de education*), both of which are fine examples of the stately manner in which the Argentine houses its public departments. The same cannot be said for the Art Gallery. I am willing to concede that in a young country the essential things, such as good drinking water and elementary education, should take precedence over the fine arts, but when so noble a building as the Colón could have been erected merely to provide society



A CONTRAST IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

The upper illustration depicts the tawdry old exhibition pavilion which Buenos Ayres is content to use as an Art Gallery, and the lower the splendid offices of the Public Waterworks.

The English "Pro-Cathedral" in Calle 25 de Mayo,
Buenos Ayres.

The Roman Catholic Cathedral in the Plaza Mayo,
Buenos Ayres.

(Note the wreaths of electric bulbs which permanently entwine the columns of the building.)

with a short season of social diversion each year (for we must frankly admit that it is more a society haunt than a temple of the muse), surely it might have been possible to do something worthier of the graphic arts! The Art Gallery occupies a commanding site on the north-east side of the Plaza San Martin, but the building is only a second-hand pavilion, brought from some exhibition (that of St. Louis, I was told), and re-erected here. It is a gim crack affair of iron frame, wood, and gaudy tiles. Although it looks quite attractive in a photograph, the shoddy workmanship, the great chunks of coloured glass used as items of the decorative scheme, and the general air of temporariness inseparable from the purpose for which it was originally designed, leave one with the impression that the Argentines set a very low value on their art treasures. Yet there are several canvases in the collection that may be worth more than the building that houses them. But the sooner this trashy pavilion is thrown on the scrap-heap and a worthy gallery erected, the better for the reputation of the country in respect to the fine arts.

One other public building there is that calls for note. It is known as the *Casa de expósitos*, and occupies an airy position on the great thoroughfare that runs through the district of Barracas—Montes de Oca. It is an immense building, larger than some of our great London workhouses, and seems to have an infinity of rooms within. There is no fanciful treatment of the exterior; all is plain, massive, substantial. The purpose of this institution is to rear the undesired children of Buenos Ayres. An *expósito* is a foundling, and this is the Foundling Hospital of Buenos Ayres. Unwilling mothers bring their offspring here, leave them at the door, where they are willingly received "and no questions asked." The State does not despise this means of fostering the population, though it leaves many thousands of infants to die annually for lack of popular instruction on the rearing of the young and also by permitting the continuance of social conditions which make the survival of most children of the labouring class something of a miracle.

When the new station of the Central Argentine Railway at Retiro has been completed, Buenos Ayres will possess one of the finest railway buildings in the world, but during my stay the termini of that railway and the B.A.P. were no better than some of our shabbiest provincial stations in England, though the Southern, at Plaza Constitucion, has a handsome building, and the Western, at Plaza Once, quite a presentable railway station.

And talking of railway stations, I shall make this the end of my journey around the public buildings of Buenos Ayres—at least for the present. I have not sought to do more than to give the reader—as in the fleeting glimpses of a strange land from the window of a speeding train—a rapid outline of the material Buenos Ayres. This splendid city of sham ! If I may not appear to have been deeply impressed with its beauties which have been so floridly pictured by more partial pens, that is probably because I have sought to bear in mind there are other great cities in the world. To the untravelled provincial, who has shipped straight from some English port to the River Plate, I can well imagine the Argentine metropolis is the greatest wonder of the world. The most devoted admirer of Buenos Ayres that I met during my stay there was a gentleman from Kilmarnock. He had never seen London ; had never previously been out of his native Scotland ; but his ten years in the Argentine capital had convinced him that it stood unique in the world and in all time as the most glorious example of the power of man in the making of cities. That renegade Scot, I quite believe, looks forward with satisfaction to living out his life there and being hurried one day, some twenty hours after he dies, to the sweet rest of Chacarita ! But he is a type one may easily allow for (I always showed a marked approval of their well-seasoned opinions) and pass on. The brilliant writer, however, who so often, from hasty observation or from interested motives, conveys a too flattering impression of a town does incomparably more harm than a whole wilderness of inexperienced and unobservant enthusiasts. So many such writers have

already described the outward show of Buenos Ayres as a sun without spots, that my observations may at least restore the spots. They are set down in all honesty and with no desire to belittle the truly commendable things of Buenos Ayres, in appraising which I trust I shall not be held guilty of any niggard spirit. But, after all, the buildings of any city are no more than the husk, and though we must break the shell to come at the kernel, it is on the latter we have our mind in the progress of the operation. Thus I am in these chapters on the outward appearance of Buenos Ayres engaged in nothing more than the breaking of the shell—and perhaps a few well-established illusions at the same time.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME "PASEOS" IN AND ABOUT BUENOS AYRES

It is said of Glasgow that it is "a gran' toon to get awa' frae" (the facilities for getting out of it to an infinity of places of natural and historic interest in its neighbourhood are well known). This will never be said of Buenos Ayres, and more's the pity. With the exception of a short afternoon's jaunt to the River Tigre, there is nowhere in its immediate neighbourhood that invites a visit, while the possibilities of the city itself in the way of pleasant *paseos* are exhausted all too soon, and ever after the unwilling resident has a choking sense of being imprisoned when his thoughts go vagabonding to "fresh woods and pastures new."

A *paseo* signifies no more than a stroll, a walk, a promenade. But the modern Argentine usually goes a-strolling in a *coche* or a motor-car. He has an engrained horror of exercising his legs. The British resident soon falls into this modern manner, either out of a frank desire to ruffle it with the best of them, or merely because one must eventually follow the line of least resistance. It demands a certain amount of will-power to walk when all the world's on wheels. Thus, as there is but a single paseo where one can display one's gorgeous motor-car or hired carriage, all the world makes for that and stares at everybody else. Palermo! Oh, potent word to local minds! Palermo is the one paseo known to all. In that one word is summed up most of what the citizens of Buenos Ayres know of outdoor enjoyment. There are other paseos that do not call for a coche—where you don't go merely to look at the crowd and be looked at; consequently these are left to the stray visitor or the Gringo, who knows no better.

But first let us talk of Palermo. It is as Hyde Park to London, as the Bois to Paris. And it is an infinitely greater source of pride to the Buenos Ayrian than Hyde Park to the Londoner or the Bois to the Parisian. I met a young English lady who had been brought to the River Plate as a child, and after growing to womanhood had returned to England for a year or two, but had now come back to Buenos Ayres again. "I just love Palermo," she said ecstatically. "It is unique; there is nothing like it in all London." I received the information with due humility.

Palermo consists of a mile or so of carriage drive which is level and tarred (differing in these respects from every other bit of road in the Argentine), a pond or two, and some trees. Materially, that is all. But it is in the spirit of Palermo that lies its fascination. No, outwardly we have nothing quite like it in London: our carriage drives are immensely smoother, our lawns are incomparably more velvety, our trees more umbrageous, and we could cut a Palermo out of a corner of Hyde Park without noticing the loss! But all that is by the way. Palermo is not to be sneered at as the lung of a stifling city. There are instances of people going along quite well with but one lung. The man with one lung, however, has scant reason for crowing over his normal fellow-creatures. Let no River Plater shake his Palermo in my face.

Palermo, taken at what it is and looked at without permitting any other resort of any European city to obtrude itself in the mind's eye, is very fine and reflects the highest credit on the municipal authorities of Buenos Ayres. They have done wonders with the most unpromising material. Yet as it stands to-day it is nothing, I believe, to what it is likely to become.

To reach this haunt of River Plate fashion you will hire a coche (taking care to select one of the minority that are cleanly upholstered and well-horsed) or you may engage a motor-car, for there is an abundance of splendid automobiles to be hired by the hour, with nothing but the tell-tale taximeter to show that it is not a luxurious private car. Or you may take either train or

tram. Nor is it any great distance to walk thither from the centre of the town. I have gone every way, for after a time it becomes "the only thing to do," and when you have reached that stage you almost invariably take a coche. The favourite route is by way of the Plaza San Martin and the Avenida Alvear, the Park Lane of Buenos Ayres. The district lying between the plaza and Recoleta is the most fashionable residential quarter, and along the fine Avenida Alvear stand many of the most beautiful private mansions in Buenos Ayres Here for the first time in wandering about the town one notes hardly any intermingling of the ostentatious and the mean. Everywhere else, that strikes the observer most forcibly—the extraordinary way in which the palace is placed alongside the hovel, so that, separated only by a matter of two or three feet of distance and the thickness of a wall, may be a group of thieves discussing their affairs over drinks in an evil-smelling "dive" and a perfumed gathering of *distinguidos*. Time, of course, will cure this in the older quarters of the town, but the indifference to the nature of one's neighbours is evidently deep-rooted, as in the Avenida Alvear itself there is at least one very common drinking saloon in the lower part of a handsome new building, and farther out towards Palermo a fine new block of flats is disfigured by a noisy bar on the street level. On the whole, however, this district is so free from the lower class of tradespeople and the meaner sort of building that in this respect it reminds one of the aristocratic quarter of any great European town.

The Plaza San Martin is a noble square, plentifully studded with trees, flowering shrubs, and flower-beds. The grass is coarse and scraggy, the close-cropped English lawn being here impossible of attainment owing to natural difficulties of soil and weather. In the centre of the plaza stands a splendid monument to the national hero. It is of the familiar equestrian type, showing San Martin, astride the usual prancing steed, pointing with his right hand to the path that leads to glory or the grave. The statue, a very spirited work, stands on a high pedestal of granite, in front of which a fine figure

of a Roman warrior is seated, holding aloft an oak branch, while four other bronze groups typifying military prowess and victory, each in itself a considerable monument, occupy granite pedestals at the extreme corners of the widespreading sculptured base. Inset in the main pedestal are battle groups in high relief, and the lower parts of the stonework are also enriched with many similar panels of smaller size, in which the stirring events of South America's struggle for independence, so little known in Europe, are vigorously depicted. Withal, a very handsome and worthy memorial, of enduring stone and bronze. In art and craft it is French, having been transported from France with much ceremony and at no small cost. It is a noteworthy ornament of the city; a legitimate source of pride to the patriotic.

The sculpture mania has Buenos Ayres in its grip. The Latin peoples have ever been more partial to that art than the Anglo-Saxon, but the Argentines are in danger of touching an extreme that borders on the foolish. Here in the Plaza San Martin there are two more groups—in marble these—one being a very striking work indeed, entitled *La Doute*. It stands near the south-east corner of the plaza, and is so shadowed by trees that it baffled all my efforts to secure a really good photograph of it. A little reminiscent of the Rodin manner—Rodin is one of the gods of the Buenos Ayrians—this work represents a great muscular young man, semi-nude, with perplexed brow, pondering a book to which an old wizened figure points with skinny finger while he peers into the face of the young man. "Doubt" is writ large thereon; but whether the old man seeks to dispel the doubt or is the cause thereof I am myself in doubt. His old face always reminded me of the bust of Voltaire in the Louvre. Perhaps there's a clue in that. The other group is called *Los primeros fríos* ("The first cold winds") and represents a naked old man seated with a naked child at his knee. It always impressed me as a peculiarly stupid work, though technically good, and beyond reminding perspiring humanity in the suffocating summer-time that there are occasions when the cold winds blow, I can imagine no good purpose that it serves.

Another feature of the plaza is an artificial rockery which, with another of the same, though somewhat higher, in the Plaza Constitucion, is the only thing in the shape of a mountain for scores of miles round about Buenos Ayres !

Such is the Plaza San Martin—as handsome a public square as you will find in any great city. The pity is that it is frequented chiefly by riff-raff, and the footways being laid with tiny pebbles, one would fain don his golf-shoes to walk thereon. It is surrounded by a series of private palaces, notably those of Mihanovich, the millionaire shipowner who was once a bargee, and that of the Paz family, already mentioned.

We continue towards Palermo by the Avenida Alvear, noting the many mansions on the way in which good taste and vulgar ostentation often stand side by side, though, on the whole, good taste prevails. These gorgeous homes are frequently left to the care of a few servants for twelve months on end, as the wealthy Argentine says to his native town, " I could not love thee, dear, so much, loved I not Paris more ! " And while he does homage to his homeland by adorning the Avenida Alvear with a palatial residence, he spends most of his time in Paris—and I don't blame him. The late Dr. Paz lived for twenty years on the Riviera, and there he died. Good Americans, 'tis said, go to Paris when they die. Wealthy South Americans go to Paris when they live and are brought back to Buenos Ayres when they die !

The Avenida Alvear is wide and well-paved with wooden sets. In the afternoons there is a continuous stream of vehicles, and on Sundays a more animated thoroughfare could not be imagined. Motor-cars innumerable go scudding along without a thought of speed limit, tinkling coches, splendid carriages and pairs, and the scrubbiest victorias and the mangiest teams you ever set eyes on. Mounted police are stationed at different points, not so much to " direct " the traffic as to act as living landmarks for the drivers, all of whom seem bent on getting somewhere first, though there is not the least occasion for hurry, unless they are bound for the racecourse, as in half an hour they will have gone the whole distance that

can be covered in comfort. We two Gringos used to spend many pleasant hours sitting in the little green garden by the Palais de Glace, near Recoleta station, watching the varied throng go by; but that was not "the thing to do," bless you, as our only companions were nurse-maids and rough labouring men. On the south side of the Avenida, however, are other and much larger gardens, where those who are not ambitious to *lucirse* (or "show off") at Palermo, are wont to sit or promenade. And very attractive are these gardens, with their winding walks, their lakelets, and shrubberies. Those at the Plaza de Francia are particularly favoured by the toilers on Sunday afternoon, though the view across the Avenida to the waterworks is somewhat of an eyesore. In the Plaza de Francia the French "colony" have erected a fine monument to the Argentine Republic, as a *recuerdo* of the centenary in 1910. At the back of the plaza is a long and substantial-looking balustrade. We thought this must lead to "somewhere beyond"—full of groves and tinkling fountains! We ascended one hot day, to find that it led nowhere, and was made of bricks and stucco, and although still unfinished, it was already crumbling into ruin. It was dusty and disagreeable in the extreme. This was an experience often repeated in South American towns.

So we continue our paseo, be it in coche or afoot, along Alvear, passing, as we near Palermo, many shanty-like structures which must soon disappear and many unsightly remains of the Centennial Exhibition. This last was opened and closed in the year 1910, but at the end of 1912 numerous ruined pavilions still cumbered the ground. One place near here used to amuse me. It was a shabby pleasure resort named "Harmenonville." Memories of that delightful bower in the Bois de Boulogne always came back to me when I looked at this, "with laughter of gods in the background." And now, we find ourselves at a great dusty meeting of wide roads. On the left is the entrance to the Zoological Gardens; to the right the woods of Palermo, with their pines and eucalyptus trees, suggestive of unfathomed forest within; while ahead the broad road continues, now noisy with tram-cars coming and

going from the racecourse and by the Avenida Sarmiento that runs south-west to the Plaza de Italia.

The woods on the right invite us by their coolness and apparent depth. They prove, however, a mere strip of trees, and we seldom encounter decent-looking people among them. But there is no lack of promenade ground in the direction of the lakes, whither every vehicle of every kind is heading. And there, beyond the great tea-room, the *Pabellón de los lagos*, the real paseo begins. Along the carriage-way by the margin of the lakes there is, on Sunday afternoons especially, an extraordinary crowd of vehicles. All have to move at a snail's pace, directed by many mounted police, who, posted in the middle of the roadway, keep the traffic into two orderly streams, one going, the other returning, while alongside the footpath stands a row of carriages, whose owners or hirers may either be seated within, staring at every other carriage that passes, or, greatly daring, may be venturing a few paces on foot beside the lakes, where sundry rowdy Italians are enjoying themselves in the gondolas and dreaming themselves back in Venice—if, perchance, they are strong in dreams.

This is Palermo. For this all the monstrous noise of motor "cut-outs" and every devilish variety of "hooter" along Alvear, all the brutal lashing of perspiring horses. For this! The dresses of the ladies in the carriages are *la ultima palabra*, and their wearers sit as stiff and expressionless as the wax mannequins in the windows of the Florida *modistas*. They recognise their friends with a slight inclination of the neck, but show no sign of pleasure. The gilded youths in groups of threes or fours, with their boots polished to solar brilliancy, go by in hired motors or in coches (the latter have the merit of showing off the boots to advantage) and stare at the *lindas muchachas* whom they do not know, and doff their hats with profoundest bows to those they do know. And so it goes on for an hour or two, then towards five or half-past five the throng begins to lessen, the returning vehicles continue townward at increased speed when they have come back for the last time to the beginning

of the carriage-drive, and by six o'clock the fashionable throng has melted away, leaving peerless Palermo to the prowlers and the stragglers once again. What strikes the spectator is the appalling respectability of it all, the gravity of the *paseantes*, the lack of vulgarity and gladness. It is all a pose, for I have seen these same charmingly dressed ladies who look so frightfully formal on Sunday afternoons all smiles and merriment on the evenings of the *Corso de flores*, or the Battle of Flowers, which takes place at Palermo in aid of public charities in the month of November. It is "the thing" to be seen taking a paseo at Palermo, and as there is nothing more serious in this strange life of ours than our social obligations, we must needs discharge them with due gravity. But what a comedy it all is for the spectator who has no obligations to local society! To the British visitor it is particularly amusing to notice how quickly his fellow-countrymen acquire the Palermo habit. As for the natives, they know that they only took on their European veneer of manners in recent years, and for that reason they are so desperately anxious to do "the right thing" that they are apt to overdo it.

The paseo by the ponds (it is gross flattery to call them *lagos*, for Highgate ponds are considerably larger than they, but *estanque*, which signifies "pond," is not so pretty a word as *lago*) is by no means the end of Palermo's possibilities to the wanderer in Buenos Ayres, though it is so to the residents. Near by is the Zoological Garden, which extends from the Avenida Alvear to the Plaza de Italia, on the great highway of Santa Fé. But one does not visit this often. It contains a large and interesting collection of wild animals, and is well laid out but badly kept. In the summer months it is disagreeably dusty, and on Sundays it is so crowded by low-class Italians and the unwashed of all nations that one feels all the wild animals are not in cages. I noticed that several of the lions, tigers, and larger beasts had skin trouble, showing raw sores, caused by some insect pests, I was told. One of the most abominable

sights I have ever seen was witnessed here. In a large pound was a troupe of poor worn old horses and ponies, wandering aimlessly about. A more ghastly collection of living creatures could not be conceived. These were the food for the lions and the tigers. Faugh!

Separated from the Zoological Garden by a spacious avenida—General Las Heras, if I remember correctly—and occupying a small triangular plot of ground extending townwards from the Plaza de Italia is the Botanical Garden. It contains many specimens of American flora and has a few hothouses full of tropical plants; but it is of no real account botanically and is more useful as a place of grateful greenness and shade, retired a little from the dust and noise of the streets, where one may idle an hour away with pipe and book.

Then, of course, there is the great racecourse or *Hipódromo Argentino*, only a little way beyond the *Parque 3 de Febrero*, as the whole park, of which Palermo proper is only a part, is named. The racecourse is, I opine, one of the largest in the world. It is very pleasantly situated and maintained in admirable condition; but it has the defect of being so large, or so designed, that the race as a whole cannot be followed uninterruptedly from any of the "grand stands" or *tribunas*. These are well built, and extremely commodious. There is a particularly gorgeous erection for the distinguished persons associated with the Jockey Club, and this is naturally alongside of the paddock. Next to it is a larger stand for the public, who pay seven pesos a head, and beyond are the *tribunas populares*, for the mob. As the *Paris mutuel* system, or "totalisator," is used for regulating the betting, the "bookie" is unknown here. There are many ticket offices, each bearing a number, and you merely go to the one that has the number of the horse you wish to "back," buy as many tickets "for a win and a place" as your fancy or your pocket dictates, return to the stand, and await results! These offices are in different series: one series only issues tickets of ten dollars, another of five, and a third of two. After a race, if your horse has won or

been placed, you go to a paying-out office, present your tickets, and there receive your winnings at the rate which was announced on the large notice-board near the grand stand after the money on that particular race had been apportioned—which, being done by mechanical calculation, occupies very little time. You will almost certainly have a few hot words with the man at the box-office, as he will try to swindle you out of a portion of your gains, trusting to the confusion of the moment to cover up his fraud. On the whole, the system is about as good a way for losing one's money as the London Stock Exchange, and it does possess an element of "sport" which the latter seems to me to lack.

We knew as much about the horses running at Palermo as our maiden aunt in Hampstead, but we stuck to our lucky number and always "got home." A sporting gentleman who was with us on one occasion, and knew the history of every horse for generations back, lost so heavily that on one race he joined my wife and me on our lucky number! The horse arrived last, but—will you believe me?—by some strange error of the judge, it was given a place, and we drew so substantial a dividend on it that the sporting gentleman—who "plunged" all he had left on it—squared his losses! There was a great how-d'ye-do in the papers about the mistake, but it shows you the value of having a lucky number, rather than being versed in the "form" of the horses! Talking of the matter with a member of the Jockey Club, he told me that on one occasion he was present when the winning horse passed so much ahead of the others and so close under the judge's box that the judge didn't see it! But I was told by a local "sport" that it is held no great crime to "pull" a horse at Palermo. A person who had at times been employed by a leading jockey to make vicarious bets for him in substantial sums of money assured me that the said jockey was often mounted on "the favourite," yet seldom did the favourite win, and never did that jockey bet on his mount! The Jockey Club controls the races and the betting paying a certain percentage

of its great gains to charities. As for the public, although present at the races in their thousands, they seemed to have no healthy interest in the horses, but were there with solemn, hard, joyless faces to make money. Yet we are told horse-racing is the national "sport" of the Argentine. The liveliest scene is when the last race is over, and the multitude fight for seats on tram-cars, while the lucky ones swagger back to town in their hired vehicles. Very few women are to be seen, certainly not five per cent. of the crowd. A few of the *mundo elegante* may be noted in the Jockey Club enclosure, but the *demi-mondaine*, so eminent and attractive at Longchamps, is rigorously debarred. Indeed, you will search in vain at the Palermo races for any real signs of gaiety or sport.

Beyond the Hipódromo lies the golf-course. The club has been specially favoured by the generosity of Señor Tornquist, a great local landowner, and is patronised by natives and foreigners alike, the Argentine being very emulative of the English in all our national sports, and at heart he is "a good sport." The course, though only containing nine holes, is well laid out and is most interesting. I recall with pleasure the few rounds I made there, and also the ample hospitality of one of the finest club-houses I have ever visited.

Between the racecourse and the links there is a fine riding track, and near the station named "Golf" are some spacious tennis courts, where energetic natives and British alike practise that vigorous pastime. Football, too, and cricket are played near here and at Belgrano, and it is a common sight at Palermo to witness some of the military aviators practising; so that, on the whole, the sportively inclined need not be unoccupied in Buenos Ayres, and if there is little that invites the visitor to a paseo in the town, Palermo has always something to offer on Sundays at least. Saturdays don't count, as the Argentines have not yet risen to our English half-holiday, and the British residents fall into the unworthy habit of working all Saturday.

CHAPTER IX

MORE "PASEOS" IN BUENOS AYRES

Recoleta I have only mentioned in passing; but that offers a very interesting paseo to the visitor. My wife specialised on Recoleta, and piloted many another lonely soul to that strange city of tombs! As they say in Scottish villages, "Let's take a bit daunder in the kirk-yaird." Recoleta is certainly worthy of a "daunder." This famous cemetery combines some features of Père Lachaise with certain of the Campo Santo at Genoa. But it is really not like either. It is peculiarly Argentine. You can trace in it the progress of the national prosperity. It is essentially the creation of a people newly rich. Here and there we see in its crowded lines of tombs some mouldering memorial of the last generation, simple, unpretentious. But most of those that bear dates within the last twenty years or so are the last word in necrological "swank" or mortuary pomp. Not for nothing are funerals styled *pompas funèbres* in the Argentine. They do well by their dead. Millions of money have gone to the making of these splendid homes of the dead at Recoleta. For they are not buried in our "earth-to-earth" fashion. The bodies are merely encased in leaden shells, within gorgeous coffins of carved wood, and are laid on shelves within the mausoleums, so that for years to come the survivors may visit the tomb and mourn with no more than the thickness of the coffin between them and the departed. It is a horribly unsanitary system of burial, and the smell in the Recoleta on a hot summer's day is distinctly "high." How could it be else, with all these thousands of decaying corpses enclosed in boxes which, you may be sure, are not

all air-tight ? So intolerable is the savour of the dead that the custodians—the cemetery pullulates with uniformed custodians—have to " air " the tombs by opening the doors for several hours daily. When I went wandering in Recoleta, I used to think that Jacques' words—

> " And so, from hour to hour we ripe and ripe,
> And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot "—

would make a good motto for the place. How Shake speare has a tag for everything, old and new !

But I must describe a typical tomb. It is built entirely of beautiful Carrara marble, and better built than most houses in Buenos Ayres. No " sham " here. It towers some twenty feet above ground-level, and its lower floor is eight or ten feet underground. It is beautifully designed, with delicately carved pilasters, and surmounted by a graceful cupola, bearing a decorative cross. The spacious entrance is fitted with a noble ironwork gate, lined on the inner side with plate-glass, and bearing on a gilded boss in the centre the Christ-mark ☧ so familiar in all Latin cemeteries. In a word, save for the cross and the Christ-mark, it is outwardly such a monument as the wealthy Roman reared by the Appian Way, and surely there must be in Recoleta as many of these vanities as made that highway one of the great sights of Imperial Rome.

Let us peep within. In the upper chamber stands an elaborate altar of alabaster and brass, with an enamelled painting of the Virgin and Holy Child, encased in a massive frame of brass, before which, on the lace altar-cloth, spotlessly clean, are burning several candles. There are two or three *prie-dieus* of mahogany and various wreaths of real flowers hung on the walls, as well as others of beads or immortels. Below, down a flight of marble stairs with brass balustrades, one can see on shelves around the chamber, six, eight, perchance a dozen, coffins, and several marble busts, portraits of the more notable occupants of the coffins, placed on pedestals, against which are heaped more wreaths. Every detail of the tomb is perfect in its way, and no expense has been spared in the

"La Merced," a Typical Buenos Ayres Church.

"Teatro de la Opera," Official Home of Opera before the Building of the Colon.

THE LUXURIOUS DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF BUENOS AYRES.

The immense building seen in the background of the upper illustration is the home of the Paz family in the Plaza San Martín; the lower view shows a typical "quinta," or country house of an Argentine magnate in the suburbs.

making of it. It is scrupulously clean, for here come dainty ladies to kneel on the praying chairs for an hour at a time, and on All Souls' Day, or the Day of the Dead (*El dia de los muertos*), the family interested in the tomb will pass most of the day here. Two thousand pounds would probably be a low estimate of the cost of this little palace of death—a few square yards in one of the main avenues of Recoleta will outvalue the same space in Florida !—but it remains a charnel-house, and it smelleth of things unclean. I often thought that the mourning ladies seen in these tombs were another of the many traces of the Moorish dominion in Spain that still survive in the customs of Spanish America.

When I tell you that in Recoleta there are some ten thousand tombs, huddled together so closely that it is hardly possible to get an unembarrassed view of a single one, and that hundreds of them are quite as splendid as the one I have described (from my memory of many that engaged my attention), you will understand what a prodigious expenditure Recoleta represents. Millions of money, much good taste and more bad, have gone to its making.

Every kind of stone seems to be used—alabaster, marbles, granites, freestone—and all have been imported from Europe. Nearly everything of artistic merit bears evidence of European craftsmanship. There is abundance of beautiful ironwork and bronze plaques, medallions, statues. The debased modern Italian work is very noticeable. Almost every atrocity is of Italian origin. But there are several mausoleums of black granite, in the style of Germany's *art nouveau*, which show how beautifully that may be treated. They are so individual and yet so restrained and dignified that the good taste of the owners is as evident in them as the skill and genius of the designers. Strange to say, few of these really beautiful things bear the makers' name, yet every ramshackle erection of the jerry-builders in the streets of Buenos Ayres displays in large concrete letters the name of the proud architect who committed it !

Naturally, in Recoleta repose many of the notable

men in the recent history of Argentina. The great heroes, such as Belgrano, San Martin, Sarmiento, sleep elsewhere in lonelier state; but here are many presidents, generals, statesmen, mingled with the rabble of the merely rich. There is also a quadrangle stuffed with hundreds of coffins let into niches in the walls, tier above tier, up to some thirty feet in height, but that is mossy and neglected, as it recalls the old days before the coming of the "boom"; yet it is there that the real forefathers of the city sleep; there you will find the true blue Argentine who in life to-day is *rara avis*.

One could write a whole chapter on Recoleta, while its history and the stories of its tombs are worthy of a book. But our purpose is a paseo, and perhaps enough has been said to indicate that in its narrow and crowded lanes of mausoleums a paseo no less interesting, but very different in kind, from that of Palermo may be made. Unlike the theme of the popular song, however, it is *not* "all right in the summer-time." What one misses most is "the storied urn." The "animated bust" there is and to spare; but the tombs are lacking in interesting inscriptions. Usually, *Propiedad de la familia Fulano de Tal* is all that gives the wanderer a clue to the identity of the peaceful dwellers in these marble halls. The graveyard poet is unhonoured in Recoleta. One feature I had almost forgotten, and it is very much in tune with modern Buenos Ayres. Several magnificent tombs were unoccupied and bore tickets announcing that they were for sale. They had been erected by enterprising speculators. Thus the Argentine who has suddenly become wealthy by selling his "camp," bought a fine mansion in Buenos Ayres, and joined the Jockey Club, may acquire a ready-made mausoleum for his *familia*. Ah, the magic dollar!

Chacarita, a long way westward from Recoleta, is the great general place of burial. It is many times larger than Recoleta and more varied in its memorials, though it also contains great avenues of handsome mausoleums. A portion of Chacarita is dedicated to the British, and here one encounters the names of many of our fellow-countrymen who have helped to build up the amazing prosperity

of the Argentine and eventually laid their bones in its friendly soil. One grave, most likely to be passed unnoticed, bears a simple stone which records that he who sleeps beneath was the last lineal descendant of the Earls of Douglas. It's a far cry from the historic haunts of the Black Douglas to Chacarita, but so runs the world away.

Still farther westward, yet within the boundaries of this wide-spreading city, is the *Parque del Oeste*, which covers even more ground than the *Parque 3 de Febrero* at Palermo. We never met any Gringos who were in the habit of taking a paseo there; while in the pretty little park in the Boca, to which we occasionally wandered, my wife and I, we never saw anybody above the loafer class enjoying its leafy shade. In fact, this applies to all the parks of Buenos Ayres, if we except Palermo and the Botanical Gardens—they are the haunts of undesirables; and while they certainly beautify the city and look extremely well as green spots on the coloured plans, they might not exist so far as the decent population is concerned.

On a very tiny scale the picturesque Plaza Constitucion reminds one of the debaters' ground at Hyde Park, for here come the socialist orators to harangue little groups of artisans and labourers, and here the tireless warriors of the *Ejercito de Salvación* raise the banner of "Blood and Fire" and wage an unequal battle against the forces of Unbelief, Idolatry, and Indifference. To encounter these uniformed enthusiasts in the remotest corners of earth wrings even from the antipathetic a tribute of admiration for the genius of him who founded the strange movement and gave his life to a great idea. I am not sure but that the Salvation Army discharges a more urgent and useful social service in cities like Buenos Ayres and Montevideo than it does in the land of its birth. But it may be that the wanderer is apt to admire abroad qualities which at home would leave him cold.

In the Plaza Constitucion there is an elaborate artificial hill, with the artificial ruins of a castle! As the whole erection is now girt about with barbed wire, I suspect its constructors builded better than they knew, and,

in attempting to imitate ruins, succeeded so well that "the ruins" speedily became "dangerous." But the pathos of the sight will not escape the reflective eye.

Of the Paseo de Julio I have already written. It is a great blot on the municipal escutcheon that this most beautifully laid-out promenade, with all its pleasant greenery, its banks of flowers, its very remarkable marble fountain of the seductive mermaids, should be a haunt of the vilest classes of the community. Yet it was here, I confess, that when I went a-wandering alone I most often strayed, and an elderly gentleman who lived at our hotel told me that it used to be his practice of an evening to smoke his after-dinner cigar in a stroll along the Paseo de Julio, until he was warned that some night perhaps he would be added to the long list of victims who had there received a knife in their vitals and been robbed while they breathed their last. The shops along the Paseo certainly contain enough daggers to kill off the whole community in a comparatively short time, if used with system ; and there were several cases of murder there during my stay, a man being done to death, in one instance, for the equivalent of nine shillings.

As I have already hinted pretty broadly, if there is not a great deal that the visitor can find to interest him in the way of paseos within the wide boundaries of the city, there is but little beyond. When we have enumerated the Tigre, Hurlingham, San Isidro, and San Andrés, the list of pleasure resorts in the near neighbourhood is exhausted ; and I have deliberately made the best of it by including San Isidro, which is merely a residential suburb prettily set on rising ground. I tramped all round San Isidro one lovely autumn day, hunting for a new golf course, which I found to be so new that the greens had not yet been laid. At that time the place, pretty as it was, could not be said to hold the slightest interest for the visitor. Its church is pleasantly situated on the high ground of the *barranca*, an elevated ridge which denotes the former river-course. There is a dainty public garden trending downward from the church to the railway level, and one has a spacious view of the country, now bosky

and broken towards the River Tigre. The then President of the Republic had a house at San Isidro, and there were some very charming villas to be noted. But it could scarcely be considered a " show place "—there are scores of London suburbs infinitely more beautiful—though the patriotic Buenos Ayrian would probably complain if I failed to include San Isidro among the charms of the country-side between the city and the Tigre.

At San Andrés there is a fine golf course, with a Scots professional, and indeed a fine flavour of Scots even to the name, which is the Spanish for Scotland's patron saint. There is naught else at San Andrés, save the usual vast acreage of flat, uninteresting earth. Hurlingham is more varied in its interests and more picturesque. These resorts are almost exclusively British. I have sunny—and also showery—recollections of both.

Remains the Tigre. And when all is said, the Tigre is the one playground of the Buenos Ayrians, after Palermo. Of it I have many mingled memories. Some eighteen or twenty miles to the north-west of the city the River Tigre joins its turbid waters with the tawny flood of the River Plate. Near the junction, the Tigre is itself a river of considerable volume, and it is broken up by numerous small islands, which, thanks to the frequent flooding in the rainy seasons, are rendered extremely fertile, as the river deposits coatings of rich soil upon them. It is the delta of the Nile on a miniature scale. Thus it is that these islands, in common with the banks of the river for many miles, are always clothed with verdure and all sorts of fruit trees flourish abundantly. The natural growth is low and bushy ; the few clumps of taller trees have all been planted. But here at last we have something approaching " scenery." The main stream is as broad as the Thames about Richmond, and picturesque backwaters allure the oarsman in all directions. There is no sensational beauty—not a vestige of anything unusual to the English eye—indeed, one might fancy oneself on the Dee, only there are no peeping gables of age-old houses, no Chester Cathedral or Eaton Hall in the background. Still, the Tigre does

offer to the hungry eye of the disillusioned wanderer some natural interest.

But let me tell you of the town that has sprung up here, before we go a-boating on the river. The railway approach to it is as unlike a pleasure resort as Cradley Heath is unlike the Champs Elysées. In the town itself the streets are still to be made, and after a day or two of rain, horses have to haul you through mud which reaches up to their knees, so that it is an agony to ride in a coach, as the animals can only be made to perform their terrible task by the most brutal thrashing. Once only did I consent to endure the experience of seeing two poor creatures flogged unmercifully to transport us a distance of about half a mile across the wooden bridge and through the monstrous mire to the Tigre Boat Club on the other side of the river.

Along the river-banks there is foot-room enough, very rustic in character. On the left bank there are the beginnings of what some day may be very pretty river-side gardens, but the roadway for vehicles is merely mother earth in her changing varieties of mud and dust. After rain it is impassable for motor-cars, and in dry weather it is covered with waggon-loads of dust. In its former state I have seen a large motor-car embedded up to the level of the *chassis*, and two other cars on drier ground, with ropes attached, utterly powerless to move it one foot; and I have seen it when the passage of an automobile meant "a pillar of cloud by day" which the Buenos Ayres Israelites—whose name is legion—might have descried in the wilderness of the city! Most of the *quintas* or country residences are situated on the left bank, in streets that run at right angles to the river, and many of these country chalets are very charming, both in architecture and rustic surroundings, but assuredly an aeroplane would be the most practical way of reaching them after a shower. I noticed a childish affection for plaster effigies of dogs and other animals in the gardens, one quinta achieving the limit of bad taste with a perfect stucco menagerie dotted about the garden. There were dogs, cats, geese, foxes,

storks, hens, and many other "strange wild fowl," to say nothing of the little gnomes, so popular as garden ornaments in Switzerland. A more ludicrous exhibition could not be imagined. The houses are built of many different materials, but stucco prevails, and they are painted in all the colours of the spectroscope, some of them rivalling the garish exterior effects of Italian ice-cream saloons; but others, not a few, charming in every detail. It takes all sorts to make a republican resort.

The river-banks are occupied chiefly by numerous boat clubs, some of which possess very fine buildings, with every kind of modern luxury. All the nations of Europe seem to be represented in this way, and, so far as I could gather, the Germans vie with the British in their devotion to the river sport, though the native Argentines can pull an oar with the best of them and have several handsome club-houses. There is a large and well-appointed hotel, and a magnificent home for the Tigre Club was nearing completion before I left Buenos Ayres. This is the fashionable resort of the smart set, who are infinitely more interested in the roulette table and baccarat than in anything so wholesome as the manly sport which the other and less gorgeous club-houses represent. They motor down the sixteen miles from Buenos Ayres on Sunday afternoon, after the races at Palermo are over; get inside the Tigre Club as quickly as possible, and so away from the mosquitos; spend the evening in "play"; stay the night, and so to Buenos Ayres in the morning. Ah, that is life!

But the scene along the river on a Sunday afternoon is bright with life, awakening memories of the Upper Thames in summer days: crews practising in outriggers; lonely canoeists; loaded boats of trippers beating the water with ill-timed blades and unconsciously reproducing our 'Arries and 'Arriets "aht fer the die"; motor-launches scurring along well laden with passengers and delightfully oblivious of the "rules of the road"; the gilded youth showing the paces of his new motor-boat and translating his Florida swagger into terms of the river. An animated and pleasing scene, lacking only our unmatched modern

river nymphs—those fresh, fair, wind-blown, sun-kissed maidens of the Thames, who, with pole in hand, make the noble art of punting on our river of pleasure one of the most engaging of pastimes.

There are leafy shades on many of the islands, where teas may be served or where you may picnic if you be so minded, just as at home. To one of these we went occasionally on our boating excursions. It is a little island orchard. The catering is excellent, and among the spring blossoms—"under boughs of breathing may" used to ring strange in the memory when one knew it was October, though the conditions were May—it was pleasant to sip the fragrant herb, which in the Argentine they can brew as well as in England and better than I found elsewhere in South America. This particular island is the property of a certain lady who in the wicked past was a dancer at the Casino, when that was probably the most notorious entertainment in any civilised city ("according to information received"), but who is now a douce and not unattractive widow "with a past," and with a present which includes good teas and a hearty welcome. Everything is so lacking in historic interest in the Argentine that I found myself not a little piqued by the story of the ex-*bailarina* and her island retreat, to which she had withdrawn with a husband when her dancing days were done; and the husband dying soon thereafter, she added the tea-garden to her well-stocked orchard and new interests to her widowhood.

I said above that one could picnic "just as at home." But that requires some qualification. The merry mosquito of the Tigre calls for note at this point. I bow to his behest. He is the king of insect pests, and he at least endeavours to introduce a foreign element into the scenery. It all looks so English, forsooth! But all through the summer and autumn these woody reaches of the river are a hell of torment to anyone for whose blood the mosquito has a predilection. Happy mortals there be who seem to have no attraction for this blood-sucker that abounds in millions along the river-banks. Neither my wife nor I was fortunate

enough to prove immune, and two visits in summer and autumn sufficed to keep us away from the Tigre till the winter was well advanced and the spring-time had come again. Many a holiday-maker have I seen return from a river outing disfigured by bites on the face and wrists for a fortnight or more. The mosquito had a peculiar partiality for puncturing my instep, and could even get its proboscis home through the buttonholes of cloth-topped boots, causing such swellings that it would be days before I could wear aught but shoes, so that meanwhile others of its kind located in Buenos Ayres would continue the good work on the now more vulnerable instep, and my two visits to the Tigre in the biting season kept me limping for many a day thereafter. No, I say it squarely, I do not think that I have any great longing to find myself back at the Tigre—anywhere between Twickenham and Oxford is good enough for me; and assuredly, were I exiled in Buenos Ayres, I should rather bear the summer evils of the roaring city than fly to others that I wot of by the Tigre.

Thus, with every desire to make the best of it, my uncomfortable devotion to the truth has made me perforce allude to the flies in the amber of the one pleasure resort which is to be found near Buenos Ayres, and of which I had heard so much before I set sail for the River Plate. "There's such a charming place called the Tigre, to which everybody goes boating and picnicking," I used to be told. But I was not told that in the summer its sting was sharper than serpent's tooth, or that in the winter you had to wade to the river through mire, and thank the gods for a fine dry day when it pleased their extreme sulkinesses to vouchsafe so great a favour.

Still, given the right day, the exile from England may bless the Tigre and may there dream dreams of home.

CHAPTER X

HOW THE MONEY GOES

Buenos Ayres has somehow achieved the reputation of being "the most expensive city in the world." But this is not, strictly, correct; for, in my experience, Rio de Janeiro can give it some points and a beating in this respect, and even its near neighbour, Montevideo, on the northern shore of the River Plate, is, in a way presently to be explained, more expensive. To the stranger, however, it is always difficult to understand or account for the wide differences between living expenses in the principal South American cities, and Buenos Ayres and Montevideo offer a good illustration of this. In the former, "old River Platers" and natives alike will tell you that the cost of living is higher in Montevideo, and this has been confirmed to me on many occasions by visitors to the latter city. But when living for some five months in Montevideo, and finding all the commodities of life more costly than in Buenos Ayres, it seemed odd to be told by natives that so long as they could get profitable occupation in the Uruguayan capital, they would not think of changing to the Argentine metropolis where life was so much more expensive.

After comparing notes with many acquaintances in both towns, and contrasting these with my own experiences, I came to the conclusion that while the householder in Buenos Ayres is confronted with economic conditions which make for excessively high cost of living, a person in the same position in Montevideo lives relatively cheaper, as house rents, criminally high in Buenos Ayres, are moderate in the other city, and domestic labour is somewhat cheaper, while facilities for securing food-stuffs are greater and the market prices

relatively less. But to the stranger who does not take a house in either city, and prefers the comfortless freedom of hotel life, the conditions are exactly reversed, so that Montevideo would appear, to a casual observer, the more expensive city in which to live.

The main reason for this is the short-sighted policy of the hotel-keepers in the Uruguayan capital, which, during the summer months—December, January, and February—is an increasingly popular place of resort for wealthy Argentines, and the no less wealthy *hacendados* from the Uruguayan "Camp." The hotels, then crowded beyond all possibilities of accommodation—so that I have known an Argentine Minister of State glad to occupy a bathroom, from which he noisily refused to be ejected in the morning to permit of other guests turning the room to its proper uses—raise their prices to absurd heights, and when the season suddenly collapses, the managers still endeavour to screw from their lingering guests as near an approach as possible to the season's prices. Montevideo hotels, that four or five years ago were charging from $3·50 to $4 per day (14s. 10d. to 17s.), now demand in the season from $7 to $9 per head for accommodation which consists of one small room, with full board, half a dollar extra having to be paid for each bath taken on the premises! When I protested against this extra charge for baths, the hotel-keeper said that under no circumstances was he prepared to deduct it, as water in Montevideo was "dearer than wine," because a *maldita* English company owned the waterworks, and made the poor townspeople pay dearly for the privilege of keeping themselves clean. Under the circumstances, my wife and I were quite willing to substitute the cheaper wine for the water, but even this condescension on our part did not meet with his approval.

Certain it is that, although Buenos Ayres cannot really maintain its proud claim to be the most expensive city in the world—for I defy you to beat the record of 16s. paid by an acquaintance of mine in Rio de Janeiro for one cake of Pears' soap, a small packet of tooth-powder, and four ounces of tobacco, all bought in the

same shop!—it is in all conscience one of the most remarkably easy places in the world for getting rid of money quickly. Mr. Punch's immortal Scotsman who wasn't in London half an hour before "bang went saxpence" would assuredly have had an apoplectic fit within a quarter of an hour of arriving in Buenos Ayres. Fortunately, the preliminary shocks, which ought to be the severest, are the least felt, for one takes some little time to became familiarised with the relative values of the money, and not until one can instantly figure the English values of the Argentine notes he is paying away does he quite realise how rapidly his hard-earned cash is slipping from him.

The real unit of value in most transactions is the paper *peso*—these notes are usually so dirty that they are in very truth "filthy lucre"—and as the exchange stands about 11·4 to the English sovereign, it will be seen that a peso is value for about 1s. 9d. of our money. Many English residents, in endeavouring to regulate their expenditure, follow the somewhat simple plan of reckoning a peso as a shilling. This method certainly saves worry, though it is extremely bad finance, and worse, when it is known that, even reckoned as a shilling, the peso can purchase nothing that is the equivalent of a shilling's worth in England. Thus bad begins, but worse remains behind, for—as we shall all too surely find—not only have we often to spend three times, and sometimes four times, the value of English money to secure what the English unit would have obtained at home, but the article so bought will prove to be *falsificado*—a shoddy imitation!

But what most strikes the observer at first is the seeming negligence with which the Buenos Ayrian throws his money about, and the brazen audacity of the shopkeeper, as illustrated by the prices he places upon his wares. The one is, of course, a resultant of the other, though, obviously, there must be other forces at work to inflate prices. Mainly, we have to bear in mind that in this great city, perhaps the most cosmopolitan in the world, with a population of nearly a million and a half gathered from the ends of Earth, a motley multitude of money-grubbers,

money is the only standard of value. Thus, an art-dealer who placed a statue in his window and ticketed it at a reasonable figure, leaving to himself a fair profit after importing it at a fair price, would not long continue to thrive in Buenos Ayres. A very large percentage of the spending class are people who have come by their money easily, and, lacking all knowledge alike of commercial values and intrinsic worth, can judge only that a thing is good or bad according as the seller prices it. It is a happy state of affairs this, which cannot last for ever, and already there are signs that the Golden Age is passing. In October of 1912, for instance, I witnessed a portentous demonstration, in which a hundred thousand citizens took part, to petition the Government and Municipality for some immediate legislative action to lessen the cruel burden of the common people, to whom high wages and brisk trade mean absolutely nothing, in view of the excessive prices for the merest necessaries of life. To this I shall make further reference in the present chapter.

I remember how impressed I was, in one of my earliest walks, window-gazing in Florida, the Bond Street of Buenos Ayres, by the curious care certain shopkeepers had taken to display articles which in England would have been huddled in tray-loads and ticketed "Anything in this basket 1s." In fancy-goods dealers, for example, insignificant little purses and common pencil-holders, cheap fountain pens and little desk calendars, paper knives, and all the familiar odds and ends which are classed under the generic head of "fancy goods," were not crowded into the window, as with us, suggesting over-flowing richness of stock, but were each disposed in solitary state at respectful distance from the other, much as though they were valuable jewels, and indeed, when one noted the prices, they might have been precious stones, for a leather purse which would sell in England for 1s. 6d. or so, would there be ticketed relatively at 12s. 6d. I paid exactly 13s. 1d. of our money for a small loose-leaf pocket-book, an exact copy of which I have since bought in London for 5s. 6d.

The chief disparity between English and South

American prices is found in articles of clothing, which, fortunately for most temporary residents, is a matter that does not greatly trouble them, as it is always possible to take sufficient clothing to last one for a considerable period. But certainly when you see an ordinary straw hat, that would sell in the Strand for 5s. 6d., ticketed somewhere round 16s., you are inclined to catch your breath. The common " bowler," that sells in London at 6s. 6d., will cost you anything from 9 to 12 pesos (15s. 9d. to 21s.); while the average price for a suit of clothes made to measure in Buenos Ayres, equivalent in all respects to a suit costing four guineas or £4, 10s. in London, is £10. Consequently many Argentines have their measure taken by a London tailor, who, charging them £6, 6s. for a suit (thus leaving an unusual margin of profit to himself), enables the purchaser, after paying £2, 2s. import duty, to wear an actual London-made suit for 20 per cent. less than he can get one of inferior quality made in Buenos Ayres.

To give anything like an exhaustive list of the ridiculous prices charged for the simplest necessities in the way of personal clothing might be to lay oneself open to the charge of exaggeration, except that, fortunately, I have preserved several newspaper advertisements as evidence of the *bona fides* of any statements I have made, should these ever be called in question. So far as clothing is concerned, I shall limit myself to the further statement that on the day of my leaving Buenos Ayres for travel farther afield, I bought one dozen pairs of common socks, which in England sell for 1s. 6d. a pair, and paid for these exactly forty pesos, or 5s. 10d. per pair. This was one of the few occasions, during my stay in South America, when I found it necessary to purchase any articles of personal wear, and on looking at the prices in London shops to-day, I congratulate myself very heartily that I went forth to my adventures in South America well-stocked. I remember an English traveller, whose business takes him to Buenos Ayres for three months of every year, stating in the most emphatic manner that he would rather walk down Florida in his shirt tail than commit the

economic crime of purchasing a stitch of clothing in the town—and he was not a Scotsman !

It might be thought that the Gringo was a legitimate object of prey for the harpy shopkeepers of Buenos Ayres, but it is not so. The present writer, being not only competent to ask for anything in the native language, but, when occasion serves, to engage in heated and lengthy discussion in that delightful tongue, never found it possible to secure better terms than were granted to any fellow-countryman who could not utter a sentence of Castellano. It is not a case of one tariff for the native and another for the foreigner, as we find in Paris and other continental resorts. The native pays as highly—and, from long practice, much more cheerfully—for all that he buys, as the stranger.

In proof of this I cannot quote a better example than that afforded by an incident in which the silk hat of my native secretary figured somewhat eminently. He had been wearing it one Sunday at some special function—for the "topper" is throughout Latin America the symbol of importance and of special occasions, as it used to be in England—and, happening to be caught in a heavy shower, he required to send it round to the hatter's for ironing next morning. His wife, also a native, speaking only Spanish, called in and took the hat back home (errand boys are at a premium). The charge made for merely ironing the hat was 4 pesos (7s.). The good lady had no idea whether this was much or little, but her husband considered it a trifle excessive, as he, having lived some little time in London, and having found it possible to have a hat ironed there for 6d. went round to the Buenos Ayres hatter, and, after much argument, succeeded in recovering 2 pesos, or 50 per cent. of the charge from that gentleman, who was quite indifferent to the business, and told him to keep his old hat at home, as he had no wish to iron anybody's hats !

That is the spirit in which all repairing business is done. If you want anything repaired, you have got to pay so much that it is about as cheap to buy a new article. One day my watch stopped ; the spring was not broken,

and evidently it was only some slight fault, requiring, probably, a speck of oil. I left it with a watchmaker and asked him to regulate it. Calling next day, the watch was ready and going perfectly well, but to my surprise I was asked to pay 8 pesos (14s.) for the craftsman's skill and labour in putting it right.

"Oh, evidently the mainspring was broken when you charge so much," I remarked.

"No, sir, the mainspring was not broken," he replied.

"Then surely one of the jewels must have fallen out, or there was something to replace, to justify so heavy a charge?"

"No, none of the jewels was missing, but it was quite a difficult little job, and, besides, we do not like to repair watches,"—which was all the satisfaction I was able to secure for parting with 14s.

On mentioning my experience that afternoon to an Englishman of longer residence in the city, he remarked that these were the sort of things that never could happen to one after two or three years, because one soon discovered it was cheaper to buy, as you can, a quite useful 5 peso American watch, and whenever it goes out of order, throw it away and buy another.

There is a perfectly reasonable explanation of this. Workmanship, artisan skill, labour of all sorts, are the commodities at highest premiums in Buenos Ayres. People are making their money, reaping fortunes, not from honest, productive workmanship and exercise of creative skill, as in England and in other settled industrial countries, but merely from sale and exchange. The men who grow rich are the agents, the middle-men, and it is the middle-men who are taking back as quickly as they can from the wage-earners the high salaries which the latter can easily obtain but not so easily retain. The stationer, for instance, who sold me for 10 pesos a mechanical pencil sharpener, which my office boy immediately broke by carelessly inserting the point of the pencil, charged 5 pesos to repair the little machine. His business was to sell at a profit what he had imported from Europe, but not to supply skill and labour to put anything right.

Terminus of the Southern Railway at Plaza Constitucion, Buenos Ayres.

Marble Fountain in the Gardens of the Paseo Colón.

Plaza Francia in the Avenida Alvear.

The memorial is an offering of the French "Colony" to the Argentine on its Centenary in 1910. Various monuments, the gifts of other "Colonies," ornament different parts of the capital city.

As rather an inveterate smoker, and one with a preference for cigars, I recall how disappointed I was to be told by the captain of the ship on which I sailed to the River Plate that there was probably no place in the world where cigars were so bad or so expensive as in Buenos Ayres. I cherished for a time some faint hope that this was perhaps a sweeping generalisation founded on unfortunate experience, but I must bear witness to its general accuracy. The cigar shops are many of them most beautifully appointed, fitted up with a luxury rare even in London or in Paris. In not one of them is there a smokable cigar to be had at less than 60 centavos (roughly, 1s.), and in order to enjoy something approximating to the pleasure of a good Cuban cigar, which would sell in London for 1s. or 1s. 6d., you will have to disburse at least 3 pesos, or 5s. 3d. It is a custom among the Argentines, who are notably abstemious, to invite a friend to smoke a cigar, under circumstances where an Englishman would ask him to "have a drink." Often I have noticed at the tobacconist's a gentleman taking in a friend to "stand" him a cigar, and seldom, if he is a gentleman who values his self-respect and reputation in the community, will he offer a friend anything less than a cigar that costs 3 pesos. It is naturally a biggish cigar, and it will certainly have a very wide band with a good splash of gilt on it, and it will probably smoke not quite so well as a 1s. cigar sold in London. So far as I could discover, the moist atmosphere deteriorates the imported Havanas. Locally-made imitations are concocted from Brazilian tobacco, packed up in disused Havanna boxes and hawked among the offices by men who pretend to have smuggled them into the country without paying duty. Admirably "faked" as to outward appearance—for the art of falsification is one of the few local industries that flourish in Buenos Ayres—these cigars can deceive no one after the first puff, but thousands of boxes are annually sold to ready buyers, who, unable to afford the shop prices, at least make a pretence of smoking Havanas, though they know quite well they are being fobbed off with cheap Brazilian tobacco. Cigars are sold

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at all sorts of prices, from 20 centavos upwards, and occasionally it is possible to smoke one sold at 50 centavos, as I had frequently to do at my hotel, where I was charged one peso for a cigar, on the band of which 50 centavos was printed. Representing to the manager that 1s. 9d. seemed a good deal to pay for a 10½d. cigar, the value of which, in England, after the excise duty had been paid, would not have exceeded 4d., he blandly assured me that they always charged a peso for a 50 centavo cigar in the hotel !

Hotel prices are naturally in excess of all shop prices in Buenos Ayres, as elsewhere, and of course there are degrees even among the hotels. At one hotel, where some of the modern comforts common to the better class of hotels in London or New York may be obtained, the tariff is so formidable that even an Argentine millionaire, whose acquaintance I made, and who had been making the hotel his headquarters for a year or two instead of living in a town house, told me that he would have to quit, as he felt it was little short of sinful to pay the weekly bill with which he was presented. Another gentleman, the manager of a very large industrial concern in England, whose market is mainly in the Argentine, was spending several months in Buenos Ayres during my stay, and left the palatial hotel in question to come to the more modest establishment where we two Gringos put up. In talking over the relative charges with me, he said that while we had to pay enough in all conscience for what we received (and for which no praying could have made us "truly thankful !"), there was at least the difference between paying excessively for very common fare and having your money literally "taken away from you." Yet the hotel in question, thanks to the extraordinary difficulty of obtaining competent assistants at reasonable wages, and to the famine prices which must be paid for every domestic commodity, as well as the immense capital that has to be invested in steel frames, reinforced concrete, and furnishings, is no very profitable business for those who conduct it. I doubt if they could charge less than they do ! This was often my experience

when I came to inquire into what seemed altogether unreasonable prices: to find that those who seemed to be exacting the uttermost profit were really asking no more than the circumstances warranted.

All the same, a knowledge of the economic conditions does not greatly help you to look with approval upon a charge of 9s. 8d. for placing a bunch of about six roses and half a dozen other flowers in a bowl on your table at dinner when you are entertaining a couple of guests, especially if, as you happen to know for certain, the said flowers have been left over from a wedding celebration in the hotel the evening before. On several occasions this was the charge which appeared on our weekly bill for decorating our little table in the gorgeous manner described. Myself, having scant use for alcoholic beverages, my main expenses on liquids touched what the North Americans call "soft drinks." Certainly the prices were hard enough. I have retained some of our hotel bills as reminders. From these I extract the following interesting items: One bottle of San Pellegrino Water, 2s. 3d; Salus Water, 2s. 10d.; Small Apollinaris, 1s. 5d.; Schweppe's Soda, 2s. 5d.; Vichy, 2s. 3d; Small Perrier, 1s. 4d. As most English make it a point never to drink the water of the town, and can easily dispose of several bottles of Perrier or Schweppe's Soda per day during the hot weather, the reader can figure what proportions the weekly bill for mineral waters will reach, and it must be borne in mind that the figures given are those charged at an hotel of a very modest character. Nor would these excessive prices be so remarkable if each bottle contained what was indicated on the label. Nowhere in the Argentine is there any certainty that such is the case, and not infrequently has one to accept some local concoction in the guise of an imported European mineral water.

I also find some notes as to alcoholic drinks in our hotel bills, which will give some notion of the casual expenses of entertaining friends. For a bottle of Guiness' Stout, 1s. 9d.; for a glass of Tonic Water and Gin, 2s. 1d.; for a bottle of Chandon, 22s.; the same for a bottle of Veuve Clicquot; Chateau Lafitte, 12s. 3d.,

and so on. It will be noticed that the disparity between English and Argentine prices in the matter of alcoholic drinks is less glaring than in the case of mineral waters. But I find an occasional item in these weekly bills which probably touches the high-water mark of imposition. Under the heading of "Alcohol," we were charged from time to time 3s. 6d. for a pint bottle of methylated spirits for use in a small spirit-lamp !

Perhaps the very apex of audacity in the matter of excessive prices is reached by the chemists, who ought surely to be the richest tradespeople in all South America. It was our unfortunate experience, as indeed it is the experience of most Europeans who have to live for any length of time in these parts, to be fairly frequent patrons of the drug-shop. But no amount of experience reconciled us to the prices that were exacted. Nor do I think the natives ever purchased anything without an inward or outward protest, as I was frequently present at disputes between customer and chemist. I recall particularly a youth who had been sent by his employer to fetch some medicine that had been dispensed for him, and on offering all the money his employer had given him to pay for the medicine, he was found to have brought less than half the price demanded by the chemist.

It was my wife's unfortunate fate to have to consume a large number of *cachets*, prescribed by a Porteño doctor, and these I had to purchase weekly at a well-known drug-store, paying 8s. 9d. for thirty, the price of which in London would have been 2s. 6d. Out of curiosity, after two or three weeks, I took the prescription to another chemist—as there is one at every other street corner, the choice is ample—and was supplied with precisely the same articles at 4s. 4½d. But the following week, when I returned for a new supply, I was charged 8s. 9d., as at the other chemist's ! On my protesting that I had only paid half that price the previous week, I was informed that, as they had a somewhat limited supply of a certain drug used in the prescription, they were forced to charge an increased price, and had therefore added 100 per cent. to the first charge ! These prices are

typical of everything sold in the chemists' shops; from soap to chest-protectors, there is not a single item that will not cost the purchaser from three to five times the price at which it may be bought in the stores of London or New York.

It will thus be seen that it is a somewhat expensive business to be ill in South America, and as most people, natives included, seem to be in a continual state of recovering from illness (so much so that a familiar greeting among the natives is *Buenos días, y como le pasa su estómago?*—"Good morning, and how's your stomach?"), the harvest of the chemist fails less frequently than that of the agriculturist. The commonest class of doctor charges a fee of 17s. 6d. if you call upon him for a few minutes' consultation and are fortunate enough to be admitted before his two hours of work are over, as you will usually find a roomful of patients awaiting his attention. If you indulge in the luxury of inviting a visit from him at your house, his charge will be 35s., which must be paid on the nail, while payment for a consultation at his rooms is either made to an attendant before entering, or to the doctor himself on leaving. A simple operation, such as that for appendicitis, will cost you anything from £50 to £200.

Returning again to the smaller items of daily expense which help to drain your earnings away from you as quickly almost as you receive them, I find I have a few further notes worthy of record. At the hotel where we lived, two English servants suddenly appeared. They had been attracted to Buenos Ayres as the new Eldorado, and wages of 40 pesos a month had seemed to them the beginning of fortune, especially when they estimated the possibilities of tips. But one of them, requiring to buy a new hat after her first fortnight in the city, and being charged 23 pesos for the same (about 41s.), which in London she would have considered fairly expensive at 6s. 11d., she and her companion very speedily made up their minds to return home, prepared to be a little more contented with the conditions they had so lately despised. A peso and a half (2s. 7½d.) was a common charge for

hair-cutting—a simple hair-cut, no shampoo or singeing included, mark you. In view of this, it would not have been surprising had long hair been the fashion.

One soon becomes acclimatised to these shocks, though I never could quite reconcile myself to paying £1, 4s. 6d. for the hire of a cab to Palermo racecourse and back—a drive, I suppose, of some two and a half miles each way. When the races were on, no cabby would consider a proposal to drive you there unless you undertook to retain his services for the return journey, and that was the only comfortable way to get back to town, as the brutal struggle that ensued for seats on the tramcars limited that economical method of travel only to the brawny, while there was always the likelihood that in the car your silver cigarette case, your purse, your watch, or pocket-book, might disappear, so that perhaps the expensive coche was the cheaper after all.

As for theatre charges, the opera, save in the gallery—where anybody who has any reputation to maintain in the town cannot afford to be seen—is possible only to the wealthy, and consequently it is seldom visited by English residents, except when honoured by an invitation from some Argentine friend. A seat in the pit of the commonest theatre costs about 5s. 3d. There is a curious system of paying for your seat and afterwards paying a peso for the privilege of entering the theatre! The cinematographs, which are relatively as numerous as in London or New York, have a uniform charge of 3s. 6d. for an entertainment that compares badly with the sixpenny houses in London. Some of them are run on a system of three sections per evening, the admission being 1s. to each section, but these are of the cheaper class.

In short, there is no necessity or luxury of life for which one has not to pay several times more in Buenos Ayres or in Montevideo than in any European or North American city. Every instance I have taken from my personal experience, and beyond these there are doubtless hundreds of examples quite as remarkable, or perhaps still more noteworthy, for various newcomers with whom I came into touch, who were settling in the city

and under the necessity of furnishing flats or houses, were uniformly aghast at the prices they were asked to pay for the most modest items of furniture, while house rents would have turned a Piccadilly landlord green with envy. I had personally to buy many items of office furniture, the prices of which I do not recall, with the exception of one polished oak table, which in London would not have fetched more than £3, but which cost me exactly £14. I also remember that a none-too-ostentatious writing-desk cost me upwards of £25.

No wonder such conditions of life should be pressing heavily on the resident population, with whom *la carestía de la vida* has become an all-absorbing topic of conversation. During my stay, as I have already mentioned, a strong movement was initiated by the popular journal *La Argentina* in the hope of bringing about some easing of the terrible burden, with what ultimate success I know not. But it is interesting to quote here a few passages from the leading English daily (the *Standard*), which, like all the Buenos Ayres' journals—native and foreign alike—is seldom severely critical of the economic conditions of the country, being, I suppose, nervously afraid of saying anything that might place the Argentine in an unfavourable light to foreign critics:

"For some years past the Press has been urging upon the National and Municipal authorities the necessity of adopting measures for improving the condition of the working-classes by reducing the cost of the necessaries of life and by providing convenient and hygienic dwellings for workmen and their families, but hitherto, the people having remained patiently submissive to the economic state of things which counteracts the higher remuneration obtainable for labour, the authorities have failed in their duties to promote, to the utmost of their power, the well-being of the mass of the population of this great city. Congress has voted lavishly the resources for the embellishment of the city, for the construction of monumental buildings and monuments, for the acquisition of useless warships, for the

granting of hundreds of pensions to persons who have no claim to public charity, for the sending of representatives to congresses held in foreign countries upon subjects in which this Republic is not interested, and special embassies and commissions under different excuses, to enable favoured individuals to make the tour of Europe with their families at the expense of the public, but there is never any surplus revenue to permit the diminution of the duties and taxes which weigh most heavily upon the shoulders least able to bear the burden. . . .

"The place of meeting was in the Congress plaza, to which, in spite of the threatening state of the weather, the people flowed from all parts of the city and suburbs, and at the appointed time marched in orderly procession to the Plaza Mayo. A deputation, headed by Mr. Adrian Patroni, a member of the staff of *La Argentina*, was received in the Government House by the Minister of Finance, Dr. Perez, who was accompanied by his private secretary and by the Administrator of the Custom House. Mr. Patroni presented to the Minister a petition, together with numerous lists of thousands of signatures in support of the petition, which asks, among other things, for the reduction of the import duties on the necessaries of life; for a diminution of the cost of transport of articles of general consumption; for the erection of 10,000 houses for workmen and their families; for the grant of sufficient funds for paving all the streets of the suburbs in order to give work to the unemployed as well as to improve the hygiene of the city; for the prohibition of races on working days, and for the closing of the hippodromes (racecourses) within five years. . . .

"Numbers of people in the procession carried placards upon which were inscribed the requirements of the proletariat, including, besides those mentioned in the petition, demands for the concession of the public land, with facilities for the payment of the same, to those who are willing to cultivate it; for personal security for all the inhabitants of the provinces and territories; for the improvement of the roads; for the suppression of trusts and monopolies; for severe legislation against

usury; for regulations of the auctioneers' profession; for issuing bonds for $100,000,000 m.n. for pavement in the suburbs; for the reduction of license taxes on the vendors of articles of consumption; for establishing free fairs in all sections of the Municipality; for permission to introduce the carcasses of animals slaughtered outside the boundaries of the Municipality."

Now what is the reason for this extraordinary expense of living? It is not a matter that can be explained in a few sentences, so many factors are at work to make the conditions what they are. I can at most throw a beam of light on several of these factors. Europeans, for instance, are astonished to be told that, in a country popularly supposed to be one of the most naturally fruitful in the world (though there is no greater illusion), the commonest fruits which in Europe and North America are within the reach of the very poorest, are only to be enjoyed in Buenos Ayres by the rich. The country is almost destitute of native fruit-bearing trees; it is naturally a treeless, bushless wilderness of rich, loamy soil, capable of producing enormous crops of grain if properly cultivated, or of maintaining almost fabulous herds of cattle. The contents of the orchards and vineyards that do exist must be reckoned as exotics. Few people, indeed, seem to trouble about the cultivation of fruit or vegetables, though the vineyards round about Mendoza on the Andine frontier, and Bahía Blanca in the south of the Province of Buenos Ayres, show what unlimited possibilities the soil possesses for the vine. Cattle and grain have occupied (and not unnaturally) the energies of the agriculturists, but fruit-growing has been comparatively neglected. Even so, it has fallen into the hands of a vicious "ring," who, adopting the worst of North American methods, have set themselves to exploit the public. In the islands of the Tigre, at carting distance from Buenos Ayres, where fruit and to spare could be grown to supply the needs of the capital; and across the river, in Uruguay, where there are ideal conditions for fruit culture, and where peaches, pears, apples, and other fruits are almost as plentiful as blackberries;

this ring has seized control, and I have been told that many hundred tons of peaches and other fruit have been thrown into the river in a single season rather than that the harvest, by its natural abundance, should have been permitted to lower the market prices.

A successful English fruit-grower, attracted by the possibilities of Buenos Ayres and the crying need for supplies, came out to study the situation, and found that although he could easily have secured ideal orchard land, and could have raised enormous crops of apples, pears, peaches, and all sorts of table fruits, he would have been powerless to have brought his products to the market in face of this sinister ring. He therefore abandoned the project and returned to England. Thus, within walking distance of orchards laden with peaches, it would cost you 3d. for one; and in Montevideo the conditions are more outrageous still, as during our summer there we bought scores of Californian apples at a cost of from 8d. to 1s. *each apple*, the local product, at best inferior to the imported, being then inaccessible.

One effect of this scarcity of fruit—and vegetables are only a little less scarce, the country people seldom tasting them !—is the vogue of English preserves, which are served as table delicacies. Jams, which the London workman buys at 6d. a pot, are dealt out in the restaurants in spoonfuls at more than 6d. a helping ! *Dulce inglésa* is the line on the menu, and when you ask for it (which you do but once), you find it means a tablespoonful of common strawberry jam, and you could have had a *pêche melba* for the money at home ! Common sixpenny pots of marmalade are sold in Buenos Ayres at 1s. 9d. In Montevideo we two Gringos were responsible for the consumption of many a tin of American fruit, such as sells in London at 10d. or 1s., the uniform price of which in Montevideo was 3s. 4d.

In the matter of manufactured articles, one naturally expects to pay extra, since everything has to be imported from Europe or the United States. From the latter country comes most of the polished oak office furniture, on which there is an infamous import duty, on top of

which again the selling agent exacts large profits. In this way the price swells to four or five times the home-selling cost. Import duties on ready-made clothes and every variety of household wares are so excessive that the original cost is augmented by 25 per cent. to 50 per cent. before the seller secures possession of the goods. The seller in turn has such enormous expenses in the shape of high wages to assistants and iniquitous rentals that he must clap on another 25 per cent. or so for handling expenses; and finally, as he himself has heavy out-goings for his own living, and will naturally endeavour to secure some little luxuries from the limited possibilities open to him, on must go another 25 per cent. or more for profit.

It is thus one vicious circle, which results in everybody earning far more money than he can earn anywhere else, and spending four or five times more to secure about one-half of the comfort or luxury he would expect to enjoy in any part of Europe or North America. Net result: he is perhaps, as my American friends say, "ahead of the game," but I am far from being convinced that the European or the North American could not equally keep "ahead of the game" in his own country, earning less, spending less, enjoying more, and saving equally. There is, however, to some temperaments a certain delight in having money pass freely through one's hands, and assuredly that is what happens in the Argentine. If the money comes easily, it goes with equal ease, and in the getting and the going there is a certain zest which brings with it a feeling of unusual prosperity. If this is a merit, it is one of those merits that have their defects; for the Englishman who has spent some considerable time in the Argentine and become habituated to the money values there, finds on returning to Europe some difficulty in readjusting his ideas of expenditure, and unless he is in the happy position of being able to continue receiving from the Eldorado of the South the wherewithal to spend at home, he is likely to overshoot the mark and to be faced with the necessity of returning to the land that at least enables him to spend so freely by bringing quickly to his left hand what goes so quickly from his right.

CHAPTER XI

SOME PHASES OF SOCIAL LIFE

HERE is a subject which every writer on the general life of a town or a country is expected to deal with, but in the case of Buenos Ayres one is reminded of the famous, " Story ? Lord bless you, there's none to tell, sir ! " Save that, in being a civilised people, the inhabitants of the Argentine must needs dwell in communities, " social life," as we understand it, is difficult to discover in these communities. Certainly, a teeming city of nearly a million and a half population, with crowded streets, palatial houses, theatres, lecture rooms, concert halls, restaurants, would seem to suggest possibilities of " social life " ; but it happens to be a city mainly devoted to money-making, those who have already made their money maintaining a centre of social life somewhat remote from the Calle Florida—as far away, indeed, as the Bois de Boulogne and the Champs Elysées, for is not Paris the social Mecca of the successful Argentine ?

Still, they are few indeed thus privileged, in comparison with the multitude who have to make the best of things as they are in Buenos Ayres. Even during the terrible months of summer, those who can afford to fly from its stifling atmosphere to the rustic surroundings of the Hills of Cordoba, to the sea-washed shores of Mar del Plata, or to the still more attractive and less expensive river-side suburbs of Montevideo, constitute a small section of the community. Buenos Ayres never quite contrives to be so " empty " as London in August, when we are told " everybody is out of town," although our streets remain as thronged as usual. Holiday-making in South America is not the inexpensive business it is with

us. The middle-class Argentine with a considerable family—and most of their families are considerable—will spend as much on a fortnight's visit to Mar del Plata as an English middle-class family would disburse on continental holidays during five or six summers.

There is, of course, an important section of the community who annually quit the city to pass the spring and summer months in the "Camp." These are the *estancieros*, whose wealth comes entirely from their country estates, where life in the winter months declines to the nadir of dismal dullness and discomfort, so that they reside for seven or eight months of the year in the city, and remove to the country for the warmer season, during which time the head of the family may inspect and revise the work that has been going on in his absence under the direction of his *mayordomo*, while the members of his family (which may include what we would consider half a dozen separate "families," as the patriarchal system of family life still obtains among the Argentines) will enjoy themselves in a variety of simple and healthy country pursuits. When residing in Buenos Ayres, the estancieros who have not placed their affairs entirely in the hands of estate agents, as is the custom with those who prefer to live in Paris, maintain offices and clerical staffs like any other business men; for the work of an Argentine *estancia* entails a vast amount of organisation, even more than the administration of a large English estate.

With the family life of the Argentines, however, I do not for the moment wish to concern myself, that being a subject of peculiar interest, which I purpose treating at some length in a later chapter. For the moment, my endeavour is only to register such evidences of the outward social life of the people as came within my range of observation during my stay in Buenos Ayres and my visits to different parts of the country. Conditions in the capital city differ, of course, in various ways, from those in the larger provincial towns, such as Rosario, Cordoba, and Mendoza, and still more widely from the life of the smaller rural communities; but we must always bear in mind in speaking of the Argentine that, roughly, one-fifth

—and the most important fifth—of the entire population is concentrated in the capital, so that while London is not the embodiment of England, nor New York of the United States, Buenos Ayres does stand for Argentina.

In previous chapters I have expressed my feelings of surprise and disappointment at the unlooked-for dullness of the so-called " Paris of South America." Never shall I forget the deadness of our first night in Buenos Ayres—a deadness that struck us like a nipping wind, chilling to the bone all hope of bright and entertaining evenings. It was an impression which the succeeding months, when we maintained a hungry and pathetic quest for social interest, did but little to remove. Perhaps it was due in some degree to the grossly exaggerated and misleading pictures of the city spread abroad by writers more intent on flattery and official patronage than on the simple narration of the truth. Almost alone among the many who have written on the life of Buenos Ayres, M. Jules Huret has ventured to hint at the appalling dullness of the social life and the lack of interest, especially for those of the younger generation.

The most vital factor in determining the social life of any community is, perhaps, the position of the womenfolk. In this respect there is probably no city in the world on which so much has been written, yet concerning which the untravelled reader entertains more erroneous ideas. For this we have chiefly to thank the sensational journalism of Europe and North America, which, on the flimsiest of bases, has built up in the public mind the conception of Buenos Ayres as the metropolis of Vice, the world's mart of the White Slave Traffic. Bearing in mind much of what has been written on this unsavoury topic, and more that is circulated world-wide in irresponsible gossip, the visitor might expect to find the outward conditions of London, Paris, and New York reproduced on a many-times magnified scale. Nothing could be further from the truth. There are no large cities that I have visited in Europe or North America—and I have visited most of them—outwardly so free of social offence as Buenos Ayres and the other great cities

of South America. By comparison, London and most of our provincial towns would seem sinks of iniquity. Go to the races at Palermo, visit any theatre in Buenos Ayres (with two or perhaps three exceptions), dine at any of the few restaurants where a good meal is obtainable, wander the streets at any hour of the day or night, and you will never have a moment's embarrassment from the social pest which obtrudes itself so flauntingly in London or New York. This is one of the few things they regulate better in Buenos Ayres. All places of public resort are barred to the *demi-mondaine,* and as she is officially known, this makes for a certain surface cleanliness of society, which is doubtless a delusion so far as the essential morals of the people are concerned, and may be written down an organised hypocrisy; but the outward evidences are as stated, and not otherwise.

Furthermore, I know of no cleaner journalism than that of South America. Even the papers of the Anglo-Saxon world compare unfavourably in this respect; yes, those we deem highly "respectable"! One might expect to find among a Latin people something of the continental levity in the treatment of this subject; but for propriety and sobriety, I do not believe it would be possible to better the journals, even of the lighter class, which are published in Buenos Ayres. They are almost absurdly respectable—the result, it may be, of a very obvious lack of humour in the people. A further consideration is the intense devotion of the Argentine to family life, and to family life of an almost Moorish exclusiveness, so that, with very few exceptions, almost any publication issuing in Buenos Ayres may safely pass from the hands of the parents into those of the youngest children.

This will be something of a revelation to many of my readers, but when I come to deal with "The Argentine at Home," the factors which make for this outward cleanliness of social life will become apparent.

On the other hand, the position of the Argentine woman, which so vitally affects the social life of the country, corresponds in no way to Anglo-Saxon notions,

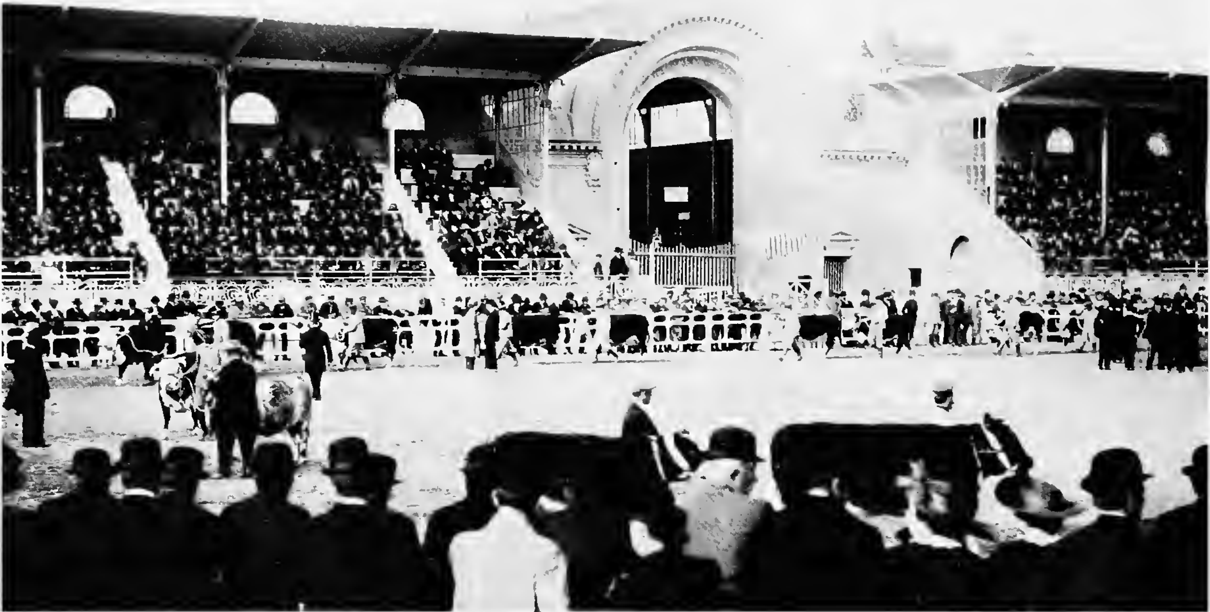
and explains much of the dullness, artificiality, and insincerity it is my immediate business to describe. I remember very well reading in the pages of M. Huret's admirable work, *Del Plata á la Cordillera de los Andes*—

"An Argentine assured me that, on meeting in the street a lady whom he had known in his youth, and whom he is entitled to address familiarly (*á la cual tutea*), he is careful not to stop and speak to her, lest in doing so he might compromise the lady."

Indeed, this Argentine informed the French writer that in such a case he preferred not to notice the lady at all, but to look away from her! Here, surely, is a suggestive fact. The statement seemed to me so remarkable that I raised the point with various Argentines, and always had it confirmed, one gentleman assuring me that he would not even go so far as to pause for a moment to speak in the street with his sister-in-law if she were unaccompanied. He thought it was an extremely foolish social custom, but considered it was one to which every gentleman was bound to conform.

It will thus be seen at a glance that one form of social intercourse so familiar to us does not exist in the Argentine, which country is typical in this of almost all the South American Republics. How far this must condition the social life, anyone can guess. The women are permitted some measure of freedom until they become engaged, and may, under strict chaperonage, attend formal receptions and balls, where the stiffest of starchy manners are *de rigueur*. But after marriage they withdraw to the seclusion of their own homes and devote themselves to the care of their families, seldom taking part in any social gaieties, even going very little to the theatre.

One consequence of this is an extraordinary preponderance of men at all places of amusement. I am probably under-estimating the proportion when I say that in almost any audience, with the exception of that at the Teatro Colón, 75 per cent. would be men. More, I have often deemed it a pathetic commentary on the arid life of the place to enter one of the many cinematograph



Prize Bulls at the Agricultural Show in Buenos Ayres.

Summer Scenes on the Tigre, the River Resort near Buenos Ayres.

theatres and note the rows upon rows of men, with no more than a handful of women sprinkled among them. Often in an audience numbering probably five hundred there would not be more than a dozen ladies, and most of these foreigners. It is a condition of things that tends to perpetuate itself, as my wife, even with me at her side, always felt a little ill at ease where so few of her sex seemed to be expected, although, without exception, the entertainments might have been arranged for a party of Sunday-school children, especially if it contained a number of "Budges" who revelled in "bluggy" subjects, as hairbreadth escapes and the adventures of Nick Winter, Sherlock (often rendered "Shylock") Holmes, and other preposterous "detectives" were the staple fare.

This tremendous overplus of men in the places of amusement admits of two explanations. First, we have the unusual social custom which allows of the husband acting as vicarious pleasure-seeker for wife and family, so that no Argentine lady complains when her husband goes out alone to the theatre and winds up the night at his club, returning long after she has been asleep! Secondly, we have to remember that in all cities populated chiefly by emigrants, large numbers of single men are to be encountered. It is the experience of business people in Buenos Ayres who employ considerable staffs that a large proportion of their workers are youngish men who seem to be absolutely without family ties or attachments of any kind, lonely wanderers from the far lands of Europe.

A further influence militating against the womenkind enjoying such entertainment as is to be found in Buenos Ayres is the widespread area of the city. With a population not very much larger than half that of Paris, Buenos Ayres occupies vastly more space, owing to the system of one-storey-houses, which is still universal beyond the congested business area of the town. The tram service—one of the best regulated in the world, as it is also one of the cheapest—affords only a very inadequate means of communication between the farther suburbs and the theatre district, in Maipú and Esmeralda, while the primitive state of the roadways in Suburbia makes travel by coche or

taxi-cab a hazardous and painful experience. So it happens that we find nowhere those bright and attractive supper restaurants with merry groups of pleasure-seekers, men and women, discussing the play they have just come from; but, in their place, many cafés exclusively occupied by soft-hatted men smoking and drinking. The most pretentious restaurant in the city shuts its doors immediately after dinner, and even during dinner the ladies are always in an insignificant minority. Gaiety, forsooth! Who comes to look for that in Buenos Ayres has undertaken one of the most barren of pursuits.

As for the character of the resorts, little that is favourable can be said. I remember with what delight I used to scan the theatre advertisements in the columns of *La Prensa* before I sailed for the River Plate, and what pleasures we promised ourselves, my wife and I, when the day's work would be done! Places of amusement there are in abundance, and their advertisements make a brave showing in the newspapers, but there are rarely more than two, or it may be three, entertainments that are worthy of a visit. South America is the happy hunting ground of all sorts of incompetent Spanish actors and draggle-tailed Spanish dramatic companies. To see *The Merry Widow*, *Casta Susana*, or *The Count of Luxembourg* performed by a company destitute of vocal talent, with shabby, misfit scenery, and a wardrobe so poverty-stricken that not a single actor wears a suit of his size (the whole company of them resembling, in evening dress, a scratch lot of waiters from a Soho chophouse), the orchestra being clad in the motliest mixture of tweed suits, while the voice of the prompter, whose sweaty shirt sleeves obtrude from his ugly box in the fore-front of the stage, is heard above that of the actor—this is by no means a delectable experience; yet such is the manner of the fare most frequently offered in the theatres of the city.

True, from time to time excellently organised Spanish and Italian companies do occupy the principal theatres; and once a year there is a visit from some eminent French actor, with a picked company, but on the whole dramatic

entertainment is pitifully poor, the pieces being staged in a slovenly and inadequate style. The State-aided Opera, which has its home in the great Colón Theatre, is, of course, a national institution, and as such fills a very important *rôle* in the social life of the richer classes, though the bulk of the people have never seen more than the outside of the building. Opera is here staged as perfectly as in the finest opera-houses of Europe, and not a few "stars" first twinkled in Buenos Ayres before their magnitude was recognised in London or Paris. On the strength of the Opera, Buenos Ayres enjoys the reputation of being a very musical city, but I do not hesitate to say that this is as great a hypocrisy as the white-gloved morality of which I have spoken. In the *paraíso* you might discover a considerable number of Italians who had been attracted to the Colón out of a genuine delight in the performance, but in most other parts of the house, and most of all in the highly-priced boxes, the people are there to see each other: the ladies to study the dresses of the other ladies, the gentlemen to display in the persons of their wives and daughters the substantial condition of their banking accounts—or of their credit. Nay, even during the most dramatic parts of *Aida*, *Manon Lescaut*, or *Otello*, I have seen quite as many ladies in the audience with their backs to the stage, chattering to friends, as there were others following the play. And in the *cazuela* (a word which in domestic use signifies a stew, and theatrically a gallery reserved entirely for ladies—also something of a stew) the chattering between the fan-flapping occupants is so continuous that on a sudden lowering of the music one is sure to hear voices from the cazuela ringing out by contrast. For the rest, the Opera is a function conducted with the most tremendous gravity, and although the season is extremely short (and usually unprofitable to the impresarios), it is not without its uses in enabling the native community to see a little more of each other than the restrictions of their social life would otherwise allow. To the stranger, however, it is socially useless, and to the mere lover of music who could appreciate the ex-

cellence of its representations, it is almost prohibitively expensive, unless he or she is brave enough to incur the odium of being "spotted" in the five shilling gallery or paraíso, to which no English resident of any position in the town would condescend to ascend. The consequence is, you will seldom meet an English resident who has ever been to a performance at the Colón.

Of recent years, a movement in the direction of providing healthier entertainment of a varied description for the family circle on certain afternoons of the week, much after the style of the London "variety" *matinées*, has been growing. Thus, on Saturday and Sunday afternoons during our stay, one used to see many ladies and young children at the Casino, but at night it was the rarest thing to discover in the whole crowded theatre a respectable woman. Occasionally an English lady ventured with her husband to one of the boxes, where it was possible to sit behind a screen and see the performance without being seen; but every seat in the pit, the circle, and the galleries was occupied by a man, and invariably there would be at least one turn that was highly objectionable, and rendered the more so by the conduct of the audience, who, slow to respond to anything which the Anglo-Saxon mind recognises as humour, have an ever ready nose for suggestiveness, and when that is forthcoming, do not merely laugh at it, but render it the more offensive by uttering all sorts of obscene noises.

The Casino, the Theatre Royal, the Scala, and the Parisiana, during my stay, whatever may be the case now, were the evening haunts of the younger men. The first named was the only one that attempted anything like our Variety Theatre entertainment, the majority of the *artistes* being usually English or American, and the difficulty of maintaining a programme was so great that the management had to content themselves with what they could get in the shape of second and third-rate "turns" from overseas, so that often the variety was not remarkable, two or three groups of comic acrobats being included in one programme; and we all know that there is no variety in comic acrobats. The other

three resorts were deplorable imitations of the Parisian houses that specialise in *revues*. With the exception of the Casino, these theatres were all so small that they would not have been considered suitable in England for more than lecture rooms or "picture" halls. The *revues* were usually so stupid, the scenery so contemptible, the performers so inferior, that I always felt sorry the audience had nothing better to do than waste their time in such inanity. French was the language of the *revues*, with occasional Spanish songs and interludes, and there was only one joke which seemed to have a universal appeal — some reference to "606." Examples: A miserable youth "comes on" to visit a burlesque doctor. He begins explaining how he had met a young lady in a restaurant, using words of the most suggestive character, each sentence containing a pun on a number. "Ah," says the doctor, "your case must be treated arithmetically." As the patient proceeds with his tale, the doctor seizes on every punning phrase containing a number, jots the number down on a slate, adds the lot up, result 909, but reversing the slate exhibits to the audience "606." Then there is feeble laughter of fools! Or a young lady has a song of the telephone, and the refrain is, "Please give me number 606." Faugh! But the spectacle of an English acrobat on the Casino stage, dressed as a Highlandman, who at certain times pulled a string that raised the back part of his kilt and displayed "606" painted on the seat of his "shorts" filled me with disgust.

The music in these revues usually consisted of a *réchauffé* of such up-to-date tunes as "Ta, ra, ra, boom de ay!" "A Bicycle Built for Two," "There are Nice Girls Everywhere," and many others that have run their little day in our own more wholesome halls. In a word, anything more despicable in the matter of entertainment could not be conceived; yet in these poor, pitiful playhouses the young men and older bucks of Buenos Ayres were supposed to be "seeing life."

At one of the theatres mentioned, a group of fourteen English girls were employed practically all the time I

stayed in Buenos Ayres, as dancers and singers. They would certainly have found the greatest difficulty in earning a livelihood in the same way in their own land, and it made me sad to hear their poor thin voices uttering some drivel about "coons" and "moons" which to me was only partially intelligible in my native language, and must have been so much meaningless rubbish to the majority of the audience. The few painted ladies who frequented those places in the evenings were a sorrowful group of regular attenders, admitted, I believe, at half price, and gave the final touch of squalid meanness to the scene.

So much for the "gaiety" of Buenos Ayres! The reader will probably now begin to realise what an attractive place it is for the young Englishman. Poor young man, there is no one for whom I feel more pity. He is at his wits' end for wholesome amusement after business hours, and his case is even worse than that of the young Frenchman or the Spaniard, who can occasionally, at least, enjoy some reasonably good performance in his native tongue, for English dramatic companies cannot possibly find sufficient support to warrant the expense of the long voyage out and back. When I come to deal with the life of the British community, I shall describe the straits they are put to for social amusement and distraction, and the ingenuity with which they contrive to render their lives a little less unpleasant than circumstances conspire to make them. But in the general social life of the town, the English take little or no part, keeping to themselves with their usual exclusiveness, rendered the greater here by the almost impenetrable barrier which the *criollos*, or older native families, present to all advances from without.

In this regard the British are not singular, as the French, German, Spanish, Italian, and other nationalities all maintain in a very marked degree their racial sympathies, although assimilating more quickly with the native element in the matter of language, which remains the great stumbling-block of the Anglo-Saxons.

Each community maintains its own clubs, with many sub-divisions among Italians and Spaniards, the Neapolitans, for instance, having their meeting-places apart from other Italians—indeed most decent Italians refuse to recognise the Neapolitans as fellow-countrymen—and, among Spaniards, the Asturians especially maintaining their local patriotism and racial interests in this way. These clubs, almost innumerable, afford the men a common meeting-place to discuss their fortunes in the new land of promise and to recall their old days at home, and as the social side of them includes frequent concerts, banquets, and balls, the women of the company have also opportunities for appearing in their best clothes and seeing photographs of themselves in groups published in *Caras y Caretas*, the principal illustrated weekly, whose every issue contains a large number of such items.

The social side of journalism is even more highly developed in Buenos Ayres and in South America generally than in North America, so that one judging only by the newspapers and the illustrated periodicals might suppose there was nowhere in the world such sociability as in these Latin Republics. In Buenos Ayres and in Montevideo elaborate *guias sociales* are published annually, containing lists of "At-home days" and other information of a personal character, while *La Prensa, La Nacion, El Diario,* and all the other newspapers devote whole columns daily to the movements of the local nobodies. No possible occasion for a *banquete* is allowed to pass, and to the English reader *Caras y Caretas* is a weekly joy, with its dozens of photographs of these quaintly comic little functions.

Señor Don Alonso Moreno Martínez (let us say) is going to Rio de Janeiro on business for two or three weeks. The friends of Don Alonso thereupon ask him to dine with them at the Sportsman Restaurant, where, in two hours' time they will demolish a quite eatable dinner of five or six courses. Meanwhile, one of the ten or fifteen hosts of Don Alonso has taken care to warn the photographer of *Caras y Caretas*, of *Fray Mocho*,

and perhaps of *P.B.T.*, and these three photographers turn up in the course of the two hours, make flashlight photographs of the little handful of diners, none of whom will be in evening dress, the group presenting the oddest assortment of clothes, and, behold, in the next issues of these widely circulated periodicals, excellent reproductions of the said photographs, inscribed: "Banquet offered by his friends to Señor Don Alonso Moreno Martínez, in view of his departure for Rio de Janeiro, where he will absent himself for a week on affairs of importance." It is no exaggeration to say that thousands of these photographs are published yearly in the pictorial press, and when the honoured guest is a little more important than my imaginary Don Alonso, then the big daily newspapers are pleased to publish the photograph, while the provinces send up to Buenos Ayres scores of them every week. It is all very pathetic, but very eloquent of the low level of social interest.

Even the Races, so important an institution in Buenos Ayres, are conducted in a way that almost entirely eliminates the social element. Among the vast crowd that frequent the splendid course at Palermo on Thursday and Sunday afternoons, except in the enclosure belonging to the Jockey Club, very few women are to be seen. The men are there in mobs, not to enjoy the races, in which they take no genuine sportive interest, but in the hope of making a bit of money. An American lady said to me she had never been at so quiet a demonstration before; she considered King Edward's funeral was altogether a livelier ceremony! The undemonstrative character of the people is, to us supposedly phlegmatic Anglo-Saxons, really extraordinary. I have an impression that it arises from an inborn laziness of character which is not altogether foreign to their nature. They are chary of giving applause in the theatre, and they sit dull and motionless before the most exciting films in the picture palaces. At the Races there is a feeling of sullen determination to get back twenty pesos or more for the two they have speculated. But it is really too much

to expect any genuine feeling of sport in a country where many of the races are notoriously "faked," as I have already explained.

With all this lack of genuine interest in life outside the brute struggle for the dollar, it is not surprising that there should be a widespread devotion to gambling and the card table, most of the social centres already mentioned being also resorts of gamblers. And with all its veneer of socialness, there is no genuine public spirit throughout the heterogeneous community. In a minor way this was illustrated in February of 1913, when, owing to certain regulations which the Chancellor of the Exchequer imposed upon the shops selling drugs and perfumes, some 1340 hairdressers and about 400 drug shops declared themselves "on strike" by temporarily closing their premises, to the serious inconvenience of the invalids and the dandies. The action drew forth the strongest denunciation of the Press for its anti-humanitarian character; but I noticed that quite as much sympathy was expressed with the male population who would thus be placed under the painful necessity of shaving themselves for a day or two, as with the suffering humanity, whose need for medicine makes the druggist's one of the most successful businesses in the city.

There is truly little humanitarian feeling evident in the social life of Buenos Ayres, although the organisation of the *Asistencia pública* is in every respect admirable and its first aid to the injured and the sick leaves nothing to be desired. The Hospital organisation into whose care the patient passes after leaving the hands of the *Asistencia* is by no means so well conducted, so that while you may rely on being taken to a hospital in the best possible way, Heaven help you after you have been left there! Fear has much to do with the public attitude to disease—that worst sort of fear which comes from little knowledge. True, the Argentine is far in advance of most of the other republics in its provisions for public vaccination, and also in its sane policy of making vaccination compulsory, but the official treatment of disease always seemed to me to suggest a nervous dread of the possibilities, a feverish

readiness to test all the latest European innovations for its suppression. The memory of past plagues is a potent factor in this; recollections and traditions of the devastations wrought in Buenos Ayres by Yellow Jack a generation ago do much to spread the nervousness when there is any whisper of epidemics in other South American ports.

January 29, 1913, was an anniversary of the first great epidemic of yellow fever that decimated the population of Buenos Ayres, and it coincided with an outbreak of bubonic plague in the northern city of Tucumán. The occasion was seized by the very competent and vigorous writer of "Topics of the Day" in the Buenos Ayres *Standard* to deliver an excellent homily on "Disease as a Hygienist." From this I quote a few passages which I think worthy of attention, coming as they do from the pen of an outspoken local critic:

"Unfortunately government as an art is not understood to include or embrace hygiene. Politics concern themselves only with the passions of the people, and the detriment thereof. The oft-quoted tag: 'The health (*sic*) of the people is the supreme law,' is remembered only when an orator is anxious to display his erudition, or when he feels in a particularly cynical mood. The 'supreme law,' as every one knows, is to get what you can, when you can, how you can, but get it!

"Not merely in the Provinces is hygiene neglected. The big cities are great culprits in this matter. Some years ago the city of Rosario was visited by bubonic plague. Instantly it was placed in a state of siege. Trains from outside were not allowed to enter, nor were passengers allowed to leave without 'a thorough disinfection.' They and their luggage were submitted to the process, which gave them a disagreeable odour, but, unfortunately, gave immunity to no one. The outbreak was, as a matter of fact, too benevolent to cause wide alarm in Rosario, but it had a wonderful influence in stimulating the city authorities. As if by some enchantment the old fœtid system of cesspools in the centre of the city was done away with and modern sanitation installed. Legions of homeless

dogs were summarily caught and mercifully asphyxiated. The vigorous broom of reform was wielded unceasingly for a few months, and Rosario smelled sweeter in consequence. But much still remains to be done in Rosario. In Buenos Ayres the old problem of sanitation is now in course of solution, a comprehensive and stupendous scheme being in course of execution. Still there are places in the outskirts that would serve as nurseries for exotic disease-germs. Unfortunately, too, the *conventillos* are full of children and adults predisposed by heredity, by malnutrition and unwholesome surroundings, to fall victims to and propagate, any passing epidemic. . . .

"The fact is, it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a city, town, or village in Argentina that can boast of adequate sanitary arrangements. The smaller the place the greater the problem. But to listen to Argentine orators, in Congress or out of Congress, it might be thought that this country had absolutely nothing to worry about but the unsatisfactory political conditions of the Provinces and the country. Whole sessions are devoted to a sterile debate upon the alleged covert intervention of the National authorities in the mean and pettifogging 'politics' of the Provinces. But never a word about the squalor that is endemic in the cities and towns of these politician-ridden quasi-autonomous States. Should Nemesis come along she will exact heavy retribution for culpable loss of time and opportunity, sacrificed in order that glib orators may air their ineffective gifts."

Clearly social hygiene is not yet a strong point in the Argentine, where 62 per cent. of deaths among children born in the country are due to malnutrition and errors of diet. Think of the folly of it! A land clamouring for population, inviting immigrants of all races, yet allowing a high percentage of its newborn citizens to perish owing to the lack of humanitarianism in its social system. The life of the individual is valued lightly in the Argentine, and in any sort of society where the welfare of the component atoms is deemed of no importance, the basis upon which to rear the fabric of social well-being is insecure.

As an illustration of the poor stuff out of which the social life of Buenos Ayres has to be constructed, note the following, which I reprint from the Buenos Ayres *Standard*:

" 'Those who live in glass houses should pull the blinds down,' is an old axiom worth keeping in mind. Although not exactly a glass house, there is a hotel in Calle Cangallo. A bedroom in the ground floor has two large windows fronting the street. Last night both these windows were surrounded by an admiring crowd. An Englishman who happened to pass naturally stopped to look at the attraction. This consisted of a young and exceedingly pretty woman who had 'divested' herself and got into bed, quite oblivious of the fact that the *persianas* (lattice shutters) were wide open. The evening was warm, and as she slept the sleep of the just, she exhibited even more of the human form divine than would be considered discreet by a classical dancer. The admiring crowd freely criticised the sleeping beauty and made no attempt whatever to arouse her to a sense of her position. Our English friend promptly entered the hotel, explained matters, and a maid promptly entering the room switched off the light to the accompaniment of a chorus of groans from those who stood without."

The lax organisation of the police is largely to blame for the lack of social sweetness throughout the Argentine. The officials of the force embrace every type of mankind, from honest devoted servants of the public to the lowest of "grafters" and murderers. They are constantly swaying between excess of zeal and absolute indifference, or active participation in criminality. Here is a typical case as reported in the daily press:

"The Buenos Ayres 17th Police have been accused of a serious abuse of authority. According to the accusers, a young couple engaged to be married were arrested in the Plaza Francia because they were seated on a bench talking! Conveyed to the *comisaría*, the two prisoners were confined in separate rooms, and one of the two police

officials, it is alleged, assaulted the young woman in a most cowardly and repulsive manner. The case has been referred to the Chief of Police."

That is all I ever heard of the matter. Almost daily all sorts of police scandals come to light in the Press, show their ugly heads for a moment, as it were, then slip out of sight, "no more being heard of the matter."

A similar case to that just quoted came to my knowledge, in which two hapless Gringos figured unhappily. A young lady had arrived from England to marry her sweetheart, who was employed in Buenos Ayres. On the second night of her arrival, they strolled to the Plaza San Martin, and, forgetful of the strange amenities of local society, behaved in the "spoony" fashion of a loving couple in a London park. They were promptly arrested and passed the rest of the night in prison. The creature who would arrest them might be a half-breed Indian, himself capable of any crime, but not understanding that Gringos are accustomed to do their love-making in the open!

Quaintly enough, the police are often the ravishers of helpless women. Once during our stay a young woman was forcibly taken by two men in a taxi-cab to the woods at Palermo and there criminally assaulted by them, while a *vigilante* "kept the coast clear." The men then decamped, and the zealous agent of Argentine law himself committed a further criminal assault on the unfortunate woman. The police have even been known—though this predated our stay in the town—to seize a woman in the street, conduct her to a house and assault her!

With the police as active agents in wrong-doing, the social life of the country could not be other than it is. Nay, when one has listened to many stories of official turpitude, the surprise is that so much approximating to modern civilised conditions should be able to survive in the Argentine. Although probably more in place in my chapter on the Emigrants, I am tempted to relate here, for the lurid light it throws on certain sections of Argentine society, one of several stories told to me by an Italian

doctor, who had practised for some twelve years, first in a provincial town and afterwards in the Federal capital.

A countryman of his came to the Argentine, with his young wife and infant daughter. In Italy he had been a small market-gardener, and in the new Land of Promise he started in a humble way as a cultivator of potatoes and vegetables near a country town some thirty-five miles from Buenos Ayres. Modest prosperity attended his efforts, and in their rudely built and sparely furnished little *rancho* the couple lived happily and contentedly with their little daughter. Some years of increasing prosperity passed in this way, and the Italian was able to acquire a little more land. Meanwhile a slight friendship had sprung up between him and the local *comisario*, who, in riding past, would occasionally dismount and enter the *rancho*, or take a seat in the shade of the rude verandah, to share a bottle of wine with the Italian and his wife. Indeed, the story as told to me by the doctor, with the warm, imaginative touch which the Italian imports from his native tongue into the Spanish, was quite idyllic up to this point, but here enters the element of tragedy.

It so happened that the young wife, her husband's junior by some eight or ten years, was even more beautiful than the average woman of her class, admittedly the most beautiful of peasant women. At first the Italian was flattered by the friendship of the police officer, whose goodwill it was desirable to retain, if all sorts of oppressive restrictions hampering the development of the *ranchero's*, work were to be avoided ; but later he began to wonder whether this friendship sprang entirely from good feeling towards himself, or whether the comisario was casting an envious eye upon the young wife. Suddenly awakened to the possibilities of this, and being, in common with most of his race, a man of passionate nature, the Italian forthwith determined to remove from the district to some place where he hoped his wife might be free from any possible persecution and he from being tempted to the usual extreme of the Italian husband whose honour has been assailed.

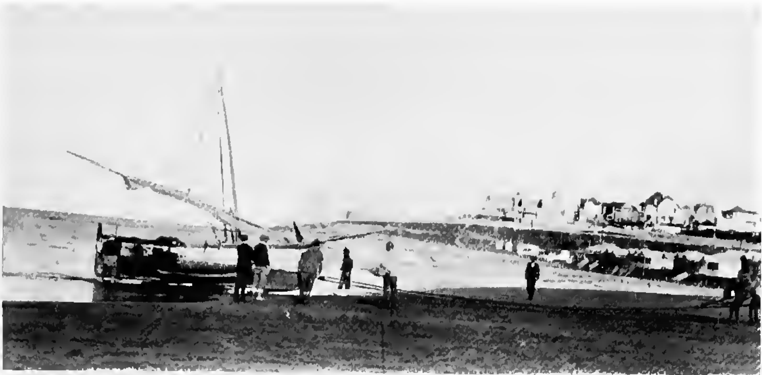
Selling his plots and belongings for much less than he might have secured had he cared to wait a favourable offer, he removed some forty miles away, leaving no clue as to his address. In this new locality he acquired a similar piece of land; set about the erection of a new rancho and the preparation of his soil. Here he opined his wife would at least be safe from the attentions of the official, and he determined he would exercise greater care in preventing the comisario of the new district from setting eyes on her, for he had now realised, what all his countrymen in the Argentine come speedily to understand, that a good-looking wife is one of the most dangerous possessions an emigrant can take with him to the new land. Quietly the couple went about their business for a time, the wife actively assisting in the work of the little farm. The shadow of the evil comisario seemed to have passed. But it was not so. Annoyed at being baulked of his prey, that ruffian had carefully followed up the disappearance of the Italian couple and traced them to their new place of abode. This he managed by the simple process of sending out an official description to all the surrounding *comisarías*, describing the couple and asking for news of them to be forwarded to him, as though they were fugitives from justice! And so it happened that, after a few months of peaceful industry, the Italian was horrified one day to see his wife's persecutor riding down the main street of the town in company with the local chief of police. Divining evil afoot, he hastened home to warn his wife, and make preparations for eventualities.

That very evening the comisario, accompanied by a local vigilante, called at the house and demanded admission, declaring they held an order for the arrest of the Italian. The latter's response was to discharge a revolver point-blank at the police agent, whom he grievously wounded,—the officer keeping out of range. The latter then withdrew, only to return with two more agents and several roughs from a neighbouring café. Acting on his instructions, the gang attacked the house, the two vigilantes being killed by the Italian before he was overpowered and bound to the rough wooden posts of the

inner wall. The comisario and the scoundrels who accompanied him now criminally assaulted the young wife and daughter before the eyes of the helpless man, and eventually left, carrying away with them the mother and child, only when the outraged husband seemed to have been rendered raving mad.

Later, several agents were sent from the local comisaría to remove the now almost lifeless Italian, who had been seriously injured in the melée and crippled for life owing to the wanton brutality of those who broke into his rancho. He was lodged in gaol, and after many months was tried and sentenced to some five years' imprisonment for the shooting of the two agents sent to arrest him. Surviving the prison ordeal, he was eventually released, though crippled, beggared, and hopeless. But the Italian spirit of revenge burned fiercely within his shattered frame, and obtaining one of the deadly stilettos with which his countrymen are all too familiar, within a few months of regaining his freedom he succeeded, in the most dramatic manner, in killing not only the comisario who had worked such havoc with his life, but also the brother officer who had so callously aided and abetted him. The one he dispatched in a café; the other in his private room at the police station, allowing himself to be arrested immediately thereafter. Of his ultimate fate the Italian doctor could not speak, but he assured me the facts were as stated, and that the man was personally known to him. Nor did he know what sinister fate befell the wife and daughter. Such is one of the little tragedies of the Argentine, and one that I have been assured by those who know, is typical of numberless unwritten chapters in its social life.

It may be objected that the killing of the officer in a restaurant and being able to escape to a distant town and kill another, seems improbable; but this you will understand when you know what happens in the event of a public murder in the Argentine. I remember walking along Calle Maipú, in Buenos Ayres, soon after my arrival, when suddenly seven or eight people bolted out of a small café, the entrance to which was down some



VIEWS OF MAR DEL PLATA.

In the second picture the large building of "El Club,' the gambling centre during the short bathing season, is seen, and the bottom illustration shows the new "Rambla" or promenade of cement structure which has supplanted a rickety wooden one.

SUBURBAN AND RURAL ROADS IN THE ARGENTINE.

The photograph on the left was taken in the suburb of Quilmes, and shows a typical suburban road in dry weather; that on the right, the main road through the town of Azul in the south of the Province of Buenos Ayres.

steps, and whence came the screams of a woman. Presently two policemen came hurrying along and disappeared within. Everybody near the scene took care to avoid the immediate vicinity of the café, lest he might be arrested as a witness! What had happened was this: A man had been shot dead, and his body was lying in the café, where only an old woman who attended the bar remained, every one who had been in the place at the time of the murder incontinently bolting. And well for them that they did so, as it is the custom of the police to make indiscriminate arrests of witnesses in the neighbourhood of any crime that has been committed, and these hapless witnesses are lodged in gaol and treated with greater rigour than the perpetrator of the deed! So notorious is this ludicrous procedure, that there is a saying in Buenos Ayres, "It is better to be a murderer than a witness," and consequently an enormous number of crimes pass unpunished for the simple reason that no one who values his personal safety cares to come forward as witness.

The nature of the crimes perpetrated daily throughout Argentina is such that the Anglo-Saxon mind revolts at the mere thought of human beings existing who could be guilty of such enormities. But it is only fair to say that in these crimes of passion and violence, the native Argentine is seldom involved, the lower class Italian, and especially the Neapolitan, being the worst offender. Indeed, the Italian doctor who told me the story related above was careful to explain that neither of the comisarios who played such villainous parts were Argentines of pure descent, but were Spanish-Italians. One has only to note the names of the persons concerned in the cases reported in the press to realise that Italy, and especially that hotbed of vice and criminality of which Naples is the centre, is responsible for the largest percentage of the inhuman outrages that stain the records of the Argentine.

As I have hinted, the Gringo who gets himself involved in any sort of dispute with the police is likely to regret it. The only safe course is to avoid at all costs the interven-

tion of the legal authorities. When one must go to law, then care must be taken to ensure the proper course of justice, either by judicious bribery or personal influence! I have known of cases in the United States where it has been necessary to "purchase justice," particularly one important judgment which was only placed beyond doubt by liberally feeing the judges. Similarly, the honest man who meekly sits down, and out of his unworldliness allows "justice" to take its course in the Argentine, without doing something to help it along, may live to regret his scrupulousness.

An English acquaintance, whose sense of justice is so abnormally developed that he would go to law about the most trumpery matter rather than submit to what he felt to be an injustice, one morning had to make some calls in Buenos Ayres, and, hailing a coach from the rank in front of the hotel, he drove to his first appointment, a matter of some ten minutes, asking the driver—an Italian—to wait for him at a certain point a few hundred yards distant, where coaches were permitted to stand. But after discharging his business and going to the place in question, he could not find the coach. The driver had evidently accepted another fare, hoping to get back in time for my friend. But, behold him at the hotel in the evening, demanding payment of fifteen or sixteen pesos, on the ground that he had waited several hours for the return of the traveller, and only gave up hope of his coming back when it was nearing dinner-time! The Englishman declined to disgorge 25s. or 30s. for his ten minutes' coach-drive, and offered two pesos, exactly double the amount he had legally incurred up to the time of leaving the coach, and thus allowing for the time he had ordered the coachman to wait. This the man indignantly refused, quitting the hotel with vows of vengeance on the Englishman, who, by the way, had only a smattering of the language, or sufficient to indicate in a crude and gesticulative manner what he required.

Next morning, or it may have been the next again, when walking along the Calle Florida, our Gringo was surprised to find himself stopped by a policeman, with

whom was the cochero, and requested to accompany them to the comisaría. He gave the agente to understand, as well as he could by gesture and some of his odd Spanish words, that he would go with him in a coach, but would not be taken on foot through the streets. Eventually this was agreed to, and thus they reached the police station, where some hours passed before the magistrate could or would inquire into the case.

In vain did the prisoner claim permission to communicate with the British Minister, and when at length he was brought before the judge, it was clear that gentleman had made up his mind on the story already told by the cabman, which was naturally a tissue of lies. A request for an interpreter was at first refused, the magistrate saying he believed the Gringo understood well enough what was being said to and about him, but on continued protest, an interpreter was called, and he made it his first business to interpret nothing said either by the magistrate or by the accused, but advised the latter to pay up and get out of the court at once. Mr. Gringo, being a particularly stiff-necked British type, insisted that having incurred the trouble of being arrested, he would not now pay one centavo more than he had offered the cochero at the hotel, and demanded that his side of the case should be fully interpreted to the magistrate. Even this seemed to make no impression on the enlightened administrator of the law, who stated that the simple fact remained that the coachman had been engaged and had not been discharged, and that evidently the accused had not taken sufficient pains to make sure that the coachman was not waiting for him at the appointed time and place, the prosecutor producing a lying witness who swore to seeing him at the appointed place and at the time stated.

At this juncture the Englishman again, in the most emphatic way, instructed the interpreter to insist on having the case adjourned until he could have time to communicate with the British Minister, as he was willing even to run the risk of a night in jail rather than accede to any order of court which seemed to him unjust. His

request was again dismissed as irrelevant, the matter being one entirely for the consideration of the police judge. Then, suddenly recollecting that at the moment of his arrest he was on the way to visit a very influential Argentine with whom he had business relations, and who took a prominent part in local politics, he suggested that he be permitted to communicate with him.

The moment the judge heard the name of this gentleman pronounced, and realised he might be a friend of the accused, the whole complexion of the case instantly changed, and, instead of passing judgment for the payment of the coachman's claim, as he had originally shown a readiness to do, he calmly asked the accused why he had not mentioned before that he was a friend of Señor Fulano de Tal, and the matter could have been arranged immediately. Moreover, he would not even allow that the coachman was entitled to more than one peso, his minimum fare for the ride from the hotel to the place at which the Englishman left the coach !

So dumbfoundered was the plaintiff at this sudden change of front that he burst into a volley of oaths against the Gringo and also insulted the judge, who forthwith clapped him in jail to cool off for the next three days !

Our friend, not a little satisfied with the turn of events, was thereupon liberated, with no worse loss than that of some four or five hours' time and the expenditure of a certain amount of nervous energy. But that was not the end of the matter. The cochero, having spent a few dollars by way of bribes anticipatory, had ample time in the next three days to nurse his wrath to scalding point, and the Englishman was advised, in view of this, to be very careful of his movements after these three days had passed, as it was a matter that might be settled in the approved manner of the Italian—at the point of the stiletto.

It so happened that, five days after the court scene, the Englishman was due to sail for England, and during the days following the prisoner's release he practically never left the hotel, even taking the precaution of having his luggage conveyed to the boat by another traveller,

to throw the coachman off the scent, if perchance he was lurking about seeking vengeance. Then, when ready to leave, a friend engaged a taxi-cab and drove up to the kitchen entrance of the hotel in it, the Englishman jumping in instantly. Thus he succeeded in eluding the ruffian, but he actually saw him arrive at the quayside just when the visitors were being turned off the vessel !

The simple narration of this episode can give but faint idea of the anxiety and inconvenience it must have caused to the English traveller, and it is to be doubted whether in the end he was the gainer. My own policy was invariably to submit to any sort of injustice when I could not see an immediate likelihood of successfully protesting against it. The line of least resistance is certainly the only policy in the Argentine that makes for comfort and peace of mind.

The practice of indiscriminately thrusting people into jail and leaving them there for several days, in the vilest conditions and often in a common room with the most desperate characters, before inquiring into their case, had one solitary merit, and, as the Irishman said, even that was a bad one. In every motor accident that takes place—and there are many daily—the first thing the policeman does is to march the chauffeur off to jail, and have the car removed afterwards. It is a matter of complete indifference to the police whether the accident is the fault of the chauffeur or not—off he goes to jail, and there he may lie for several days before he is discharged. As it would be difficult to discover more reckless drivers than those who make pandemonium of the streets of Buenos Ayres, this struck me as not entirely a bad method. To assume the guilt of the motor-driver until he had proved his innocence was, in nine cases out of ten, to take the proper course. Some English acquaintances of mine, however, who kept an automobile and employed a very considerate and cool-headed Englishman as driver, were unable to agree with me, as their man had just spent three days in prison for a slight accident in which a careless passenger had injured his foot by stepping off the pavement against the wheel of the car,

and, owing to the verminous condition of the jail, the poor chauffeur had to destroy all his clothes after he was liberated ! My friends had also had to suffer inconvenience, owing to their car being abandoned in the street by the arrest of the driver, and being held by the police for a day or two before it was delivered to them, suffering, in the meantime, some damage. The only moral of this story is that Buenos Ayres is no place for an English chauffeur !

But of course it is easy to be critical of the social conditions of a country which, after all, has no more than emerged from somewhat primitive conditions into the larger life of a great modern nation. The Spanish civilisation in America was not in every way superior to the native civilisation it destroyed and supplanted, and for generations it made but little progress of itself, if anything deteriorating as the inevitable consequence of its low and brutalising aim—the securing of treasure for the Spanish Crown. The Spanish communities established throughout the continent were notoriously lacking in ideals. Until they threw off the yoke of Spain and began to feel within themselves the stirring of national aspirations, to cherish ambitions of elevating themselves into individual nations, their history went some way to justify the famous cynicism that the true dividing line between Africa and Europe is not the Straits of Gibraltar, but the Pyrenees.

No longer, however, can it be said that any of these virile young peoples are without their ideals. If the Argentine citizen had no other figure than the splendid one of Sarmiento to point to, he would still be justified in claiming for his country a place among the intellectual nations of our time. And Sarmiento is but one of many great men whom the Argentine has produced.

There is everywhere in South America to-day an unmistakable reaching out for better things. Alongside the sheer brutality, unhappily still existing, the tender plant of intellectual culture has been growing, and with it true humanitarianism has made progress. It is, however, the defect of virtue ever to be less interesting than vice ; not only in the Argentine, but also among ourselves, the

baser elements of society have a knack of thrusting themselves in front of the worthier, so that the observer is liable to get his perspective askew. That is why it is easy to overestimate the importance of these baser elements of Argentine social life, though not to overdraw the picture of actual conditions, for nothing that I have set down above can be regarded as more than the lifting of one corner of the curtain on the bloody drama which brutalised humanity is still playing in the Argentine.

In short, it may fairly be said that the baser elements of social life touch a higher percentage of the whole in the Latin-American civilisation of to-day than in that of Europe or North America, but that the more elevating factors are present and, if less in degree, are similar in kind to those of the older nations, and will eventually produce a worthy social system in which intellectualism and humanitarianism will triumph over the brute forces of self-seeking and indifferentism. But the time is not yet.

The Argentine is credited with expending more on the education of its people than any other country in the world, with the exception of Australia, and if the truth must be told, it is not getting the best value for its expenditure. Since the days when Sarmiento—who took part in the insurrection against the notorious Rosas in 1829, and some twenty years later had a hand in overthrowing that *gaucho* tyrant—established in 1856 the first department of public education, the public schools of the Argentine have been regarded as one of the first considerations of every statesman. Sarmiento spent his life in the cause of education, which he had studied in the United States and in Europe before rising to power in his native land, and during his presidency he achieved great things in the founding of schools and colleges throughout the country.

A visitor to Buenos Ayres, and especially if he be one of official distinction in his own country, will be shown some most admirable educational institutions in the federal capital, and among these the splendid Colegio Sarmiento, which perpetuates the memory of the wisest

and most humane of Argentine presidents. So far good, but he will not be told, especially if he be under official guidance, that probably the school teachers throughout the country are four, five, or six months in arrears with their salaries, the appropriation for public education having somehow been diverted to the building of battleships, or the furnishing of accoutrements for the army, or having disappeared into even less tangible objects. Just as an immense amount of the corruption and criminality among the police is due directly to the infamously low rate of remuneration, which in 1912 was practically the same as it had been some fifteen or twenty years before, though the cost of living had meanwhile doubled, if not trebled, so is school-teaching rendered one of the most despicable of callings by reason of the shamefully low wages paid to those engaged in it. In a country where the commonest forms of manual labour are highly rewarded, the rank and file of teachers are not so well paid as they are in England, and thus, in financial standing, fall into the meanest class of workers. Nay, it is by no means unusual for their wretched salaries to be as much as six months in arrears, and in any case the average teacher seldom has the satisfaction of handling his or her income, owing to a check system worked under the immediate auspices of the Educational Department itself.

The school-teacher, being quite without resources and living from hand to mouth, wishes to buy, let us say, a sewing-machine for his wife, or some household necessity. He obtains this on the instalment system, and the Educational Department becomes his *fiador*, or guarantor, for the transaction. It does more; it actually pays the instalments and marks them off against his salary! In such wise many teachers do all their shopping, even to the purchase of their eatables, and rarely have the satisfaction of handling their actual salaries. No wonder that the poor pedagogue, who ought to be the hope of his country, is more often despised and contemned for his inability to acquire money in a country where the possession of it is the sole measure of a man's ability.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that there is a genuine desire for knowledge among the Argentine people to-day, a willingness to be instructed only second to that of the North American, whose advanced ideals of education first fired Sarmiento to emulation. The works of an informative character sold in the bookshops would, I am confident, greatly outnumber those of light reading, were statistics available. There is throughout the Press the same evidence of a serious interest in subjects which among us would be considered "heavy" or "dull." In a word, the good Argentine is a man very much in earnest, given to pondering the problems of life in the light of the best criticism he can find, and if he is still overshadowed by his worser compatriots, he is by no means a negligible quantity, nor is he rarely to be met with.

In many ways the country seems to be passing through much the same social development as the history of the United States presents, always remembering, however, that it is based on a civilisation that differs radically from the Anglo-Saxon. A further evidence of this is the extraordinary popularity of the lecture as an instrument of education. In the course of a single year, the procession of lecturers who invade Buenos Ayres assumes proportions that are almost comic. Not a week passes but the newspapers herald the coming of some European celebrity, whose portrait is published broadcast, whose life is written up in every journal, and whose lectures (for which a high fee is usually charged) are pretty sure to be well attended. The subjects on which these lecturers discourse are often of the most forbidding seriousness, and only people famishing for knowledge or utterly at a loss otherwise to dispose of their time, could provide audiences for them. These *conferencistas* come indiscriminately from France, Spain, and Italy, the languages of these countries being so widely represented in the Argentine that a gathering capable of understanding any or all of them is not difficult to get together. Some of the lecturers are officially invited by the Government, who pay their fees and expenses; others—the majority—are quite as much interested

in filling their pockets as in furthering the intellectual development of the Argentine, and very willingly invite themselves, any lecturer of the Latin race being a gifted self-advertiser. A good many ladies, chiefly Spanish novelists of reputation, or political agitators, also grace the lecture platform in Buenos Ayres and the large provincial centres. A reception committee is usually formed to meet the distinguished visitor at the boat, and there is the usual *banquete*, with the equally inevitable *copa de champaña*, and the ubiquitous photographers from *Caras y Caretas* and the other pictorial papers.

This movement had assumed proportions which in 1912 led the caricaturist to turn their attention to it, and cartoons of the different lecturers hurrying off with bags of gold, indicated the local cynicism on the subject; but apart from its amusing aspect it ought to be accepted as an earnest of the desire that does exist for instruction in subjects of public life. One popular lecture, for instance, was devoted to "The Management of Public Museums," but literary subjects, studies of the lives of famous authors, and historical studies, as well as travel-talks, seem to be most acceptable. One lady arrived from Spain with a lecture in which she endeavoured to prove that Columbus was a Spaniard, based upon the most slender evidence put forth by a Spanish antiquary, with whom the wish was father to the thought; but she was listened to in a good-humoured, sceptical manner, which spoke well for the common sense of the people, who wisely do not care a straw whether Columbus was a Gallego or a Genoese. Among the celebrities engaged under Government auspices to lecture in recent years was M. Anatole France, one of the favourite authors throughout Latin America. In common with most other authors, he not only lectured, but made use of his experience on returning home to describe the countries he had visited. I was told that description of Uruguay, by one famous French visitor, was particularly remembered in Montevideo, as he mentioned the fine coffee plantations of the country, and this was the first that any Uruguayan had ever heard of them!

Although the final civilisation of the Argentine people will leave between it and any Anglo-Saxon civilisation a marked cleavage, yet it will approximate more closely to the British or North American than to the French or Spanish. To say that the Argentines are Latins with certain aspirations which are essentially characteristic of the Anglo-Saxons, would be too broad a generalisation, but, closely analysed, we can discover even more characteristics in the Argentine sympathetic to our own social notions,—imitative of them, perhaps,—than in the French or Spanish, though at bottom the Argentine remains Latin, and every nation, like every individual, is doomed to carry, wherever it goes along the road of progress or retrogression, "the baggage of its own psychology." Socially, we ourselves have passed through some of the phases from which the Argentine is only just emerging, and our North-American cousins have passed through others which at no time affected British social life.

In concluding this chapter, I have to admit that I have been somewhat hampered in its construction by the fact that many illustrations which I have stored in my mind affecting the social side of things, fall more properly into other sections of my book, so that it is impossible to avoid in some degree the overlapping of interests, especially when I deal with subjects such as that in my succeeding chapter, which is really a further consideration of the social life of the country, and it might be said that the work as a whole is a record of social conditions seen through English eyes. In the present chapter, I have therefore sought to do no more than touch discursively upon certain incidents and matters coming within my knowledge during my stay on the River Plate that may shed some light on an aspect of the Argentine which few English writers mention in their usually flattering and, too often, uncritical studies of the country and its people.

CHAPTER XII

BUSINESS LIFE IN BUENOS AYRES

Although I will not admit that Buenos Ayres is the most desirable place of residence, or that I should willingly pass the rest of my days there, I can understand that it possesses real fascination for the man of business. One was continually meeting Britishers who would, in the crudest fashion, contrast the Argentine capital with cities of the Homeland, to the total eclipse of the latter, and proclaim that there was but one place on earth for them, and that was Buenos Ayres. There are any number of British exiles who will assert this, and who are undoubtedly maintaining in their adopted city an existence that in all points of comfort cannot be compared with that within the reach of a person of very moderate means in England. These people are not to be regarded as asserting loudly what they only half-believe. It is more than probable that they are honestly convinced of what they say, and that, so far as they are concerned, they do but utter the simple truth.

The secret of the matter lies in the fact that in the Argentine, as, indeed, in most alert young countries, there is a quick response to the efforts of the business man, which is but rarely experienced in the markets of the Old World. In this progressive Republic we have the phenomenon of some seven million people, of whom more than 20 per cent. are accessible in one city, crying out for commodities. It is a country almost destitute of industrial resources, lacking coal, minerals, wood—the essential elements of industrial life—for though minerals and wood do exist within the political delimitations of the Republic, they are geographically distant from the

centres of population. Imported coal is extremely costly, while water-power, owing to the extraordinary flatness of the land and the sluggishness of its rivers, is difficult, if not impossible, to utilise. So that, for all practical purposes—unless the discovery of oil deposits in the south-west may work a revolution in industrial possibilities—we may regard the Argentine as a country at present limited to the pursuits of agriculture and cattle-rearing. These are the true bases of its wealth; for the development of these have English capitalists poured some £150,000,000 of money into the country, to cover it with a system of admirably constructed and well-managed railways. Mainly on the strength of these industries have British, French, and other foreign investors taken up the millions of Government Stock for the national development of the Republic. In all, some £300,000,000 of British money have been invested in the country.

Thus we may view the people as divided into two great camps: those who work the land and breed cattle, and those who make a living (and something to spare) by supplying the requirements of the former class, acting as middlemen between the European or North American exporter and the Argentine consumer. Roughly, into one or other of these very disproportionate classes every worker in the Argentine must come, although, of course, there are endless variations of relativeness, if one cares to search for them. It is true that here and there some slight industrial progress falls to be noted. There is a good deal of tobacco-making; there is more than one successful paper-making enterprise; in a timid way there is even the founding of iron; but, broadly speaking, industries, apart from the land, do not exist. It is true you can get a table made, but it will be a very insecure table, it will also be very expensive, and you will be sorry you did not buy an imported one. The same applies to many other simple kinds of manufactured articles, which might, with a little patience and care, be successfully and profitably produced in the Argentine; but it is a safe assumption that for many years to come

—probably not within the lifetime of the present generation—there is no likelihood of national industry developing to such an extent that it would be able to replace to any great degree the imported article.

Meanwhile, the commission-agent is enjoying a golden age of gain. It is a fairly easy matter to induce people to purchase who are in a chronic state of needing all sorts of commodities, living, as they do, in a country which is but poorly supplied even with the commonest necessities of modern domestic life. The commission-agent has merely to announce the fact that he has made arrangements with Messrs. So-and-so, the well-known manufacturers of this or that, and will be pleased to supply it on certain terms, for his customers to find him out and make him busy—granted that the article in question is one for which there is a real need. The crudest sort of advertising, the baldest form of announcement, will prove almost as effective as the most skilful propaganda would at home. So it happens you will find many British residents of the meagrest intellectual endowments who have acquired considerable fortunes by doing nothing more brilliant than I have indicated, but who have been lucky enough—or shrewd enough, if you will—to secure the representation of some useful British or American-made device, such as a windmill water-pump, of which many thousands are in use throughout the country; a mechanical cash register, without which no Argentine business-establishment is complete; a patent grass cutter; or almost any conceivable article of general utility. While the primal wealth of the country may come, as it does the world over, from the land, the most substantial profits made are those that go into the pockets of the agents, many of them unskilled, who handle the imported manufactured goods which the people of the country require in exchange for their grain, their cattle, their cow-hides, and their wool. Economically, of course, this is an unfortunate state of things, but I am concerned not with things as they ought to be, but as they are, and it is the present condition of the Argentine.

The net result of all this is a very pronounced feeling of briskness in almost every branch of commerce. The country is steadily progressing in its agricultural development, the Government is steadily borrowing to advance public works, and, except for the temporary set-back in 1913–14, it may be said that credit all round has continued extremely good for many years. Consequently, men of business do not haggle and discuss the fractional profits with which manufacturers and merchants have nowadays to be content in the older countries of the world, and especially when there is a large amount of borrowed capital floating throughout a country, there is sure to exist something of that spendthrift feeling which we always associate with the individual borrower. This tends to make commercial conditions extremely "easy." Given that A possesses the article which B wants, or thinks he wants, or which perhaps A has told him he ought to have, there is every likelihood that B will purchase the same at A's price, or, if he insists on a reduction, that will probably be the result of a personal knowledge of A, who is most likely in the habit of placing a specially high profit on any article he offers to B, intending to rebate the excess of profit. This used to be the sole method of doing business throughout the Latin-American market, and here and there lingering traces of the Moorish system of asking double or treble what one expects to receive for an article may be detected.

Until quite recently much of the shopping in Buenos Ayres was conducted on this ancient Oriental system of beating down the seller. No Argentine lady would ever have dreamed of paying what the shopkeeper asked her, and, equally, no shopkeeper would ever have dreamed of asking the customer what he expected eventually to expect; but the Argentines, more alert than most Latin-Americans, and more anxious to put themselves in line with Anglo-Saxon business methods, have largely abandoned this obsolete farce, and now in most business houses and in most of the shops, *precio fijo* is the order of the day. The thanks of the shopkeeping community are particularly due to the pioneer house of Messrs. Gath &

Chaves, the largest department stores in the Southern continent, who virtually broke down the old system when they opened their great establishments some years ago and announced that all goods would be sold at fixed prices. At first they had to turn away innumerable customers who simply refused to buy unless the prices were reduced, but eventually the battle was won for honest trading, and the system has been largely adopted throughout the country. It is true that small dealers of divers sorts still endeavour to maintain the ancient bluff. One day, for instance, in the window of a bric-a-brac seller, I was attracted by a walking-stick of a peculiar Brazilian wood. I entered, and asked him how much he wanted for it. He named a price, the equivalent of about £2, 10s.

"I'll give you twelve pesos (21s.)," I said.

"Muy bien" (very well), said the dealer wearily, as he handed me the article and accepted the money; and there seemed to be no feeling of shame on the part of the seller in endeavouring to secure so high a price. Assuredly, what I paid him was all the article was worth, and probably a little more than its real value, but, assuming that I wanted the stick, he made a shot at a price which he fancied I might pay.

This irresponsibility is characteristic of much of the business dealings not only in Buenos Ayres but in all the South American centres where it has been my lot to make purchases. There is an extraordinary ignorance of intrinsic values. The restrictions of imports, the delays of the Customs authorities (who will often hold up a valuable shipment from three to six weeks after its arrival), the lack of competition, all tend to the imposition of the most absurd prices. Just imagine asking three printers in England to quote for a certain piece of work, and receiving from A a quotation for £200, from B one for £91, 10s. and from C another of £365. Such disparities are absolutely unthinkable in any country where labour has been properly organised, where prices of materials have been more or less standardised, and where the only difference must come from the ability of one firm to save a little more than its competitors in its work-

An Argentine "Gaucho" in his Hours of Ease.

ITALIAN "COLONOS" AND THEIR "RANCHO" IN THE ARGENTINE

A VILLAGE WHEELWRIGHT IN THE ARGENTINE "CAMP."

ing methods. Not once, but on scores of occasions, I met with discrepancies in estimates of which the above illustration is typical. Hence the man of business who merely employs one printer, without putting others in competition, may be losing heavily, as it is folly to place any sort of order without securing two or three checking estimates. Moreover—and here the foolishness of the methods adopted becomes apparent—I have on more than one occasion invited the printer whose estimate was highest by upwards of £100, but whose work seemed to me the best, to accept the order at the estimate of the lowest printer, and he has willingly done so ! I also recall another printer who, on my protesting against an overcharge on an account for £150, made a reduction of £85, in order that I should not bar him from future work ! This slight excess occurred on some work done without estimate. The same printer informed me that the account in question was based on the standard rate, which for many years his house had been charging one of the principal banks for the printing of their stationery. The reader will scarcely wonder, therefore, that we used to remark, in discussing these discrepancies in estimates, that it was evidently no more than a toss-up whether you were to be asked to pay £10 or £90, and in view of this it will be seen how essential is some expert knowledge of the work in hand to any person who ventures to engage in business in South America.

At the same time the spacious feeling that comes from this disregard of small profits has its effect on the individual man of business, and the quick results that follow the friendly attitude of the public to all sorts of new offers is highly inspiriting. I can therefore perfectly understand the enthusiasm of an Englishman who, perhaps only moderately successful, or making insufficient progress at home, has emigrated to Buenos Ayres, and is enjoying the delights of handling a rapidly growing and remunerative business, feeling that here indeed is the only land worth living in. For, after all, to most business men their business is their life, and as there is so little to interest any man in Buenos Ayres outside his office,

conditions are mutually reactive, the inspiration of the business serving to increase one's interest in one's work, and the increased interest tending to increased business! In this way the business man becomes doubly a worker, and knows not even the Saturday afternoon holiday, an institution that is very slowly, if at all, creeping into even the English offices in Buenos Ayres.

Most business men have admitted to me that, while they like the town, it is only a place for working and sleeping in, and I suspect the majority of cherishing in their heart of hearts the hope of returning to their native land some day for good. I have known men who have lived there over thirty years, and who have lost every relative and friend they ever possessed at home, come back after all and close their account with Buenos Ayres. On the other hand, not a few I have met who, having retired to England, to France, or to Germany, as the case may have been, have eventually returned to settle and die in Buenos Ayres. These are the people who say there is "a something" that draws them back. They would even have you believe there is about South America that strange, intangible glamour of the East, which places most who have lived in the Orient under its spell. This I will not believe; there is no glamour, there is no romantic beauty, there is no sensuous delight in the atmosphere of all South America. What happens is a far other thing. Men become so devoted to their business, under the conditions I have outlined, so engrossed in the mere circumstance of their prosperous affairs, that, neglecting all other interests in life, they have nothing left to them but their business, and when they return to their native lands they have not brought *that* with them, and where their business is their heart is also. Glamour, no; but business, yes—as one would say in the phraseology of the country.

Seldom missing an opportunity of making inquiries as to the business success of all sorts of people with whom I came into contact, I might set forth some quite remarkable examples of how the conditions in Buenos Ayres compare very favourably, from certain points of view,

with those at home, were it not that I hesitate to use the experience of friends in such wise that some readers might identify them.

M. Jules Huret, in his admirable work, to which reference has already been made, offers many notable examples of prosperous careers in different branches of trade and commerce, related to him in his various travels throughout the Republic ; but in every case these narratives were given for publication. I cannot fairly do the same with much of the information in my possession, but I purpose giving, as nearly as may be, the particulars of three comparatively young men of my acquaintance, and contrasting their present conditions with what, in all likelihood, would have been their positions in England had they remained at home.

The first, whom I shall distinguish as Mr. X., is a young man of very considerable natural talent. In personal characteristics he is the very antithesis of the "pushing" young fellow, and, I rather suspect, had permitted others to push ahead of him at home. At all events, essaying a venture on his own account in London, it turned out badly, and he found it necessary to take up his profession again as an employee in a moderately responsible position, receiving not more than £350 per annum. His integrity being above suspicion, his ability unquestioned in his particular profession, which calls for much precise knowledge and long years of study, he was fortunately able, when he applied for the post of manager of a very large enterprise in the Argentine, in favourably impressing the selective committee, and was engaged. In this very responsible position he has, to my knowledge, greatly improved the conditions of his company, extended its work, increased its profits, sent up its shares. His remuneration, instead of being £350 per annum, is about £2000, and may increase, according to results, to double that figure. The business in which he is engaged is of the same nature as he has been employed in all his life, and to which he was trained in the provinces of England.

Take Mr. Y., another young man, outwardly more suggestive of liveliness, sparkle, capacity, than Mr. X.,

but probably no better endowed intellectually. Mr. Y., who is not quite thirty, is at the present time director of the South American interests of an important English firm, handling contracts in the Argentine and in Uruguay for hundreds of thousands of pounds, and himself earning in salary and commission something in the neighbourhood of £2000 per annum. This Mr. Y. would have had reason to count himself singularly fortunate if, remaining in England and engaged in the same class of work, he at the present time had been enjoying a salary of, say, £500 per annum. Moreover, in common with Mr. X., he has that splendid influence in character-building which comes from the fine sense of self-reliance imposed upon one by having to control the destinies of many employees and decide large and vital questions on one's own initiative. Such positions for men of thirty to forty are extremely few in England, but are by no means uncommon in South America.

As regards Mr. Z., I think I may state without fear of identifying him that his profession is that of architect. The architects in Buenos Ayres are among the busiest of professional men. One can scarcely walk for five minutes in any direction without noting building operations, and for scores of years to come the more central parts of the city will be in a state of rebuilding, as all the smaller and old-fashioned houses are bound to give way to modern steel and concrete structures. Hence the skill of the architect is in high request, and likely so to continue, although it must be admitted there is plenty of competition, as Italians, French, German, and all nationalities are represented in the ranks of the profession. The extraordinary cosmopolitan character of the city also justifies the variety of races among its architects, every conceivable European style, not to mention many inconceivable styles, being favoured by the property owners. Mr. Z., however, is an Englishman, and as an architect I confess he is no better than the ruck, but I believe he has the recommendation of being honest, and for that reason, if for no outstanding ability of any other kind, he has earned substantial success, so that it

is no unusual thing for him, in the course of the year, to find himself in pocket to the tune of £3000 or £4000, which, I imagine, is by no means an ordinary sum for even an architect of unusual ability to earn in England.

It so happens that not a single one of these young men I have mentioned really likes Buenos Ayres, but each is delighted with his particular work, and I am strongly of opinion that in the fulness of time they will all become submerged in the said work. That is to say, they will go the way of those I have already described, who, yearning at heart to be home again, become so engrossed in their business, trade, or profession, that unconsciously with the lapse of years they grow into veritable slaves of their business and cannot live without it. If a man can make his fortune under four or five years in Buenos Ayres and then withdraw, all may be well; but beyond that time, it seems to me, the genuine fascination which the spirited commercial life of the place exercises on any keen man of business will become too strong to permit of his cutting the traces, and I am just as sure that a day will come when, in totting up his profits and losses, he will feel he ought to put down on the debit side of his ledger of life a very large figure to represent what he has lost in his long years of exile from his home-land.

In connection with Mr. Z., I mentioned the fact of his honesty, which, it goes without saying, applies equally to Mr. X. and Mr. Y. Here we touch one of the most important matters in the business life of South America Honesty is a quality that does not bulk unduly in South American character. Having had peculiar opportunities of testing the honesty of the general public throughout the Argentine, Uruguay, and Chili, and having listened to all sorts of local and foreign stories about the shameless disregard for the ordinary usages of decent straightforward business said to be characteristic of one country more than another, I am persuaded that there is little to choose in this matter between South Americans in general, if we exclude the Indians and *mestizos*, or half-breeds. In Buenos Ayres it takes very little searching indeed to discover Englishmen as dishonest and un-

worthy of trust as any scoundrelly native. Nay, I am not at all sure that worthless English emigrants and English-speaking *porteños* — children born of English parents in the Argentine, who speak both languages equally well—cannot give most of the tricky natives and unscrupulous foreigners a strong lead in the matter of dishonesty.

Individually, I found among the native population a very high percentage of men of the strictest commercial integrity, men who were *caballeros correctísimos,* not merely in the formal sense of the phrase, but in actuality. At the same time I am forced to confess that there is something in the atmosphere of Buenos Ayres which seems to depreciate the importance of business rectitude. Ask me to describe this with any definiteness, and I am afraid I should fail, but the fact remains that one is conscious of the feeling every day and in every business relationship. It may be the influence of old tradition, the result of the Argentine capital having been for so long the resort of all sorts of foreign criminals and justice-bilkers, as much as the experience of business men in their dealings with Buenos Ayres' houses to-day. But whatever the extent or reality of this commercial dishonesty may be, it is a factor to be reckoned with, and in all negotiations with commercial houses it is no doubt well to look carefully at their references if their credentials are unknown. A *procurador,* or attorney, for instance, who was employed very successfully in connection with certain legal matters that came under my notice, and who did his work so well and so profitably to those who feed him that it was suggested to establish in other parts of the country similar connections for the recovery of debts, said to his clients, "Unfortunately, I know of no other honest procurador in the Argentine with whom I could co-operate in carrying out your suggestion!" The gentleman who reported the matter to me stated that he entirely believed his attorney spoke the truth as to the lack of honest lawyers, and he even had his doubts about him! But how can we expect the legal fraternity to be honest when we know that justice is poisoned at

its source; that the Argentine Law Courts have nothing to learn and can probably teach even Tammany something new in chicanery?

Let me give but one instance of how justice is administered. A young Spaniard, one of many employed in a certain undertaking in which I was interested, had to be discharged for dishonesty. He was an attractive, gentlemanly young man, with tastes beyond his means—which is all that needs to be said of nine-tenths of the swindlers in Buenos Ayres. Discharged for dishonesty, he was immediately admitted as a clerk in—of all places in the world—a very prosperous bank! Within six weeks of his admission to the bank, he contrived to steal some £700, a portion of which went to wipe out gambling debts, some £300 he sent to Spain, and the remainder, nearly £200, he lodged in another bank. Arrested, he was so conscious of the absolute proof of his guilt, that he signed a statement written by his own lawyer admitting the whole matter, hoping thus to be clemently dealt with. The case came before a young judge, who took a personal liking to the prisoner, and deliberately made up his mind to discharge him. This seemed a difficult thing to do in face of the signed confession.

Among the witnesses called was the gentleman who had discharged him for dishonesty prior to his being admitted to the bank. This gentleman was called because the prisoner had given his name as that of his previous employer. The only question the judge would allow the witness to answer was, "When in your employment, did the prisoner strike you as a person who would be likely to have committed this forgery in the bank?" The witness, having no wish to keep the prisoner in jail, answered, "No." The judge then asked the prisoner whether, in view of the fact that his alleged confession was written by a third person and only signed by him, he had been fully conscious of what that document contained, and whether he realised precisely the gravity of the admissions therein. The prisoner seemed somewhat bewildered as to how he should reply, and, not quite realising that the judge had actually turned himself into

advocate for the defence, seemed on the point of committing himself by accepting full responsibility, when the judge, silencing him and whispering with the clerk for a few moments, asked the prisoner not to answer until he had consulted with his lawyer, The clerk of the court withdrew, with a sign to the prisoner's lawyer, who, also leaving the court, returned presently and whispered a few words to the prisoner.

The forger was then asked by the judge to state exactly how the confession had been secured. Now, nothing loath, he brazenly asserted that the confession had been forced upon him, and that he had signed it most unwillingly, not realising how it incriminated him, and so forth. Result: prisoner not only discharged, who, according to the law of the land, could have been put in jail for five years, but, by an order of court, the money which he had stolen from one bank and lodged in another and which had meanwhile been arrested by the court, restored to him !

Is it surprising, in face of an experience such as this, that the business world teems with minor employees who have been guilty of all sorts of thefts and dishonest practices, but whom employers have not prosecuted because conviction is so difficult to secure and legal expenses are so heavy ? An intimate personal friend of mine who was robbed of £800 by an employee, who forged his signature and imperilled his credit in various directions, spent so much time and money in endeavouring to secure the conviction of the wrong-doer that he eventually gave up the struggle and left him to be liberated from prison, where he had lain for some seven or eight months, without a trial.

Here, then, is probably the real reason of this feeling of low business morality which undoubtedly does prevail in Buenos Ayres—the laxity of the law and the difficulty of securing justice. A further example, and one of very recent date, will serve to show to what extent audacity attains in the commercial world of Buenos Ayres. A picture-theatre secured, at great cost from a European firm, the exclusive right to reproduce an important film

throughout the Argentine, Uruguay, and Chili. In due course the film arrived, and was placed with a firm of photographic experts to make a number of copies for dispatching to the various centres where it was to be exhibited, and where the exclusive nature of the exhibition was already being loudly trumpeted in the Press. Those entrusted with the making of the copies did not hesitate to multiply the number by some two score, and to sell them at high prices to competitive theatres. In this delightfully simple way, instead of one theatre in one town being able, as it had announced, to give the exclusive exhibition of the film, some eight or ten competitive theatres in the same city were showing their unauthorised copies of it on the same evening.

Confronted with such facts, it is hardly a matter for surprise that many foreign merchants look upon Argentine transactions with suspicious eye, exacting conditions of payment that are more rigorous than apply in other quarters of the mercantile world. Certainly in England, and I believe in the United States also, this feeling of insecurity exists, and exporters are usually chary of entering into negotiations with unproved houses in Buenos Ayres. Then, again, the difficulty of finding local representatives of strict integrity is so great that many large firms who have made efforts to open up business out there have eventually given up the task, one well-known maker of a very profitable line of stationery goods, for which there is a large demand in Buenos Ayres, confessing to me that over a long period of years each arrangement he had made for local representation had eventually fallen through, owing to the slackness or dishonesty of his agents. In this particular case I personally endeavoured to secure a competent, trustworthy representative for the house in question, and failed to do so.

It is a lamentable fact that the general laxity of business morals has the effect of developing in clever men their roguish propensities, with the consequence that I have noticed all too often when the assistance obtainable in Buenos Ayres has been undeniably competent as regards intelligence and resource, it has failed in the matter of

honesty, and, inversely, where honesty has been beyond suspicion, these other desirable qualities have been lacking. And thus we have employers deliberately, with eyes open, utilising the services of persons whom they distrust and whom they know to be capable of swindling whenever opportunity serves, simply because their other abilities are essential to the creation or extension of the business in hand. The atmosphere of suspicion thus engendered, and the high standard of incompetency in almost every branch of service, are two factors that must enter into the serious consideration of all engaging in the business life of the country.

I could describe at least a dozen individuals with whom, during my eight months in Buenos Ayres, I came into touch—all persons of the most obvious capacity and worthy of employment, had that capacity been wisely directed, but each, on close investigation, so tainted with suspicion of trickery and trailing behind him an inglorious record, that it was impossible to utilise his services. One person in particular, with whom I almost entered into an important literary venture, whose scholarly attainments were unquestionable, and who, at first, seemed a thorough gentleman, had, as I subsequently discovered, served three terms in provincial penitentiaries, and had even been guilty of attempted murder—which crime he had planned purely and simply for business ends, with a view to "putting away" a gentleman whom he and another had swindled to the extent of nearly £1000, and who was proving inconsiderate enough to invoke the law against the swindlers. This person, whose portrait and finger-marks are duly filed in the Criminal Bureau of Buenos Ayres—where, by the way, the system of thumb prints originated—had, during his various encounters with the law, become intimate with a comisario, who, prior to entering the police service, had himself been a successful criminal, and continued, not unsuccessfully, his criminal career in his new capacity. With the aid of this official, the "liter'y gent" was able to defeat the ends of justice, and for aught I know is still busy under police protection fleecing new victims in or about Calle Florida.

The laxity of business morality is, of course, a concomitant of the laxity of general morals, or an effect of the latter, most of the commercial obliquity that exists having a first cause in the immoral life of the offenders. Just as it is the fashion of many Argentines, in addition to maintaining their legitimate wives and families, to possess openly two or three *queridas* (or, more bluntly, concubines), so, among those who are financially ill-equipped to play the pasha, the imitative spirit—so strong in the Argentine—asserts itself, and even down to the office boys it will be found when things go wrong with them there is "a woman in the case." This, and gambling, account for probably two-thirds of the commercial dishonesty, and the remaining third has its most likely source in a pitiful effort to imitate their betters in the matter of high living, where the plainest of fare and the humblest accommodation cost more than genuine luxury does with us. Drinking enters very slightly into the account, as it would be difficult to find a large community where less tippling exists than in Buenos Ayres. Whatever there is of that will be found chiefly among British and German residents, so that any anti-temperance partisan desirous of proving that a temperate public is not necessarily a moral one, will find abundant argument ready to his hand in the life of the Argentine.

Turning from this unpleasant aspect of the business life, which is, after all, only one phase of it, and must not be allowed to darken completely our view of the commercial Argentine, there are several other aspects that must engage our attention, and perhaps to more profit. First of all, British readers particularly should rejoice to know that their own country and its manufacturers occupy a pre-eminent position in the affections of the Argentine people. While on every hand there was evidence of great activity on the part of the Germans, who, before the European War, had laid themselves out, and with a fair measure of success, to secure a large slice of the Argentine import trade, there is not only in the Argentine but throughout all South America a widespread distrust of the German. He is noted for commercial

methods that are no more praiseworthy than many that prevail locally. His propensity for showing samples that are much superior to the goods supplied is notorious, and such progress as he had made may be regarded as largely the result of a readiness to flatter the native buyer by speaking the language of the country and dealing with him in terms of local usage. The Britisher, on the other hand, is guilty of the coldest indifference to the convenience of the Argentine consumer.

I have, for instance, met many travellers from British houses who have been visiting all the South American capitals and the great centres of population with samples of their goods, and who have not been able even to ask for a glass of beer in Spanish. I recall one gentleman in particular who, by the sheer merit of the goods he was offering, had done a very considerable business, and yet was so hopelessly ignorant of the native tongue that he could not even pronounce the names of the firms who had bought from him, or the streets in which their offices were situated! This never happens with a German traveller. He may make the most atrocious mistakes with the language, but he at least does attempt, and usually succeeds, to explain himself without the aid of an interpreter, and the Spanish-American accepts any effort on the part of a foreigner to speak his native tongue as a compliment to himself, and strives valiantly to understand what the foreigner is endeavouring to express.

Then, again, British manufacturers show an unruffled disdain for local conditions in many of the articles they supply. Take, for instance, the sailors' hats so much worn by children in England, and even more in favour with the *niños* of the Argentine, where everything that touches their naval aspirations is highly popular. Thousands of these are imported from England, and it always struck me as ludicrous to witness little Argentines going about with "H.M.S. Redoubtable," "H.M.S. Dreadnought," "H.M.S. Benbow," or some such peculiarly British name on their hats. Why on earth do not the British manufacturers have the common sense to secure the names of the principal vessels in the Argentine Navy,

and use these for the hats they export to the Republic? Evidently the Germans were doing so, as occasionally you would see "Sarmiento," "Belgrano," "San Martín," in place of the meaningless British names, and I was told these did not come from England. The patriotism of the Argentine and of every other South American is such that he would undoubtedly buy an inferior hat for his boy if it bore the name of a national warship, and even pay more for it than for a superior British-made hat with the name of a British man-of-war thereon.

All sorts of sanitary appliances are also imported from Great Britain, with the instructions for their use painted or engraved in the English language. Take "geysers," as an example. It often occurred to me in using bathrooms in various parts of the country, where the geyser is an inevitable fitting, that it was not only bad business, but very dangerous for these appliances to be in use with English instructions engraved upon them. The working of a geyser is, at best, none too simple, and when every detail of its manipulation is explained on the machine in a language of which nine-tenths of the users are totally ignorant, the possibility of putting it out of order or of setting the place on fire is considerable. Lavatory basins with "Hot" and "Cold" mean nothing to a native, who can only think of *caliente* or of *fría*. The same applies to proprietary medicines imported from Great Britain and the United States (though American exporters are waking up to the need of printing instructions in Spanish), whereas German, French, and Italian medicines are invariably supplied with Spanish directions.

In short, the pre-eminence of British goods, which, wherever I went, not only in the Argentine but throughout all South America, gladdened my heart and made me feel proud of my country, is in many respects undeserved. That pre-eminence is due to nothing but honesty and commercial integrity. For, happily, the British manufacturer is, with few exceptions, an honest man, selling a good article at a reasonable price; he keeps his bargains, and, fortunately for him, *palabra inglésa* (the word of an Englishman) is honoured throughout Latin America.

But the German, if he cares, can also make good articles, quite as good as the English, and some German firms are honourable exceptions to the rule I have mentioned above; so that once an importer has secured German goods which are as sound as the English and have been made to suit local requirements, the English manufacturer has met the most serious kind of competition.

I attribute a great deal of the indifference shown by our own exporters to lack of proper representation on the spot. So long as the demand for every class of imported article continues as lively as it is at present, and the local agent can dispose of the stuff he receives without undue trouble, he does not worry about making his service more valuable to his clients by insisting on manufacturers doing their business in terms of the country. Meanwhile, one finds everywhere the most remarkable evidence of preference for British goods—British brands of tea, British preserves, pickles, sauces, sweets, British machinery, clothes, furniture, are everywhere in prominent use and demand. A good deal of this preference is also the natural result of British capital having been so largely used to develop the country—they say locally, "British money and Italian labour have made the Argentine"—but let me warn the British manufacturer that things cannot continue as they are indefinitely; this happy condition of demand exceeding supply will change, and, meanwhile, if he is making no serious effort to consider more carefully the needs of his customers and to render them better service, his astute German [1] competitor will be "climbing upward in the night!"

While British and American exporters are not always represented as well as they might be in the South American market, there is yet another point for their consideration—are they properly staffed at home for dealing with this particular field? I believe that not a few have clerks in their foreign departments entirely ignorant of South American geography, if the "howlers" they commit are

[1] The European War may be expected to modify German competition for some time to come, and *now* is the time for the British exporter to make progress.

any criterion. The ignorance which prevails in Great Britain in this connection is notorious, and, from what I have been able to discover, general knowledge in the United States is no more advanced—less, if anything!

One example coming within my own experience will serve to illustrate what I mean. Staying at our hotel in Buenos Ayres was one of the managers of a very large British enterprise, with agents in different parts of North and South America. One of these was stationed at Punta Arenas, a considerable town in the far south of Chili, on the Straits of Magellan. It is the port for a vast country in which sheep-farming has of recent years been making remarkable strides, and where wealth is growing rapidly. This gentleman chanced to be on his way to England, and made a break at Buenos Ayres to visit his superior at our hotel. Among the subjects discussed by them was the curious fact that for three years in succession the agent had received at Punta Arenas an account from the head office for goods supplied during the year to a certain Señor P——, whom he had failed entirely to trace. One evening, as the manager and the agent were scanning the list of hotel guests, the latter exclaimed, "Why, there's a Señor P——. I wonder if that might be the man I'm after?" Further inquiry proved that the gentleman in question was a well-known merchant from Asunción, the capital of Paraguay, whose business had brought him on a visit to Buenos Ayres, and that he was none other than the mysterious Mr. P—— whose accounts were regularly sent to Punta Arenas for collection. The point of the story is, that while Punta Arenas is distant 1350 nautical miles, or a full four days' steaming south of Buenos Ayres, Asuncion lies 825 to the north of Buenos Ayres—another three or four days' journey by rail and river—but the export department of the English firm was so little versed in these matters that it selected its remotest agent to collect the debt! Punta Arenas and Asunción were both in South America, and that was enough to establish a connection! This is but one of many instances I could give to show the lack of geographical knowledge even among British firms trading with the country.

Here is another aspect of business life that calls for the careful consideration of all who are ambitious of securing a share of the profits that await the seller in these lively markets of the south. The natural prosperity of the country is considerably exaggerated owing to the ease with which it has been able to borrow from Europe, and these heavy borrowings have led to general extravagance, raising the sense of prosperity beyond what is justified by intrinsic values. I do not suggest for one moment that borrowing has vastly exceeded the potentialities of the country, but I do assert that it has anticipated these potentialities, and to that extent discounted future development. The possibilities of the Argentine are colossal, and its power of recuperation after the severest trials, such as ruined harvests or destruction of cattle and sheep through drought, amazing. In this connection it is unnecessary to say more than that in one single summer the country has suffered the loss of several million sheep owing to a prolonged drought, without the community as a whole being conscious of any financial strain from so great a destruction of capital. The British makers of sheep-dip, however, would probably know a difference of a good few thousands of pounds in their exports to the Argentine that year, and British wool-buyers who swarm over to the River Plate each year would have to pay a good deal more for their purchases, owing to the shortage of supply.

Still, the fact remains that, due largely to the popular conception of the Argentine as the new Eldorado for European manufacturers, enormous sums of money are annually being wasted by ill-advised efforts to secure business for which competition has suddenly become keen. Now, we have to remember that with a borrowing people an element of thriftlessness is inevitable, and that there is a necessarily high percentage of wastage in the heavy loans which the country has secured from Europe. Hence that general sense of prosperity and abundance which on closer examination is often found to be more apparent than real! Right through the Argentine this spirit of borrowing prevails. They are a nation of

Preparing the Picnic Meal—"Un Asado" in the Argentine.

The staple fare of the "Gaucho" is roasted beef, and at picnic parties a whole animal is often roasted, in the manner above illustrated.

Fields of Maize.

It is said the profits of a single harvest have repaid the cost of the land.

borrowers, and in all ranks of society—by which is meant the various divisions graded according to the supposed dimensions of their banking accounts or their credit—the one notion of doing business is by drawing on the Bank of the Future. The countless thousands of land-sales, which have brought unequalled prosperity to one class of the community and riches to the leading news-papers (daily crammed with advertisements of these auctions), have been and still are conducted on the principle of *mensualidades*, or monthly payments. The hire purchase system is universal. The reputedly wealthy use it in precisely the same way as the struggling mass: the one to burden themselves with all sorts of idle luxuries paid for at excessive prices, and the other to secure the necessaries of life sooner than if they had to pay cash for them. Mortgage banks abound and flourish on interest rates that range anywhere from 8 per cent. to 14 per cent., many such banks offering depositors 7 per cent. per annum for their money, which they lend out at 10 per cent. or 12 per cent. to help landowners in the development of their properties. You will be told by local residents that this high rate of interest is perfectly compatible with the capabilities of the country, and that the Englishman, with his time-honoured notions of 4½ per cent. on land mortgage, is a hopeless back number in the Argentine. There may be some truth in this, but it is difficult to get away from the feeling that there is the hectic flush of unhealthiness in any system that demands such high rates for its financial accommodation.

As one could fill a whole book discussing nothing else but the aspects of the various branches of commercial enterprise, all so different in their essentials from most of our home conditions, I am making no attempt to enter into detailed consideration of the subject, but merely to illustrate broadly the danger I have hinted at, arising from the almost uncanny feeling of prosperity which the peculiar conditions of the country have induced.

I may touch briefly on the motor-car business. Although, as I have already stated, there are few countries in the world less attractive from the point of view of

motoring than the Argentine, where roads such as we know them in Europe, or even in North America, simply do not exist ; and no large city so ill-adapted for motoring as Buenos Ayres, where the principal streets are extremely narrow and badly kept, while those of the suburbs are almost entirely unpaved ; the popularity of the motor-car as an article of luxury and ostentation is amazing. The importation of expensive cars was proceeding in the most reckless manner during my stay there in 1912, with the result that I was informed by one of the leading automobile dealers whom I met in Chili some six months after leaving the River Plate, and who had come over to spy out the Transandine possibilities, that it was estimated by the various houses dealing in cars at the end of the 1913 season, that there were no fewer than eleven hundred unsold cars (mostly of expensive makes) in the storerooms of the numerous agencies in Buenos Ayres. In the previous season I think the highest number I saw on a motor-car was in the four thousand's, so that a year later there was an unsold overplus of more than 25 per cent. of the total importation from the very beginning of the industry. No wonder there was general talk of "the Motor Crisis" in 1913!

In my walks abroad during 1912, it was an endless source of wonder to me to contemplate the folly of the European companies in their mad scramble for this business. I saw dozens of establishments being opened at enormous cost, stocked with expensive cars and served by retinues of gorgeous youths who were to sell these to the fabulously wealthy Argentines. In eight months' time I saw more than one of those splendid establishments shut up, and doubtless since then many another has pulled down its shutters (the use of metal shutters which pull down from above is universal). Of one in particular I secured some inside information. It was a German concern, and it took a magnificent *exposición* in a fashionable quarter, paying a rent of £800 per month. In the first nine months it had sold some thirty-five cars, the total value of which did not greatly exceed the rent of the showroom. In addition to the

showroom, the concern in question required a large warehouse and repair shop in another part of the city, so that the man of business will be able to guess how such an enterprise was likely to end—even if the Great War had not come along to make bad hopelessly worse. Moreover, most of those cars were sold at so much "down," and the remainder in ten monthly instalments. I suppose it is a safe assumption that more money has been lost in the motor-car business in Buenos Ayres than is likely to be made in it for some years to come.

One particularly astute foreigner with a large stock of unsold cars devised a most admirable selling scheme. He made a bargain with a gang of willing scoundrels that each should go to a certain organisation which provided any conceivable article to its customers on the instalment system, exacting from the customer an increased price, and from the seller of the article a substantial discount. The accomplices of the motor dealer, each through this medium of the purchasing agency, bought one of his motor-cars, tendering the initial payment —the money for which had been supplied by the dealer— and the buying agency in due course furnished the car, paying the vendor his trade price for it. Each car sold in this manner immediately came back into the possession of the vendor, and, naturally, the accommodating financiers soon discovered no second payments were forthcoming. I understand this enterprising motor-dealer had thus netted quite a respectable sum on his surplus stock before his good work was interrupted by an unwillingness on the part of the purchasing agency to continue !

All this will serve to suggest the general looseness of business methods and the accompanying wastage that is going on, which can be attributed to no other cause than the ease with which the country has been able to borrow and the avidity with which foreign manufacturers have taken the bait by rushing into the market without due consideration of its risks and the characteristics of the people with whom business has to be done. In no wise do I wish to belittle the commercial possibilities

of the country, for I am a firm and convinced believer that South America generally is "the Coming Continent," and that Buenos Ayres is probably the most attractive of the newer business centres of the world to-day, with limitless opportunities for sound commercial expansion to European and North American manufacturers; but by reason of its very attractiveness, the freedom with which money circulates, and the readiness with which the people burden themselves with responsibilities, the desideratum in all business enterprise is not boldness, but caution.

One of the most experienced native business men assured me that in land speculation, which is even a more popular form of gambling than the public lottery—servants and street porters actually owning "lots" they have never seen, and never will see, and for which they are paying every month—the vendors never hesitate to make the number of instalments run into several years, in order to make the individual instalment as low as possible, because the purchaser, incapable of a "long view," in no case realises the burden he is accepting, and merely looks at the amount he has to pay monthly. The sum total of payments is seldom mentioned, the accepted formula being a small initial payment and anything from twenty-four to sixty mensualidades, also of comparatively small amounts. The vast majority of the buyers never complete their purchases, surrendering, after a year or two, what they have paid, together with the land, to the vendor, who will probably resell it to another purchaser, who will do the same thing, and in this way the land speculator grows rich.

Every day the newspapers contain particulars of some fresh scheme for relieving the public of their money; sharks abound, and their variety is endless. From the point of view of the foreign manufacturer, one of the most pernicious forms of unfair trading is that practised in connection with the registration of trade-marks. The law grants the sole title in a trade-mark to the first person who registers it, and exacts from him no evidence whatsoever that he is registering that which is his own

property. The outcome of this delightful state of affairs is that a fraternity of long-sighted speculators has grown up in Buenos Ayres, whose business is to keep in close touch with the commercial worlds of Europe and North America, and the moment a manufacturer places a new article in these markets and registers his trade-mark, one of these gentry hastens to secure the proprietorship of that trade-mark for the Argentine, registering it as his own. His next movement—which may be delayed for a year or so—is to write to the foreign manufacturer and to state that he shall be very pleased to act as agent for the article in question, which he thinks he can sell to advantage, and, indeed, so confident is he of being able to handle it successfully that he has taken the trouble to register the trade-mark. The manufacturer, if he wishes to introduce the article in South America, must then either appoint this honourable gentleman his agent or pay him an extortionate price for the right to sell his own article under its original name.

One example of how this works will suffice. A world-famous typewriter is sold in the Argentine by its duly accredited agent with its name spelt backwards, because an enterprising gentleman had forestalled the owners by registering on his own behalf the proper name, and the company, neither caring to appoint him its agent nor to pay him for the privilege of selling their typewriter there, adopted this plan of labelling their machines for sale in the Argentine. Some famous brands of Scotch whisky cannot be sold in the Argentine, as a Jewish gentleman is in possession of their trade-marks, which he registered in anticipation, and thus the whisky drinker will discover all sorts of unfamiliar brands specially prepared for export, while it is possible that the purloiner of the familiar trade-mark may arrange to bottle any sort of vile rubbish under the well-known label. This is a state of things, of course, that can easily be met by the foreign manufacturer, whenever he is introducing any new article of consumption, taking care to have it formally registered in the Argentine at the same time that it is placed on the home market, so that, if in the future he

should wish to export it, he will be able to do so without facing this unfair competition.

Owing to the accessibility of legislators to influence and bribery, all sorts of abuses arise. In Montevideo, for instance, a typical case came under my personal knowledge. A large British manufacturing house which for many years had been supplying an article of wide consumption throughout South America, and in Uruguay particularly, suddenly discovered that an excessive import tariff had been placed upon it. A large consignment of the article in question arrived in the harbour of Montevideo two or three days after the passing of the Act, and a battle royal ensued between the representative of the British company and the Customs officials, who endeavoured to exact the new tariff, but who were eventually defeated on the ground that the tariff did not date from the passing of the Act but from the signing of the same by the President, which, fortunately, had not taken place until two or three days after the arrival of the cargo. This increased tariff had been imposed solely on the initiative of an ambitious Uruguayan, who had determined to manufacture a competitive article locally, and got his friends in the *cámara* to assist him by choking off the foreign competitor. The result was that the British firm had immediately to buy land and build a factory in Montevideo in order to get "inside the tariff," which they did before the bungling native was able to work out his own plans, and so completely outwitted him. The probability is that the tariff will again be taken off, and the British company will be able to make the Uruguayan consumer pay for the inconvenience and expense which the unsuccessful trickery of their compatriot incurred.

Before turning from this subject, I must add a final word about the extraordinary incompetency of native labour, already mentioned, which conditions to so large an extent the business life, not only of the Argentine, but of all South America. Incompetency is the keynote of the Spaniard as a worker, inefficiency characterises all his products, and the complete indifference to the

pressure of time is another characteristic of the Spaniard. All these we find more or less eminent in the South American. The Argentine himself is steadily escaping from the influence of his Spanish original, and will eventually become a more wide-awake, competent, and altogether a more intelligent worker than those in whom the essential Spaniard remains. But, even so, he has still to rid himself of innumerable faults in order to come into line with what modern industrial conditions exact from the worker in France, Germany, and Italy, in Great Britain or North America. The tradesman will dismiss you with the blandest assurances of completing the work he has in hand for you "to-morrow," and probably you will discover a week later he has not yet begun it. He doesn't care a straw whether you are pleased or not. The professional man will make no attempt whatever to keep an engagement within half an hour of the appointed time, and the employee does not understand that the interests of the employer and his own can ever possibly be identical.

There is but one way to deal with the Spanish-American worker, and that is never to encourage him, never to express your approval of his work, never for one moment to let him feel you value his services, and never voluntarily to advance his wages! The master who finds his native helper really useful and shows his appreciation by doing any of these things, will speedily have to meet a demand for an impossible increase of wages, or to suffer the annoyance of seeing his employee "slacking" at every opportunity and assuming an attitude of disregard for his interests. The man reasons that if his master thinks so well of him as to advance his wages without a request, or to express his satisfaction with his services, he has become so invaluable to that master that he can presume on him by taking liberties which a less useful worker would not expect to be allowed. Presently, the only thing his master can do is to discharge the man whom he has thus thoughtlessly encouraged, and it may be that the latter will retaliate by waiting at the door and either shooting or stabbing the misguided employer.

Especially in handling the *peones* is it necessary to maintain the severest, almost the most brutal, conditions of discipline. Among my acquaintances in the Argentine is a wiry little Englishman, whose reputation as a disciplinarian is so widely known that his services are much in request to " clean up " estancias where unsuccessful managers have allowed slackness to prevail among the hands, or " arms " rather—agricultural labourers being collectively *brazos* or *braceros*, though the latter term is also used in the singular. He looks the last man in the world for the job, having more the appearance of a natty, little London lawyer. But he was wont to ride about among the rough Italian and Gallego labourers, always complaining about the inefficiency of their work, and if one ever muttered a protest, he calmly smashed him to the ground with a well-directed blow on the forehead from the butt of his loaded riding whip. On various occasions he has even gonc so far as to have two peones seize one of their number who had retorted to some complaint, carry him to a barn and strip off his shirt, and after having him tied to a post, personally apply a substantial number of lashes to his back. It might be thought that this was just the type of man to receive a shot some night, or a stab in the back, but that is not the way of things in South America. He has gone about his business for nearly thirty years, and has won the respect of the creatures he has knocked down and flogged, as well as that of all the others who did not wish to feel the weight of his strong hand. No, the type of employer more likely to be assassinated is he who has treated his employees with ill-directed kindness.

I met a gentleman, the manager of an estancia, at our hotel in the middle of one week leaving for his home, and heard the following Sunday that he had been shot dead by a labourer on the Saturday, because he would not re-employ the man whom the *mayordomo* had discharged during the manager's absence. The fellow had no grudge against the man who discharged him, who was probably in the habit of making his arm felt among the workers, but the manager, who had shown a kindly interest in the

peones and braceros, and could, had he wished, re-engage this one, was the natural object of his vengeance. Another gentleman with whom I came into occasional relationship was shot dead one evening by one of his workers because he would not advance him a day's money, declaring that he already had received sufficient for the week. Wages are paid nominally by the month, but improvidence is so common among the workers that seldom has a man, no matter his status, to draw his full pay at the end of the month, continual advances having been asked for week by week.

Therefore any European house that purposes branching out in the Argentine is faced with difficulties that do not exist, at least to the same extent, in almost any other great field of trade, and some allowance must be made to discount these in money values from the cost of doing business there.

Blackmail and " graft " entering so largely into business and politics, it would be surprising were it entirely absent from the Press. In proportion to its population, Buenos Ayres probably supports more periodicals than any other city in the world. There are about fifteen morning and evening journals devoted to Argentine interests, " national " newspapers; two dailies which cater for the Spanish community in distinction from the native Argentine; three or four Italian morning and evening papers; two English dailies (one of which has a wide circulation and is extremely profitable to its proprietors); two French dailies; two or three flourishing German dailies; one Turkish daily (containing four pages about the size of a London evening paper, printed in Arabic characters), and weekly, semi-weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly publications almost innumerable, catering for all manner of interests and representing a veritable babel of tongues—Yiddish, Scandinavian, Syriac, Russian, Greek, Catalan, Basque, to mention a few at random. A mere glance at a list of these journals would be sufficient to indicate, even to the uninitiated, that they cannot all be getting an honest living. Those that are conducted on strict business principles are relatively few; the blackmailer is busy on the others. His methods are

simple; naïve to a degree. The advertising manager calls upon you and states that he has seen your advertisement in *La Prensa, La Nacion, La Razon, La Argentina,* or *El Diario,* all of which are reputable and important journals, and that he would like you to put it into his paper; and if you do not think of doing that, his editor is contemplating publishing an article attacking you, and it would be a pity to let that appear. They are foolish indeed who allow such threats to induce them to use space in any of the numberless rags that issue from obscure printing offices, as the circulation of these sheets is so small, their influence so contemptible, that it would scarcely matter whether they published a full page denouncement of a Calle Florida tradesman as a thief and a swindler and offered their paper for sale at his door, so little attention do the general public pay to them.

On the other hand, there is an abundance of good journalism, and neither London nor New York can produce more profitable mediums of commercial publicity than several of the daily papers already named, or such weeklies as *Caras y Caretas*, *Fray Mocho*, and *P.B.T.* Relatively, the advertising rates in all these journals are higher than in British or American publications of the same circulation, but the ready response to the advertisements in them not only compensates for the difference in cost, but makes them work out cheaper mediums of publicity than the average in Great Britain or North America.

From every point of view the Argentine offers to the man of business almost unequalled opportunities; but, as I have endeavoured to illustrate in this chapter, it has the defects of its merits, and he who imagines it a veritable gold mine where there is no more to do than pick up the nuggets and bring them home, is the most deluded of optimists. It will give rich return for industry, for intelligence, and for honest merit, but while the business man in search of new fields of enterprise may reasonably expect to do relatively better in the wonderful Argentine than in most other markets of the world, what I have written may show that business life in Buenos Ayres is not entirely a bed of roses.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ARGENTINE AT HOME

As we make no distinction in English between the name of the country and that of its native, referring to both as "the Argentine," I am continually finding little difficulties present themselves in the progress of my writing, involving circumlocutions which are obviated in the Spanish. The Spaniard can never doubt the intention of a writer about the Argentine, *la Argentina* being the name of the country, or of a female native, while *el Argentino* indicates the male native. In the English we have to depend entirely on the context of the sentence to make clear whether the reference is to the country or to a native thereof. In the present chapter, of course, the title sufficiently indicates that we are to look at the Argentine native in his domestic relationships; and I must confess the subject is one that does not admit of very extensive treatment, for the reason set forth by M. Jules Huret in one of his admirable studies. The French writer observes (I translate from the Spanish edition):

"Only strangers of high social or official standing are received with any active sympathy. It is a matter of pride to be able to make these visitors realise the great progress of the metropolis and to introduce them to two or three *salons*, which are all precisely alike. But if the stranger, although he be of good family, arrive at Buenos Ayres provided with letters of introduction to real *criollos* (natives with generations of Argentine pedigree), he will receive cards in reply, and not always that courtesy; rarely a word of friendship or welcome. He will hear repeated on all hands *mi casa es suya* ('my house is yours'); there will be the usual courtesies with him

should they meet, and he may even be asked to go to the Jockey Club, if his stay in Buenos Ayres is not to be a long one. With few exceptions, he will not be able to penetrate into the intimacy of the 'home' or of a family of *criollos*. Argentine family life, especially of the better class, retains many of the habits of the Spaniards and something of the customs of the Arabs."

This is correctly observed, and if an amiable Frenchman found such difficulty as M. Huret evidently experienced in penetrating within the outer walls of Argentine domesticity, how shall the Anglo-Saxon succeed where a Latin had to confess failure? It is to be borne in mind, however, that this refers chiefly to the old families, who affect to despise the motley rabble of newcomers; and while profiting enormously by the industry and enterprise of the Gringo,—who has developed and exploited the riches of their country, making them rich in the process,—do not wish to be vulgarised by intercourse with the merely money-making element of the population. The exclusiveness of such families is notorious, and maintaining as they do the ancient patriarchal relationships, they are sufficient unto themselves, so that any foreigner who seeks to force himself into their small and narrow-minded circle is an ill-advised mortal who will surely be snubbed for his pains. They are as truly republican, these criollos, as the families of the Doges of Venice; but politically, and even socially, they are being overwhelmed by the great tide of commercial prosperity on which all sorts and conditions of people and the motliest mixtures of nationalities have floated into wealth and power. Yet there is something austerely attractive in their dignified isolation, their cold contempt of the ruck of the community. Like the creole families of Louisiana, they are landmarks of the past, mouldering memorials of a social system that has served its day and is ceasing to be.

We have really to go farther back than Spanish origins to trace the influences that have moulded the Argentine criollo into what we find him. Just as it is a recognised law of heredity that certain characteristics

are apt to skip one generation and reappear in the next, so do we find among these people of South America features that are more Moorish than Spanish. In the later centuries, while the Spaniards have been ridding themselves of most traces of the old Moorish dominion, those who settled in their American colonies retained customs and habits of thought which were disappearing in the home country, and owing to the isolated and circumscribed colonial life, tendencies towards exclusiveness became emphasised to the point of exaggeration. Thus, in certain directions, the dusky hand of the Moor is even more noticeable in South America to-day than in Spain itself. This is a point of view which few Argentine writers would be willing to endorse, as it is the claim of the Argentine that his civilisation is purely European, though distinctive in its individuality. The fact remains, however, that the position of the womenkind, legally and socially, though now showing signs of rapid change, conforms more to Moorish notions than to European ideals; the very arrangement of the house is Moorish, disguised, it is true, by progression through Spanish and French styles; the tribal dignity of the head of the family is nearer to Arabic life than to anything still surviving in European civilisation.

It will be at once obvious to the reader that in a country where we find the very latest ideas of intellectual and industrial progress warring with social conceptions which Europeans have long come to esteem as essentially oriental, we must have a very complex and unfamiliar system of family life to consider. Indeed, while there is but little for the writer to deal with, who confines himself to a record of familiar experiences, the subject is extremely fascinating and capable of treatment at great length. My present purpose, however, is to deal with the obvious, with "things seen," rather than to attempt in any detail the tracing of origins of the Argentine social system. But the slight suggestion I have thrown out will show the bent of my thought in this connection, and perhaps help the reader to a better understanding of what is to follow.

It must be understood that the foreign resident actively

engaged in business affairs might not, in the whole course of a lifetime, come in contact with any of the real criollos. Nor would it be matter for surprise if he seldom or never encountered a real Argentine. Personally, it was my good fortune to meet several gentlemen of eminent position and influence in Buenos Ayres who were natives of the country, whose parents in some instances had even been born there, and all were intensely proud to be Argentines. It would be difficult, however, to determine to what extent any of them, had England been the scene of their lives, would have been regarded as Englishmen. The extraordinary power of the country to assimilate all races under the sun, the speed with which even the most unpromising material of immigration seems to be transformed into Argentine nationality, presents one of the greatest difficulties to the foreigner in his search for national characteristics. I was told by various English residents that they had only been able to make their children grow up with the English tongue by thrashing them when they spoke Spanish; and M. Huret mentions the typical case of a Frenchman whose sons absolutely refused to learn their father's language, and were proud to speak only Spanish. He also tells how two sons of a wealthy German resident in the Rosario, who had been sent to a German university, while staying at the Plaza Hotel in Buenos Ayres on their return, on being mistaken for Germans, felt so mortified that they wept!

There are two immediate reasons for this fervid patriotism of the younger generation: (1) the fact that all male children born in the Argentine are regarded as Argentine citizens and must perform their military service; and (2) the exaggerated patriotism instilled into them at school, where the national flag is exhibited in every room and receives the homage of a sacred thing.

It is perfectly understandable that a young man, feeling himself a citizen of no mean country, in which his father is no more than a foreigner—rarely does a Frenchman become officially an Argentine, as that involves the renunciation of his own nationality; the Germans are less squeamish in this respect; while the Italians and

Spanish readily nationalise themselves—will take a wholesome pride in his citizenship. And as language is the greatest instrument for binding a people together, and the predominance of Spanish in South America is incontestable, it is not surprising that the native-born should even prefer the language of his country to that of his father's country. In the course of my stay I met quite a number of persons bearing the most familiar English and Scottish names, who could not even say "Good morning" in English. With certain of these I had frequent transactions, and it was interesting to study the racial characteristics of a gentleman named Campbell, a fanatical Argentine, whose parents two generations back spoke nothing but "braid Scots," yet whose every action and trick of speech was peculiarly Argentine. Another gentleman, one of the most able and businesslike men I encountered, boasted the name of Harris (pronounced "Arrees"), which was about the only English word he knew. Thus it happens there are unnumbered thousands of Argentines without a single drop of Spanish blood, but with all sorts of infusions of British, German, French, Italian, Belgian, Russian, Scandinavian, etc.

As regards the patriotic teaching, here is an example of the catechism in daily use throughout the public schools:

"*Question.*—How do you esteem yourself in relation to your compatriots ?
Answer.—I consider myself bound to them by a sentiment which unites us all.
Question.—And what is that ?
Answer.—The sentiment that the Argentine Republic is the finest country on earth.
Question.—What are the duties of a good citizen ?
Answer.—First of all, to love his country.
Question.—Even before his parents ?
Answer.—Before all."

Afterwards, the scholar responds in the following manner to another question from the teacher:

"In the veins of no human being ever flowed more

generous blood than ours ; the origins of no people in the world ever shone with a brighter aureole than that which illumines the brow of the Argentine Republic. I am proud of my origin, of my race, and of my country."

Whenever the name of General San Martín is mentioned by the teacher in a class, the scholars are expected to bob up and make the military salute, at the same time saying *viva la patria !* And the extreme gravity of all classes in uncovering and their prayerful homage when the somewhat bizarre strains of the National Anthem, reminiscent of the Marseillaise mixed with a Sankey hymn, are heard, are very touching, while the national flag borne through the streets or exhibited on any official occasion involves the doffing of all hats.

All this, to Europeans, extremely exaggerated patriotism will appear far less so to the citizen of any young country, and is but little more pronounced than that of the United States. It is probably necessary to the fomenting of a proper sentiment of nationality. Time will adjust the erroneous perspective of the present day.

These, then, are two very potent factors in the making of the Argentine patriot : the claiming of every male child born in the country as a national unit, and the determined inculcation of a vigorous patriotism. We have to add to them the influence of the language and also that natural love of country which makes the human being prefer even the most forbidding and unattractive scenes, if they happen to be the first on which his dawning mind has looked. So strong is this feeling, that I have found it quite impossible to utter a single word in criticism of Buenos Ayres in the presence of young people, the children of British subjects, who had been born there and had never seen a European city. Nay, they are to be met in England, full of contempt for poor old London and all things English, and fired with the most unreasoning love of their native Buenos Ayres. Thus in a country where " the melting pot " so quickly turns all that is thrown therein into the same mould, it is almost futile to go searching for " the real Argentine," and we must be content to

Bags of Wheat awaiting Shipment at a Railway Station.

Three Huge Piles of "Jerked Beef" outside a "Saladero," or Curing Factory.

A Scene in the "Camp"—Peones outside a "Pulperia, or Country Grocery and Liquor Store.

attempt no delicate differentiations, but simply to accept in the broadest and loosest way the Argentine residents as the Argentine people, excluding, perhaps, the larger portion of the British community.

Early discovering the fact that there was no possibility of the average stranger being admitted into the charmed circle of the private family, I turned to other methods of discovering something of the family life, and confess that I did not even despise the observations of English governesses, whose services are in keen demand among the well-to-do. Some of these ladies might do the necessary picture of the inner life of the Argentine family which no ordinary visitor is ever likely to be able to draw from personal observation.

Let me give one glimpse of an Argentine interior, as I had it from a very able teacher of languages—an English lady who had spent a number of years in the homes of different families. Unlike most Argentine families, this was self-contained, the father and mother with their brood of young children, and a considerable retinue of servants, occupying an immense house in the fashionable district, with no other relatives sharing it. The gentleman derived a large income from his estates, and was above the need to do more than draw his money periodically from the agents into whose hands he had placed their management. The wife, still under thirty, was the mother of some eight or nine children, and she had already attained to that condition of adipose tissue which is the ambition of every respectable Argentine lady. Her mornings were spent in aimless lolling about the house in a state of undress, her toilet being a matter for the afternoon, when she went for a short run in their big Limousine, or visited some lady friends to take afternoon tea. In the evenings, she had her children with her to a comparatively late hour, her husband spending almost every evening at his Club, and he too would attend to his toilet in the afternoon, thinking nothing of sitting down to lunch in his shirt-sleeves with his suspenders hanging from the back of his trousers, while his wife would be in her dressing-gown. The children were not admitted to meals,

but took their food with the governess and one or two nurses in a special dining-room, into which papa would occasionally wander at meal-time, still in his shirt sleeves, and help himself to scraps from the dishes on the table, or perhaps a spoonful of soup from the tureen! This the governess found somewhat trying in her efforts to instil manners into the children, whose conduct at table was deplorable. Once, when one of the elder girls was fingering the bread on the governess's plate, that much-tried lady explained to her gently that such was not considered good manners, to which the bright young girl replied, "In England, yes; but here, no."

To keep these lively youngsters from all sorts of monkeyisms, such as licking the dividing spoon, putting their knives into their mouths, and making as much noise over a plate of soup as one does in a bath, left the governess scant time to enjoy her meals, and such manners among children are not altogether exceptional in Argentine homes. Young people are pampered to a dangerous degree, and, while still mere children, they have more pocket money to dispose of on their own little selfish pleasures than many a well-to-do Englishman spends on himself.

Although there is great and growing popularity for all forms of English sport, and especially football, the boys of the moneyed classes are often somewhat effeminate in their manners. Those of the household above-mentioned who were old enough to go to school, were taken there, a distance of about a quarter of a mile, under care of a nurse or the governess, in one of the various motor-cars owned by the father, and at the hour of dismissal each day they were brought home in the same manner. I used to think it quite one of the characteristic sights of Buenos Ayres to notice the groups of nurses and governesses at the doors of the better-class schools, waiting to receive their little charges and conduct them as far as two or three squares away by electric tram, when the parents could not afford to send a motor or a horse-carriage for that purpose. Many of these helpless boys would be twelve years old! This is understandable in the case of the girls, nay, imperative, but it tends to make the boys timorous and

unmanly, afraid even to cross the street alone. In view of the universal pampering of the children, it speaks highly for the essential virility of Argentine character that the youth of the country cannot, as a whole, be said to lack in manliness ; they seem to throw off in adolescence the effeminacy which their boyhood training is admirably adapted to foster in them.

Of familiar domestic intercourse, such as the social relationships of British and North American home-life make possible, there is absolutely none in the Argentine, or, indeed, throughout the whole of South America—excepting always those families where Anglo-Saxon influence predominates. The drawing-room of most of the better-class houses is a gorgeously furnished chamber, in which the furniture, on most days of the year, is hidden under dust covers, and where the blinds are seldom raised. It exists for state occasions only, when the starchiest formality is observed, and these are by no means numerous and always duly announced in the social column of the daily papers. The lady of the house passes most of her time between her bedroom and her boudoir, and it is in the latter, if she cultivate a circle of lady friends, that she will sip afternoon tea with her callers, although you will occasionally come across an announcement in the social news stating that some lady is going to give a " five o'clock tea-room " at four o'clock, and inviting her acquaintances to be present. There is a great partiality for the use of English phrases, and " five o'clock tea," together with the addition of "room," is often used without any clear understanding of its meaning.

But the Argentine mother, although her ways are not our ways, might in certain respects serve as an example to English and American mothers ; entering not in the slightest degree into any of her husband's concerns that lie outside of their home, her devotion is entirely to her children, who will in large measure reflect her standard of culture, and when the lady of the house has had a European training, there will be nothing lacking in the behaviour of her children.

This bond between the mother and children is very

strong, reaching out through all the living generations, so that even a great-grandmother—and there are many, as the women marry young, grandmothers of forty being not uncommon—enters very intimately into the lives of all her progeny, who vie with each other in their love for her. The community of feeling between all members and branches of the family is most pronounced. The importance of this in knitting together the fabric of Argentine society cannot be overestimated.

Unlike the French housewife, the Argentine lady does not greatly concern herself about the finances of the household, merely giving directions for the expenditure, but usually leaving it to her husband to settle the accounts. In this she shows something of the "grand lady" and also something of the lady of the harem, acknowledging that it is no part of a woman's business to understand the value of money. Her conception of her office is to be pleasing and attractive to her husband and devoted to her children, in which duties she finds her full content. The very formality of her name indicates how far the Argentine lady is removed from the possibilities of Pankhurstism. She is proud to be known as Señora María Martínez de Fuentes, thus indicating that she is María Martínez *of* Fuentes, the latter being her husband's name. It is an admission of husband's rights which could not exist in a country of self-assertive womenkind.

By the way, it may be interesting here to explain the peculiar customs that regulate family names in South America, and lead to continuous mistakes on the part of Englishmen and Americans, who have not taken the trouble to familiarise themselves with them. I have just explained that when a lady marries she retains her maiden name and adds to it, with the preposition *de*, the name of her husband. Almost certainly, however, her husband would have two family names—the paternal and maternal. Let us suppose his name was Fuentes Mattos, the first his father's family name and the second his mother's family name. His wife, in adding his name to hers, ignores his mother's name, which is of secondary importance, and in many cases is entirely dropped. On the

other hand, the children of this imaginary couple, would be named Fuentes Martínez, thus indicating that the father was a Fuentes and the mother a Martínez, so that we have the following varieties of nomenclature in one family:

Father—José Fuentes Mattos.
Mother—Maria Martínez de Fuentes.
Son—Alfonso Fuentes Martínez.

When we remember that the names of the grandparents and the grandchildren will all pass through similar changes, it will be seen how complicated South American family names may become. Still, always bearing in mind the simple rules I have illustrated, there is no difficulty in identification, and relationships can be much more clearly established than with our cruder system.

There is a tendency in the Argentine, due to admiration of British brevity, to ignore the maternal name entirely, whereas on the Pacific coast it is the universal practice to use only the initial, so that Señor José Fuentes Mattos would there be expected to sign himself José Fuentes M. As it is, in the Argentine a man will sometimes write his name in full and at other times use only the initial for the maternal name, or drop it entirely; but for Señor José Fuentes Mattos to receive a letter from England addressed "Señor J. F. Mattos" is an insult he does not readily forgive. Naturally, that is what happens daily in business correspondence between England and South America, and I well remember a traveller for an English firm coming to me to solve the difficulties of a long list of names he had received from his head office, in every one of which the surname was represented by an initial and the maternal name written in full.

Returning to the Argentine at home, we have to consider for a moment that patriarchal system of living, to which I have already made reference, as one of the legacies of the remote past. Formerly familiar in Spain, had it not existed in the mother country before the colonising days, it would almost certainly have been forced upon the colonial pioneers. For protection against the marauding Indians the colonists, even for many years after

gaining their national independence in 1810, had to maintain themselves in closely banded communities. Even so recently as the year 1860, the now thriving city and port of Bahía Blanca, which may yet rival Buenos Ayres as a great centre of shipping, was no more than a military outpost to keep the Indians from penetrating too near the townships in the province of Buenos Ayres. Thus we might have attributed to the influence of environment the system of one family with all its connections, interested in the work of a large estancia—as extensive, perhaps, as an English county—living together under the one paternal roof, did we not know that it has a remoter origin. Now that the conditions which justified it have entirely passed away, its true origin is not only forgotten, but would, probably, be denied by those who observe the custom, which survives in the very heart of the metropolis, and among the best families of the land. I remember well how impressed we were with some of the private palaces in Buenos Ayres, many of which rival in size and architectural ostentation the great public buildings. It was a matter for wonder how any ordinary family could tenant a house large enough to serve as the town hall of an important city. But all was made clear when we knew that in many of these private palaces there was not merely one solitary family nestling away in some corner of the huge building, but probably anything from six to a dozen related families living under the one roof, so that I used to think of the head of the family in Gilbertian rhyme, abiding in peace, not only with wife and children, but with

> "His sisters and his cousins,
> Whom he reckons up by dozens,
> And his aunts!"

To Britishers especially, it is a surprising fact that there are brethren in the world who can dwell together in harmony, to whom propinquity does not lead to family bickerings. That would be notoriously impossible in Great Britain, and I suspect equally so among the Anglo-Saxons of America. Our nature prompts to the independent life and an early good-bye to the parental roof.

Surely, then, there must be something radically different in the Argentine character which can enable half-a-dozen or more inter-related families to live harmoniously in the same house. Of course, each family unit has its own particular quarters, and in some of the more stately residences each family is really self-contained as to its house accommodation, but more usually they will have common dining-rooms and sitting-rooms, the women-folk passing practically all their time in each other's company. As a people they must either be abnormally good-natured, family affection must be developed beyond anything familiar among us, or their racial inclination to indolence makes them so tolerant of one another that they do not have the spirit to quarrel. I suspect that something of all three, interacting on their lives, makes possible the existence of this unusual condition of happy family life.

The system is one that has much to be said for it, and fostering, as it does, an intense feeling of family pride, which is reflected in the patriotism of the country, it must be regarded as a valuable asset of national character. If it happens that any member of the composite family meets with misfortune, he can be sure of the immediate sympathy and practical help of his relatives within the domestic circle, for they would deem it an indignity that one of their family should be known to be in difficulties. If one of the married sons dies, leaving a widow with several children, there will never be a moment's doubt as to what the widow will do. She will continue in precisely the same position within the family, and even if her husband has left no money at all, his brothers will consider it their bounden duty to maintain her and her children in the same comfort as her husband would have done. Nor is there any charity in this, as there would be with us. It is a natural concomitant of the family system. What we should consider generosity the Argentine brother-in-law regards as a simple duty, and there is hardly a limit to what he will do in the shape of service to the family of his dead brother.

In this connection I recall a very interesting illustration of the racial differences between Argentine and

English. An English settler in Buenos Ayres had five daughters born there, four of whom married British residents or the children of British residents. The one exception married an Argentine gentleman, and so narrowly British were her relatives that at first they looked with disfavour on the match. After some years the English husband of one of the daughters died, leaving her with four children and an empty purse, having wasted all his wife's patrimony in foolish speculation—there is no Married Woman's Property Act, the husband becoming sole arbiter of his wife's fortune! Her English brothers-in-law and her own sisters were more or less sympathetic, but the despised Argentine brother-in-law immediately made a home for her and her children with his own family, and, as one of her relatives told me, seemed to think he was only doing his bare duty. This is a very pleasant trait of character, and, from all that I was able to gather, it is entirely characteristic of the better-class Argentine. Certainly, wherever I found that British women had married natives, they had good reason for happiness, and too often were able to commiserate with their own sisters and women friends who had married Englishmen.

Another noteworthy resultant of the strength of the family bond is its influence for good on the men. In a country where, thanks to the cosmopolitan rabble of rogues and tricksters who swarm in every quarter, dishonesty abounds in all its guises, the temptations to most men are greater than in the older and more firmly established countries of the world. Pride of family very often keeps a man in the straight path. It is a little reminiscent of the antique system of the Japanese, which involved the entire family in the disgrace and punishment of any one member who transgressed the laws of honour. The strongest deterrent to one tempted towards a wrong course is not what the community at large will think of him, but how his action will embarrass and humiliate his whole family. And when a member of one of these composite family circles is guilty of embezzlement or any misdeed which can be rectified by the self-sacrifice of the others, the matter seldom reaches the public; his

father and his brothers and other relatives willingly make good his defalcations. Quite a number of cases of this kind came to my personal knowledge, and I believe it is a fact that the law has seldom to be appealed to when anyone has suffered a loss through an employee or a partner who is " well connected." For this reason astute business men are always careful to inquire into the family connections of any person with whom they purpose having transactions, these connections being their best guarantee. It will usually be found that the most barefaced swindlers are either foreigners or of foreign parentage, and not seldom have they a good deal of British blood in their veins.

As to the " homes " of the Argentine, they approach more nearly Anglo-Saxon ideas of " comfort " than the French, Spanish, or Italian notions of " home." French styles of furniture and interior decoration still predominate. There is, however, a growing appreciation of the more solid comfort of English styles, and popularity for these is assured. Our capacious easy-chairs are ousting the dainty, elegant, and abominably unrestful French affairs. Little progress, however, has been made in the direction of heating the houses, and an Argentine interior in winter, as I have said in an earlier chapter, is apt to be a picture of shivering cheerlessness. But there are signs that even this will be remedied in the increasing approval of what may be described as " English comfort."

That the Argentine's home is likely, however, to be thrown open to the freedom of the English home is inconceivable. His exclusiveness is a heritage of the past. He could not rid himself of it, even though he tried. Nor is he trying very hard. He may in time come to follow European customs in the ordering of his meals which still remain, in real Argentine homes, a topsy-turvy wonder to the European, the soup usually appearing about the end of the dinner, and the cheese being eaten indiscriminately between the earlier courses. This is no more than a fashion, but the other matter is " bred in the bone."

Knowing this, it seems quaint to receive from a native a letter on some ordinary affair of business, bearing his home address with the initials " S. C." or " S. C. U."

appended. Here we have an old Spanish formality; one of the emptiest of courtesies. The initials stand for *su casa de usted,* literally "Your house." That is to say, he informs you his house is your house! But he has no more intention of ever asking you to enter his house than you have of going there to stay. It reminds one of Mark Twain on his travels in Spain, when, expressing admiration for a Spaniard's jacket, the owner retorted, "It is yours, sir," and further assured him when he also admired his beautiful waistcoat, that it also was at his disposal, so that Mark, out of consideration of the Spaniard's convenience, refrained from admiring anything else he wore. This is a custom of very primitive peoples, and I am told that something similar obtains among the Maoris of New Zealand; one of whose chiefs pressed upon King George, when, as Prince of Wales, he visited the colony, the acceptance of some venerated object, and was greatly chagrined by the royal visitor, in all innocence and wishing not to offend the chief, accepting the quite useless gift. We must never let ourselves be caught with Spanish courtesy, and we must remember in South America that their courtesy is one of the things they have imported from Spain.

Among the minor characteristics of the Argentine which frequently interested me and for which I endeavoured to find a reason, was the habit of repeating the most ordinary phrases in much the manner of a doddering old person in England reiterating the same story. Let me try to express this in English. A lady is telling how she narrowly escaped being run down by a tram in the street—

"It would be about four o'clock in the afternoon, when I was going down Calle Sarmiento. There was a lot of traffic in the street, and without looking backwards I stepped off the pavement. Just as I stepped off the pavement I heard the bell of a tram, and looking back, it had nearly reached me, so I gave a scream and stepped back on the pavement, just as the tram passed me, in the Calle Sarmiento, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, when it was very crowded and I had just stepped off the

pavement when I heard the bell, and had only time to step back when the tram passed me. If I hadn't heard the bell, I might have been run over, and I gave a scream just as I stepped back on the pavement."

That is no burlesque version of how this most thrilling story would be told. Then, suppose you have to arrange with one of your native employees to purchase a box of purple carbon paper and three shorthand notebooks on his way to the office to-morrow morning. You will tell him so, and expect that to be an end of the matter—when you are fresh to Buenos Ayres. But no, after listening attentively to your elaborate instructions, he will then repeat—

"So, when I am coming in to-morrow morning, I will go to the stationer's, and I will get a box of purple carbon paper and three shorthand notebooks—a box of carbon paper, purple, and shorthand notebooks, three, to-morrow morning on my way into the office. Three notebooks and a box of purple carbon paper. Bueno!"

This most tantalising habit of trivial repetition is universal, and so endemic that English-born residents speaking both languages translate this mode of thought into the English tongue, with the quaintest results. There is surely no people in the world who can take a longer time to explain a little matter than the South American, and I have often thought that the thinness of the Spanish language, which frequently calls for three or four times the number of words that would be used in English to express a simple idea, must have had some influence in producing this strange habit of repetition, in order to fix in the mind precisely what is wanted and the condition under which it is to be secured. The only satisfactory method of conveying ideas from mind to mind was to assume that the person you were addressing was still under fifteen years of age. The swift exchange of thought-flashes which is possible between Anglo-Saxons is unknown to users of the Spanish tongue, but the more go-ahead Argentine, who really represents to-day the brightest intelligence that expresses itself in Spanish, is deliberately aiming at the Anglo-Saxon ideal, and, disregarding the circumlocutions of his native speech,

is endeavouring to bend that to the brisker uses of modern commercial life. This theory of mine may be entirely wrong, but the facts, as I have endeavoured to illustrate them above, are substantially correct.

If anything is likely to seduce the Argentine away from his oldest and most honoured customs of life, it is the spirit of emulation which pervades the whole social system, though it is present to a much greater degree in those of mixed parentage than in the criollos. By no means peculiar to the Argentine, it attains to almost equal strength in the United States ; nor is it at all uncommon in English society. Social rivalry is really the motive force behind much of the commercial activity of the country. The family of Sanchez have just built a swagger new house and bought a 25-h.p. Limousine. The Alonso family, having quite as much money and perhaps a trifle more than the Sanchez, cannot brook this ostentation to pass without reply, so up goes a still more florid mansion, a 40-h.p. car is bought, and the chauffeur wears a dozen more brass buttons. This game of " Beggar your Neighbour " in social ostentation is being played merrily through every grade of Argentine society. It is extremely good for business. Not only does it create a brisk demand for luxuries, but it lays upon those who play it the necessity of energising to secure the wherewithal, and is thus productive of creative effort in the making of wealth where formerly the impetus was lacking. So that perhaps it might not be wrong to suppose that what the European observer would write down in the one case as the vulgar striving of social " climbers," and as rotten economics in the other, is economically good in the development of a young country. But it is imitative and nothing else, for there is as yet no evidence of the growth of a distinctively national taste, and this imitative tendency of the people is destined to bring them steadily nearer to European ideas, so that they will probably emerge with a social system that will bear the same relationship to that of all the European nations as a composite photograph does to all the portraits that have been overlaid on the negative.

CHAPTER XIV

"THE BRITISH COLONY" AND ITS WAYS

All the different nationalities represented in the population of the Argentine are known as "colonies," excepting the Spaniards and Italians, who are at once so numerous and so involved in the life of the country that it is scarcely possible to think of them as forming mere colonies. The Republic, with a total population of seven and a half millions, contains vast numbers of Italians and Spaniards, but reliable returns as to the various nationalities included in the population are difficult to come by, if not impossible to secure. It is stated that there are upwards of 800,000 Spaniards in the country, while the Basques, both French and Spanish, are said to exceed a quarter of a million; the Germans number nearly 50,000, the total of German-speaking persons, which includes Germans, Austrians, and Swiss, being upwards of 120,000. The British residents throughout the Republic probably do not total 40,000, but that is thought a fair estimate. As for Italians, their name is legion. In Buenos Ayres alone there are some 350,000 of them! But all figures must be regarded as approximate only, as the re-emigration movement is considerable. For example: in the year 1911 the total immigration into the Republic was 225,772, but the emigration from it amounted to 120,709, leaving an immigration balance of 105,063. Race statistics are easily obtained as to the incoming population, but of the settled residents and those who leave the country, there is a good deal that is speculative in all estimates, official and otherwise

The Spaniards and Italians are split up into many subsections, such as the Basques, Asturians, Andalusians,

Neapolitans, Tuscans, Lombards, Sicilians, and so forth. It would thus be correct to talk of "the Asturian colony," but scarcely so of "the Spanish colony"; of the Neapolitan colony, but not of the Italian.

To a remarkable degree do these communities preserve their racial distinctions, as I have already explained, this applying more particularly to the cosmopolitan centres of population such as Buenos Ayres, Rosario, La Plata, and Mendoza. In the smaller country towns, where the nationalities thin out, there are not the same inducements to maintain distinctions of race; thus, paradoxical though it may seem, the process of "Argentinising" the Gringo proceeds apace more rapidly in the Camp than in the larger towns, or even in Buenos Ayres, which might be thought the hottest part of the "melting pot."

Naturally the capital contains the major portion of the British colony. Yet, not even the ubiquitous Italian, though always overwhelming the Britisher in sheer numbers, finds his way to remoter parts, for everywhere throughout the vast territory of the Republic our kinsmen have penetrated, either as lonely overseers or "construction engineers," in little groups as prosperous *estancieros*, or managers of divers concerns. In Rosario there is a very considerable colony of Britishers, in Bahía Blanca, in Mendoza, in Tucumán—wherever there are banks to be managed, railways to be maintained, machinery to be sold, there you will find the enterprising sons of Albion busy, and usually prosperous; though the figure I have just used may not quite apply, as the most familiar names borne by these self-exiles from our shores are Scots and Irish.

In many respects the Irish Argentine was one of my most interesting studies. As a journalist, it was for me something of a revelation to find two comparatively prosperous weekly newspapers, the *Southern Cross* and the *Hiberno-Argentine Review*, both printed in English and very much alive, dedicated exclusively to the interests of the Irish Catholic families of the country. The Irishman is well-known for the part he has played in the

development of South America. In that wonderful statesman and governor, Ambrosio O'Higgins, and in his no less brilliant son Bernardo, the liberator and first President of Chili, did not Ould Ireland give to South America two of the noblest men of action whose lives illumine its history? In the Argentine also, the Hibernian has played no mean rôle in the development of the young nation. His influence in her counsels to-day is considerable. Prepared as one may be by previous reading to discover him prominent in its life, it is none the less strange to meet eminent men of business, in every fibre of their being fervid Argentines, using the Argentine tongue with all the nuances of the native, who speak our own language with the most pronounced Irish brogue.

Comparatively few of these Irish Argentines, moreover, have ever crossed the seas to the green isle of their ancestors. Almost without exception they are bitterly anti-English in sentiment. Originally sprung from lower-class Irish peasantry, to whom the miserable conditions of emigrant life in the Argentine, a generation or two back, were far less forbidding than to the average British emigrant, the dress-suit and silk-stockinged stage of luxury attained by the many who have scraped a bit of fortune from the generous soil, is to them a satisfaction that might not appeal so strongly to the classes which England and Scotland have been unhappily pouring into Canada during recent years. His religion also fitting in with that of the country is another factor that has helped to make the Irishman at home in the Argentine. I do not doubt that if he had been content to work in his own green land with the same application and energy that he must apply on these unbeautiful plains of the southern continent, he might have prospered equally; but the fact remains that here, in Argentina, he has prospered and has retained his religion, and that is something for those who, like myself, abominate the ways of Rome, to put in their pipes and smoke.

Under our Treaty with the Argentine, the children born in the country of British parents occupy a somewhat

curious position as regards nationality. While their parents remain British subjects unless—and this rarely indeed—they deliberately renounce their birthright to become nationalised Argentines, children born in the country are reckoned as Argentines and amenable to the laws of the Republic so long as they continue to live therein, but they become British subjects on entering British territory. Thus, the native son of British parents must conform to the law of military service, while the native-born daughter ranks with all other Argentine women in her disabilities as to the personal control of her property in the event of her marrying in that country. Yet, on coming to London, that son and daughter cease, for the time being, to be Argentine subjects, so far as British law is concerned, and are here accepted as native-born Britishers. Whether this curious international arrangement exists in connection with any other European countries I know not, but suspect it does not, else the heroic efforts of many foreign women residents, and especially the French, to maintain the nationality of their children, would not be necessary. Seldom does a steamer leave Buenos Ayres for Europe without carrying several lonely women who have left their husbands, perhaps in some remote corner of the Pampa, in order that the child to be born may see the light under the flag of its parents' country. M. Huret mentions the case of a French lady who, in addition to a long and toilsome journey from the interior, undertook the trip to Europe and back on two occasions within three years thus to preserve the French nationality of her children! With English mothers the chief, indeed the only, reason for following this course is to save any son of theirs from the burden of military service. And many a poor lady who has made the trip has been disappointed to be told the child was a girl!

The statesmen are most insistent on the maintenance of the conditions that go with Argentine citizenship, and to such a point that the famous Bartolomé Mitre, one of the greatest men the nation has produced, declared that, rather than withdraw the condition that he who

A "Ramada," or Shaded Resting-Place for Men and Horses in the Argentine "Camp,"

An "Estancia" Homestead of the Old Clay-built Type.

becomes a citizen of the Republic must renounce his allegiance to his native land, he would "set fire to his country from all sides."

Officialism is alert and open-eyed in its watch and ward over the native-born sons of foreigners who seek to evade their military obligations. So far as I could gather, there was but little disposition to do so on the part of most of the young citizens sprung from Gringo parents; rather are they apt to look down upon the country of their fathers, and to swell with pride at being privileged to serve the Argentine.

Exceptions to this rule will most usually be found among the sons of resident Britishers, though many of them, and especially the Irish, willingly do their duty by the Republic. I remember overhearing the mother of one of these young Irish *porteños* scolding him because he insisted on speaking Spanish even among his own people, where English (with a thick brogue) was the language of the family circle. He had served his term in the Republican army, and gloried in reciting its illustrious achievements, before which the efforts of the poor blunderers who muddled through with such footling officers as Napoleon and Wellington paled into insignificance. What were the British Grenadiers to the *Granaderos de San Martín*? What indeed! But the Englishmen and Scotsmen who, by accident of birth, rank as Argentine citizens, and have done their military service, are comparatively few in proportion to the whole. I have met native-born Argentines not a few who were far less enamoured of the country and its ways, and more sanely appreciative of Old England than many British residents who had better reason to entertain these sentiments.

A certain lofty contempt for the Englishman at home is to be noted in the attitude of the "British Colony" to things British. "I have no use for the untravelled Englishman," said an Argentine-born Englishman to me. This gentleman's parents had evidently been so essentially English that their son, now a man of about fifty, had grown up and attained to prosperity without being able

to speak more than "Gringo Spanish." He had no use for the untravelled Englishman, and yet I shall venture to say that many a Lancashire or Yorkshire man who has travelled no farther than London will have as broad an outlook as the English porteño who has never been outside of the Argentine. This very gentleman, one of the most charming and agreeable of the British residents with whom I came into touch, had himself visited England for the first time two years before I met him, and confessed that the old land, with its unlimited facilities for the larger enjoyment of social life, made a deep impression on him, even to the point of awakening the desire to come "home" and avail himself of his British birthright for the rest of his days.

Judge ye, therefore, to what extent he was entitled to sneer at the untravelled Englishman! So far as enlarging one's horizon or enriching the mind is concerned, a fortnight on the continent of Europe, amid historic scenes and in touch with the grand, great things of the past, will do more than twenty years of Buenos Ayres. Thus I was at first inclined to stiffen against my porteño friend and resent his suggestion, but I had misunderstood him, and we were really in entire harmony, he and I. His point was that the Englishman who arrives in Buenos Ayres direct from England, and has never before travelled throughout his own country or even troubled about that continental fortnight, is apt to prove a social bore to his fellow-countrymen in Buenos Ayres. I concur most heartily, for this is the very type of Englishman who discusses in the loudest voice and with the most unreasoning bigotry the incomparable advantages of the Argentine over the benighted little island he has left. Nor must it be supposed that the seven thousand miles from the Thames to the River Plate do anything appreciably to reduce the untravelled state of this Englishman. There is little to be seen, and what there is slips past the average voyager without notice, so that he reaches his journey's end in the same splendid state of untravelled ignorance that he left his native town in England. There is an unfortunately large proportion

of such Britishers among the colony of our countrymen on the River Plate.

In any consideration of the British colony, we ought to have established in our minds what exactly are its constituents. A very large number of its members are associated with the management of the railways. Even readers who are only indifferently informed on South American subjects are probably aware that the British are the real railway makers of the world, and that the thousands of miles of lines which interlace the far-flung towns of the Argentine are monuments of British enterprise, while some £150,000,000 of good English money has gone to their making. In this alone the Britishers have proved themselves the greatest benefactors of the country, although it has not been entirely a work of philanthropy. The railways, then, being chiefly British concerns, show a natural preference for British employees, and thousands of young Britons are serving on them today in all sorts of capacities, but chiefly as clerks, accountants, draughtsmen, engineers, and department managers.

Time was when the young railway employee in England who secured a post in the Argentine went direct from a thistly pasturage to a field of clover ; was able to keep his horse and ruffle it with the best. That was before the standardising of the currency, when a paper peso would occasionally be as good as gold, and usually a great deal better than it has ever been since the establishment of the *caja de conversión*. To-day they speak of those times as of a Golden Age that has vanished, and now the lot of the minor railway employee is by no means an enviable one. It is true that he will probably receive a salary twice or two and a half times greater than he got at home, but, as I have already made clear, the net result of such a salary will be that financially his Argentine condition, if not worse than his British, will be but little better. He will handle more money, and he will get a great deal less for what he spends. Meanwhile, he has signed his two or three years' agreement, and must struggle on, however inadequately he is financed for the fight. Falling readily into the ways of his better situated

countrymen, he endeavours to vie with them, and in the process is lucky indeed if he avoids running into debt. From this class, to which naturally there are many exceptions among the higher placed officials—many of whom are men of outstanding ability, handsomely paid and more liberally treated than they would be in similar positions in Great Britain or North America—we have not the best of material for the building of the British colony.

The British banks and financial agencies, so numerous throughout the Republic, are very largely staffed from home, though there is also a large native element in every office, as it is not to be supposed that the operations of these banks are confined to a British clientele. Far from that; I should imagine that the large majority of depositors with such as the London & River Plate Bank were foreigners. Certainly, to judge by my occasional visits to that busiest of banks, there were always fewer Britishers among those waiting on the outside of the counters than there were English-speaking accountants and cashiers on the inside. In addition to all the heads of departments who were, I think, without exception, Britishers, the staff contained many English-speaking porteños; but working away at the books, and not in touch with the public, one could note many essentially British faces. This is typical of most of our banks operating in South America, some perhaps employing more of our fellow-countrymen than others. If anything, the Anglo-South American Bank seemed to me to find employment for even more Englishmen than the average in its various branches in the Argentine and along the Pacific coast.

The young men drafted out from England for employment in these banks are, I imagine, of a somewhat better social status and also better paid than the ruck of the railway employees. In contrast with the conditions of service and remuneration at home, the bank clerk in the Argentine certainly does seem to better his position somewhat, or, more correctly, he attains advancement earlier than he would at home. He is, on the other hand, doomed to a long and probably permanent exile, as there seems

little disposition on the part of the home offices to find openings in London for any of their employees once they have become accustomed to the work and life of South America. This is probably one of the reasons why the British banking community throughout the country appears to be very settled in its character, the constant shifting, so unsatisfactory a feature of the clerical staffs of the railways, not being a characteristic of the financial fraternity. Then, the business of the banker, bringing him into direct touch with the public, imposes upon all those anxious to progress therein the necessity of acquiring the language of the country, whereas the railway clerk, beyond a string of technical words used in his book-keeping, may never find any need for it, and rarely indeed does an Englishman make any attempt to learn the language unless under pressure of circumstances. This is another of the reasons for the superiority of the banking clerk over the railway clerk, as it will be found that the intelligent Englishman who has acquired a good command of the language, with whatever object in view, always holds a superior position to his fellow-countryman who has not done so, or is at least likely to outstrip him in the long-run.

A third element in the making of the British colony are the "cable boys." The various cable companies are all served by very young men, who, among Britishers abroad, probably bear away the bell for their unlimited power of "swanking." It is altogether delightful to pass an hour or two in the company of some of these breezy youths. They leave you with the impression that the whole modern civilisation has been moulded by men of their kidney. They talk about their work with a zest that no mere banker, engineer, journalist, or architect could possibly impart to his humbler calling. They call it "The Service," and to hear a group of them discussing the personalities of their great men in charge of branch offices at fabulous salaries of £6 or £7 a week, is most refreshing to the wearied man of affairs.

Often have I watched and frequently had intercourse with these glorious youths, of whose romantic existence I had only the haziest notions until I went a-travelling

in South America, and they always contrived to make me feel something of a worm for not having dedicated such abilities as I possess to "The Service." Yet there is a pathetic side to them and their work. The Cable Service and Wireless Telegraphy are two potent snares for the youth of our time. It really requires a very modest supply of grey matter in the cranium to discharge the duties of either, and a young man of twenty is as good a cable operator as he will be at forty, and probably better than he will be at fifty. Few are they who can hope to rise to the more responsible managerial positions. The bulk of them grow up into disillusioned, under-paid, and aimless men. It is a service for youths, in which they quickly attain proficiency, and what, for youth, is a substantial wage; but "soon ripe, soon rot." So that whenever I came in touch with those swaggering "boys," I used to see hovering behind them shadowy figures with grey, sad faces, and did not grudge them their swanking days.

Yet another of the constituents of our "colony" is furnished from the ranks of the commission-agents and local representatives of our exporting firms. A great many large manufacturers maintain their own offices and staffs under the management of able assistants who have been trained at home, while many others are content to be represented on a commission basis by an agent, who is his own master and handles the business of several firms whose interests do not clash. Among these will be found many of the most prosperous members of the British community—men of self-reliance, initiative, individuality. There are also to be considered in this connection, though the bond that binds them to the British colony is ever loosening, fellow-countrymen who have permanently established themselves as local tradesmen, conducting every variety of business, such as chemist, draper, grocer, jeweller, boot-seller, furniture dealer, bookseller, and so forth. In all parts of Buenos Ayres, and in a lesser degree in the larger towns of the country, the wanderer will note familiar British names over shop windows, often with the Christian name in Spanish—*Juan* for John, *Diego*

for James, and so on. It is a fair assumption that when the English tradesman has taken to use the Spanish form, he intends to strike his roots deep into the new soil. His children will become more Argentine than British, and theirs British not at all.

But perhaps the most important, and I suspect the most substantial, of our fellow-countrymen who have made their homes in this Land of Fortune are those of the estanciero class. It is true that the wealthiest of them cannot be compared on a mere money basis with the wealthier natives, who have seen their landed properties increase some hundred-fold in value in the last forty years, whereas most English estancieros had to buy their holdings after the upward movement began. Many of them carry on farming on what, compared with the average conditions at home, is a baronial scale, and, as a rule, they seem to be pleased with their lot and happy in the country of their adoption. They are frequent visitors to Buenos Ayres, and flock there, particularly at the time of the Agricultural Show, when their women-folk vie with each other in the display of their latest hats and dresses. Included among the agricultural class are many highly paid managers, usually Englishmen of good education and organising ability, who conduct the intricate affairs of large estancias either for private owners or for public companies.

It is impossible, of course, to give in complete detail an analysis of the British colony, and all that I have attempted has been to suggest very roughly the classes that go to its composition. It will be seen that it is first and last a purely commercial community. In no sense is it a replica of English society as we know it at home. Every member of it is there to make money, and by the extent to which he is succeeding does he stand in the estimation of the community. It could not be otherwise. It is true there are British schools with British instructors, British churches—a pro-Cathedral among them—with clergymen, Nonconformist pastors, and Irish priests, societies for literary discussion, British clubs, charities, hospitals, missions to seamen, Salvation Army workers,

and amateur theatrical societies; but the fact remains that it is in the very fibre of its being a business community, where commercial standing takes precedence of most other considerations.

At the same time I found ample evidence in the British colony of a desire to approximate more nearly to the social observations of English society, to look more closely at the credentials of newcomers before taking them to its bosom. In the early days Buenos Ayres was one of the many dumping-places for our native wastrels, and the colonial freedom which accepted everybody at his face value produced an inevitable mixture of sorts, so that not rarely did Britishers of dubious antecedents manage to secure a wife among the daughters of some prosperous British resident. It is well-known that the daughters of these families even still have great difficulty in finding suitable husbands of their own class, and during our stay I confess I saw sufficient of the British community to have made me extremely careful, had I intended to settle in the town, in the choice of my friends. There is in all this nothing that reflects upon the worthier elements of the community; it is the inevitable outcome of conditions unfamiliar to us at home, and rather than finding much to censure, one may discover a great deal to commend in the life of these exiled countrymen of ours. That it is provincial to a degree is scarcely surprising, and that it is productive of much genuine friendship, sympathy, mutual helpfulness, is due to the generous English nature on which it is based.

Its class distinctions are being emphasised, and not before time. At first blush one might be repelled by what seemed the pettiness of its interests, the little corroding jealousies, its snobbishness, but the last mentioned is at bottom a praiseworthy effort to raise the social level beyond that obtaining with the indiscriminate mixing of good and bad which characterised the earlier life of the community. The pettiness is inescapable. A little village in England would probably provide no more gossip and scandal than any isolated British community ten times its size in a foreign land.

A nursery governess comes out to Buenos Ayres and stays at the by-no-means-luxurious headquarters of the Y.W.C.A. until she finds a job. She will probably be back there frequently in the periods between her various posts, as she will have many changes before she is "suited." Eventually she will meet some decent, lonely Englishman managing an estancia a day or two's journey away in the Camp. They will get married, and make a brave show of it at the Y.W.C.A., and next day the *Standard* will publish a column describing the great event, with the list of presents spaced out in single lines. Need one be surprised if the nursery governess suddenly finds herself something of a snob ? She will immediately " put on airs," and on her visits to the capital with her husband, she will ruffle it for a day or two in the smartest of new dresses and the biggest of hats, just to advertise the agreeable fact that they are " getting on."

Marriage possibilities form the favourite gossip of the community, and the *Standard* even publishes copies of invitations that have been sent out by the most ordinary members of the community, introducing them with the words, " The following wedding invitations are now in circulation." The most vital crisis in European affairs will receive less space than the wedding of John Jones and Mary Smith. The favourite paper of the community teems daily with the most trivial personalities, even the social movements of a railway clerk not being deemed unworthy of record. The lack of entertainment causes amateur theatricals to flourish, and the English papers will " spread themselves " on a three or four column criticism of the most ordinary amateurish production of, say, *The Count of Luxembourg*, while there will not be lacking foolish people to assert that the amateur production was in every respect finer than anything that could be seen in the principal London theatres. There are two or three of these dramatic societies with long rolls of membership, and the performances are given in the regular theatres some half-a-dozen times per annum, these functions being admirable occasions for the display of new toilets on the part of the ladies of the

audience, and an airing for the gentlemen's swallow-tails.

I often thought it was evidence of the dearth of social entertainment that British residents were always eager for an opportunity to dine at any of the hotels, although they could have done as well, if not better, in their own homes, so far as food was concerned. An invitation to dinner at the hotel had evidently all the charm of an "event" for them. Those who maintained a widish circle of friends would also occasionally offer an "At Home" at the hotel most patronised by the English. In short, one felt from the straits to which they seemed to be put for amusement and distraction, that there was a great social hunger in the community; but on reflection I could see that even those evidences of pettiness, which somewhat grated on one fresh from the larger life of London, were more apparent than real, and our fellow-countrymen in Buenos Ayres were solving fairly well the problem of existing as social beings in an unfavourable environment. It was the little round of the most ordinary social engagements, magnified into artificial importance, that helped to make their exile pleasant. I can even imagine myself sinking into a condition out there that would make the report of the wedding of two local nobodies quite interesting reading.

The various literary societies were also productive of some intellectual intercourse, and although I attended none, thanks to the *Standard* I was able to read many papers delivered at their unions, reprinted at full length, which touched a very fair average of literary production. On the other hand, the most contemptible rubbish that I have seen in print took the form of letters to the Editor of the *Standard* or the *Herald*, which gave admittance to good and bad indiscriminately. Ignorant diatribes against English politicians and home affairs from uneducated residents, who rejoiced to sneer at the Motherland, too often found their way into type instead of into the waste-basket, and could not but exercise a bad influence on other ignorant members of the community.

But it was among the British colony that I found

more ignorance and bigotry than I did amongst the natives, the Spaniards, the French, or the Germans. Some of the sanest criticisms of the country to which I listened were made by natives and Spaniards, and also by Italians. I found my fellow-countrymen seldom had a well-balanced opinion to deliver; they were either disgusted with everything and longing to be home, or delighted with everything and never wishing to return. Out of many I can recall to mind, I shall select two, both young men, and both typical asses, whom I may describe as pro-Argentines, although neither was naturalised, and both had only been about five years in the country.

The first I shall describe as Mr. Q., a notorious bore, who must surely have earned a wide reputation for his habit of monopolising the talk in whatever company he finds himself. I first came into contact with him after listening patiently to a long harangue, addressed chiefly to a group of innocent ladies, on the amazing progress of the Argentine. Not a single statement that he made had a remote connection with fact. I sat by uncomplaining, until he assured his admiring female group that Buenos Ayres in the last thirty years had not only become the third largest city in the world, but that in fifty years it would unquestionably have exceeded London in the matter of population. This was too much. I offered to bet the gentleman a thousand pounds to a shilling that he was talking nonsense, and that Buenos Ayres, apart from being already notoriously disproportionate in population to the country as a whole, was not third, but thirteenth of the world's large cities, in proof of which I was fortunately able to produce within ten minutes *Whitaker's Almanack* for 1912. I did not, however, receive my shilling, as Mr. Q. declined to accept *Whitaker* as an authority, stating his information was based on statistics issued by the Argentine Government! Of course no such fool-statistics have ever been issued, the third city of the world (Paris) containing twice the population of Buenos Ayres.

I had many other encounters with the same gentleman, who, having acquired some land which he was endeavour-

ing to transfer to the public on the most philanthropic basis, turned himself into a walking advertisement for the glorious Argentine, and never ceased to explain to visitors how completely played out was Great Britain, how rapidly she was sliding down the slippery slope to oblivion, while the Argentine was forging ahead on the path to world empire! Please do not suppose I am exaggerating one tittle the declarations of this British driveller, who, by the way, hadn't acquired a single sentence of Spanish in five years! He pictured Buenos Ayres as the future hub of the world's civilisation; this purely agricultural country of the Argentine (featureless and ill-adapted for any purpose other than the growing of luxurious crops and the rearing of vast herds of cattle), as a teeming land of wondrous industries, before which such things as England, America, France, and Germany have achieved would have to pale their ineffectual fires. No argument of sanity that could be advanced disturbed the calm serenity with which this self-constituted trumpeter of the Argentine reiterated stupidities that would have put the most perfervid patriot to the blush.

I have described Mr. Q. at some little length, because, bore though he is, he is typical of a certain class of Englishman whom one encounters in the Argentine, and for whom Argentine and average Englishman alike have a wholesome contempt. He is one of those aggressive, self-assertive "Anglo-Argentines" who come home occasionally and blow about this new land of promise, to the ultimate disillusionment of such as give ear.

The other Englishman I have in mind, who also typifies a certain class, is less offensively anti-British than Mr. Q., and his observations being based upon a little knowledge and a large inexperience, he is more amenable to reason than the Mr. Q.s—who are mere windbags that seek to cloak their lack of success at home by magnifying their changed condition in the new land. Mr. F., as I shall call the other, had a little knack from time to time of dropping such sage remarks as, "Where in the whole of London will you find such evidence of wealth as you do in a walk along the Avenida Alvear?"—"Where in

London will you see so many beautiful dresses, such wealth in millinery, as at Palermo on a Sunday afternoon ? "—" Talk about the business of London, what is it in comparison with the business of Buenos Ayres ? "—" Were you not astounded at the magnificent buildings when you came to Buenos Ayres, all so bright and clean-looking, after London ? "—and so on *ad nauseam.*

We dubbed Mr. F. " the silly ass observer." For each of these examples of his acumen in the art of comparative observation breathes of ignorance and thoughtlessness. They are, indeed, almost too stupid to call for notice, but as Mr. F. was personally a pleasant and amiable young Englishman, I was often at pains to explain matters to him, and always found that at the root of his odious comparisons lay the simple fact that he had lived in London with his eyes shut and his mind untouched by the grandeur that surrounded him. How many hundreds of thousands of our young men are like Mr. F. ! They look on the old familiar things of home with unseeing eyes, and when, perchance, in some new land they begin to take notice, they lack standards of comparison to guide them. When I explained to poor Mr. F.—who was honestly overwhelmed by the glory that is Buenos Ayres—that Threadneedle Street or Lombard Street in ye antique city of London, though they look as nothing to the eye that cannot see beyond their drab and smoky walls, might comfortably purchase the entire Argentine and all that in it is, from the torrid north to the foggy south, and have something over to be going on with ; when I impressed him with the undoubted fact that most of the wealth which he saw around him had come into being, thanks to English money, and that a very substantial portion of the profits being derived from the exploitation of the country went every year into London pockets, he began to see things in a new light. To compare the Avenida Alvear with Park Lane, merely shows that one has not observed Park Lane, or that he is not aware that the Avenida Alvear and the few streets thereabout which represent the Mayfair, Belgravia, and West End of London, are as an inch to an ell. Mr. F.

is very representative of the "cable boy" standard of intelligence, but in other respects a fine, clean English type, that one would value all the more as an element in the British colony were it given to a little reflection before it aired its opinions on Argentine and the world in general, of which its experience has been notably slight.

Hardly at all does the emigrant class enter into the British colony. Workpeople of our race there are occasionally to be met throughout the Argentine, but the country as a whole is ill-adapted for them. Any person who by word of mouth or writing spreads abroad the idea that British artisans or those of the labouring class of our countrymen will find the Argentine an attractive field, is guilty of nothing less than a crime. I was pleased to receive, during my stay in Buenos Ayres, a copy of the *Glasgow Herald*, which contained a very sane editorial, warning British workers against entertaining any notion of trying their fortunes in the Argentine. The conditions of life in which the Italian emigrants, the Spaniards, Poles, Russians, Syrians, and all the rest of them herd together in the cities or make shift to exist in shameful shanties in the Camp are impossible to even the commonest class of English or Scots workpeople, if the language difficulty did not exist to make matters still worse for them.

I did hear of some misguided fellow-countrymen who were enduring terrible hardships as common labourers on the sugar plantations at Tucumán. One of these was a Glasgow man who, owing to an error of carelessness, lost a post he had held for twelve years in a stockbroker's office. There was also a Glasgow couple, who had originally been shop-keepers, but, things going badly, they had, on the advice of some irresponsible optimist, emigrated to the Argentine. The man was cutting sugar cane, and he and his wife were pigging in an *adobe* house together with other labourers—Poles, Bulgars, and Italians. Another couple I heard of had come out from England, where they had managed a small hotel, bringing with them a large stock of beds, etc., and what they

supposed sufficient capital to start in a modest way in Buenos Ayres. Owing to the prodigious cost of the necessary furniture and the high rents which the meanest of houses command, they were quite unable to carry out their plans, and their dream of making a fortune suddenly vanished, so that they were glad to sell their beds and bedding and accept a joint situation on an English estancia, the wife as cook and the husband as general utility man. British subjects of another kind also found their way to Buenos Ayres during my stay, and created no small sensation. They were a group of Hindoos, perhaps thirty or forty of them, lured from sunny India into the depths of a perishing winter, and a more miserable handful of humanity could not have been seen. The disposal of them was quite a local problem for a time, and the British colony was looked to for help, as these lank and turbaned Orientals were certainly "British subjects." What became of the poor wretches I do not remember, but it would have been some gratification to have known that the foolish person who induced them to leave their native land had received a punishment that fitted the crime.

As I have said, however, casual emigration of Britishers to the Argentine is very slight, and ought to be entirely discouraged; but many workpeople are there under conditions which are very different from those described. They are chiefly railway engineers, employed as foremen or as expert workers in the great workshops of the different railway companies, or as locomotive drivers. Their conditions of life, although I fail to see wherein they are greatly superior to those obtaining at home among their class, having regard to the different purchasing value of the wages earned, are at least made agreeable by association with fellow-workers of their own race, and the possibility of saving more money than they would be likely to do at home. For example, where a working man at home might be able to save £20 per year, he will at least be able to save the same relative proportion from his wages in the Argentine, and as his wages will not be less than double,

and perhaps two and a half times, what they would have been in England, by the same ratio may his savings be increased. These workmen have also security of employment, and, in fine, must not be confounded with the emigrant class. They find grievances none the less, and even went on strike in the year 1911.

Owing to the little communities in which they live being almost entirely British, they do not assimilate with the natives, and few of them, even after many years in the country, have picked up more than some odd words of the language. A friend of mine, who was rather shaky on his Spanish, was waylaid at a railway station in the interior and wished to have a train stopped at a point along the line where there was no station, to enable him to reach a certain estancia. He managed to explain this in Spanish to the stationmaster, but the latter was unable to interpret it to the engine-driver, who turned out to be English and did not know a word of what he called "their blooming lingo!" These sturdy and skilled artisans of our race naturally do not count in the British colony of Buenos Ayres; most of them live in the railway centres of the provinces, and come only occasionally to the capital for a trip.

What will strike the British visitor in Buenos Ayres with a curious air of home is the railway bookstall at Retiro, Once, or at Constitución. The former looks as familiar as a London suburban bookstall, with all sorts of English periodicals from the *Strand Magazine* to *Ally Sloper*, bundles of sixpenny and sevenpenny novels, the *Times* weekly edition, *Lloyds' News*, and many another friendly face, though the prices charged are naturally two or three times those printed on the periodicals. These are evidence of the large English community residing in the various suburbs served from the stations named, and in every train that enters or leaves there is always a goodly sprinkling of our kinsfolk. The English book-shops in the heart of the city are also well-known centres, being entirely patronised by the "colony," but the English grocers drive a large business with the native population, and employ many assistants who only speak

A Modern "Estancia" Homestead built of Concrete.

A "Rodeo," or Round-up of Cattle in the Argentine Pampa.

Spanish. Still, British housewives have no need to acquire the language, as they may transact all their business in their native tongue, and it is no rare thing to meet a lady who, in twenty years of Buenos Ayres, has not even got to know the Spanish names of the common objects of the dinner table. In the provinces, however, most British lady residents have to acquire at least a smattering of the native lingo.

A further element in the British Colony may be described as the floating population of our countrymen who make periodical visits to the Argentine in pursuit of business. The stay-at-home has no faint notion of the extraordinary trafficking of our race in foreign parts. Veritable battalions of commercial travellers representing British houses visit the Argentine each year, staying from two to six months at a time, and the hotels are always sheltering Englishmen who seem to have nothing to do beyond taking their meals and playing billiards for weeks on end, but who are really waiting the signing-up of contracts. One gentleman I knew had put in nearly nine months of this strenuous work, and eventually left in despair. The contract for which he had been waiting so long was fixed up about three weeks afterwards, and went to a German firm whose representative had perhaps been more patient in waiting, or more liberal (or more discreet) in his bestowal of baksheesh.

Among these travellers one encounters "fine confused" ideas on all sorts of Anglo-Argentine topics. In particular, I recall one gentleman who used to delight in the discussion of the social conditions not only of the Argentine but of Australia, which he also "worked" in his commercial round. He would grow maudlin, and move himself to tears over the fearful conditions of the London poor, asserting that nowhere in all the world had he ever seen so depressing a sight as the Thames Embankment in the winter time, with its tattered contingent of unemployed. I endeavoured to dry this poor gentleman's tears by stating that for many winters I used to walk past this most appalling sight every night, until I came to be familiar with the individual features of these out-

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casts. In my opinion, nothing was here for tears; these were a mere handful of wastrels in a metropolis with a population as great as that of the entire Argentine nation, and if it had been possible to scrape together all the wastrels of the Argentine and parade them in the Paseo de Julio any winter night, the tender-hearted traveller would have witnessed something quite as terrible. But no arguments could prevent this good gentleman from sinking into sorrow on his pet topic, and in all his travels and with all his limited powers of observation and deduction, he measured his native London against the great cities of South America and the large towns of Australia by that Embankment winter's night parade.

Those British visitors whose stays are short do not fare badly in the Argentine capital, and as a rule retain rather pleasant memories of the place, although not a few with whom I conversed really dreaded the necessity of having to return, as they found time hang so heavily on their hands. Then there comes occasionally one of the scribbling fraternity, who fixes a little round of engagements, hurries to see the sights of the place, and flits away again to entertain a public quite as well informed as he or she may be by the little that he or she has seen in the few days' stay. I spent some time with an American correspondent, who did not know a word either of French or Spanish, and yet had the fortitude to contribute a series of articles to one of the local papers, giving his valuable impressions of a country and a people into whose mind he was not able even to peep. His articles, of course, were written in English and translated into Spanish, and were published with a great *fanfarronada*, although his literary reputation was unknown even to me, whose business it has been for many years to keep in touch with literary reputations on both sides of the Atlantic.

The regulation course for the "globe-trotter" of our race who flits through the Argentine for a week or so, to write a book thereon, is to motor round the various public buildings, interview a few of the official heads, endeavouring, if possible, to have a talk with the President,—a comparatively easy matter in all South American Re-

publics, the President being a sort of *ex-officio* Chief of Publicity,—engineer an invitation to a model *estancia* to stay overnight, and an interview with a reporter from the *Standard* to announce the gestation of the great work that will later see the light in England. The usual practice of the more or less distinguished visitor is to deliver himself of the most fulsome flattery of all that he has seen, and to lay on the butter with a trowel. To this rule there are occasional exceptions, and I gather that the Princess of Pless, who paid Buenos Ayres a visit when I was sojourning in Chili, was one of these exceptions. The Buenos Ayres correspondent of *La Union* of Santiago sent to his paper an amusing little article on the Princess, which I think worthy of translating, as it will make an acceptable tailpiece to this chapter. He wrote :

" She has gone ! A wandering star, seeking a constellation wherein she may shine with due refulgence and without suffering eclipse from other stars of greater brilliance. She had a glimpse of the Argentine in her dreams as the ideal land of aristocracy by having read in the ' British Cyclopaedia ' (*sic*) that in this country there are no titles of nobility other than those of the wash-tub.

" Yesterday she stated in one of her farewell confidences : 'I go away horribly disappointed ! Not a sauvage (*sic*), not a tiger, not a Paraguayan crocodile ! '

" What a useless voyage ! To confront the dangers of three thousand leagues of sea and twenty days of poor food and worse sleep to come to see savages, when these can be found in thousands within twenty-four hours of London ! In this poor America there remain no other savages than those Europeans who exploit the miserable natives of Putumayo. The veritable Indians of the tales of Fenimore Cooper and of Gustave Aimard, the scalp hunters, the throat cutters, the mutilators of children, are to be found in the very heart of Europe, in the countries of ' The Merry Widow.'[1] There the

[1] In view of the Teutonic atrocities in the European War, here was a true word spoken in jest.

Princess ought to have gone a-hunting for those sanguinary curiosities and to satisfy her appetite for exotics.

"She came here nervously afraid of the prospect of being carried off by Calufucurá, and even resisted the temptation to visit the *estancia* of Pereyra, fearing lest the Cacique Catriel should force her to prepare the pipe of counsel surrounded by his tribe; and she goes away disenchanted by not having seen an Indian even in the distance, and disgusted at having had to suffer the sugary gallantries of some of our dandies of the old school, little fortunate in the conquest of princesses.

"But, above all, what mortified her most and most precipitated her departure, rendering her ill at ease during her stay in Buenos Ayres, is the fact that she did not rank here in the front file of beauty, nor shine above the rest in fashion, nor found herself in any sort a protagonist. She was no more than one among the mass of our women, and less than many of our distinguished ladies. Thus she has gone as she came, after having attempted to discover some labyrinthine forest never visited by man; without encountering more than cultivated soil and agricultural machines, where she had hoped to see Indians discharging their poisoned arrows and brandishing their formidable tomahawks. And thus it is that she says in her despite, 'America has lost all her virginities, even the celebrated virginity of her forests!'

"Yesterday the Princess embarked, and on seeing her aboard the 'Arayaguaya,' using her walking-stick like a crutch, to hide her mincing gait—alone, with not even the companionship of a 'snob,' who might have attempted to win her goodwill, not even a lady of honour dazzled by her noble title—there came to our mind, though altered by the circumstances, the lines of that farewell elegy on the remains of Sir John Moore:

"'Not a drum was heard, not a triumphal note—As she arrived at the Dársena Norte—Not a soldier discharged his farewel schot—When the steamer left the argentine shore!'"

The intrinsic merits of this little sketch and the charm

of the concluding effort in English, surely justify its reproduction! What on earth the Princess of Pless may have said to lead to this display of journalistic courtesy, I do not know, but I suspect that she must have ventured some words of frank criticism, and that is precisely what the commoner element of the Argentine public does not want. It asks for butter, and it wants it thick; and if you can add a layer of sugar—for they have a sweet tooth—so much the better. Most of the British Colony know this, and also know on which side their bread is buttered. Thus the English visitor who is indiscreet enough publicly to express a frank and honest opinion of anything that does not meet with his approval in Buenos Ayres or the Argentine, will scarcely expect to be grappled to its bosom by hooks of steel. I am persuaded, however, that the better class of native Argentine opinion is quite capable of sustaining honest criticism and profiting thereby.

CHAPTER XV

THE EMIGRANT IN LIGHT AND SHADE

There is a popular story in Buenos Ayres of a Spanish emigrant who had just arrived with wife and children; and as the group was crossing the Paseo de Julio, the wife espied a silver coin in the gutter. She called to her husband to pick it up, but he disdainfully answered, "I have no concern with mere silver money, when I have come here to gather gold!" The story usually ends here, but I suspect the frugal wife of picking up that coin herself and thereby making money more easily than her husband would be like to do for some time to come. For certain it is that the Argentine is no "land of gold," such as our world has had to marvel at in California, Australia, South Africa, and Alaska. No—it is something better than any merely auriferous land! So rich is its soil, it returns to those who work it such wondrous increase of harvest that it is truly an inexhaustible gold mine. But the first and final essential to the winning of its gold is Labour. This, as we know, Italy has given to the Argentine in abundant measure, and those who only know the Italian by such specimens of his race as grind organs and sell ice-cream in England, have no least small notion of what a splendid fellow he is, his many vices notwithstanding.

Before we take a look at the different classes of emigrants which the Argentine attracts and their influence on the development of the country, a word or two on the land system may be in place. The time will come, I doubt not, when some revolutionary change will be forced upon the country, as the soil is too closely held by the landed aristocracy,—the multitude of small lots sold

by speculative dealers notwithstanding. In this young country, with its Republican Government and its progressive ideas, we encounter the anomaly of a mere handful of fabulously wealthy proprietors owning the greatest part of a vast territory—nearly eight times larger than our own boasted isles of Britain. If the same conditions were relatively translated into our country to-day, Mr. Lloyd George would have no difficulty in securing an overwhelming majority for their instant abolition. Meanwhile, these prodigious tracts of territory being so tightly held by a few private owners, have the effect of increasing the values of the negotiable land, of which there is evidently still sufficient to meet the demands of the moment. Double the population, however, and such a change will pass over the scene that legislation to force the hands of private owners and loosen their grip on the lion's share of the Republic's soil will be inevitable.

The system on which the land is worked is also charged with danger to the social development of the community, and some day it, too, must give place to a better adjustment as between the owner and the worker. I have made frequent reference in previous chapters to the estancias, without entering into any detail as to the working of these great agricultural estates, which, curiously enough, are known by the Spanish word for a dwelling-house or a sitting-room (*estancia* in South America means either a farm, a country house, or the whole area of landed property under one ownership). Here, however, I must explain something of the peculiar methods of working these estates.

The owner himself will cultivate at his own cost a certain portion with alfalfa, wheat, maize, or linseed, as the case may be, and will maintain immense herds of cattle, sheep, and horses, according as he specialises in agriculture or in live stock. But the estancias are usually much too large for their owners to develop to their full extent, and thus have grown up two methods of co-operation, neither of which has in it the germ of permanency, both being based on one man's need and another's opportunity. The one system is worked by the *medieros*, the

other by the *colonos*. The *mediero* is a man who has come out from Spain or Italy with some tiny capital in his pocket that enables him to purchase certain agricultural implements, seeds, and probably to knock up a shanty of corrugated iron—wood for building purposes being a highly priced commodity. But he cannot afford to purchase agricultural land in any locality where his crop would be of adequate value to him once he had raised it, for wherever the land is within reachable distance of a railway line, it is impossible to purchase it at anything like its actual market value, the method of the Argentine land-seller being invariably to demand the price which the land may be worth in ten or fifteen years! The land-vendor takes "long views," he is big with the future, so confident of it that he values his possessions of to-day at the dream prices of a somewhat distant morrow. Now the mediero cannot come to grips with such as he, and cap in hand he approaches the estanciero, offering in return for the right to work so many acres of his land, to "go halves" with him in expenses and in profits—hence *mediero*, or "halver."

The *colono* (colonist) is a genuine knight of the empty purse, with nothing to offer save his labour and that of his wife and children; but *that* is a great thing, and he is received with open arms throughout the length and breadth of the Argentine. The estanciero not only grants him as many acres of land as he may be able to work with his wife and family, but lends him cows for milk, horses for the plough, and through his *almacén* supplies to him on credit the necessary implements, seeds, and food, as well as corrugated iron and planks of wood for the building of his *rancho*. It should be explained that the almacén on every estancia is an important institution, a sort of universal provider for the hundreds of medieros and colonos who have taken up land on the estate, selling to them all sorts of commodities at a substantial profit to the estanciero. The "colonist" is now expected to labour incessantly on the land allotted to him, so that he may repay to the almacén the pretty heavy debt he has contracted there, while an agreed percentage of his crops will go to the owner of the estate.

These medieros and colonos include all nationalities, but are chiefly drawn from the Italian emigrants, the Spaniards being more commonly tradesmen. Everything looks *couleur de rose* to the poor toilers; they set about their task with high hope, a new feeling of freedom, little recking that they have tied themselves to a new serfdom by the bond of that initial debt with which they start. The mediero has a better chance than the colono of "turning the corner" soon, and it too often happens that the latter, after two or three years of incessant labour, has no more than cleared his feet, when comes a bad harvest, and he is back where he was at the beginning. Withered are his roses, poor fellow! Disgusted at the result, and hoping that a change to some other part of the country may turn out for the better, he disposes of the few things he owns, quits his "camp," and shifts to some other quarter, perhaps only to repeat this chapter of his history.

Meanwhile, it will be seen the estanciero has had another corner of his estate brought into cultivation, its value considerably increased thereby, and the poor Italians have spent their strength for a bare subsistence. That many of them do succeed in earning some profit, especially those of the mediero class, and starting in some other business, is undeniable; but the roll of those who have turned over the soil of the Argentine and brought it into bearing to the great benefit of its owners and their own non-success, is, I am told, beyond reckoning. This, then, I submit, is no system that can endure. It carries its own seeds of decay. So long as the stream of immigration flows as steadily as of recent years, the system will doubtless continue, but a time will come when disappear it must, and some method of employment based on a fairer distribution of profits, or on adequate wages, take its place.

Apart from the ethics of the Argentine land system, which are clearly open to criticism, one can have nothing but praise for the manner in which emigration is officially encouraged, and the way in which the emigrants are handled on arrival at the River Plate. There is a fine saying reported of President Sáenz Peña when he repre-

sented his country at the Pan-American Congress in Washington on the occasion of the fourth centenary of the discovery of America. In the course of a speech he was making, some fervid Yankee thought it a fit occasion to interject the watchword of the Pan-Americans, " America for the Americans ! " Quick as a flash Dr. Sáenz Peña retorted, " Yes, but Latin-America for humanity ! "

This certainly is the spirit that informs the policy of Argentine immigration. A hearty welcome is given to people of all races, whose only right of entry into this new land of promise is the possession of brawny muscles and the will to work. Every week they are arriving in shiploads, and the manner in which these cargoes of humanity are received at the docks in Buenos Ayres and speedily transhipped by rail to different parts of the interior, according to the demand for *brazos*, is one of the most business-like things the visitor will have an opportunity of noting in the public administration. Shipload after shipload of Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese, and other nationalities arrives and melts away, absorbed into the thirsty country like water into sandy soil.

During our stay, a splendidly equipped hostel, or shelter, was opened for the emigrants. Erected by the riverside close to the scene of their disembarkation, this building is capable of sheltering a large number of emigrants. Sleeping-rooms fitted with wire mattresses upon which the emigrants may place their own bedding (always the most precious of their personal possessions) are provided for the men, and similar accommodation for the women and children. There is no excuse for any of them to go unbathed, lavatories specially fitted with showers being provided for those who care to use them (the superintendent told me it was seldom that an emigrant ventured on such an experiment), while in the great common dining-room they may take their meals in comparative comfort and can secure eatables at a low rate. The accommodation, if I remember correctly, is free, and the whole place is so admirably clean that it must come with something like a shock to most of the emigrants who pass through it, habituated as they have been, almost

without exception, to dirty ways of life in their native lands. Many of the emigrants never see Buenos Ayres at all, as the trains that take them into the Camp pick them up at a short distance from the vessels which have borne them oversea, and at the very doors of the shelter where they may have passed the night of arrival.

Laughter and tears mingle a good deal in the landing of these poor people from the Old World. Huddled almost like cattle in the steerage of the steamers, their condition at sea presents what seems an unbridgeable abyss between their lives and those of the saloon passengers. Day after day I have watched them sitting aimlessly on deck in their dirty, faded clothes, the effluvia from the mass of them, even tempered by the sea breeze, suggesting conditions of horror when they "turned in" at night, that might recall the Black Hole of Calcutta. The captain assured me it was not so very bad, but I never had the stomach to prove it for myself. Yet, on the morning of arrival at Buenos Ayres, what a transformation! Girls who have seemed the dirtiest of sluts throughout the voyage step down the gangway quite neatly attired. The married women, tricked out with little bits of finery, the men mostly in suits of black, with sombre soft hats, and every Spaniard armed with an ample umbrella, are difficult to recognise as the slovenly creatures one has seen for weeks feeding out of tins and using fingers for lack of knives and forks. But even among the emigrants there are many grades, and not all are able to make this sudden transformation, many having no more than the soiled and shabby garments in which they have made their voyage, a little handkerchief tied at the corners being a pathetic index of their worldly gear. But even from among these, there will be some that one day shall bridge that awful gulf between the steerage and saloon, and make a voyage home as cabin passengers to advertise the magic Argentine!

Hope is the prevailing note in the demeanour of every new batch of fortune-seekers. It shines brightest, perhaps, in the eyes of the alert and wiry little Italians; the Spaniards, also, step ashore with a firm and confident

tread ; but mostly among the Poles, the Bulgars, and the Russians do we see the dull look of something very like despair. In discussing the character of the emigrants with M. Huret, Señor Alsina, a former Director of the Emigration Service, remarked :

"What surprises one most in the careful observation of these people from the four extremes of Europe is the rapidity of their transformation, Spaniards from Galicia brutish and wretched, sordid Jews from Russia, lift up their heads (*levantan la cabeza*) at the end of a few months. I have seen them arrive bent and downcast, with all the timidity of a dog that has been badly treated, so dejected and timorous, indeed, that I thought it necessary to engage some Russian students to lecture them on the dignity of humanity in general, and the conditions of liberty which they could enjoy in the Argentine. A few months afterwards, seeing many of them again, I could observe that they had so entirely changed that they had become argumentative, noisy, and given to discussion.

"The case of the Armenians is in this respect entirely typical. Some eighteen years ago they arrived here for the first time. Becoming pedlars, they travelled all over the Pampa, some with 'bundles' on their backs, others pushing before them their wares. Little by little they made money, even growing rich. Many of them went in for politics, and to-day occupy positions of influence in the public life. Very active in business, they are in a fair way to surpass the Italians in the retail trade. Proud of their title as free citizens, they refuse to sell their vote, which is the common practice among the populace; and their prosperity is so real, so positive, that the Armenian Colony is offering to the Argentine a monument which will cost them 120,000 fr."

I am afraid that appearances are very much inclined to be deceptive in studying the faces of emigrants. Surely there are none who can look more dejected than the Armenians and the Poles, who closely resemble each other in facial appearance, yet the money-making potentialities of these sad-faced emigrants are relatively much higher

than those of the merry little guitar-strumming Italians and Spaniards.

On the arrival of every new contingent there is always a considerable group of friends awaiting the vessel, and fortunate are they who have come out on the initiative of some relative that has gone before and prepared the way. These emigrants of yesterday, who have already come to grips with fortune and won the first bout, form one of the pleasantest features of the disembarkations as they stand on the quayside in their "Sunday best," with their watch chains, tie pins, finger rings, and highly polished boots, to announce to all the world that they are "getting on." This friendly co-operation is of immense service to the Emigration Bureau, and is really a sounder sort of propaganda than the familiar widecast publishing of alluring pictures of the riches of the country and the ease with which fortunes may be made. The emigrant who comes because a brother or a friend has already substantially changed his condition, and will have the advice of that friend to help him in securing employment, is at least on sure ground; and where labour is in such demand he cannot well make a mistake, provided he is willing to work.

In this way have grown up the distinctive "colonies" throughout the country, the majority of the Russians making direct for the neighbourhood of Bahia Blanca, where their services as agricultural labourers and as craftsmen are in high demand; the Turks and Syrians concentrating in a district of Buenos Ayres where they seem to engage in every variety of occupation in which there is a minimum of creative work and the possibility of profiting as middlemen by the labour of others. A great many French find their way to Mendoza, the centre of the vine-growing, in which business not a few have become masters of millions. The German emigration is of more recent origin, and embraces, like the French, a superior class of people, as well as supplying a modicum to the toiling community. Although all the emigrants, save the Spanish, are at first conditioned in their occupations and their localities by their ignorance of the native

language, so that they must needs go where they find their fellow-countrymen and more or less follow the pursuits in which these are engaged, they speedily pick up the language; and once acclimatised and furnished with the means of universal intercourse, they begin to look around, weigh up the possibilities of the country, and strike out their independent courses. In this movement the British have practically no part whatever, and with the exceptions of the scanty Irish emigration of past years and the Welsh colony settled, with very equivocal success, on the River Chubut some twenty years ago, the annals of our countrymen in the Argentine present no parallel whatever to those of the other European nations.

When we talk of Argentine emigration, we refer chiefly to the Italian and the Spanish, though the Basque provinces of France and Spain have probably supplied the very finest element of foreign blood in the Argentine nation to-day. Up to the outbreak of the great European War Italy was sending from eighty to a hundred thousand of her sturdy sons to swell the Argentine population every year, although latterly there had been a very considerable movement towards repatriation among the Italians and also among the Spaniards. The Italian who does not determine to make his home in the Argentine is quickly satisfied with a comparatively small amount of savings. Once he has netted from £200 to £500, he considers himself a man of independent means, and is apt to return to his native village with his tiny fortune, which will enable him there to live far more comfortably than he has been existing in the Argentine, and to enjoy a life of comparative leisure. The call of the Homeland is always very strong to the Italian, and if he acquires his little fortune quickly, before his family have become thoroughly Argentine in character and sentiment, he will almost surely go back. The hundreds of thousands of his race who are fixed and rooted in the Republic are they who, either through superior fortune have come to hold such a stake in the land, or from longer delay in "turning the corner" and the influence of their children, have become habituated to their new environment.

The quickest fortunes, the easiest gained wealth, assuredly do not come to those who take up the life of the colono or the mediero, as above described, for there are innumerable other ways in which money can be made more readily, and those who engage in shopkeeping—always a superior class to the tillers of the soil, as they require some little capital for a start—as well as the many Spaniards who enter the already established business houses, are in more immediate touch with money-making possibilities than the *braceros*. It is always thus, that they who are of least use in the economical development of the country should be most speedily rewarded.

I heard of an Italian waiter, who arrived in Buenos Ayres some time in November of 1911 and without delay went on to Mar del Plata, the fashionable seaside resort, where he immediately secured a situation in one of the hotels. In one month he netted a thousand *pesos* in tips, and with this vast sum (£87, 10s. of our money) he returned forthwith to his native country in order to purchase a piece of land and set up as a small farmer. A coachman, also an Italian, whose services I occasionally employed during our stay in Buenos Ayres, informed me that he was making a clear profit of 600 *pesos* (or £52, 10s.) per month. The coach, a very handsome one, and the horse, a splendid animal, were his own property; and so careful was he of his coach, that he did not care to bring it out on very sunny days, lest the upholstery might fade, while he disliked driving on very wet days; so that he suited his own convenience as to the hours and days of work! Withal, he was speedily acquiring a competence. He assured me he drank as good wine as he got at home, and if he did not eat so well, it was because nobody did in the Argentine, owing to the difficulty of getting good food at reasonable prices. He also had been a waiter, but evidently had his eye on a higher mark than his compatriot who hastened back from Mar del Plata with his first month's tips.

I do not doubt that if one had gone about, note-book in hand, collecting experiences from all sorts and conditions of people who had emigrated to the country, no

end of "human-interest" stories could have been obtained. Such as I came by, however, were the fruit of casual conversations, and the absence of the British from the emigration movement was probably the reason why I did not study it in more than its broadest aspects. To follow it here in detail would involve so much in the way of comparative statistics, that I make no apology for touching the subject in the most sketchy, but I hope not unsuggestive, manner. I did receive, after leaving Buenos Ayres, some copies of the *Herald* containing a long and interesting correspondence, originated by an Englishman in Buenos Ayres, entitled, "Is Argentine as Bright as it is Painted?" Some excellent letters were written by Britishers while the correspondence continued, and although the Mr. Q's and Mr. F's could not allow the occasion to pass without casting a stone at the unworthy land of their birth, the whole weight of opinion was in tune with what I have written. If anything, most of the writers went further, and some even piously called upon the Almighty to protect the wretched English workman whose lot it was to live in such places as Bahía Blanca and Rosario. Personally, I must confess that I have seen worse places to live in than Rosario, and even considerably worse than Bahía Blanca. I have been in Antofagasta!

But enough of the British in this connection, for they certainly do not amount to anything of real consequence in the sum-total of Argentine immigration. What was to be noticed, however, is a very distinct forward movement among the Germans. Germany had come rather late in the day to discover our countrymen very thoroughly established in all branches of commerce thoughout the Republic. But, undismayed, the German had set himself to the task of undermining British supremacy, laying his plans to capture a large share of future business. Within recent years, and, indeed, during my own year on the River Plate, a most notable influx of Germans had resulted, and this movement was wider in its scope and character, if not so large in volume, than that from any other country in the world. There could be no comparison in sheer bulk between it and the Italian immigration,

FAMILIAR SCENES ON AN "ESTANCIA."

In the upper picture, a "Bebedero," or drinking-place for the cattle; in the lower, a flock of sheep brought in for shearing. The windmill pumps seen in both illustrations are the commonest objects of Argentine landscape.

Teams of Oxen Ploughing in the Argentine Pampa.

as the annual average of Germans and Austrians arriving in the Argentine was only some 10,000. But in this smaller Teutonic invasion lay greater money-making possibilities than in the Italian horde.[1]

These Germans represented all classes of the community; there were quite a few titled Teutons engaged in business in Buenos Ayres before the Great War. They were developing their banking connection throughout the Republic with great energy; German manufacturers were establishing branches everywhere; German clerks were flooding into all sorts of businesses, their superior working qualities to the Spaniard, their readiness to accept the lowest wages that would support an existence, and their ability to acquire speedily the language of the country, being all sound reasons for the ready demand for their services. One seldom met a German who could not at least contrive to make himself understood in English, and who, although seldom speaking the Spanish language with grace or correct pronunciation, would not in a few months be able to converse in it with a fair degree of fluency.

In addition to those different classes of Germanic invaders came the hand-workers—engineers, carpenters, builders, agricultural labourers. In considerable numbers these workpeople, who shared the ability of their compatriots in the acquiring of languages, were filtering all over the Argentine, and in certain districts of the south-

[1] From the year 1857 to 1912 inclusive, 4,248,355 persons of all classes entered the Argentine. The nationalities represented were as follows: Italians, 2,133,508; Spaniards, 1,298,122; French, 206,912; Russians, 136,659; Syrians, 109,234; Austrians, 80,736; Germans, 55,068; Britons, 51,660; Swiss, 31,624; Belgians, 22,186; Portuguese, 21,378; Danes, 7686; Dutch, 7120; North Americans, 5509; Swedes, 1702; others, 79,251. During the year 1912 the total number of newcomers was 323,403, comprising Italians, 165,662; Spaniards, 80,583; Russians, 20,832; Syrians, 19,792; Austrians, 6545; French, 5180; Portuguese, 4959; Germans, 4337; Britons, 3134; Danes, 1316; Swiss, 1005; North Americans, 499; Belgians, 405; Dutch, 274; Swedes, 94; others, 8786. While the repatriation of hundreds of thousands would reduce these figures greatly, the increase by births in the country, which cannot readily be traced, is an important countervailing item. The Argentine authorities naturally set great store on this, and even state at times the number of women "of child-bearing age" entering the country.

west—especially around the celebrated Lake Nahuel Huapi, some thirteen hundred miles distant from the capital—there are entire settlements of German farmers, with their native school-teachers and Protestant missionaries. In fine, the Germanising of the Argentine had begun, and if it was still far from attaining the dimensions it had already assumed in Chili, it certainly seemed, before the Prussian Junkers plunged the world into war, that the industrious German would soon oust the English, the French, and the Italian from their supremacy in their respective fields, although never likely to compete with Britain or France in the matter of invested capital. Demented Kaiserism may have done Britain a good turn even in the Argentine!

It is not to be supposed, although I have emphasised the fact that the Italian immigration is essentially a movement of unskilled labour, that it is exclusively so. For the Argentine offers to the English observer a very remarkable lesson in the industrial progress of Italy, which may entirely escape him in his travels in Italy itself. To encounter at every step, as one does wherever one goes throughout the Argentine, the most persistent evidences of Italian enterprise in every branch of commerce, is to discover the Italian in an entirely new light. Most of us are in the habit of going to Italy to look at old things, to revel in the glories of her past, and are apt to come away from Rome, or Florence, or Venice, and especially from Naples, with an impression of bygone grandeur and lingering poverty. It is true that we must set against this the feeling of prosperity and modern activity so evident in Milan and in Turin; but, on the whole, the peculiarly English notion of Italy is that of a country living mainly on its past.

The Italian in the Argentine will speedily dispel this. Not only does he supply the strong arms that are tilling the soil of countless leagues, but he maintains many of the great importing establishments in Buenos Ayres and the principal towns. Italian engineering agencies and workshops abound. A large proportion of the splendid motor-cars that crowd the streets of the capital hail from

Italy. Some of the finest chemists' establishments are Italian. Not only are Italian workmen vastly in the majority on all building operations, but very often Italian brains are directing the whole undertaking; Italian contractors are paving the streets. In short, Italy stands forth in the life of the Argentine to-day as a magnificent industrial and commercial force, supported by the wide-spreading base of Italian emigrant labour.

There is also a very large traffic between the two countries in casual labour, shiploads of Italians coming out each year for the harvest season—during which wages jump up from 40 or 50 pesos a month to 5 or 6 pesos a day—and return home immediately on its conclusion. The Italian steamers (the fastest that ply between Europe and South America, some of them doing the journey from Buenos Ayres to Genoa in twelve days, whereas the average of the English mail steamers from the River Plate to London or Liverpool is from eighteen to twenty-one days) provide special facilities for the shipment of these labourers at a very low head-rate. In recent years I believe official statistics have shown a remarkable return movement among Italian emigrants, to which, naturally, this large element of casual labour has contributed not a little.

As regards the Spanish emigrant, I had many discussions with Spaniards settled in the Argentine, from whom I gained a good deal more information than I had ever been able to acquire from any printed source. One of these gentlemen in particular had studied the question in five or six of the Republics, and was engaged upon a book for circulation among his countrymen at home, putting the matter in a new light. In his estimation, the Argentine conditions represent an improvement for only the lowest class of Spaniard. This class of Spaniard I remember being very fully described in a leading article in *La Prensa.* His notions of thrift were there illustrated by his habit, when in his native country, of journeying about the countryside barefooted, with his boots and stockings hung around his neck. When he approaches a village, he pauses by the roadside to put on his stockings and boots, and so shod traverses the village; but, as soon as he has

emerged on the highway again, he removes them and continues his journey with them around his neck once more! Such a custom touches the zero of social comfort, and those habituated to it could scarcely fail to do better in almost any other country in the world.

According to my Spanish friend, such of his countrymen immediately become enthusiasts for the new land, and not only being able to go about permanently with their boots and stockings, but perhaps to buy a white collar for themselves and even a pair of silk stockings for their wives, feel they have suddenly made a magical transition into the very lap of luxury. But for the craftsmen, the village carpenter, the blacksmith, the modest tradesmen, he assured me the change was not always for the better. Spaniards of these classes can, thanks to the cheapness of commodities in their native country and despite the lowness of wages, secure infinitely better household accommodation, and will eat better food, drink better wine, and altogether live a less strenuous and more satisfactory existence than the majority, at least, will be doomed to maintain in the Argentine. As to all this, I can speak with no exact knowledge, and I do no more than report the opinion of a Spanish gentleman, confirmed to me, I may add, by several others of his race who ought to have been in positions to judge.

The gentleman in question was probably somewhat prejudiced, as he was a patriotic Spaniard, fond of elaborating his theory that Spain to-day had lost her head over the Argentine and was hastening her decay by orienting her literature and her journalism towards the lucrative market of South America instead of towards purely Spanish ideals. Looking to South America as a land of employment for her children, as in the past her kings had looked to it to fill their coffers, she was guilty of a crowning folly. If the energy she was pouring into South America were properly utilised at home, it would return far greater profit to the nation and the individual. Such, at least, was his line of reasoning, and I more than half suspect it was well-based in fact.

And withal, from what I can gather, in all the annals

of Argentine immigration, the most interesting chapter that might be written would describe the activities and achievements of the Basques. This splendid race of people who seem to unite the finest qualities of the French and the Spanish, have distinguished themselves above all others in the making of modern Argentina. The geographical position of their homeland, enabling them to acquire, in addition to their own most difficult language—which polyglot Borrow found his hardest nut to crack—both French and Spanish, are peculiarly adapted for making their way in Latin-America. But apart from the language question, their personal characteristics, in which industry joins with intelligence and imagination, would inevitably carry them to success. They stand to South American colonisation as the Scot to British Empire-making, and the peculiar custom of their country, whereby the eldest son inherits all the family goods and remains at home to maintain the family succession while the younger sons have to fare forth into the world to seek their fortunes, marks them out for colonists.

My acquaintance with the Basques was limited to one family only—a wonderful family; they are French Basques, and some fifteen or sixteen brothers and cousins are united in a great business, which has important warehouses and distributing centres in every large town along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of South America, as well as in many of the business centres of the interior. But for a typical story of the Basques, I turn to the pages of M. Huret and translate what is one of the most interesting little romances of Argentine emigration :

"I wish to relate in some detail the story of one of these French Basques (perhaps the most celebrated of them all), as I heard it from one of his sons. I admire and sympathise with the pride of this intelligent plebeian in a country where so many people think of little more than how to make others believe in the aristocracy of their blood, as if the most beautiful and the noblest qualities of 'aristocratic' blood did not potentially exist in the blood of the people !

"Pedro Luro was born in 1820 in the little town of Gamarthe, and in 1837 he arrived at Buenos Ayres with a few francs in his pocket. Entering as a labourer in a *saladero* (beef salting establishment), he contrived to save enough to contemplate matrimony, but suffered the loss of his little savings by robbery. He applied himself with new energy to work; purchasing a horse and a tilt-cart, he converted the latter into an omnibus, and with himself as driver plied between the Plaza Montserrat and the suburb of Barracas.

"He then married a countrywoman, Señorita Pradere, a relative of his own, and with one of her brothers founded an *almacén* (general store) at Dolores, some three hundred kilometres to the south. But soon this store did not suffice for his activity, and leaving his wife and her brother in charge of it, he scoured the Pampa for cattle, wool and hides. Later on, he made a proposal to a neighbouring estanciero whom he saw planting trees on his ground, and effected a contract with him, the conditions of which are famous still in the Argentine. Luro was to plant as many trees as he liked on two hundred *hectáreas* of land, which the estanciero was to place at his disposal, and was to be paid for the work at the rate of four centimes for each common tree and twenty-five for each fruit tree of which the fruit contained stones.

"Calling to his aid a number of his fellow Basques, at the end of five years Pedro Luro had planted so many trees on these two hundred hectáreas that the proprietor owed him a sum not only superior to the value of the ground planted, but of the whole five thousand hectáreas composing his estancia (land was sold at that time in this district at 5000 francs per league). The estanciero did not care to pay Luro, with the result that the astute Basque started an action at law and converted himself into the proprietor of the 5000 hectáreas.

"About the year 1840, the southern part of the province of Buenos Ayres was still almost desert, the land of small value. These were the times of the Rosas tyranny and incessant revolutions. All around the abandoned estancias dogs had returned to a state of savagery, and

cattle wandered free in innumerable hordes across these immense spaces. It happened that Luro was assisting at a *batida* (battue) of these animals, rendered mad by being entangled in the lassos and pricked with knives in the hocks. Pondering over the value of all that flesh and fat lost, for it was then the custom merely to secure the skin of the animal and leave its body to decay, the idea occurred to buy from him all the animals of the class that were thus hunted and killed, at the rate of ten pesos of the old Argentine money, equivalent to little more than one peso of the present currency. The proprietor was highly amused at the suggestion. 'I quite believe I will accept,' he exclaimed, laughing, 'but do you really think it would be good business?'

"It was with the only system of capture known to the *gauchos*, that is to say the lasso and the *bolas* (two balls attached by a leather thong, which, thrown with great dexterity at the legs of an animal, entangle these and bring it to the ground), necessitating months and an enormous number of men, that he would be able to bring some thousands of cattle—and in what sad state—to the salting factory.

"All the same, Luro insisted with perfect coolness, and the contract was signed.

"Now the tactics conceived by the intelligent Basque were as follows: He began by prohibiting the gauchos from scouring the country in cavalcades. During three months, only two men on horseback, going slowly, were allowed to wander about the pasture ground of these wild cattle. Little by little the animals became accustomed to the sight of them and did not fly away when they approached. When some hundreds of cattle had thus been domesticated, they were taken farther away, where others were still in a wild state, and these in turn were easily reduced to the tameness of the first.

"In batches of five hundred to a thousand, Luro was soon able to herd the cattle direct to the salting factories, where he sold them at 15, 20, 25, even 30 fr. each. At the end of a year, he had thus secured no fewer than 35,000 head of cattle. He had made himself rich, and the

proprietor of the estancia had received from him at one stroke 70,000 fr., which he had never expected, remaining enchanted with his transaction.

"In 1862, Pedro Luro went still farther afield, beyond Bahía Blanca, whose fort at that time constituted the frontier against the Indians. He was delayed for some time on the banks of the river Colorado, owing to the Indians having robbed him of his horses. Meanwhile, exploring the valley of the river, he quickly grasped the potentialities of the district. Returning to Buenos Ayres, he secured an interview with General Mitré, to whom he proposed to buy from the State 100 square leagues of land (250,000 hectáreas) at the rate of 1000 fr. per league, with a view to founding a colony of three hundred Basques in that region.

"His scheme apparently approved by the President, he then set sail for Navarra Baja in Spain, where he recruited some fifty families, with whom he returned to the Argentine. But the Government, while agreeing to the sale of land, would not, for some unknown reason, permit the founding of the colony, so the Basques were spread over the land of their compatriot. Many of them, or their descendants, are to-day millionaires, while the land bought at the 1000 fr. the league is valued now at 200 fr. the hectárea, or, say, 500,000 fr. per league.

"Meanwhile, Pedro Luro continued his active commerce in skins and wool. Ere long he had constructed the largest curing factory in all the basin of the River Plate, expending millions of francs on it. Then he set himself to the exploitation of the bathing station of Mar del Plata, which had been founded by Señor Peralta Ramos, one of the most fortunate of speculations, from which his heirs, continuing his work there, have benefited immensely. At his death he left to his fourteen children 375,000 hectáreas of land, 300,000 sheep, and 150,000 cattle, then valued at 40,000,000 francs.

"Pedro Luro was a Frenchman who did honour to his country by his exceptional qualities, his spirited initiative, valour, endurance, and business intelligence. He took to the Argentine more than 2000 of his fellow Basques,

whom he employed in his many agricultural and industrial establishments, providing them with cattle, letting land to them cheaply, lending them money. Almost all of these have made their fortunes. With Luro, disappeared one of those types that are almost legendary, and without doubt the most famous colonist of the epic period of Argentine immigration."

Here, then, is as fascinating a story as we shall find in the annals of colonisation, and so eminent in the life of the Argentine are the descendants of Pedro Luro to-day that the story of their origin and the achievements of their progenitor would form a splendid subject for some native writer, were not the Argentine authors too busy imitating European models to lend themselves to the simple narration of such splendid life-histories as the making of the Argentine presents. For the passages I have quoted from M. Huret is no more than the prelude to a romance which is likely yet to see its final issue in the founding of a great and prosperous town at the mouth of the river Colorado in the bay of San Blas, southward of Bahía Blanca. The Luros are the lords of all the land in that region, and I recall the interest with which I read a series of somewhat highly-coloured articles by Mr. A. G. Hales, then attached to the staff of the *Standard*, who, in the latter part of 1912, made a journey on horseback through that district. He pictured the coming of a day when ships would sail from the city of San Blas laden with wines for the tables of European epicures, and no end of other wonders that would come to pass in the valley of the river Colorado, which some fifty years ago the shrewd Pedro Luro had secured for his descendants at so small an outlay. At the present moment there is no railway within one hundred and fifty miles of San Blas, and I suppose there is no more than a paper plan of the future city lying somewhere in the estate office of the Luros, and no ships cast anchor in its bay; but there was a time when Buenos Ayres itself, and not so many years ago Bahía Blanca, meant no more to the world than a name on a map, and who shall say what dreams may not come true?

CHAPTER XVI

LIFE IN THE "CAMP" AND THE PROVINCIAL TOWNS

To the European imagination, the figure of the Argentine *gaucho* typifies the rural life of the country. And a fine figure he cuts in his showy *poncho* (a shawl with a slit in the centre to thrust the head through), the graceful folds of it, with fringed edges and embroidery, falling as low as his top-boots with their jingling spurs. On his head he wears any variety of soft felt hat, but never the "panama hat" of popular imagination. He is more inclined to cultivate a beard and fierce moustache than to shave, and above his poncho, which covers a complete suit of ill-cut clothes, he usually wears a black or white silk handkerchief tied loosely around his neck. On horseback, an admirable figure, the poncho serves also as covering for his steed, which he rides with unrivalled grace and confidence.

He has a soul for music, too, this rough and somewhat villainous-looking knight of the Pampa. The guitar is his favourite instrument, and he is no gaucho who cannot strum a tune thereon, or improvise some lines of verse, the old Spanish custom of singing a couplet to the accompaniment of the guitar still retaining high favour in the Argentine Camp, to such extent, indeed, that a weekly paper, *La Pampa Argentina,* exists for no other purpose than to collect and circulate the latest efforts of the *coplistas* and reprint famous couplets of the past. His sports, too, are rendered picturesque by the part which his horse, almost imseparable from himself, performs in them.

An agreeable sense of old-fashioned courtesy still clings to him, and while I fear his morals will not bear

too close an inspection, nor are his habits of life quite as cleanly as domestic legislation has contrived to make those of most European and North American people, the gaucho is by no means unlikeable, although I never felt quite so kindly towards him in the flesh as I have done imaginatively through the pages of Mr. Cunninghame-Graham and Mr. W. H. Hudson. For all his courtesies, his nature retains much of the old Spanish cruelty. To see him bury his spurs in the flanks of his horse with a vicious dig, and pull the animal up on its haunches by throwing his whole weight backwards on the reins that are fixed to a long and brutal curb bit, is not a sight that makes you long to go up and take him by the hand as a man and a brother.

His origin is the mixture of Spanish and Indian blood, in which it is not improbable that some of the worst qualities of both races may have been retained, along with a curious strain of sentimentality. That he is a veritable devil of cruelty I cannot assert from anything I have witnessed, but from much that I have read and heard from eye-witnesses he seems no person to quarrel with. "A merciful man is merciful to his beast." If this be any true test, then the gaucho is not a merciful man. One of the most disgusting performances it has ever been my lot to witness was one of a series widely advertised in Buenos Ayres, and patronised by the Spaniards and natives with high approval. It took place in the grounds of the Sports Club, near Palermo, and consisted of exhibitions of gauchos breaking in supposedly wild and savage horses (*potros*). As a matter of fact, the horses were poor, spiritless creatures, that could be made to buck only by the riders gashing them with their cruel spurs in the tenderest parts of their bodies. A more degrading or beastly exhibition I have never seen, yet it amused the Spanish-Argentine audience vastly. No, among the gauchos there is nothing of the Arab's traditional attachment to his horse. His horse is to him a brute that has cost a few pesos and may be ridden to death with no great loss. Here, however, it is not my intention to enlarge on this subject, which I am reserving

for more specific treatment in a later chapter, and I shall merely record one instance of gaucho brutality, as described to me by an Argentine lady.

It dates back some eight or ten years, when, together with her husband and a party, she was on the way to a very remote settlement on the Andine frontier, where her husband had taken over a large estancia. The coach was driven by a team of six or eight horses, and, while going along, a gaucho who accompanied the driver and assisted him in the "care" of the animals, managed, by his skill in throwing the lasso, to capture a wild mare, whom they surprised in the solitude of the Pampa. More as an exhibition of the driver's power to control the animals than out of need, this wild thing was harnessed up with the others and attached immediately to the coach. It very soon became unmanageable, and presently, in its struggles, fell down, the heavy coach rolling over it and breaking its hind legs. Quick as a flash, the gaucho who had captured it leapt to the ground, and, before any of the travellers realised what he was doing, he was dangling in front of them the mare's tongue, which he had cut out by the roots with his long-bladed knife, the animal being still alive! The husband of the lady who related to me this pleasant little episode of native life, immediately shot the animal dead, and would willingly have done the same to the gaucho but that his services were essential to their journey. Mare's tongue is considered among these gentlemanly savages of the Pampa a great delicacy, and they are evidently not particular about waiting for the mare to be done with it.

I have no wish whatever to blacken the character of the gaucho, nor yet have I come to praise him, for I found myself but little in touch with his class, and such as I met I shall hope were not the finest specimens. Later, however, I did meet an old German who had lived among them for some thirty years, and still had his home in a lonely corner of the Andes. When I encountered him he was carrying what seemed an unusually large revolver of an antique type, and I asked him if he could count up how many people he had killed with it, living all those

years where the arm of the law can scarcely reach out. "Never once in my life have I had to use it against a human being," was his surprising reply, and with that must disappear some of our boys' book fictions of gaucho ferocity.

The gaucho is to South America what the cow-boy is to the North, and so far as life in the larger towns is concerned, the one is as seldom seen as the other where streets are paved and electric trams are running. If anything, I should suspect the gaucho of entertaining a greater dislike for town life than does his counterpart of North America. He is essentially a child of nature, delighting to be in the saddle, roaming the plains, rounding up the cattle, living to the full his outdoor life, eating enormous quantities of beef and mutton, sipping his *mate*, and strumming his guitar at eventide by the open door of his rudely furnished rancho. It seems to me that his opportunities for scoundrelism are somewhat limited by nature, and if there is no denying his cruelty, that is no more than acknowledging his origin. He seldom owns property of much importance, and there are not many families of gaucho origin who have risen to wealth, although one full-blooded member of the race, the ever notorious Rosas, who held the Argentine in an iron grip as dictator from 1833 to 1852, has left his mark on its history. It is more than likely that he is fated to disappear in the onward march of the Republic. Nowhere has he the field to himself, as he had, say, twenty years ago, for, as I have already pointed out, the Italian, the Russian, and indeed the labourers of all nations, have spread throughout the country to such extent that there is probably no estancia where the newcomers do not outnumber the gauchos. Proud of his national origin he does not mix readily with them, and this self-isolation will surely have but one result, although the time may still be distant for the passing of his picturesque figure from the Argentine scene.

That there is a fascination about the life of the Camp, most of the Britishers who engage in it are ever ready to bear witness. When you meet a fellow-countryman

who is sincerely in love with Argentine life, he is almost invariably "from the Camp." But this fascination is of slow growth, and such occasional visits as the town dweller is able to pay to the estancia of a friend in the interior go a very little way to create in him a liking for the life. The estancias are very much alike in construction, and vary only according to the resources of the owners. They are usually plain structures of wood and iron, and only occasionally do we find them built of bricks. Those that boast a second storey are few, though where the owner controls a large piece of territory and spends much of his time in personal supervision, we occasionally find a more ambitious effort in domestic architecture. There are no gentle valleys surrounded by low hills, or shady woods, where attractive sites may be secured. In this treeless land the farmer has to make his own shade by planting trees around his house, and usually his home is set within a quadrangle of eucalyptus trees or Californian poplars. There are no broad, white, firm highways reaching out into the country, along which one may travel in comfort to distant estancias—nothing but mother earth everywhere, and such rude and primitive tracks as the European mind would more readily associate with neolithic man than with one of the richest and most progressive agricultural countries of the modern world. The European traveller who first sets eyes on a Camp road in the rainy season experiences a shock from which he does not readily recover.

Let me try to picture, not a mere byway to an estancia, but a " main travelled road " in the Camp, such as I have seen it after a few days of rain. It may be twice as wide as the average English highway and is far more like a muddy river-bed than a way for wheeled traffic. Here and there, there may be as much as thirty or forty yards in which the proportion of earth to water is greater, though it will be cut and scored with wheeled tracks a foot or two in depth, the whole surface having the consistency of a mud heap. Then will succeed another twenty or thirty yards of yellow water, deep enough to drown a horse did it fall down, and thus league upon

league, alternating between patches of rutted mud and rippling pools, the noble highway goes on its undeviating course through the Camp.

Travel along one of these roads in any kind of wheeled vehicle is the last word in discomfort. All the buggies used for passengers stand very high on tall wheels, so that the axles may clear the inequalities of the mud, and the waggons for conveying grain and goods to the railway stations, from forty to one hundred miles away, are fitted with great narrow wheels, the better to cut through the doughy compound. The life of the animals employed to pull these vehicles is one long agony of toil, horses having to make their way at times through liquid earth half-way up their girths. Teams of oxen I have witnessed so buried in the "road" that only a small part of their backs was visible above the surface, while they laboriously dragged their hoofs with a sucking noise from the thicker compost in the unseen depths where they found a precarious foothold.

The reader can picture to himself the delights of winter travel along such roads, and, further, he may imagine how nearly these highways approximate to the European conception of a road when they suddenly dry.

Their summer condition suggests a stream of lava that has cooled down, except that the dust lies thick on it and rises in blinding clouds at every puff of wind. Small wonder, then, that the estanciero who can afford to live in town during the winter is never to be found at his estancia, where, in truth, it would be difficult to find him were he there, as most of these country houses during the winter months are practically isolated, owing to the condition of the roads. None the less, in the long, rainless months it is easy enough, and certainly invigorating, to move about the Camp on horseback, and even by motor-car, as there are no tiresome restrictions about keeping to the road, and one may ride or drive at will over long tracts of flat, grassy land.

The smaller towns in these boundless prairies are all so much alike, owing to the lack of individuality in the scenery, that any one is representative of the whole

country. Most of them are on the railway lines, for the railways have made the towns spring into existence, instead of the railways having been laid to serve the needs of townships. The great majority of them have begun with nothing more than a railway station and an almacén. The stationmaster is thus a person of much importance throughout the Argentine, the link that binds the estancias within his district—and his district will probably stretch a matter of fifty miles or so on both sides of the railway line—to civilisation, as represented by Buenos Ayres and beyond. He receives letters, telegrams, and goods for them, and their gauchos ride in to the station so many times a week to take home the mail.

According as the settled population of the district offers retail tradesmen opportunities for trafficking to some profit, little one-storey buildings begin to spring up near the station, until in a year or two some dozens of houses, with the most oddly assorted stores occupying their front premises, will represent the thriving township, whose possibilities are limited only by the imagination of the vendor of real estate, and his powers of vision would put some of our most imaginative novelists to shame. There will be a few rude cafés; a butcher's shop which opens in early morning and again towards evening, displaying a red flag to indicate that warm, freshly-killed meat is on sale; a baker's that hangs out a white flag when there's a supply of bread for sale; a "general dealer" or two; sellers of "store clothes"; and such craftsmen as joiners and boot repairers, leather workers, and the like—"the rude forefathers of the village." The first *almacenero* to establish himself will presently be ambitious of marking his progress by converting his corrugated iron shanty into a brick building, and thus the town progresses until, ten or fifteen years later, it has its municipal authority and its *Intendencia,* and begins to think of lighting its still unpaved streets. Wherever one goes throughout the Argentine, there are these germs of possible towns to be seen, all without the slightest touch of beauty, but all speaking eloquently of the new

Montevideo from the South, showing the Cerro with its Fort.

Shipping in the Roadstead at Montevideo and the Maciel Quay.

General View of the City of Montevideo and the River Plate.

life that is throbbing in the veins of this vast country, to what great issues in the future we can but guess.

In many of these towns, where the population runs into a few thousands, the cinematograph represents the sole centre of amusement, and it may be taken as proof that public administration in the larger cities makes for cleanliness of life when I mention that, while the moving picture exhibitions, so numerous in all the larger towns, are there conducted in a way that would have the warmest approval of Mrs. Grundy, in these smaller country places it is the custom for the women and children to leave the halls after the ordinary evening exhibition, while the men remain to witness the most obscene films that can be secured from the filth-mongers of Paris or New York.

There is probably in all such towns at least one church, but the influence of the priest in the Argentine is slight, and the religious life of the Camp communities exists at very low ebb. Still, I have noted many evidences of a real co-operative spirit in the erection of churches, the men lending a hand with their labour to rear a building likely to serve the needs of the town for years to come, and often, indeed, anticipating in its size and ambitious design a somewhat distant future. Many churches will be seen, in a journey through the country, only half-built, and constructed of rude clay bricks, which it is hoped some day to cover over with cement, their window spaces filled with sheets of tin, that some day may glow with coloured glass. In fine, it may be said of the smaller towns of the Camp that none of them yet exists, but all are in the making, and in judging them we must not be too critical, for we are looking only on the first rough sketches, so to speak, and know not what they may become.

When we come to the large provincial centres, such as Rosario, La Plata, Mendoza, Córdoba, Tucumán, Santa Fé, and others of growing importance, we find ourselves contemplating something that is not merely in the initial stages of its existence, but has "arrived." Between the forlorn little *pueblecito*, or even towns of some note, such as Dolores in the province of Buenos Ayres, or Mercedes

in that of San Luís, and the important cities I have just named, there is even a greater difference than between the familiar commercial centres of the Old World and these southern emporia of the New. Difficult though it is to be perfectly just in comparing towns where one has been no more than a fleeting visitor, with others in which, voluntarily or involuntarily, one may have had to live for some time, I do venture to say that from what I saw of the provincial cities I can conceive myself at least as happy (if not more so) settled in such a town as Rosario or La Plata as in Buenos Ayres itself.

Although noted for their travelling propensities, which bring so many Argentines to Europe every year, the visitor will be surprised to find how seldom he will meet a native who knows his own country at first hand. It may be safely said that in Buenos Ayres one will meet as many people of native birth who have visited Europe as have been to Rosario, and most certainly far more who have made the overseas trip than have faced the thousand miles railway journey to Tucumán. The Argentine does not know his own country, and he is scarcely to be blamed. A certain widely travelled native used to entertain me with descriptions of his adventures in London and on the Continent, and would grow dithyrambic in his praise of old England's capital, where, in his opinion, the whole municipal energy and the efforts of the electric railways, tramways, omnibuses, and all branches of public catering, were devoted to making the lot of the foreign visitor as easy and comfortable as possible. Beyond being able to read our language in an elementary way, he had no command of it, but, armed with one of the multitudinous maps of the "Underground," and following the arrows which so lavishly decorate the station walls and the insides of the trains that burrow by devious paths through London's mighty molehill, he felt perfectly happy and never at a loss how to make his way about. Patriot though he was, London and Paris and the great cities of the Continent had more to teach him than any of his own, and knowing, as he did, each Argentine city is more or less a replica of another,

while the country possesses no scenes of natural beauty within easy reach of the capital, he was content to take his educational trips abroad and leave the seeing of his native land, if ever, to a later time, when there might be better reward for the pains.

This is the attitude of the average Argentine, so that the Italian worker who has had to move about the country in quest of employment comes to know the Republic better than its natural citizens, while the European engineers, commercial travellers, and business men in general, can tell the Argentine native a great deal more about his country from personal observation than he himself is ever like to know. He has heard so much about it, too, from foreign writers, and he is so frequently treated to the dazzling products of the National Department of Statistics, that he is given to take its wonders for granted and leave it to others to perform the task of personal inspection. Myself, I had planned to go as far afield as Tucumán, merely to have a glimpse of the sugar cane and orange-growing district, so different in character and climate from the agricultural regions of the centre and the south, but being assured by three different gentlemen who had their business headquarters in that thriving city of the north that half a day would be ample in which to exhaust its interests, while the journey thither and back again would consume some four or five days, I decided to range myself with the native, and take Tucumán for granted. But opportunity serving, during my stay, to visit a number of provincial centres between the Andes and the River Plate, I shall now set down a few recollections of some of these visits.

A very acute American gentleman of my acquaintance, carrying on an important export business with South America, disputed an assertion of mine, based entirely on something that I had read years before, that the city of La Plata in the province of Buenos Ayres was a more important centre of population than Bahia Blanca, the rising southern port of the province. He was perfectly satisfied that I was in error, and even went so far as to doubt the very existence of such a city, suggesting that

I was confusing it with the fashionable holiday resort on the Atlantic seaboard, Mar del Plata. That a town of fully 100,000 inhabitants could exist anywhere near Buenos Ayres and on the very banks of the River Plate seemed to him impossible, especially as he had just returned from a business visit to the country. This I mention merely as a passing illustration of the lack of knowledge among even the most intelligent people as to the topography of the Argentine.

Not only was I confident of the existence of La Plata, concerning whose famous museum I had frequently read, but it was one of the cities I intended to give myself the pleasure of visiting. So, one fine day I hied me hither, forty minutes from Plaza Constitucion. This is one of the pleasantest little train journeys in the province, passing through some of the oldest settled country, where woods and water combine to form many a little landscape like the reproduction of some old-world scene. The trees, of course, in common with the majority of the inhabitants, are from Gringo stock, and we must always remember when we look upon a coppice in the Argentine that it is almost as much an import from Europe as a motor-car. Fine opportunity for the cynic this, to tell the aggressive native that everything he has, even to his woodland scenery (excluding the Gran Chaco and thereaway), has been imported from that Old World he is apt to despise. But I am in no cynical mood, and I am full of admiration for La Plata, even though an American might remark that it is a town whose builders have "bitten off more than they can chew."

La Plata is essentially a thing of the New World. It is not a town that has grown. It has been made, or, more correctly, it has been nearly made, and stopped short temporarily for lack of funds. It is the capital city of the Province of Buenos Ayres, which, in 1881, under the policy of President Roca, became a distinct entity from the newly created federal district of Buenos Ayres. The explanation of this in due detail is matter for the historian, and involves the tracing of the growth of the Republic, its evolution from the Confederation of

the River Plate, and the ultimate settling of political rivalry by the creation of Buenos Ayres as the federal capital, in which struggle Córdoba had fought a fierce fight against heavy geographical odds and against "the fox" of modern Argentine politics, General Roca. Córdoba still looks with jealous eye on Buenos Ayres as a usurper city.

Before the 19th of November 1882, the site of La Plata, twenty-four miles south-east of Buenos Ayres, and inland some five miles from the south shore of the River Plate, was a barren waste, but on that day the corner-stone of the new capital of the province was laid. The plan adopted for the making of the city was sufficiently ambitious, following that of America's magnificent capital, Washington, with great diagonal avenues 97½ feet wide, streets of 58½ feet in width, and many spacious public squares. Ten million pounds went to the laying out of this model provincial capital and the erection of its public buildings. Its importance may be judged from the fact that the provincial legislature having its seat here controls territory as large as the British Isles, and a population to-day numbering upwards of two millions.

So quickly was the work of construction pushed forward, that, in less than three years from the date of its foundation, La Plata had already a population of 30,000, and in addition to the splendid public buildings which had sprung up on what so lately was a barren waste, there were nearly 4000 houses erected or in course of construction. For a time the building went on merrily, and then the funds began to give out, so that to-day we find the city at once an evidence of a great outburst of energy and an earnest of what it may become when the provincial treasury is again sufficiently well filled to permit of finishing much that has lain for years incomplete.

The province, having lost control of the port of Buenos Ayres by the Federal Act, set about another great undertaking in which four million pounds more were spent. This was the building of a port at Ensenada, about five miles away on the River Plate, connecting that by means of a canal and railroad with La Plata. Ensenada is now

the port for several lines of steamships engaged in the frozen meat traffic, and carrying many thousands of passengers annually to and from the River Plate.

The railway station of La Plata is a very beautiful and commodious building, which gives the visitor an agreeable first impression on arrival, while the spacious streets, villainously paved though many of them remain, offer a welcome sense of freedom and airiness to one who has been cooped up for any length of time in the choking byways of Buenos Ayres. There is none of that eddying and surging traffic of the metropolis. The current of life flows with an old-world leisure; everywhere there is a sense of "ampler air." The public buildings are numerous and imposing, the Government House, the Capitol, the Treasury, the Law Courts, and all the other departments of the provincial legislature being housed in handsome quarters, though, naturally, much that looks as if it had been built for ever is really found on inspection to be in keeping with the universal "sham" of Argentine architecture. French influence predominates, and while there is much in the city that recalls a French provincial capital, there is nothing beyond its ground plan and the width of its streets to liken it to the splendid capital of the United States.

The houses in the residential part are chiefly of the familiar one-storey variety, with here and there a modification of a French Renaissance building—austere, withdrawn, and always somewhat dusty. Grass sprouts luxuriantly between the cobbles in all the streets a little way from the centre, and the great avenues that cut athwart the town in all directions still lack many finishing touches in the way of pavement, while most of the public squares speak of plans stopped short of completion. The great public park, amply shaded with lofty eucalyptus trees and no lack of shrubbery, though a worthy monument and an adornment to any town, has still that unkempt appearance of a partly finished exhibition ground. Some day, I do not doubt, it will receive its finishing touches, and will probably be a nearer approach, as indeed it is at present, to European notions of a public park than

anything to be seen elsewhere in the South American continent. The museum in the park presents a rather scabby face of flaking cement, which goes ill with its severe Greek modelling. Interiorly, it is admirably arranged, and noteworthy chiefly for its wonderful collection of glyptodons, those giant armadillos of the country's prehistoric past. In no museum have I seen such splendid specimens, and so many have here found house-room, that later on, when the other provinces come to organise their local museums, it should be possible to supply them all with specimens and still leave sufficient to make a brave show at La Plata. Noteworthy also is the famous stucco cast of the monstrous brontosaurus, taken from the original in New York Museum of Natural History and presented by Mr. Andrew Carnegie, who also gave a copy to the British Museum.

La Plata is not ill supplied with hotels and restaurants, and contains a number of well-designed churches, as well as two or three handsome theatres, while its racecourse is second in the Argentine only to that of Buenos Ayres. Withal, a beautiful, and in many ways an attractive, city, where it would be no ill lot to pass one's life, though I am prepared to be told it is a hotbed of political bickerings; inevitable that, in any centre of South American government. One drawback it has, which would plague me sorely, I confess. On the occasion of my first visit, a beautiful calm day of winter sunshine changed in an instant, on the rising of a sharp wind, to the greyness of a London fog, but ten thousand times more abominable in character than any fog could ever be, for the greyness came from dense clouds of finest dust, raised in such abundance from the sand-strewn streets that even the great public buildings, one of which I was in the act of photographing, were suddenly blotted from sight, and everybody out of doors was making a desperate dash for shelter. I saw it again in rain, and once more in sunshine, and I shall prefer to think of it in the last condition, and always to defend it from those who will tell me it is not worth the forty minutes' journey from the capital.

Entirely different in character from La Plata is the

busy, go-ahead, self-reliant, commercial town of Rosario, on the right bank of the Paraná River, some 160 miles north-west of Buenos Ayres. This splendid city is no costly product of political ambitions, but the quick flowering of a great trade centre, Rosario being the market-place of the vast and bountiful provinces that lie between the Paraná and the Andes, and a river port of great and growing activity. The province in which it is situated, that of Santa Fé, still contains considerably less than 1,000,000 inhabitants, and of these about 130,000 live and work in Rosario ; yet this great town—the second in commercial importance in the entire Republic—is under the political control of the city of Santa Fé, the capital of the province, with a population of a mere 40,000. In a country where population and commerce are the determining factors of importance, it can easily be imagined how Rosarians chafe under the domination of the political groups in sleepy Santa Fé. That is a state of things that cannot endure, and some day the agitation, periodically renewed, for the shifting of the seat of provincial government, will surely succeed, and give to Rosario the political importance which the enterprise of its citizens and its commercial prosperity demand.

It is one of the Argentine towns from which I have carried away the pleasantest memories. I am not at all certain that its superior hotel accommodation does not to some extent colour my recollections. Nor is that a small matter, for had it been possible to secure in the capital city as near an approach to European comfort as may be obtained in at least two of the excellent and ably conducted hotels of Rosario, I fancy I should have passed my long months in Buenos Ayres more agreeably. As a provincial city, Rosario undoubtedly approximates more nearly to our ideals than Buenos Ayres does as a capital. It is hardly less cosmopolitan in character, and there is a large and agreeable sense of commercial movement everywhere in its bright and ample thoroughfares. Lacking in public buildings, for the reason stated, the city contains many fine commercial edifices, while its shopping centres are wonderfully well-furnished with

world-wide products, one large establishment, devoted to sanitary appliances, excelling anything I have ever seen in the quantity and variety of its wares, having a huge show-room devoted entirely to all sorts of porcelain and enamel baths.

All the principal banks have substantial-looking buildings, and the residences of the merchants of the town are no unworthy competitors with those of Buenos Ayres itself. There are several good theatres, where the best foreign companies that come to Buenos Ayres invariably make an appearance. The principal park, a favourite centre of social life, is admirably laid out, and has its inevitable statue of Garibaldi, for the Italians are here as plentiful as elsewhere, and wherever a colony of Italians can get together sufficient money for a statue of their national hero, there will he be seen in some heroic pose. M. Huret was reminded of Bluebeard in looking upon the Garibaldi of Rosario, and I confess the somewhat ferocious aspect of the hero of Italian Independence, as portrayed in this particular statue, would fit not ill that ogre of our childhood.

But what interested me most in my peregrinations around the city was the wonderful dock accommodation. The building of its splendid port began in 1902, and I should judge that it is now complete, or as near completion as will be necessary for some years to come, for the Rosarians, with a fine sense of future development, determined, in providing a port for the ever-growing traffic of the town, to base its accommodation upon the estimated needs of the year 1932 ! By reason of this generous anticipation of the future, the port, at present with a traffic of some four million tons per annum, looks almost idle. The quays stretch along the river front for some miles, dotted here and there with big grain elevators, and railway trucks unloading their freight for shipment into the steamers, which, though mustering a considerable fleet, seem " few and far between," the accommodation for them being so enormous. The river Paraná is wide and easily navigable for sea-going vessels of considerable tonnage at Rosario, and this, combined with the privileged

situation of the town in the centre of one of the richest agricultural regions of the Republic, mark Rosario out for a future of the greatest prosperity. Its history already is second to none as a modern romance of commercial expansion, and the brisk business air that pervades the community, exhaled by all its citizens, legitimately proud of its rapid progress, render it a most attractive centre for the commercial man.

Here we find a considerable British colony, for which in 1912 a local English newspaper was started, and the town is also a favourite shipping centre with the English estancieros of the closely settled agricultural region to the north and west, to which five or six railway lines branch out from the city.

The railway run between Rosario and Buenos Ayres is perhaps the most comfortable of any in the Republic, and the Pullman service is excellently maintained, the journey occupying from about eight or nine o'clock in the morning until about half-past six in the evening. The departure of the Rosario express from Retiro every day is usually a scene of much male embracing and female kissing, as the relations between the two cities are very intimate. Like most train journeys in the Argentine, there is never a tunnel, scarcely a perceptible change in the gradient, and only an occasional low bridge over some small stream to be crossed. You skim along through endless fields of alfalfa, of maize, of linseed, or through vast pasture-lands dotted with innumerable herds of cattle, which always reminded me of Meredith's sonnet, where he says that Shakespeare's laugh is

> "Broad as ten thousand beeves at pasture!"

A trip to Córdoba, involving another day's journey north and west from Rosario, offers a more appreciable change of scene. Here we find ourselves in a city that has caught but little of the new spirit of the Argentine and rather prides itself on being the shrine of the ancient spirit. For the first time, too, we can witness something resembling scenery, as the country in the neighbourhood of Córdoba, tired of being flat and uninteresting for so

many hundred miles, begins to take on some picturesque inequalities, and at no great distance beyond the antique city the Hills of Córdoba, wooded and picturesque, come gratefully to the eye. The city itself is essentially Spanish, with its narrow streets and old colonial houses, its numerous churches and black-gowned priests. Less than any of the Argentine towns do we find here that cosmopolitan mixture of humanity; here the old customs have fought a longer fight against latter-day innovations. M. Huret mentions an amusing example of this. He says: "No more than twelve years ago, it would not have been decent for any Córdoba woman walking through the public streets to have raised her skirt slightly; it was allowed to sweep the pavement with its tail. Two fashionable young ladies who had returned from Paris were the occasion of a scandal, by having ventured to show their ankles. But they continued doing so, and ended by conquering public opinion, so that to-day the ladies of the town are no longer afraid to raise their skirts in the street, but even have come to the point of wearing short dresses!" This is very characteristic of Córdoba, whose ancient university (founded in 1605 by the Bishop of Tucumán, shares with that of Lima the distinction of being the oldest in South America) has done so much to maintain the spirit of times past, at the very threshold of the most insistent modernity. Little though I admire the Roman Catholic Church as I find it in South America, it seems to me that the Argentine is the better for its Córdoba. It is good that in a young Republic, where commerce and the making of money have suddenly and inevitably become the great ambitions of the populace, the spirit of veneration for the past, even to the point of narrow-mindedness in social relationships, should somewhere survive as a leaven to the lump. Intensely provincial, parochial indeed, the life of Córdoba has still about it something of the aroma of a grey, old, historic place, and may not that be as fine a possession as great docks and grain elevators, and new-made banks stuffed with money?

Of Mendoza I shall have something to say in a later

chapter, and of Bahía Blanca I need only state that it is no more than a town in the making—the raw materials of a great possibility which in another decade may have grown into something not unlike Rosario to-day. Its life is naturally lacking in that rhythm I find in the great established emporium of the Paraná, but on every hand the evidences of activity are so patent that it requires no remarkable vision to see Bahía Blanca some day with a population running into six figures, with finished streets and settled conditions, where so much at present is in the travail of birth.

To sum up, the provincial life of the Republic reflects in high degree the conditions of the capital from which all the commercial centres take their cue. Buenos Ayres is the great exemplar, and it is only to be expected that the newer towns springing into greatness should aim at reproducing in themselves what they admire in the capital, avoiding always the creation of such unduly narrow thoroughfares as Buenos Ayres has inherited from the old colonial city. In the smaller towns, life is attended with many hardships and calls for stern self-denial, for plain living, if not for high thinking, and the impression of their inhabitants which survives in my memories of those I visited is that of their sullen determination to become rich, at no matter what inconvenience for the present. So, everywhere one finds the people looking to the future rather than endeavouring to "live along the way." For hundreds of thousands the Future may have a full hand. For hundreds of thousands more, perhaps it is well the Future is veiled, that they may at least toil on in hope.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SPIRIT OF THE COUNTRY

There is a sense in which the spirit of a country must show itself in any honest description of its life and character. The preceding chapters of this book have dealt with so many and varied aspects of Argentine life that the reader should have been able to take in from these something at least of the spirit of the country: perhaps as much as can be made manifest in any specialised treatment of the subject. Yet I feel the attempt should be made to disengage from the tangle of ideas and impressions created in the mind by close observation of the ways of a people some orderly estimate of its "spirit."

I remember very well on our taking the river steamer from Montevideo for the night journey to Buenos Ayres, after trans-shipping from the ocean liner, that an Anglo-South American, who had been a fellow-voyager, said it would be amusing to watch the demeanour of the Argentines on board, as we should be able to distinguish them from the general mass by their swaggering walk, their bumptious manners, and sartorial affectations. And that evening, while the passengers were thronging aboard, it did seem as though he spoke truth, so many answered to his description; evidently all of them Argentines returning to Buenos Ayres at the close of the Montevidean season.

These fellows strutted about the saloon and paraded the deck of the steamer with a splendid air of proprietorship, while the grossly offensive manner of the stewards, who treated the passengers with a lofty contempt and a calm indifference to their wants, gave one an extremely bad first impression of Argentine manners. Nevertheless

this was no true sample. The traveller who allows such evidences as these to prejudice him against a whole people is hardly a trained observer. If a foreigner were to judge the British people by many of the specimens I have myself encountered abroad, he would draw an extremely unflattering picture of us as a nation. Swagger there is and to spare among the Argentines, and boastfulness of their national progress is only to be expected in a young people whose international experience is still far from complete, but that these are essentials of the Argentine spirit I would have no one believe.

Truer would it be to say that the spirit of the Argentine —that intangible something which permeates a whole people and marks them off from others—can best be discovered in walking about the streets, mingling with the throng, listening to the casual remarks of passers-by. You will notice, not once or twice, but scores of times in any day—that is, if you notice anything—the curious habit of men in conversation rubbing together the forefinger and thumb of the right hand. This is expressive of money. One of the curiosities of the Spanish language is the extraordinary amount of gesture which usually goes with it; people commonly, when referring to themselves, tap the breast to emphasise the personal pronoun; when speaking of having seen something, they will point to the eyes; or to the mouth if they wish to convey some notion either of speech or silence. In the same way the Argentine seldom mentions *plata* (money) without this rubbing of the forefinger and thumb, suggestive remotely, I suppose, of the counting out of coins. He who christened the Rio de la Plata made a happier hit than he could have suspected, for plata lies close to the heart of every citizen of Buenos Ayres, and you have never to listen many minutes to a casual conversation in the street without hearing mention of it. "He has given so many pesos per yard for the land."—"Fancy selling it for a thousand pesos and having bought it only eighteen months ago at three hundred and fifty!"—"He has got lots of money —*tiene mucha plata.*"—"He is asking too much money." —"I have offered so many pesos." These, and such

phrases, one overhears at every turn, and might well suppose that the spirit of the country was exclusively associated with the getting of money.

Still would that be a wrong conclusion, just as I believe it would be unfair to the country as a whole to judge of it by the sham and shoddy of Buenos Ayres and its great cities, or by the primitive and low social conditions of the smaller towns. We must look elsewhere for that " spirit " of which we are in search. The Jockey Club will not help us. No, it will tend rather to confirm the impression of the peacocketing passengers on board the river steamer. Congreso itself will help but little. There we shall find the " grafter," the place-seeker, the dishonest politician, just as eminently successful as in the United States, and who would allow that the real spirit of the United States disengaged itself in Congress or from the political groups at Washington ?

Again, a friend of mine, having important business with the municipality of a provincial town, had to call upon the *intendente* with reference to the signing of certain documents, which formality was only possible after the mayor's secretary had pocketed several hundred pounds of baksheesh, and the mayor himself had named his price for his signature. The intendente's daughter, a young woman of seventeen years of age, singularly handsome, happened to be in the room at the beginning of the interview, and my friend may have looked upon her with some evidence of admiration, for when she left, her father remarked to him :

" Fine little girl, my Manuelita, eh ? She'll make good meat for the beasts ! "

On a later visit in connection with the same undertaking, the daughter was not present, but the accommodating mayor blandly asked my friend if he would care to see his little daughter, as he rather thought he admired her—a fatherly suggestion which was respectfully declined.

This is typical of many instances I can give (the drift of which needs no indication), and still I do not wish to quote it or them as eminently characteristic of the spirit of the country.

No more do I wish to maintain that the secretary of the said mayor, a quite humble functionary with an official salary of £30 a month, who lives at the rate of nearly £3000 a year and is understood to be growing wealthy (having a brother a judge, he can secure for anyone for a definite fee a favourable verdict, even to acquittal for murder !), is a gentleman in whom the spirit of the country shines radiantly. Many such as he there are growing rich by foulest methods of corruption, polluting justice and public life by their every action, yet without losing the esteem of their fellow-citizens.

Rather would I instance the children's fondness for balloons, which one notices everywhere, as more in tune with the spirit of the country ! Every day at certain hours a man will be seen bustling down Calle Florida with some hundreds of penny balloons inflated with gas, taking them to one of the large drapery establishments, where each customer may receive a balloon as a present. During the afternoon mothers and nurses and children innumerable will be seen about the streets with their balloons. It is indeed *un país de niños*—a land of children ! Yes, after reviewing all the various manifestations of the national spirit, down to its love of the morbid, its revelling in stories and scenes of crime, its lack of humour, I am persuaded that most representative is this childishness. Perhaps it is because the Argentines are children at heart that they are so lacking in the sense of humour. Children are notoriously humourless, though they may be the cause of infinite humour in others. The keen relish of life's lighter side comes with advancing years. So with young nations. The Argentine is not old enough yet to have developed the sense of humour ; it is still seriously young. But with this youth it also has that wonder sense which is the privilege of all youth, and just as the sand-built castles of the children by the seashore are to them more wonderful than the pyramids of Egypt, so are all things in his Republic to the Argentine.

Most of the corruption which exists in public life is due to the participation of foreigners therein ; Italians chiefly. That will pass. The nation is young and is

Plaza Independencia, Montevideo.

The central building in the background is the Government House, or official residence of the President.

The Plaza Libertad, or Cagancha, Montevideo.

CATHEDRAL AND PLAZA MATRIZ, MONTEVIDEO.

PLAZA INDEPENDENCIA AND AVENIDA 18 DE JULIO, MONTEVIDEO.

gradually adjusting its perspective. The boastfulness of the younger generation, so irritating to the visitor who is prepared to admire all that is worthy of admiration in the Republic, is another fault of youth. It, too, will pass. The young Argentine who to-day talks of his country as a great empire of the future, dominating not only the Western hemisphere but influencing profoundly the whole civilised world of the future, is still *bien jeun.* He will grow older, and his vision of the wonders that may be shall grow dimmer.

Remains the fact that eminent among the public men of the Argentine are many of supreme ability and integrity. Rather let us think of them than of the baser sort. They are the true patriots, and they also once were young. I have read many speeches and articles by such publicists as Dr. Luís María Drago, Dr. E. S. Zeballos, Dr. Quesada, Dr. Ramos-Mexía, and Dr. David Peña (all doctors of law, the use of such degrees being universal), to mention a few only of the scores of honourable names that one might muster. With these leaders, and such as these, the Argentine is not only assured of material progress but intellectually equipped for a future which will see the abolition of innumerable abuses that darken its public life to-day. The spirit of the country is the spirit of youth, and youth, as we know, has its faults. But there is " no fool like an old fool," and the old nation that is wedded to its folly is of human institutions ever the most hopeless.

Such follies as we can detect in abundance in the Argentine are either the immediate follies of youth or corrupting influences imported from Europe. For my part I am persuaded that the people as a whole constitute a nation in earnest. With their heart set on progress, small wonder if its material forms should first engage them, but there is no lack of forces making for better things, and if at the moment too many of the younger generation of Argentine writers seem to have fallen under the spell of the French decadent school, that, too, will prove no more than a passing phase. There is a far finer appreciation of literature, an infinitely more

important body of national literature, in the Argentine than in Australia or in Canada. And there is a certain veneration for old things and ancient culture which is not at all consonant with the spirit of youth. Even the United States have not yet entirely emerged from that condition of youthful disrespect inseparable from great material progress in a young country. In the Argentine one finds a very remarkable degree of admiration for the fine old things of Spanish civilisation. Spain was a harsh mother to her, yet she is remembered as the mother, and her harshness as that of *la madre pátria*. Her glorious literature has the profoundest admiration of the Argentine. Still, the Argentine is never blind to the failings of Spain, and the conditions of his national life having tended to put a finer edge on his wits than those of the Spaniard can boast, he is always ready to assert his independence. A good instance of this is furnished by an anecdote of a well-known Buenos Ayres *abogado* who was present at a lecture by the eminent Spanish novelist, Señor Blasco Ibáñez, when the latter declared, in alluding to the Spanish colonisation of South America and the West Indies, that Spain, after having given to the world sixteen children, was now exhausted. The acute Argentine lawyer retorted:

"That may be so, but England has had more children than Spain, among them the United States, India, and Australia; and after each new birth she has gone forward acquiring more strength, greater force."

The Argentine may thus be said to look towards the Motherland for her culture, but to the Anglo-Saxons for social ideals. She has probably looked more than she has followed. She is essentially a child of Spain, still young, but entirely independent of her mother, with much character of her own and a willingness to emulate good examples. For "a land of children," these are surely conditions that will make for greatness when it has grown up.

CHAPTER XVIII

A LAND OF PAIN

Although by no means a nervous person or one so dotingly fond of animals that he exaggerates every little evidence of ill-treatment, I have ever taken a keen interest in animal welfare, and what I have seen during my stay of nearly two years in South America has led me to look upon some of these Latin Republics as almost incredible hells of suffering for the so-called "lower animals." I am much tempted here to write a general chapter on the subject, covering my observations not only in the Argentine and in Uruguay, but in Chili, Bolivia, Peru, and elsewhere, for it is remarkable to what an extraordinary extent the various Republics differ in the treatment of animals. The Chilians, for instance, are moderately careful of their horses, incomparably the finest in South America, while dogs are allowed to multiply like so much vermin, and throughout the country hundreds may be seen short of a leg! The Indians, on the other hand, and especially those of Bolivia, treat horses with gentleness and seem on the friendliest of terms with their dogs, while even the large troops of llamas, the burden-bearers of the Bolivian plateau, are handled with no evidence of brutality. In the Argentine, however, horse and mule and dog are the subjects of such indiscriminate cruelty that it will be sufficient if I confine myself to recording a few of the instances seen by me and others that were matter of common report during my stay. For of all the republics mentioned, the Argentine is most deserving of the title wherewith I have headed this chapter, noticeable improvement in the treatment of animals being evident in Uruguay.

It is difficult to explain why the mere crossing of a river should produce a change in human character, yet I assert that the lot of man's friend, the horse, is far happier in Uruguay than in the Argentine. It may be that the Uruguayan horse is of better quality, better fed, and so fitter for service, thus saving the driver from the need of thrashing it soundly and incessantly every journey it makes. But I am not so sure of this, for I have seen Argentine drivers maltreating fine, spirited horses just as severely as the broken-kneed and spavined jades so commonly seen between the shafts.

Or perhaps it is something of a local habit, originating, it may be, in the inferior quality of the horse-flesh. Conceivably, a driver who has only found it possible to make his horse go by thrashing, becomes so habituated to the act of thrashing that every horse coming under his hands will receive like treatment, merely from long practice and not from necessity. Be the reasons what they may, the facts I deem it my duty to set down are incontestable.

As a lover of dogs I was particularly interested in watching their treatment in Buenos Ayres, and I am not ashamed to confess that sights which I saw there haunted me for days, and still remain indelibly impressed on my memory. First, let me explain the admirable system of the municipality for cleaning the city of all stray curs. A branch of the sanitary department maintains several waggons which every day visit different districts. Each waggon is attended by an employee in addition to the driver—an expert in the art of throwing the lasso, in which the Argentine gaucho is unrivalled. So afraid are these brave fellows of being bitten in the attempt to capture some poor diseased or dying dog which ought to be destroyed, that they lasso them in the public streets, and, thus secured, chuck them into the waggon. The dogs are then supposed to be taken to a general depot to be put out of existence as painlessly, we should hope, as possible.

Now this, on the face of it, is no bad scheme for ridding the city of canine undesirables, and every humanitarian should applaud it, in so far as it reduced the stray

dogs, nearly all which are diseased, having for that reason been turned adrift by heartless owners. But, unfortunately, the able official with the lasso never thinks of capturing a stray dog, or a dog it would be kindness to kill. He has a far more profitable game to play. His attention is devoted to lassoing the very best dogs he can see, whose owners will then have to go to the depot and pay anything from five shillings to a pound, according to the mood of the gentleman in charge, to have their animals returned.

The audacity of these official ruffians knows no limits. A lady of our acquaintance was out driving with her little daughter in their private carriage one afternoon, and had allowed their pet Pomeranian to take a little exercise by running on the pavement beside the carriage. Suddenly the daughter heard the children in the street shouting that the dog-catchers were coming—for it is to the credit of the youngsters everywhere that they run ahead of the dog-catching van to warn people to secure their dogs—and, stopping the carriage, she leapt to the pavement to secure her pet, but in the very act of lifting it, the dog was lassoed and torn from her grasp. No appeal to the policeman at the corner could restore it to her, until that evening when her father could attend at the depot and go through the usual formalities and part with the usual bribe.

This disgusting abuse of a most necessary sanitary measure leads Buenos Ayres to be overrun with mangy curs, some of which, as I remember them, were more like horrid creatures of a nightmare than "the companion of man." In particular I recall a large Borzoi, from which, owing to starvation and disease, every single hair had departed. Its back was arched like a bow pulled taut, and its legs, once so straight and handsome, were bent and pithless. Yet this poor brute, an object of pitiful horror, with its red-rimmed, mournful eyes looking reproachfully at the passers-by, was to be seen slinking about the crowded and congested thoroughfares day after day. This creature, which was not an old dog, and perhaps had been as handsome as those rendered popular in England

by Queen Alexandra's affection for the breed, had probably been lost to his original owners, and months of wandering and starving must have elapsed to bring him into the appalling state in which I saw him. Seldom was an eye of pity bent upon him; nay, I have seen boys kicking him, with the full approval of the policeman.

Another I recall, in much the same condition, had been at one time a fashionable French poodle of the large black variety, but his skin, to which only a few scraps of hair still adhered, was a mass of sores, his ribs so prominent that they threatened to cut through, and the animal altogether so exhausted that as he walked along the busy pavements of Maipú he had every now and again to sit down and lean against the wall. Yet another I noticed on a wet and bitter winter day. It was a little silky spaniel, and my attention was attracted to him making efforts to jump on the step at the door of a grocer's shop. He fell back several times in trying this, and then I noticed that one of his hind legs had been cut off a little above the foot, and the same accident had evidently sliced off a portion of his tail. He had thus a bad start for the jump, but when I came nearer I found a bright little boy inside the shop door who had evidently kicked the little dog each time it jumped up, and presently it continued on its hopeless way along the Calle Viamonte.

The happiest dogs I saw in Buenos Ayres were those lying dead in the gutter. Every day dogs are killed or maimed by the reckless motor-cars, as there is no room for them to run freely on the pavement, and still less for them in the roadway. It is little short of a crime to allow a dog to be at large in Buenos Ayres, yet so perverse is fate that such creatures as I have just described, maimed and diseased, linger on unkilled, while healthy animals, probably well-cared-for, meet swift fate beneath some of the myriad motor wheels.

Withal I would not have you suppose the Argentine is essentially and invariably cruel to his dog. It is the weakness of all Latin races either to be too cruel or too kind. There are many dogs in Buenos Ayres that suffer

more from kindness than from cruelty, just as an Argentine who takes a real interest in his horses will probably spoil them by over-feeding and under-working. That well-balanced average of good treatment which, on the whole, is more characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race than of any other, is lacking. At bottom we find the old innate carelessness and indifference of the race. On one occasion I went to inspect a large number of dogs and puppies for sale in a well-known mart in the Calle San Martín. Among a group of some ten or twelve beautiful terrier puppies, was one in a very bad state of distemper. The attendants of the place were either too ignorant of the fact, or so utterly indifferent, that they were making not the slightest effort to prevent the whole group from developing that highly contagious fever. There must be, I think, a considerable amount of ignorance to add to the carelessness, for I was informed by a native that his landlord had that day sold for fifty pesos a valuable Great Dane because it was developing rabies ! The man was an Italian, and he scouted the suggestion that he had done anything wrong in getting rid of the dog in that condition. That was entirely a matter for the purchaser to find out !

In the matter of animal disease it came with something of a shock to me to see prize cattle at the Buenos Ayres Agricultural Show suffering from foot-and-mouth disease, or *aftosa*, as it is known in the Argentine. Shall I be believed when I state that prize bulls, so far gone with the disease that they could scarcely crawl round the paddock, were sold at auction for substantial sums ? Yet when I got to know that it is the custom in South America to nurse the animals affected by this fever back to health, and that those sold in that condition were only disposed of subject to their recovery, I began to wonder why in England we take such stringent methods of elimination ? It is a subject on which I possess not a particle of expert knowledge, but surely it cannot be right in one country ruthlessly to destroy every animal that shows signs of foot-and-mouth disease while in another it is possible to sell prize animals while suffering from it. The explanation of this I must leave to my bucolic friends.

Turning now to the question of the horse and his treatment, I have from time to time in preceding chapters been forced to pass some strictures on this subject and to mention specific instances. Probably the most remarkable and suggestive case reported in the Press during my stay was the following: A one-horse coach was passing along one of the narrow streets to the south of the Avenida de Mayo — Perú, I think—when the animal fell in the mud, and no efforts of the driver could get it to its feet again. It was a bitter day of blinding rain, and while the poor creature lay struggling in the slush, blocking the traffic of the narrow thoroughfare, it gave birth to a foal. The newcomer was placed in the coach, the mare eventually raised to her feet and harnessed once more to the shafts, the driver taking his seat and thrashing her off to the stables as though nothing unusual had happened. I wonder what our good folk of the R.S.P.C.A. would have to say to that!

To describe one tithe of the cases of cruelty, either personally witnessed or coming to my knowledge during my eight months in Buenos Ayres, would occupy many pages of this book, and I shall limit myself to one more in particular. It happened in the Calle Bartolomé Mitre, one of the most congested thoroughfares in the city. It was again a rainy day, when horses may be seen falling in every street owing to the absurd regulation which prohibits the use of heel pieces on their shoes (perhaps—ye gods!—it is thought these might injure the roads). When I came on the scene this horse was lying in a helpless condition on the asphalt with sand all around him. The sand had been brought so that he might find a foothold in his struggles to rise, but the poor brute was far beyond struggling. Everywhere that the harness had touched him he was marked with raw flesh. Under his collar was a ring of raw flesh around his neck; the saddle, which had fallen loose from him, disclosed great patches of bleeding skin; the girths, wherever they touched him, had left bloody traces, and every movement the poor thing made peeled off the skin where it touched the ground A more loathsome spectacle of

inhumanity I have not seen. This horse should have been shot months before. His skin was positively rotten, and in places green-moulded. Yet the little Indian policeman from the corner was helping the driver to raise the animal to its feet. This they were attempting by making a loop of the reins around its neck, the policeman pulling on this with all his might, so that by partially choking the horse it might be tempted to struggle to its feet, while the driver stood and thrashed it with his whip in the most unmerciful manner, every stroke breaking the skin. All to no purpose; it was too lifeless to struggle, and lay with a mute appeal in its eyes to be put out of its agony.

I personally protested to the policeman against his endeavouring to raise the animal, which was clearly past all service, and he frankly told me to mind my own business as he was there to get the street cleared. A young native, however, at this juncture, came along, and seeming the only person other than myself who was in the least interested in the fate of the horse, I explained to him what had taken place while I stood there, and he, producing a card of membership of the Sarmiento Society —which is endeavouring to sow humanitarianism in the stony soil of the Argentine nature—insisted that no further effort should be made to raise the horse by thrashing it or partially choking it, and that it ought to be destroyed immediately. The policeman was disposed to listen to him, as, thanks to this Society, considerable sums of money have been distributed among the police in accordance with the number of convictions they have secured against persons ill-treating animals. When I passed the spot some hours later there was only the sand and some clots of blood to be seen,—I know not what had become of the horse; but the picture of it, bleeding and hopeless, haunted me for weeks, and remains vivid in my mind's eye still.

I have no wish to harry the feelings of the reader, and I have personally trained myself to a certain degree of fortitude in looking upon suffering, for I am not at all sure that the Cæsars who invented and maintained the

Coliseum at Rome chiefly for the purpose of hardening the populace by familiarising them with bloodshed, were not wise in their generation. I have no patience with the maudlin sentimentalist or the ultra-sympathetic person who melts into tears or prepares to faint at the sight of blood. For such as they, a few months' wanderings in the streets of Buenos Ayres would be an admirable training; but for the ordinary man of feeling, it is a purgatory of pain. Horses innumerable with diseased swollen legs, broken skin, and bleeding fetlocks, are familiar objects of the streets. To horses in good condition, life during the warmer months in Buenos Ayres is bad enough, plagued as they are by the myriads of flies and mosquitoes; but to the poor animals suffering from wounds, no mind can imagine what their torture is, for these insect pests swarm ever to the open wounds, and I have seen a horse almost mad with agony from the clustering flies sucking the blood at an open sore on its body. Sleep is impossible in the neighbourhood of a cab rank, as through the sultry night the standing horses will be heard stamping their feet in the most irritating manner on account of the plaguing insects.

Of course much of this ill-treatment is due to "want of thought as well as to want of heart," and we must not be indiscriminate in denouncing the Argentine. I have seen, for instance, two fine horses yoked together, one of them in a state of semi-collapse from high fever, obvious even to me that has no special knowledge of horse-flesh, by its nostrils being entirely stuffed with yellowish-green matter, while it tried to rest its fevered head against its yoke-fellow. This, of course, was bad economy, the one horse most certainly infecting the other, and almost certainly both of them being doomed to early death. But at the back of it was crass ignorance and carelessness—the two qualities so eminent in all service throughout the Argentine.

I recall also a coachman thrashing two horses attached to a heavy waggon because they were going so slow. The man was losing his wits with rage as he madly applied his whip to the poor brutes, who were struggling and

sweating to move the waggon, empty though it was, along the road. I pointed out to him that he had omitted to undo the chains with which the wheels were locked. He thereupon jumped down, still in a state of high dudgeon, undid the chains, and got back again to his seat, and began the lashing as freely as before, but certainly with better result.

"*La gente aqui no se fija en nada*" (the people here don't pay attention to anything), a Spanish friend of mine was fond of saying. His experience was precisely the same as my own. Instructions of the most explicit kind, given for the purpose of some little task, were never by any possible chance correctly carried out. The person addressed never seemed to take any intelligent interest in what was being said to him. He nodded with a confident "*Si, señor,*" to everything, and comprehended nothing. The sense of care and attention had not been developed in him. This extraordinary failing is not characteristic merely of the Argentine but actually exists in greater degree in other parts of South America. It explains much of the apparent apathy to suffering, and the lack of care for the domestic animals.

I remember we had been but a few days in our room at the hotel when, looking out of the window one morning, I saw a woman in the side street come to the door and throw a biggish black and white object into the street. Presently a cart came along, and the horse knocked this object on to the tram lines. Then came a tram and cut through it; then numerous other horses and coaches passed over it. Taking my field-glasses I could make out that it was a large cat which had evidently died overnight and was thus disposed of by its mistress. Within a few hours it had been so pounded out of recognition that by the evening practically nothing of it remained. This, I afterwards found, was quite a common method of disposing of household pets when they had ceased to be, forced upon the people, perhaps, by the simple fact that few of the dwelling-houses have a backyard, and none have an inch of front space.

Where such indifference to the welfare of man's

animal friends and helpers exists, humanitarianism is necessarily a plant of slow growth. That it has been planted, the Sarmiento Society serves to show, and although nothing whatever can be hoped for from the Church, which is supremely indifferent to the suffering of the animal world, there are certain warmer human qualities in the Argentine people which in due time will triumph over the present era of active brutality and apathy. Horses are too cheap and food too dear for their lives to be a subject of solicitude with the Argentines. If these economic conditions were to be modified in some way, that might also help to a change of feeling.

Best of all would be the passing of some stringent laws, and their enforcement. For when it has been possible to work such a revolution in the treatment of animals as we have seen within the last ten years in Naples, previously notorious for cruelty,—a revolution due entirely to the initiative of the Queen of Italy, who invited the English Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to organise the movement there,—as much is possible of achievement in the Argentine. The English newspapers of Buenos Ayres frequently stand forth as champions of animals' rights, and probably a sufficiently strong public opinion may yet be formed on the subject to remove from the country the stigma which at present it undoubtedly deserves in the title I have here applied to it.

CHAPTER XIX

TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW IN THE ARGENTINE

ALTHOUGH there is a great deal in South America to appeal to the sense of the historic, to render the study of the past interesting and profitable, in the Argentine the past does not greatly engage anybody. There is a general concurrence with the Oscar Wilde dictum that the best thing about the past is the fact that it is past. Here and there native scholars devotedly tend the lamp of History, and from time to time remind the populace of past events worthy of celebration, whereupon the populace, nothing loath, celebrates, and every electric light in the country blazes forth, though it might be difficult to obtain from the average citizen a really intelligent appreciation of the event thus commemorated.

Speaking broadly, everybody in the Argentine is looking forward ; few indeed are they who pause to take a backward glance. To-day and to-morrow are the things that matter ; not yesterday, nor the day before. And to-day matters less than to-morrow. I have already mentioned the propensity of the landowners and vendors of " lots " to discount the future in their sales. This was confirmed to me by various gentlemen acting for large English and French syndicates in land purchases in different parts of the Republic. All were agreed that it was well-nigh impossible to find a landowner prepared to talk business on the basis of current market values. Yet I was told by those in whose judgment I have the fullest confidence that agricultural land, enormously though it has increased in value of late years, is not yet inflated beyond its intrinsic possibilities. Certain lands examined with the greatest care by two Australian

experts were, they assured me, though offered much above their present market value, obtainable at little more than half the price of similar land in Australia. Hence they reasoned that, even allowing for the likelihood of having to pay more than a legitimate price according to actual conditions, the possibility of buying agricultural land in the Argentine which would depreciate in value was very remote.

Mention of these Australian experts reminds me that a very interesting movement was noticeable in 1912 and has probably increased in volume since. Owing to the excessive and vindictive restrictions which the Labour Government of Australia had imposed upon property holders, many of the large Australian landowners and agriculturists were beginning in 1912 to look abroad for new fields where they might invest their capital. The Argentine naturally attracted them, similar as it is in many ways to Australia in soil and climate. The gentlemen above mentioned represented between them a potentiality of some £4,000,000 of investment in Argentine lands, and so favourably impressed were they with the splendid possibilities of the soil that I do not doubt they will yet become—if they have not already forwarded their negotiations—owners and developers of large tracts of Argentine territory, the folly of the Australian labourists driving their millions of money forth from the land where it was earned to fructify a foreign country, and incidentally to earn greater increase for its owners.

It is not to be supposed, however, that everybody who engages in land speculation in the Argentine makes money thereby. In all countries that have passed through a period of "land boom" there will ever be a larger proportion who lose than gain. Many English residents in Buenos Ayres engage in a small way in land-speculation as a "side line" or hobby, with an eye to the possibility of adding to their incomes. But those with whom I discussed this matter nearly always concluded by admitting that, so far as they were concerned, the game was not worth the candle, as the anxieties incident to the speculation, and the necessity of watching the market day by day, constituted a serious interference

with their ordinary business, which in the end the profit hardly justified. At the same time one heard many stories of fortunes rapidly realised by successful "deals," that seemed to make all honest work for payment a futile farce. Here is one of many instances:

A young English dentist—one of the most lucrative professions in the Argentine, by the way—was doing very well in Buenos Ayres. He did not own his premises, nor did he even rent them direct from the owner. He was no more than a lodger, and possessed only the instruments and appliances of his profession. But his services were in large request and well-rewarded, so he ventured upon matrimony, his sweetheart going out to be married to him, as he was too busy to come home. The young wife took with her a considerable quantity of furniture, including a fine dining-room suite, the gift of her parents. A house was taken and furnished, but the dentist still continued to carry on his work at the old address where he rented rooms. Business continued excellent. Meanwhile, a friend had mentioned to him that a certain plot of land was for sale in a part of the town where values were bound to rise. The purchase of this required the total savings of the dentist, but he bought it. Soon afterwards an adjoining plot came into the market, and this he wished also to acquire, but lacked the capital. Here the young wife suggested that they should sell off their furniture, for which they could secure a much higher price than it had cost in England, give up their house, and go into lodgings. This was done, a good profit being realised on the sale, and the new plot bought. So, for a year or two, the young man went on increasing his property as he was able from the profits of his profession. In the course of six years the land he had thus acquired had not only increased substantially in value, but, being let out for building purposes, provided him with an income which enabled him to retire to a beautiful home and small estate near London. This is no fairy tale of a land vendor, but a brief record of fact, the beginning of which does not date back more than seventeen years.

The tales of fortunes made by the purchase of land in

Buenos Ayres during comparatively recent years, which one heard on all hands, were bewildering in the dazzling possibilities they held out for "getting rich quick." I was shown properties that in ten or fifteen years had not merely doubled in value, but had increased from five to tenfold. One particular site I remember near Recoleta, which had been valued at about £6000 on the occasion of the owner's death in 1907, was sold in 1912 for upwards of £40,000. The secretary of an important mortgage company that rigidly refrained from all speculation, mentioned to me several instances in which his company had foreclosed and sold off properties to recover its mortgages, where, had it bought the property at its auction price, it would, in the course of a very few years, as events proved, have earned upwards of 500 per cent. on the capital invested.

With all these alluring facts before me, and with every opportunity to acquire Argentine land and wait for it to treble or quintuple its value, I own not one square inch—not even an 8 per cent. or 10 per cent. mortgage, which I was told was as easy to acquire as a 4½ per cent. mortgage in England! But, acting on the most reliable "inside information," I did become the owner of a considerable number of Argentine railway shares, and at the time of writing I have the pain of seeing these being sold on the London Stock Exchange at 50 per cent. less than I paid for them. This reminds me, by the way, that an old English lady whom I met in Buenos Ayres, on a business visit to the city, had brought with her some hundreds of pounds to invest in Argentine railways. She was much surprised, and not a little disappointed, when I advised her to take her money back to London, where the shares could be purchased to better advantage. From bitter personal experience, I can state that on all financial matters affecting English investments in South America, your London stockbroker can give you better information than you will obtain "on the spot." The Stock Exchange of Buenos Ayres I found ridiculously ignorant of possibilities in respect to shares of Argentine enterprises whose registered offices are in London. Thus the investor in Argentine public companies controlled from

The "Rambla" or Promenade at Pocitos, Montevideo.

Bathing-Place at Ramirez, Montevideo, showing the Parque Hotel in Background.

Main Buildings of Montevideo University.

The Solis Theatre, Montevideo.

London can do a great deal better if he lives in Hampstead than if he lived in Belgrano.

On the other hand, investment in mortgages and the purchase of land can only be satisfactorily transacted by those who are resident in the country or have secured a thoroughly reliable person to hold their Power of Attorney. That fortunes are still to be made in land purchase, and that splendid incomes are being derived from mortgages, are facts that cannot be disputed, but the nonsense that gets into print in English journals about lucrative investments to be secured by the simple act of sending out your cheque and receiving in return fat half-yearly dividends, is of the most reprehensible character. Some one sent to me an English daily paper with an article entitled, "A Safe Eight Per Cent. Argentine Investment." On the face of it, all looked in perfect order, but on careful analysis the 8 per cent. dwindled to 6 per cent., after allowing for bank collection charges and the fluctuations of exchange.

It may be possible to get from 8 per cent. to 10 per cent. on a mortgage on agricultural land in the Argentine, but if the mortgagor is resident in England, by the time he has met a variety of charges for the collection of said interest, the return beyond what would have been obtainable from the same money invested in a British industrial concern is not likely to reach an extra 2 per cent. More, there are all sorts of little difficulties and peculiar customs to be noted in connection with Argentine mortgages. For instance, a mortgage that is continued beyond eight years may become illegal, and repayment be a matter for the discretion of the mortgagee ! It is thus the general custom to effect a mortgage for three years only, with a clause providing that it may be re-inscribed by the judge for a further period of three years. An important consideration is the provision that the mortgaged land shall not be rented for a period longer than the duration of the mortgage. And in every instance, no matter where the mortgagee may reside or even if his land be a thousand miles distant from the federal capital, he must give an address in Buenos Ayres, as otherwise any question of legal difficulty is intensified to the point of impossibility. I have

already hinted sufficiently at the difficulties of securing justice in Argentine Courts, but the English mortgagor who becomes involved in any legal question with a native, resident remote from the capital, and has not provided for the right to sue that native in the federal capital, may as well give up hope of securing satisfaction, no matter how patent his rights may be. There are many other difficulties in the handling of mortgages which arise to cloud over the bright prospect of investing one's capital in that way and so deriving a snug income to keep one in comfort at home.

Nor is it all that fancy paints it to be owner of land in the Argentine. Several persons of my acquaintance are in that supposedly enviable position. In one case a lady is receiving upwards of £2000 a year from a piece of property, exactly the same as her sister, ten or twelve years ago, sold for a sum that does not yield her £200 per annum in a 5 per cent. investment. This lady is one of the fortunate. A gentleman owning a far larger property has had to spend as much as eighteen months of his time at a stretch in the Argentine trying to let it to advantage, and has suffered all sorts of losses from bad tenants. Yet the gentleman in question is a well-known authority on Argentine land, and in his time must have bought and sold property aggregating many millions of pesos. He is now resident in England, and if anybody comes to him for advice about investing money in Argentine land (except as a shareholder in a land-investment company), he will pronounce an emphatic "Don't."

During my stay, there was every evidence of a coming "slump," and since I left it has come with a vengeance. Old established firms, which hitherto had enjoyed the highest reputation for stability, have gone bankrupt in dozens. This was entirely to be expected ; was inevitable. I have already given sufficient reasons to show why the country must from time to time pass through financial crises ; that of 1913–14 was no more than a momentary pause in its onward progress. It had been largely influenced by conditions of universal depression, for in the world of finance, even more obviously than in that of humanity, "We are every one members one of another,"

in the Pauline phrase. The Argentine, whose development has depended entirely upon European faith in its possibilities, whereby colossal sums of European capital have been placed at its disposal, has suffered from a sudden tightening of the European purse strings. It is like a young, go-ahead business which has gone ahead a trifle too fast for its financial resources, and, unless it can raise some fresh capital, is in imminent danger of bankruptcy. Thoroughly sound at bottom, nothing can well stay the progress of the Argentine, and the millions of European gold that have been poured into it have served to create new sources of wealth whose ultimate increase an hundredfold is as certain as most things mundane.

Apart from natural risks such as failure of crops from drought, excessive rains, or locusts, destruction of cattle and sheep in millions from protracted periods of heat, there is another danger to which the Argentine is peculiarly exposed. That is the lack of a settled policy in agriculture and cattle-raising. So many of the estancieros are still experimentalists that they are apt to show a certain affinity with their sheep in following the mode of the moment rather than in maintaining an individual and well-conceived working policy for their lands. From all that I could gather, the country is essentially one for stock-raising. In the early colonial days, so stupendous were the herds of wild cattle roaming the plains that settlers were permitted to possess themselves of three thousand head—but not more! This will indicate how cattle may multiply on these sunny plains.

It is doubtful if there is in all the world a similar territory so admirably adapted for stock-raising, and on its live-stock modern prosperity has been based. But, not content with the profits derived from this great business, estancieros during more recent years have turned their attention to agriculture rather than to cattle-raising. The reason for this entails but little searching. Provided huge crops of grain may be secured from land which else were pasturage, the relative profits are vastly greater. Hence it became the fashion to devote more attention to agriculture and less to cattle. With what

result ? The most deplorable. During 1912 and 1913 the public press was voicing the national alarm at the tremendous decline in *ganadería*. In such wise was the supply of cattle shrinking that large numbers of cows were being sent to the meat-chilling establishments (*frigoríficos*) to fulfil contracts. The destined mothers of future herds were being slaughtered. The Argentine, whose supplies of cattle ought to be without limit, was actually, in 1913, importing live-stock from the neighbouring Republic of Chili, where the cattle industry is comparatively in its infancy.

Here is a state of things that might well spell disaster. It is primarily the result of the imitative habit in following a new craze, and the lack of an established policy.

If, alongside of this declining activity in stock-raising, there were an enormous countervailing increase in agriculture, there would be no occasion for criticism. But owing to the uncertainty of the seasons, agriculture must remain in the Argentine—at least until "dry farming" has been perfected—a more speculative industry than cattle. Government has recently taken measures to establish North American dry farming, and this may go some way to ensure the agriculturist against seasonal conditions which at present make him a highly nervous observer of the barometer. Even so, and admitting the agricultural possibilities of the country to be enormous, its essential industry, that which nature seems to have marked out for it, is cattle-raising. So, after some four or five years of crop failures, and faced with a scarcity of animals, estancieros are again feverishly turning their attention to live-stock. The imminent danger is, that in making haste to recover their pre-eminence in cattle-raising, they may undo something of the progress they have made in agriculture. And so they see-saw from policy to policy. This is bad, and so long as it continues we shall see these periodic panics. A more settled system is bound to emerge, more individualised, and based upon a nicer appreciation of local conditions, for the climate differs throughout the Argentine as widely as it does between the south of Spain and Siberia.

The future prosperity of the country is not a matter

of doubt to any person who has travelled across its fertile plains, but all Argentine prosperity, whether of to-day or to-morrow, must rest upon agriculture and cattle-raising—the latter, perhaps, bearing the greater proportion. Here lies its limitation. He is no true friend of the Republic who paints highly coloured pictures of a coming day when workshops in the great cities will hum with myriad crafts, and industries flourish as we see them now in the great industrial centres of the Old World and the United States. The mechanical arts and sciences will be relegated to a very humble position in the Argentine activities of the future, as they are in its industrial life to-day. You cannot make bricks without straw, nor can you work machinery without power. If the Andes were made of solid coal, still would the progress of the Argentine be slow in the textile and mechanical industries. It would cost more to carry the coal to the Atlantic seaboard, where the industries must needs have their centres, than it now does to bring coal thither from England. But there is no reason for supposing that the Andes contain coal in any considerable quantities, while we do know that the only coal-beds at present being worked on the Chilian side with some degree of success produce coal of so inferior a kind that it is only useful for mixing with imported coal.

Already I have had occasion to point out these limitations, and here I do no more than reassert that in my opinion the future of the Argentine is indissolubly bound up with the proper adjustment of its two great national industries. Nature has intended it to rear cattle almost without limit, and to produce grain for the teeming populations of Europe, and it never pays to fight against Nature. It may be that some day rich gold deposits shall be discovered in still unexplored corners of the Andes, where we know that copper, tin, and silver are to be found in abundance. But in these things there is no permanence. For a generation or two, gold discoveries might modify a country's progress, and might eventually do a great deal more harm than good, as it is to be feared the rich nitrate fields of Chili will yet do to the sister-Republic. The real gold is the fruitful soil, and this is the Argentine's ample dowry.

The future of a country, however, is not merely a question of commercial possibilities. In treating of all new and essentially commercial countries, the tendency is to forget that there are other factors to be taken into consideration. The immediate past of the Argentine had very little to do with commerce. Its history is little more than a story of more or less sanguinary squabbles between political parties, or the struggles of individuals to secure a temporary ascendancy over the mass. It is really not an inspiring story the political development of the Argentine, or of any South American Republic. It has its great moments, but they are few compared with the long unedifying periods of petty bickerings. All that the Argentine put behind it when it suddenly awakened to the fact that, if it behaved itself, it could secure substantial loans of European money wherewith to develop its resources and so enrich its citizens. The revolutionary era is past, not entirely because the spirit that informed it has disappeared, but because other considerations of personal prosperity are now involved in any movement that would tend to discourage the faith of foreign financiers in the country's future. The energy which found expression in the days of revolution has not ceased to exist, but has suffered a change, and, transformed, it is at work in the political world of to-day, either for good or for evil. On the whole, I think for good, if I have read the signs of the times correctly in my endeavour to define "the spirit of the country."

Only the youthful jingoes foresee for the Argentine an imperial era, with the country lauding it over heaven knows what other countries of old Earth. The sane and stable mind of the nation is set upon the development of sound nationalism, the welding of the whole cosmopolitan population into a composite people. Such dangers as beset it are very similar in kind and degree to those that vex European politics—international jealousies. Brazil and Argentina do not understand each other any better than Britain and Germany. When, in April 1912, ex-President Roca went as Argentine Ambassador to Brazil, and ex-President Campos Salles as Brazilian Ambassador to the

Argentine, there seemed to be a wiping out of old jealousies, but these will only completely disappear with increase of intercourse between the two Republics, and conditions are not markedly favourable to that, as a curious feature of the political life of these Latin-American peoples is that all maintains a more direct intercourse with the Old World than with one another.

Although the Argentines under San Martín helped the Chilians to throw off the Spanish yoke, there lingers something of old rivalry and distrust between the two nations, notwithstanding such diplomatic courtesies as each government presenting the other with a fine house for its embassy in their respective capitals. Peru and Chili, too, while making much parade of cordial relationships, are still existing in a state of veiled enmity. In fine, South American politics are just as full of international jealousies and complications as those of Europe; and the Argentine, as the most progressive of these powers, must depend upon her strength and preparedness for the maintenance of her position among them. The Christ of the Andes, that giant statue on the Cordillera frontier of the two Republics, is a pious expression of the hope that Chili and the Argentine may never go to war again, but we know that these pious expressions are no more binding than inconvenient treaties—not to say "scraps of paper." Hence the question of armaments is an important one with most of the Republics—with Chili probably most of all, but only in a lesser degree at present with the Argentine.

There is another reason for this, and one which in Europe is little understood: the North American menace. While the Monroe doctrine is not entirely despised among the Latin Republics, the Drago doctrine, formulated by the great jurisconsult of Buenos Ayres, which asserts the independence of their nationalities and maintains the principle that no power by force of arms may impose itself upon any of them, is much more acceptable to Latin America. The Republic of the United States, comparatively little known, and exercising very small influence throughout South America, is looked upon with increasing suspicion. The making of the Panama Canal, instead of appealing to South

America as a great new factor in their economic lives, is viewed in many quarters as the first step towards attacking their existence as independent nations. The United States are suspected of an aggressive policy towards the South, and with such skilful diplomatists as Mr. Theodore Roosevelt—who so recently undertook for his personal gratification a tour of South America—publicly stating in Brazil that the United States, in alliance with Brazil, could dominate the whole Western hemisphere, the road to a better understanding is not made unnecessarily smooth.

The great protagonist of the anti-Yankee movement, which is steadily gaining ground throughout all the Republics, is a Buenos Ayres gentleman of some local celebrity as a *littérateur*—Dr. Manuel Ugarte. He has stumped the whole of South America, and everywhere he has been received with open arms. As a prophet, he warns the nations of the danger that threatens in the North; he sees in the Panama Canal an instrument deliberately prepared by the United States, not so much for her own commercial expansion, but the better to impose *yanqui* authority on the southern continent. He has no difficulty in making out an excellent case, as he need do no more than quote from some of the ravings of those American senators who publicly talk about "one flag from Pole to Pole and from ocean to ocean." A South American politician may be excused if he does not readily discriminate between such insensate bombast and the saner United States' opinion which realises very well the impossibility of bringing the mighty southern continent into the Union, and knows what a handful the little Philippine Islands have proved. The excuse for such agitators as Dr. Ugarte is the greater so long as Mr. Roosevelt is allowed at large to make speeches wherein he can undo in five minutes the work of years of diplomacy.

The distrust of North America is a very real thing throughout these Republics, and when, in the autumn of 1913, Mr. Robert Bacon, formerly American Ambassador to Paris, was engaged at considerable expense by Mr. Andrew Carnegie and sent to deliver lectures in all the South American capitals on behalf of "Universal Peace,"

his mission was looked upon in most quarters with suspicion. True, he was received with much pomp and circumstance, and treated with great display of cordiality, but a metaphorical finger was laid to the national nose at his departure, and the national eye winked knowingly. As one gentleman rather cogently observed to me, when the said Mr. Bacon was present as the evangel of peace in Lima, "Why doesn't he pack off with his lectures to Mexico just now? That's where he might be of some service, as we're all quite peaceful down here." It is quite useless to endeavour to convince a South American that the United States have not as deliberately engineered the revolution in Mexico as they did that quaint little affair in Panama.

This of the future is certain—that the surest way to produce an alliance of all the South American powers, in which their national differences would for the time vanish and the whole join together as one great nation, would be for the United States to pursue a policy of aggression in respect to any single one of them. To an extent little appreciated either in North America or in Europe, these South American Republics have each their racial distinctions, and in all there is an intense feeling of nationality, which, rather than diminishing, is steadily growing, and is the object of the most assiduous cultivation on the part of the leaders of the people. But the Drago doctrine is vital to their national destinies, and the very reasons that make them distinct entities would unite them as a whole to confront a common enemy.

In the development of South America, the Argentine has an important rôle to play, and as that country has been the pioneer in putting a stop to the old foolish era of revolutions and internecine strife, turning towards Europe not only for ideals of political advancement but for that material help which at once places the country under an obligation and calls forth its own best energy, and is the best pledge of peaceful intentions, it is safe to assume that, despite such temporary set-backs as the commercial crisis through which it was passing as these lines were being penned, the Argentine will maintain undismayed her political and commercial expansion to splendid issue.

CHAPTER XX

OUR SUMMER IN MONTEVIDEO

No matter how little we may love a place, we shall surely feel some sentiment of regret at leaving. If I had been told after my first few weeks in Buenos Ayres that I might come to entertain a kindly feeling towards that stony-hearted city, I doubt not that I should have resented the suggestion. And yet, when it came to saying good-bye to the friends we had made, taking a farewell look at the scenes amidst which for eight months it had been our lot to live, and setting our faces towards another town, a different country, and new conditions of life, Buenos Ayres did appear almost friendly. The long, low line of flickering lights stretching for many miles by the river-side, and inland myriad others picking out the topography of the great city, seemed more picturesque than I had hitherto thought, as we looked upon them that sultry December night when we steamed away from the Dársena Sud on our night journey to Montevideo.

During our stay in the Argentine I had had occasion to make various journeys to and from Montevideo, nor was this to be our last sight of Buenos Ayres; yet the occasion was different from all others, in so far as it betokened the completion of one stage of our life in South America and the beginning of another, to which we had long looked forward with the pleasantest anticipation, for Montevideo had left on us both a very favourable first impression when we spent a day there on our outward journey.

The dreaded summer heat, which makes life a burden in Buenos Ayres from the Christmas season until the end of March, was just beginning, but good fortune decreed

that we should spend our first South American summer in the airier city of Montevideo. It is surprising how greatly two towns with only some 125 miles of river between them may differ, not only in climatic conditions, but in general character. The peculiar position of Montevideo has given it its benigner climate, for it is essentially in the same zone as Buenos Ayres, and the visitor might expect little difference in the climatic conditions of the two cities. Lying on the north bank of the River Plate estuary, at a point where it is difficult to tell, except by the tinge of the water, whether it is river or ocean that laves its shores, the older part of the town is built upon a little tongue of land that thrusts itself into the water, forming westward a very beautiful bay with a picturesque cone-shaped hill at the western extremity, while seaward a smaller bay indents the rocky coast, and on another tongue of land the more modern suburbs of Ramirez and Pocitos have been built. The old town is thus a little peninsula, and in many of its streets one may look east and west to water. There is hardly a day of the year when refreshing sea breezes do not sweep the peninsula with their draughts of ozone. But the modern city has far outgrown its original site, and extends now in many fine avenues of handsome suburbs for miles around the bay and inland.

The first impression of the Uruguayan capital is that of an essentially European city, clean and well-built. Stone is employed to a greater degree in its architecture than in that of Buenos Ayres, though most of the modern structures are of the steel frame and cement variety. The older part of the town is regarded as "the centre" for its nearness to the harbour, and because it contains most of the popular shopping streets, but in reality it is now the fringe, and with the future expansion of the city its centre of gravity will surely shift a mile or more inland. Here are congregated all the banking establishments, the *Bolsa de comercio*, the shipping offices, and the warehouses of the large importing firms. Here, too, in the Plaza Constitucion, we find the dignified but somewhat small Cathedral, and the historic House of Representa-

tives—an unimpressive, two-storey building occupying the opposite corner of the plaza, its lower storey being utilised by the police authorities as prison and court of justice. The Uruguay Club has a handsome building—far finer in every respect than that of the *Cámaras*—in this plaza, while the friendly English Club looks across at it from its humbler but very cosy quarters on the opposite side of the square, hard by the offices of *El Siglo* and *La Razon.*

The streets in this neighbourhood are all of the narrow, colonial kind, and, being chiefly paved with stone, the noise of the traffic, together with the continuous passing of electric trams which run in almost every street and maintain a nerve-racking ringing of bells, is out of all proportion to the amount of business represented. "We are fast asleep here," is a frequent saying of the self-depreciative natives, and if it be true, I can only suppose they are abnormally sound sleepers, as the noise of the streets, chiefly due to the tramways, might often waken a cemetery.

When we two Gringos began our summer stay in the city, we chose what seemed to be entirely comfortable quarters in the best-known hotel, occupying an ideal position in the Plaza Constitucion, or Plaza Matriz (after the Cathedral or "mother church"), as it is indifferently called. There, on the third storey, we had a spacious room with balconies overlooking the animated square, and a little writing-room set in a turret whence the pleasantest glimpses could be obtained in many directions. The food of the hotel (as we knew from previous experience) was incomparably better than anything to be had in Buenos Ayres. Indeed, it is renowned throughout the River Plate district for its excellent *cuisine*, for which, by the way, its charges rival those of the most expensive London restaurants.

Thus it might have been supposed we were in for an agreeable change from our experiences on the other side of the river. Resembling a quiet backwater to the great turbulent main stream in comparison with its mighty commercial neighbour, one might have expected

here in Montevideo to find quiet. Certainly, in some of its suburban districts, such a search would not be fruitless, but the restfulness once secured would only co-exist with dulness, and after all it were thus a choice of evils. In any case it better suited my affairs that we should live in the centre of the town, where, indeed, dwellings of all kinds mingle familiarly with shops and warehouses. How we fared at our hotel may be gathered from the following passages with which I find I began an essay on a literary subject while living in the town:

"I have left my room with the turret window that overlooked the pleasant Plaza Matriz. It was perfectly planned for the meditative life, and but for the vileness of man and the supineness of the municipal authorities one could have passed some months tolerably there, looking out upon the panorama of Montevidean life and setting one's thoughts on paper when the mood came. But the men who drive motor-cars in this far land are the vilest of the breed. The plaza is filled with gorgeous cars that ply for hire, each handled by a rascal who is no better than a highway robber by day and a beast of prey by night. The law of the town prohibits the use of the 'cut out,' or opening of the exhaust pipe of the motor, but no one respects the law, and it is the custom for the demons who drive these cars to keep one foot all the time on the pedal which opens the exhaust! The consequent noise is so appalling that the main streets of Montevideo have become a veritable pandemonium. Fleet Street is a sleepy Devonshire lane by contrast!

"Thus bad begins, but worse continues when the hour has passed midnight. The endless stream of electric 'trams' with hideous clanging of superfluously clamourous bells goes on till two, mingled with every variety of motor noise; then, between two and four, the motorists delight to 'test' their engines, running round the plaza with open exhausts! Sleep is impossible, especially when you add a temperature anywhere between 80 and 90, and mosquitoes buzzing through your room athirst for your blood.

"So we are no longer tenants of 'the room with a view.' After some weeks of suffering bravely borne, we have fled the hotel and are now living seaward in the Calle Sarandí, where there is no view by day and few motors by night, and where the noise of the *electricos* only keeps one awake until two in the morning. How soon one becomes thankful for small mercies in lands of little comfort!"

But after all we were lucky in Montevideo, for by some providential arangement it was decided to remake the principal streets of the city, relaying them with asphalt, and this involved the upsetting of the whole elaborate tramway system, whereby certain streets were for several months debarred the privilege of the electricos. Sarandí, where we had settled ourselves very comfortably in the home of a foreign consul, was thus, after our first few weeks, deprived of its tram-cars, and except during the time of Carnival our surroundings there were as quiet as in a country village. Not until within a few days of the end of our stay of nearly five months did the cars begin again.

Montevideo, like most of the other American cities in which it has been my lot to linger for a time, seems to me to be greatly "over-trammed." There is hardly a street along which tramways do not rattle at all hours of the day and night, and how they pay is to me something of a mystery, for they may be seen in streams going their noisy rounds empty or with a mere handful of passengers. Many a time have I seen half a dozen pass along at intervals of fifty yards, and the total passengers carried would be two or three negroes and a sleeping Italian. One street in particular, the Calle Rincón, where we narrowly escaped the calamity of renting rooms, is probably without an equal in any city for the quantity of cars that pass through it per hour. It is a short and narrow street, and I doubt if at any moment of the day, from four or five in the morning till two next morning, while the electric trams are running, Rincón can be seen without a car. At times I have counted fifteen or sixteen, with only a few yards between each, and yet foot-

passengers in this street, as in most of the highways and byways of the city, are few.

The tramway system is curiously arranged, and while grossly over-supplying the business part of the town, under-supplies the farther suburbs. Imagine the aforesaid peninsula, on which the older part of the city stands, as the handle of a fan, and all the outspread parts of the fan as the remainder of the city, every rib extending from the handle as a tram-line, and there you have very roughly a map of the Montevideo system. Picture, then, how congested the handle becomes as the trams rattle inwards from all parts of the fan, turn round in the handle, and set forth once more to the outer parts! All the same, I am far from complaining about the tram service, for once the system is clearly understood, it is found to work admirably, and enables one to reach all parts of the wide-spreading town with comparative ease and at little expense, the regulation fare for the journey of a few hundred yards or two miles being 2d.

As I have indicated, there is no lack of public motor-cars for hire, but the rate is so excessive that, except for those on holiday bent, it is prohibitive. Personally, I made occasional use of them, though the necessity of paying something like 16s. or 18s. for a journey of some three miles from the Plaza Matriz and back, with a comparatively short wait, added to the reckless manner in which the car would be driven, did not commend them to me for frequent use, while the stony streets made a journey in a coché extremely unpleasant. The native newspapers were continually agitating against the iniquitous charges of the hired motor-cars, whose tariff was based upon the cupidity of the highwayman in charge, and what he deemed the limit he might bleed from his victim, the fare. I remember one evening being attracted to a large crowd assembled around one of these cars, and found an Irish *porteño* from Buenos Ayres in the hands of the police, while his wife and sister-in-law were in a state of great excitement at the possibility of losing that night's steamer. It appeared that the driver of the car he had hired to take him and the ladies to the landing-

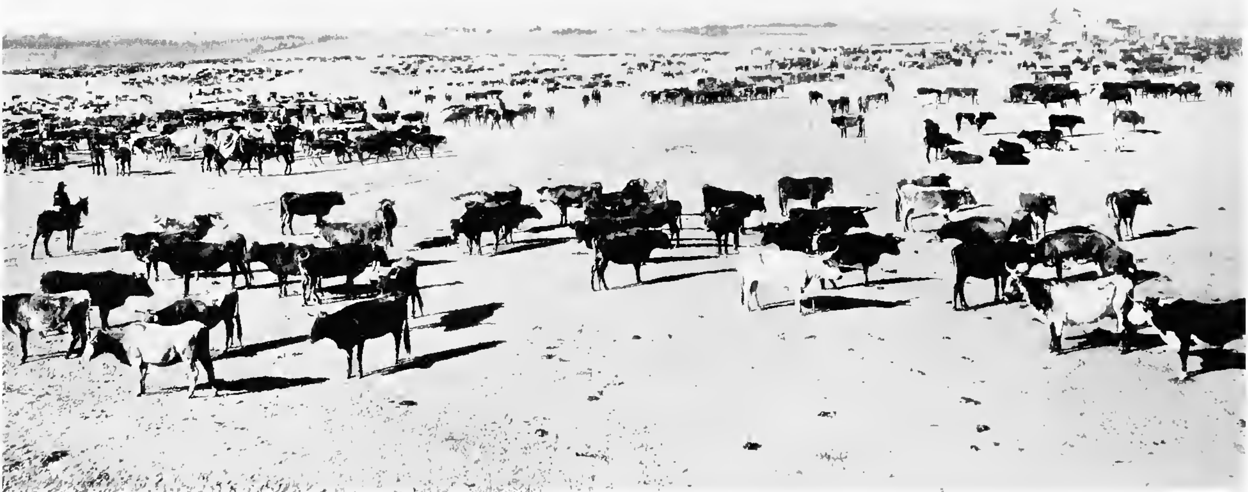
stage, had marked up on the taximeter certain charges warranted by his tariff, but so grossly excessive even to Buenos Ayres ideas that the porteño immediately protested and would not proceed in the car. He also refused to accept my advice to pay up and catch his boat. I did not linger to see the final issue of the dispute, but the cause of it was typical of many little differences one was to discover which made life in Montevideo considerably more expensive than in Buenos Ayres.

Mention of the police, by the way, reminds me that they are one of the most engaging features of the town to the Gringo. If the authorities had advertised for the most undersized, debilitated, and ignorant members of the community that could be found, they could not possibly have excelled the extraordinary collection of miserable humanity, clothed in ill-fitting uniforms, used as sentinels at every other street corner. Many of these police are Indian half-castes or Negro-Indian *meztisos*. They are wretchedly paid, and seem incapable of all responsibility, as their efforts to direct the traffic are ignored, and were they followed would lead to more confusion than order. Hardly any of them—with helmets two or three sizes too large, their trousers so long that they bag about their boots, over which, by the way, they wear white spats, their ill-fitting coats of blue caught at the waist with a belt, from which depends a sword—is sufficiently educated to write his name.

There are two classes in the service, however; the superior policemen, with sufficient education to write a report of any occurrence and exercise authority, being mounted, and when anything happens, the mannikin at the corner blows his whistle (which he uses to the disturbance of the town at frequent intervals through the day and night, merely to advertise that he is still at his corner) and presently, answering the call, along clatters on horseback one of the superior class, presumably competent to deal with the case. On the whole, the police service struck me as inferior to that of Buenos Ayres, and I imagine that, shameful though the wages of Buenos Ayres police may be, those of the lower class

Scene in the Parque Urbano of Montevideo.

A Rural Glimpse in the Prado, Montevideo.



Cattle assembled on "La Tablada," near Montevideo, for conversion into "Extract of Beef."

in Montevideo must be still less. Yet these policemen are regarded as so much fighting material for the Government, and it used to be the practice, on the outbreak of a revolution, to send forward the police as the first objects (objects, indeed, they are !) to be fired at by the revolutionaries. The organisation is a quasi-military one, and so fond do some of the agentes appear to be of saluting, that every time I crossed the Plaza Zabala I had to undergo the ordeal of receiving a full military salute from the elderly policeman at the corner of one of the streets converging on that square, so that to avoid this attention I occasionally chose another route.

The people that pass in the street present certain points of contrast with the passers-by in Buenos Ayres. Clearly the writer, in a North-American Encyclopædia, who stated that Montevideo was " one of the most cosmopolitan towns in South America " was scarcely entitled to the editorial description of " authority on Latin America." I remember also that the same writer alleged there were no fewer than sixteen public squares in the city, which assertion, together with that already mentioned, leads me to suspect he never saw it with his own eyes. Cosmopolitanism is precisely the last impression one is likely to carry away from Montevideo. Italians are to be seen in considerable numbers, but the appearance of the people as a whole is essentially Spanish. The Iberian type has been better preserved here than on the other side of the river ; Spanish character informs the life of the people to a larger extent. French and German residents there are, but in numbers so inconsiderable that, even together with the English population, they represent a very small percentage of the whole. After the Italians and Spaniards, the largest foreign element is probably Brazilian, which, in the general population of the country, exceeds the French and all other nationalities combined, exclusive of the Argentines. In fact, there is little similarity in the composition of the populations that exist on the opposing banks of the River Plate.

Such foreign element as one sees in the streets is chiefly representative of the casual visitors brought to

the town for a few hours, a day, or so, by the numerous steamers that make it a port of call on their way to or from Buenos Ayres, or, by the Straits of Magellan, to or from the Pacific coast. Groups of fair-headed Germans and fresh-complexioned Britons are thus frequently to be met wandering about from plaza to plaza during the brief stay of their ship in the roadstead. Australian vessels also touch at Montevideo, and then one will notice groups of twenty or thirty odd-looking people straying somewhat timorously along the unfamiliar streets, their garb leaving one in doubt as to whence they hail, though the usually dowdy and unattractive appearance of their womenkind permits no possible doubt of their Anglo-Saxon origin.

Strange it is that our own British Isles, where womenkind are more beautiful than in most countries of the world, have an inexhaustible capacity for sending forth the most unattractive females into foreign climes. To me this is an unexplained mystery. I have met individually many beautiful and charming English ladies abroad, but never have I seen a group of our countrywomen on travel who did not thoroughly justify in every detail of dress and gaunt, forbidding angularity of feature, the familiar caricatures of the French and Italian cartoonists.

The women of Montevideo are celebrated throughout South America for their beauty and elegance of manners. In this regard the town enjoys something of the European fame of Buda-Pesth, and certainly no Oriental (the Uruguayan, by the way, likes to be known as an Oriental, the proper style of the republic being *República Oriental del Uruguay*) ever talks to a Gringo about his capital city without mentioning that it is celebrated for its *lindas mujeres.* True enough, it deserves its reputation as a town of beautiful women, for most of the Montevidean ladies have a beauty that is curiously in keeping with the official name of the Republic—Oriental! They are of the languorous, dark-eyed type—beauty that has a touch of the Jewish in it—and they are far more naturally graceful than the ladies of Buenos Ayres, whom they make no effort to imitate in the matter of elaborate dress, their tastes running on simpler lines, with the exception, per-

haps, of a notable fondness for elaborate coiffures. I was told by my Spanish lady secretary, who had lived for some years in Buenos Ayres before coming to Montevideo (and to whom I owe a good deal of my information on the domestic habits of the people), that those charming ladies of Montevideo completely outdid the Argentines in the matter of *postizos*, as many as seven or eight different pieces of made-up hair being added to their natural tresses. The sign "POSTIZOS" (false hair) was one of the most familiar in the streets of Montevideo, where coiffeurs abound.

Fresh from Buenos Ayres, it was particularly pleasing to us to notice the marked respect which the women of Montevideo received from the male population. Nothing that I observed during my wanderings about South America seemed to me to present a greater contrast in manners than this. Across the river, a few hours' journey, it has been made possible for women to walk about the streets in the daylight only by passing and strictly enforcing an Act against *falto de respeto á la mujer*. Within recent years this instrument has materially improved the liberty of women in Buenos Ayres, as all that a lady has to do who is molested in the street by a man, is to call a policeman, give him in charge, and walk away. The molester is then marched to the police station, fined substantially, and his name and address published in all the journals next morning, the lady suffering no further inconvenience than the momentary trouble of telling the policeman the man has annoyed her. No such law has ever been necessary in Montevideo, where one was reminded of home by noting how women, unaccompanied, and young girls, could freely go about the streets at all hours of the day, even until midnight, it being not uncommon to see mothers with their children sitting in the plazas enjoying the cool, sea-borne breeze as late as eleven or twelve o'clock at night. In this alone I think there is evidence of a subtle difference of character between the peoples of the two cities.

We do not see the same bustling crowds, nothing remotely suggestive of the great business interests at stake across the river. The atmosphere of Montevideo

is essentially that of leisure, of a people engaged in affairs that do not imply any particular hurry. "Spanish to-morrows" are familiar here—*mañana* is a potent word! The total population being only some four hundred thousand, signifies localism, especially as there is no great influx of foreign immigration, and most people of any position in the town know everybody "who is anybody." I have read in "authoritative" works that the population exists in a continual state of vendetta between the two political parties, the Blancos and the Colorados. As I purpose showing in my next chapter, politics are undoubtedly the great passion of the Orientals, but nothing could be more misleading than this conception of bitter enmity between ordinary citizens of different politics, for I personally became acquainted with many natives of the opposing camps, and among them found the most intimate friends who differed radically. Two of the twelve or thirteen daily papers published in the city are printed in the same offices and on the same presses, though they represent antagonistic political parties.

The whole atmosphere of the town in its social life was to me infinitely more pleasing than that of Buenos Ayres. It is a friendly town. It is more—a town of homes. The ambition of the Montevidean is to secure a comfortable berth in the Government as quickly as he can, and build for his family a comfortable home in which he will take a genuine pride and where a real home feeling will exist. There are, of course, many natives engaged in flourishing commercial enterprises, and these are probably among the wealthiest, but this ambition to get something out of the Government is universal, and while it may lead to very pleasant conditions of life for the successful ones, it is extremely bad from the point of view of national progress. That, however, is a subject which properly belongs to the following chapter. Remains the fact that there is an air of comfort, or leisure, and of life being pleasantly lived in Montevideo.

The city itself, far more than Buenos Ayres, is entitled to be described as "the Paris of South America." From the ample Plaza Independencia, the Avenida 18 de Julio

extends eastward for miles in a vista essentially Parisian. Around the arcaded plaza are many cafés, with their chairs and tables streaming over the wide pavements, while along the avenida, at the beautiful Plaza Libertad (or Cagancha), and still farther east, following the course of this splendid avenue with its theatres and bright little cafés, the scene is one entirely reminiscent of the Paris boulevards. There is also an air of substantiality about the buildings—which seldom rise higher than two or three storeys, and more often are content with one—due, I think, to a larger employment of stone, though the country still lacks enterprise to make the fullest use of its natural riches in building-stone. These are bound to be developed in due time, and will greatly add to the endurance of its cities.

Some day, perhaps, the Plaza Independencia of Montevideo will be one of the finest public squares in any great city. I have seen many projected designs for its reformation, and there is no doubt that every building at present surrounding it, including the Government House, is bound to disappear. They are all unworthy of the plaza, and must some day make way for structures of greater dignity and beauty. The design for the new Government House is so ambitious in comparison with the common little stucco erection which at present very inadequately serves that purpose, that I doubt if it is ever destined to be realised in its entirety. Builders are now busy, however, on the new Legislative Palace, which will supersede the absurd little building in the Plaza Matriz, unworthy to serve as the borough offices of a London suburban municipality. In accordance with the modern development of the town already mentioned, the site of the new Palacio Legislativo lies away to the north-east of the present national building, a distance, I should judge, of nearly two miles. Work on this magnificent new pile was progressing steadily, and before long I expect to hear of its inauguration. With its completion, the political centre will change entirely, and a new importance will be given to the vicinity of the Legislative Palace, which is at the junction of the great Avenidas Agraciada and Sierra, at

present chiefly occupied by private residences and small dwellings of the colonial type.

The Uruguayan methods of dealing with these great public works are not precisely ours, for it was originally intended to erect the new home of the Cámaras on the Avenida 18 de Julio, where that bifurcates with the Avenida Constituyente, and the foundations of the great building, and indeed a considerable portion of the first storey, were erected. Then there was a change of opinion—the imperious President Batlle was, I think, responsible for that—and the whole work was stopped. There stand to-day these temporary memorials of national extravagance, while the new building is being erected a mile away to the north. Some day the foundations of the unfinished masonry on the Avenida 18 de Julio are to be taken away and the site laid out as another great square, to be known as the Plaza de Armas—a warrior race must needs have its Plaza de Armas!

Everywhere one is impressed by the energy that is going to the beautifying and enlarging of the city. The extensive Boulevard Artigas—which on the eastern extremity runs north and south for several miles, and to the north, forming a right angle with itself, runs westward nearly to the bay—in its present half-finished state is one of the finest thoroughfares in the whole continent. But the city is so well-supplied with wide and far-reaching boulevards that its population is not dense enough to give to these an appearance of animation, except for a mile or so to the east of the Plaza Independencia, and seaward for some little distance beyond the Plaza Constitucion.

The town boasts many theatres,—more proportionately than any other South American city,—several of these, such as the Solis, the Politeama, and the Urquiza being commodious and well-built. The dramatic instinct is pronounced in the natives, and there is quite a considerable band of literary enthusiasts in Montevideo working to create a body of national dramatic literature—surely a remarkable ambition for a nation whose total population is 1,100,000 people! The late Florencio

Sanchez and the late Samuel Blixen, both Montevidean dramatists of distinction (the former died at an early age a few years ago, after winning an international reputation), were two of the chief forces in this modern movement which has resulted in so keen an interest in the drama that a local publisher has been able to issue quite a long series of plays written by Uruguayan authors.

Noteworthy among the public edifices of the city are the handsome buildings of the University, where the Faculties of Medicine, Mathematics, Law, and Commerce are all splendidly housed. During our stay, a further extension of the University accommodation was made in the shape of a plain, modest, two-storey building—*la Universidad de Mujeres*, or Women's University, which began its career under the most promising auspices. Other branches of public education, such as the fine School of Agriculture, splendidly equipped, and the great Veterinary School, where the very latest appliances of veterinary surgery are at the disposal of the students, would be worthy of detailed description, did the limits of my space permit. The Uruguayans are enthusiasts for public education, and relatively to the Argentines stand much as the Scots to the English. One might write at great length of the excellent educational facilities which exist in Montevideo, but perhaps the best proof of their efficiency is the fact that we find so many Uruguayans occupying positions of importance in the Argentine, especially among the learned professions. Uruguayans swarm in Argentine journalism, just as Scots in that of England. These beautiful buildings of the University, and that devoted to the Faculty of Secondary Education (*Facultad de Enseñanza Secundaria*), are no mere vanities, but centres of most active educational life.

There is little to interest us in the churches of the town, though the Cathedral, with its ever-open door, and the absence of that tawdriness which one is apt to associate with the material evidences of religion in South America, always seemed to me in harmony with the sane and orderly character of the city. The English church, which stands on a rocky eminence at the south end of the Calle

Treinta y Tres, with the waves of the estuary splashing at its base, is probably as historical as any other in the city. For more than half a century it has existed much as it is to-day, a neat little building of the basilica type—which in Roman Catholic countries usually distinguishes Protestant churches from Roman Catholic. In the course of that time, however, the character of the surrounding neighbourhood has greatly changed, as it is now the lowest quarter of the town, chiefly occupied by licensed brothels and the low resorts of the mariners whom the winds of chance blow into the port of Montevideo. In the same locality I found the old British hospital, an establishment entirely inadequate for its purposes, but then in the last days of its long existence, as a commodious new hospital was being built on the Boulevard Artigas, and, if I am not mistaken, was inaugurated before we left.

Near to the latter, another fine new hospital had just been erected by the Italian community. This occupies a very extensive site, the buildings exceeding those of the British hospital by several times, to meet the needs of the large Italian colony. But in the care of the sick the city as a whole is well-provided, the great Hospital de Caridad, which occupies an entire square in the Calle Maciel, in the very heart of the poorer districts whence come most of the patients, being largely supported from the proceeds of the frequent public lotteries held on its behalf. There is also a service of Asistencia Pública, organised on the same method as that which plays so notable a part in the life of Buenos Ayres.

Scattered among the different public buildings, the city possesses a few paintings of historic value, but on the whole it may be said to be destitute of art treasures, while the little museum that occupies a wing of the Solis Theatre is scarcely worthy of even a little nation. The National Library and various other libraries associated with the different faculties of the University, and that of the Cámaras, as well as the excellent institution known as the Ateneo, which occupies an attractive building in the Plaza Libertad, are all evidence of the remarkable

literary culture of the Republic, probably superior to that of any other modern people so small in numbers; but of sculpture and the graphic arts there is very little indeed to be discovered in the city. Perhaps, after all, these are more often evidences of commercial prosperity, for art flourishes best where there is ample money to purchase its products. And for reasons which I shall endeavour to explain in my next chapter, the time of commercial expansion and the enrichment of the people in Uruguay is not yet.

This the observer will also note by contrasting the private residences of the wealthier classes with those of the Argentine. Montevideo contains many beautiful homes, but few of those grandiose palaces which are so familiar a feature of Buenos Ayres. At the bathing suburb of Pocitos, and on the road thither, especially along the Avenida Brasil, many beautiful *quintas* are to be seen, but most of them are of modest size and quite unpretentious, although occasionally some successful Italian has had his suburban villa decorated in the loud style of an ice-cream saloon exterior with elaborate iron-work railings and balconies designed in the most debased style of the *art nouveau*, and painted a vivid blue. The house of the late President Williman at Pocitos is merely a charming little suburban villa, with no undue ostentation; in fine, one discovers in the domestic architecture of Montevideo something of that essentially democratic spirit which informs the character of the people.

In the older part of the town the pleasant old custom, which used to be universal throughout Europe, of the merchant or tradesman residing on the premises where he plied his business still lingers. The successful lawyer lives right in the heart of the business district, and has his office in his house. So, too, the doctor, while the printer, bookseller, and the importer often have their private residences on the floors above their business premises. One of the wealthiest families of bankers thus live over their bank, not far from the docks, in a street so noisy that the unceasing rattle of its traffic still sounds disturbing in my memory of the busy days I spent there.

But this old custom is rapidly giving way before the attractions of the beautiful suburbs that have opened up along the sandy shores of Pocitos and inland as far as the charming little town of Villa Colón, with its great avenues of trees, its rippling streams, and leafy, undulating landscapes.

There are strange tastes to be noted, for one of the most imposing private residences in the city, indeed the most remarkable of all, worthy to be used as the Government House, has been built within recent years by a successful Italian in the Plaza Zabala, almost within hail of the docks and in the very centre of that fan handle which I have already described as the turning-point of the multitudinous trams. The frequent visitors who leave their ships for a short ramble round the town are always arrested by the imposing appearance of this building, and often little groups of them are to be seen discussing what it may be. Never, by any chance, did I notice visitors pausing before the plain little colonial residence a few paces westward in the same street, where a tablet records the interesting fact that it was the lodging of the great Garibaldi when, during the final struggle between Rivera and Oribe (1843–1851), the hero of Italy for a time commanded the Brazilian regiment, which, with the Italian and French legions, defended Montevideo against the leader of the Blancos.

So far as fresh air is concerned, there is certainly no reason for preferring one part of Montevideo over another, as the whole town is so accessible to the sea breezes that even in the height of summer, when the population of Buenos Ayres is gasping for breath, there is always fresh air in Montevideo—infinitely more than the Argentine capital is it the city of *buenos aires* (good airs). And as for *paseos*, their name is legion. Many a pleasant evening did we lonely Gringos pass at one or other of the *playas*, as the waterside resorts are termed. Thanks to a public commission, which takes in hand the organisation of the summer fêtes, there is always something going on at one or other of these resorts, and half an hour in the tramway suffices to transport one to Ramirez, Pocitos, or Capurro,

as the occasion serves. Each has its respective *noches de moda*, when the promenade pier is illuminated with the usual prodigality of electricity, and a band plays for some hours, during which the *paseantes* wander up and down to the strains of the music, and after the last number has been played, hasten to the homeward trams—the mildest and most innocent form of pleasure imaginable, and entirely at variance with European notions of South American life.

Of Pocitos I retain the most agreeable memories, for many was the night we lingered on its gaily lighted pier, listening to the band, watching the throng of idlers, or "looking lazy at the sea," where the lighthouse on the Isla de Lobos (the island of sea-lions, where many thousands of these animals are killed every year for the oil they yield, and for their skins) was throwing its beams across the dark waters of the estuary—a signal post to the broad Atlantic and to Home! The water-front at Pocitos has been turned into a splendid promenade, comparable almost with the Marina at Rio de Janeiro, and among its little rocky prominences are many charming glimpses to remind the English exile of the shores of his homeland.

Often we rambled, too, on foot along the coast to Ramirez, over fields and rocks and patches of sandy shore, catching sight at times of the great ocean liners slowly creeping up the river on their way to the great city of the other shore.

Ramirez is not so fashionable as Pocitos, being rather the resort of the multitude. At the latter playa during the season, when the fine hotel is thronged with visitors, one may see the latest Parisian modes, exhibited chiefly by Argentine lady visitors, who are nearly always distinguishable from the quieter and slimmer belles of Montevideo; but at Ramirez we have a miniature Blackpool, with open-air theatres, merry-go-rounds, shooting galleries, and such-like diversions of the mob. Here, too, is the fine Parque Urbano, beautifully laid out on bosky, undulating ground, with devious little waterways, where pleasure boats, shaped like swans, ply for hire. Hard by

the pier stands the great Parque Hotel, where the chief attractions are the gambling tables, mainly patronised by wealthy Argentines.

At both places there is bathing throughout the summer, after the water has been duly blessed by the Bishop, on (I think) the 8th of December—for the native does not venture to dip himself until that ceremony has been performed. Long rows of bathing boxes line the beach at Pocitos, but the local authorities are curiously indifferent to the interests of the bathers in choosing a little promontory about half a mile from the pier for burning the refuse of the city and throwing it into the water, so that the whole of the little cove shows along high-water mark a thick line of dirt washed up after the ill-advised sanitary efforts at the point! It is thus customary for the bathers, on emerging from the salty waves, to wash themselves from pails of clean water, in order to remove the traces of burnt refuse from their bodies. This is a little touch that is quaintly South American.

Capurro, the third of the suburban resorts, is prettily situated on the bay, about midway between the city and the Cerro. It serves the western part of the city, which stretches out along the bay, and did not seem to be much frequented by the summer visitors, though on its noches de moda we used to see its numerous electric lights blazing like a little constellation as we looked westward from our windows in the plaza.

Finest of all the paseos is the Prado. This splendid public park lies in the same direction as Capurro, and through its undulating grounds runs the little river Miguelete. It is the pride of the Montevideans, and fully merits the charming adjectives they apply to it, for it abounds in fine avenues of century-old trees and winding walks among rich and varied vegetation, while its *rosarium* is very extensive and contains an infinite variety of roses. Well-kept, provided with a good restaurant, and seats for the weary, with boating on the Miguelete among the swans, the Prado is certainly a great possession for any town, and will compare with most European resorts of the kind. It is favoured by the residents more than by

the visitors, and on Sundays is the scene of innumerable picnic parties.

Nor must I forget, in recalling the scenes among which we spent our summer at Montevideo, the curious little Zoo at Villa Dolores, some little distance from Pocitos. Here, again, we encounter one of the many evidences of difference in the Uruguayan and Argentine character. This institution, originally a portion of a large private estate, and established entirely as a private collection by the owner, has recently been made over to the Government, who are continuing its maintenance in a praiseworthy manner. It is the outcome, not merely of the educational side of zoology, by which I mean the illustrating of animal life by living specimens, but of a desire to promote a friendly interest in the animals. Among the many curiosities it contains is a little cemetery with monuments to departed pets. Some of these are quite elaborate affairs, with inscriptions full of naïve tenderness, though it is difficult to suppress a smile at a memorial to a pet serpent! Dogs, cats, monkeys, donkeys, parrots, and I think even a lion, are among the departed whose memories are here preserved.

The collection of wild animals is not so large as that at Buenos Ayres, but their houses are of the cleanest and most varied character, imitating in cement all sorts of quaint dwellings such as caves, kraals, beehives, and the most fanciful structures in which animals ever were housed. Great artificial grottos and craggy peaks of cement decorate the grounds, while the water-fowls have all manner of queer little islands, with strange figures of gnomes dotted about them, in the lakelets and canals. The whole place is inspired with the feeling of kindness to animals, but I was never quite able to understand why it contained such large numbers of valuable dogs penned up in great airy cages, unless they were for sale. One of the apes was so well-trained that he used to wander about the grounds free from his keeper and make friends with visitors, often to their discomfiture. On holidays he would go a-cycling, to the delight of the children, and was an expert on roller skates, being in

every sense as clever and intelligent as the famous Max and Moritz. The admission to this most interesting public exhibition is only a few pence, and its refining influence on the public cannot be overestimated.

It will be seen from this rough and haphazard sketch of the attractions of Montevideo that we two Gringos had good reason to congratulate ourselves on being able to spend our summer there, rather than in Buenos Ayres. I am free to confess, however, that during the period of Carnival, which lasted for the greater part of February, there were times when we were inclined to think that we had almost too much of a good thing. All those pleasure resorts figure more or less prominently in the long list of festivities arranged by the Carnival Committee, and the town itself becomes one vast exhibition of illuminations. The three principal plazas are decorated with the most elaborate designs in arches of electric lamps. The avenida is festooned from side to side, and all the way from the Plaza Libertad to the Plaza Independencia, with lamps innumerable, while Venetian masts, carrying huge comic faces that are illumined by night, line the pavements.

The Carnival proper, with its processions of decorated coaches and symbolical cars, its battles of flowers, and its *comparsas*, or companies of masqueraders, lasts only throughout the first week of February, but for a fortnight or more in advance and for a good fortnight afterwards, every boy in the town possesses himself of a tin can and a stick, and, as single spies or in battalions, they make night hideous. A passion for causing a noise by any means seems to seize the lower orders, and the whole month of February is practically wasted so far as business and serious affairs are concerned. The newspapers teem with announcements from the secretaries of the different clubs that have been organised to take part in the competition of the comparsas, as prizes are offered for the company making the bravest show as courtiers of Louis XIV., mounted gauchos, warriors of the Cannibal islands, or whatever guise they may determine upon. Albanians, Montenegrins, Rumanians, and other foreign residents

who boast a picturesque national costume, don it for the Carnival ; girls of the populace dress up as boys, and boys as girls ; false faces of every conceivable kind are worn by merry-makers, who, so disguised, may "chivy" the staider passers-by to their hearts' content. There are great masque balls in the Solis Theatre, balls for children, and dances innumerable in private houses, into which masqueraders often enter and take part in the fun uninvited and unknown.

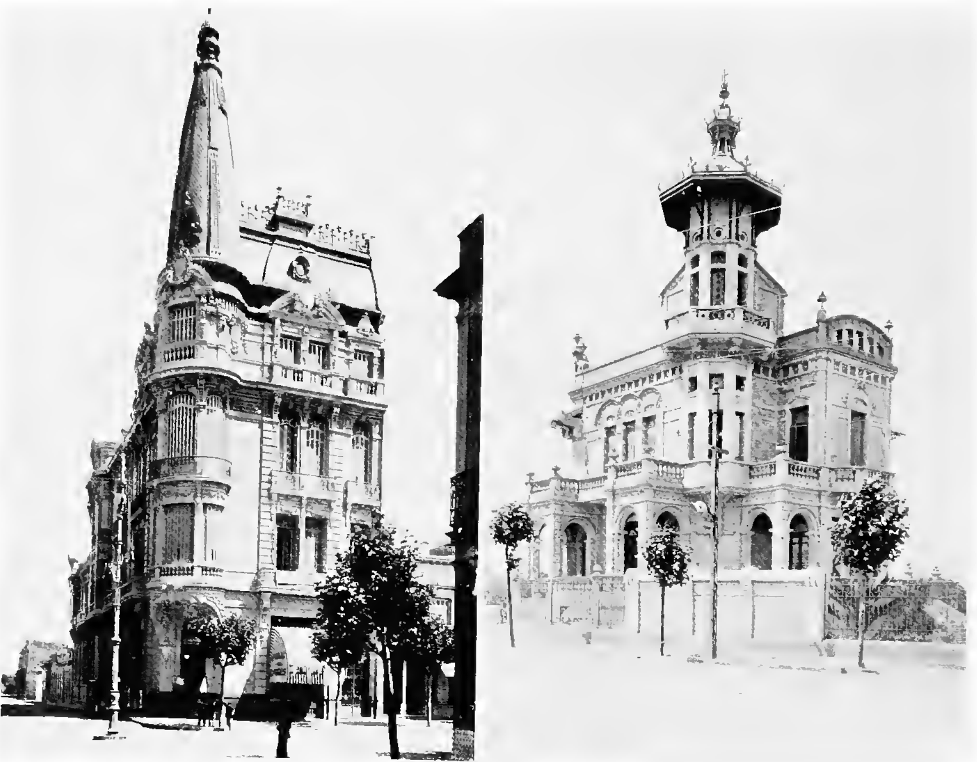
The real old spirit of Carnival is abroad, and the whole thing is conducted with so much good taste and with so little rowdyism that it is easy to see why it attracts such large numbers from Buenos Ayres, where the low-class element so abused the liberties of Carnival in past years that it was prohibited, and is observed only to a small extent in some of the suburbs. The use of paper confetti and *serpentinas*, of which tons must be sold during the festivities, litters the streets and festoons lamp-posts, telephone wires, and window railings with streamers which, in the less accessible places, hang for months afterwards as mournful reminders of the merry time that was ; but the municipal authorities show a remarkable celerity in clearing away all their temporary provisions for the festivities. By the beginning of March, Montevideo was its own staid self again, and by the end of that month the short holiday season had utterly passed, the bands at the playas had played their last tunes, the Hotel Pocitos and the Parque Hotel had closed their doors, no gaily-dressed throngs were to be seen on the promenades, and people were beginning to think of their social engagements for the coming winter ; for it is in the autumn and winter season that the Montevideans themselves enjoy most their social round, when their theatres are occupied by numerous dramatic and operatic companies from Italy, Spain, and France, when political enthusiasts harangue their audiences, and lecturers give their *conferencias* on literary and scientific subjects.

On the whole, you will see we had not so bad a time in the capital of Uruguay. Memories of our pleasant days and nights there crowd so thickly on me as I write

that it is difficult to set them down, and I feel that the most I can do is to touch in the briefest way upon those that come uppermost, leaving it to the reader to imagine how our time was passed. We never seemed to tire of wandering the streets, as the avenida and the two central plazas retained an air of brightness and friendliness to a late hour, and often a military band would be playing between nine and eleven o'clock at night. Until a late hour, the town never assumed the extraordinary nightly dulness of Buenos Ayres, and very pleasant it was, night after night, to see the little family groups meet and gossip with the familiarity of a village. The Bohemian element represented here, as elsewhere, by wide-awake hats and pendulous locks, had its habitat at the Café Giralda, at the corner of the Plaza Independencia, where most evenings the local poets,—it rivals Paisley as a nest of singing birds,—journalists, and "coming men" in politics looked in for a coffee and a chat.

Surely there never was such a town for journalists. I believe you could not throw a stone down any street without hitting a journalist. An English city of the same size would probably possess not more than two daily newspapers; Montevideo has a dozen or more, and at least half of these would bear comparison with our best provincial dailies, while *La Razon*, the principal evening paper, is equal to any London penny evening journal, and probably superior as a literary production. Many of the journalists do not limit their activities to that profession, but are also engaged as lawyers, accountants, and in other businesses, as it is very common to combine several occupations; the warehouse clerk may possibly play in an orchestra in the evenings, and make up some tradesman's accounts on the Sundays. Which reminds me that every place of business is closed on Sunday, only the restaurants, cafés, and theatres being open.

The shops, of course, do not compare favourably with those of the great metropolis farther up the river, for there is not the wealth in the country to justify anything approaching the luxury and plentitude of the Buenos Ayres shopping marts. The largest establishment of the



Types of the Fantastic Domestic Architecture of Montevideo.

A Typical Country Road in Uruguay.

Hides drying at Curing Factory near Montevideo.

drapery kind is owned by an English firm, and there are several fine warehouses run by French and Italian firms, as well as some of considerable size under native proprietorship. But for the most part, the shops, among which jewellers' abound, have a provincial rather than a metropolitan touch, though the newer establishments along the Avenida 18 de Julio are coming into line with the most modern ideas of shopkeeping. The habit of the tradesman to live on his premises is probably one of the reasons why the early closing, so remarkable in Buenos Ayres, is not observed in Montevideo, to the consequent brightness of the streets. I remember how we used to be misled in our window-gazing by the prices of the wares, soon after our arrival, as everything appeared so much cheaper than in Buenos Ayres, until we had become accustomed to the fact that the Uruguayan peso is worth exactly 2s. 6d. more than the Argentine, being equal to 4s. 3d. of our money. Then we discovered that most things were somewhat more expensive!

While we suffered from no lack of noise, as the reader will have discovered, during our stay, I do not remember ever to have heard the whistle of a railway train. Trains come and go at the station of the Central Railway, which is some considerable distance from the older part of the city, but although our wanderings took us several times to that model of a railway station, we never even heard the hiss of steam, nor saw any sign of life therein. It possessed an excellent restaurant, and its exterior is decorated with large stucco statues of George Stephenson and James Watt and two foreign celebrities whose names have escaped my memory, but as railways are still in their infancy in Uruguay, and trains go only every second day to the principal provincial cities, and not always so frequently as that, it will be understood why the Montevideo station is more often as quiet as a museum than animated as a railway terminus. It is quicker, for instance, to reach Paysandu, the important commercial city of the north-western Uruguayan province of that name, by taking the boat to Buenos Ayres and going thence by train, than travelling all the way on Uruguayan railways.

This lack of speedy train service prevented me from becoming acquainted with the provinces of Uruguay, as none of my plans could accommodate themselves to the leisurely methods of travel, and so my excursions were confined to the immediate surroundings of the city. My favourite outing was a trip across the bay in a little steam-launch, which in less than twenty minutes landed me on the rickety old wooden pier near the Villa del Cerro, and thence a long exhilarating ramble uphill took me to the old Spanish fortress on the top of the Cerro, still used as a fortification by the Uruguayans. From the walls of this, a splendid prospect seaward or landward may be had, while the fortress itself—with its rather slatternly garrison, the officer on duty looking heroically seaward while he sips his *mate*, and the horses cropping the grass on the slopes below—is by no means uninteresting. What pleased me most was to look landward over the rolling plains, grassy and undulating, as far as eye could reach, and at no great distance from the fort, alive with herds of cattle on the part known as *la Tablada*, so important to the life and prosperity of Montevideo. For in these herds, brought here chiefly to be converted into extract of meat for a great English firm, is the principal wealth of the country, and its history that is not concerned with wars and revolutions is bound up with the herding of cattle. Such as we see the country from the Cerro, it is, I am told, throughout its length and breadth, a land of ideal pasturage, full of gentle valleys, and with no hill that rises more than 2000 feet above sea-level. A pleasant land, with endless possibilities for the agriculturist. Yes, all my memories of Montevideo seem to be agreeable, for even its cemetery, beautifully situated on high ground by the sea, was in keeping with the general impression, and had an air of peacefulness and rest which Recoleta so much lacked.

CHAPTER XXI

URUGUAY: SOME NOTES AND IMPRESSIONS

LITTLE countries, like little people, have a knack of making themselves interesting. The simile might be further pursued—especially among the Republics of South America—in that the smaller they are, the more noisy and obstreperous shall we find their histories have been. But there is a certain dignity and much to admire in the little Republic of Uruguay, and its country is one of the most attractive.

After the impression of vastness left on the wanderer in the Argentine, Uruguay seemed a very small affair indeed—no more than an Argentine province. It was a corrective to this impression of littleness and consequent impotence to remember that even little Uruguay was larger than England and Wales, and not so much smaller than the whole of Great Britain! It covers 72,210 square miles, against the 88,729 of Great Britain. We know, however, that mere area does not matter greatly in national importance, compared with population, and the total population of Uruguay is just about the same as that of greater Glasgow.

It may be a small country and a smaller people, but the spirit of great things flames in the breast of Uruguay. Here is how one of its authors, Señor Ambrosio L. Ramasso, in his well-known work *El Estadista*, begins his chapter on the warrior spirit of his race:

"The production of the soil, exuberant; flesh food for nourishment, in abundance; a frugal people, sustaining themselves chiefly upon beef, flour, and *mate*; the land undulating and extremely fertile, the climate without

excessive rigours, and the need for clothing moderate; the horse always at hand; hospitality unlimited, and the host who gives it generous; nature luxuriant, beautiful, full of tones and superb changes, inviting to admiration, and the enjoyment of that drowsiness and indolence which the benignity of the climate carries with it; the lack of the habit of work, due to the facility with which the physical necessities may be satisfied; the war that continues with the animals: all these factors had two decisive results in the making of the child of this country. On the one hand, they made him full of passion, with no manner of break thereon; and on the other, they did not suppress the fighting instincts of his ancestors, but rather encouraged their growth. His chief tendency had to be inevitably towards war, either as the outcome of his natural heritage, or as an escape valve for activities not otherwise employed, or yet again by giving expansion to that passionate and vehement nature of the Latin race in a climate where vitality is such that all things tend to expand and overflow. A further condition which favoured the bellicose tendency in the Uruguayan was his excessive power of imagination; a faculty which then, as now, he had in richest measure. . . ."

And in this manner Señor Ramasso goes on for several pages, showing how nature had marked out the Uruguayan for a warrior, and fighting as the master-passion of his life. The history of the country is certainly sufficient proof of this spirit, and it still exists in high degree, though it would seem that the bad old days of the sword and the gun have now given place to an era of political strife in which the tongue and the pen are the more favoured weapons.

Uruguay retains, in Europe at least, an unenviable reputation as a hotbed of revolutions, and I am far from supposing that we have seen the last of these. But forces are at work which will make the upheavals of the future more decorous than those of the past. During our summer in Montevideo all the elements of a first-class revolution were in existence, but they spent themselves in a wordy warfare among the newspapers, in public

demonstrations and counter-demonstrations; not a shot was fired, though the President's suburban retreat at Piedras Blancas, a few miles from the city, was continually under strong military guard.

"You will still hear much talk of revolution among our young men at the cafés," said Uruguay's most famous philosopher and *littérateur* to me on one of the many occasions when we discussed the entertaining politics of his country. "That is one of their amusements, and will continue to be so for some time yet, but every new batch of emigrants that lands in the port of Montevideo helps to banish further the revolutionary era, and if we could but divert some portion of the great stream of emigration that rolls past our shores each year into the Argentine, nothing would be more effective in producing a peaceful and prosperous Uruguay."

These were the words of Señor José Enrique Rodó—*el gran Rodó*, as he is affectionately termed throughout Latin America—and therein we have the explanation of the bellicose history of this charming little country. Uruguay was left too much to itself, its people so long content to let the natural fruitfulness of their land supply their simple needs, that the only outlet for their energies was to quarrel among themselves, and thus grew up the two political camps, the *Blancos* and the *Colorados*, concerning which I do not recall any approximately accurate description in the writings of any foreign author on Uruguayan politics. Even so skilled an observer, so admirable a student of political conditions, as Viscount Bryce fell into absurd mis-statements of facts in what he wrote of Uruguayan affairs in his *South America: Observations and Impressions*. As I have not had an opportunity of reading Lord Bryce's well-known work, and personally know it only through numerous extracts translated into the native journals of the Argentine, Uruguay, and Chili, it would be ungracious of me to say anything in criticism of it, beyond the passages thus coming to my notice. Certainly his explanation of the two parties into which Uruguay is divided is no better than the nonsense one hears talked among casual visitors

on whom some local resident has been performing the operation known as "pulling his leg." Translating from one of several articles on the work in question, which appeared in *La Tribuna Popular* of Montevideo, I find that Lord Bryce is alleged to have written to this effect:

"The children of Uruguay are born little Blancos or little Colorados. It is the political heritage of the early days of Independence. Scarcely any ever desert their colours. In a White district it is dangerous to wear a red necktie, just as it is in some parts of *Yolanda* (? Irlanda—Ireland) to show an English badge."

This is described by the editor as "a very pretty paragraph," and here is another which he quotes as "a curious paragraph that might be regarded as an example of Mr. Bryce's Yankee humour" (for he is under the impression that the literary Viscount is a "Yankee Constitutionalist"):

"General Oribe mounted on one occasion a spirited white horse. On seeing this, all his sympathisers followed his example by mounting themselves on beautiful white steeds. Hence came the name of the White Party. General Rivera, the irreconcilable enemy of Oribe, mounted himself in turn on a superb horse of a reddish colour, in contrast to his terrible rival. The Riveraists then sought for coloured steeds, and mounted on these followed their chief. Henceforward, the Red Party disputed successfully for power with the White Party."

This, of course, is mere moonshine. It may possibly have originated in one of these fertile Uruguayan imaginations of which we have heard, but I cannot conceive so fine a historian as Lord Bryce accepting it. I have already indicated that Blancos and Colorados (the latter word, by the way, does not mean "coloured," but signifies "red," or "ruddy") may live together in perfect amity. So incorrect is the statement that every child is born a Blanco or a Colorado, that there are innumerable families in the country divided in politics, and in my own short experience I have met instances of

brothers who adhered to different parties. I recall in particular two brothers who, in a perfectly friendly discussion, admitted that they took no real interest in the politics of the country and were largely indifferent to the course of affairs so long as Uruguay continued to prosper, but who, before the evening had gone, were disputing so hotly the respective merits of the two parties that they almost came to blows, the one being clearly a pronounced Blanco and the other an equally tenacious Colorado.

What is inevitable to every Uruguayan is that he shall be a politician. Politics are the passion of the country, and at an age when young men in England would probably be at a loss to mention the name of our Prime Minister, or to state which party was in power, young Uruguayans grow disputatious with each other on "affairs of state."

Another very curious mis-statement of fact is cited from Lord Bryce's book by the *Tribuna*, which observes that the paragraph is a revelation of "the rich imagination of its author." Our eminent publicist writes to this effect with reference to revolutions in Uruguay:

"When a revolutionary movement is about to break out in Uruguay, the organisers make an appointment to meet, mounted, at a certain place and on a day agreed upon beforehand. The Government always knows well in advance of this, and is able to possess itself of all the horses in the country, keeping those in a safe place so that they may not fall into the power of the revolutionaries. The latter, therefore, remain perforce on foot. The horse is the soul of Uruguayan revolutionists. It is the heroic tradition of the glorious epoch of the gauchos. Without horses the rebels are lost."

The amusement of the Uruguayan editor over these paragraphs and many others equally distant from the truth was entirely justified, and I have quoted them here (roughly retranslating them) out of no desire to belittle the work of one of our ablest writers, for whom I have

the greatest admiration, but merely to show how erroneous one's impressions may be as the result of a too brief visit, and lack of opportunity to study at leisure the condition of a country, as well as its historical past, as these have been expressed in the language of the country. Such misconceptions are familiar to us, and to be expected in the writings of irresponsible lady globe-trotters, but not in the sober and authoritative pages of one who has given us such a classic as *The American Commonwealth.*

It is no easy matter to furnish a satisfactory explanation of the two political parties of Uruguay, and when I find so competent an authority as Mr. C. E. Akers, in his *History of South America,* affirming that there are really no distinctions between them, that each professes the same ideals of government and seeks merely to wrest political power from the other, I attempt an explanation only with trepidation. Not that I purpose a detailed account of their origins and evolution, for that would involve an extremely long disquisition, and would scarcely hold the attention of an English reader, but that any attempt to distinguish between them in a few words is attended with difficulty and apt to be misleading.

The root difference of the two parties can best be described as Nationalist *versus* Progressist. Broadly, the White Party is the Nationalist Party, and the Colorado the Progressist. The colours distinguish the Spanish Colonial origin of the one party from the democratic origin of the other. That is to say, the Blancos have always tended towards exclusiveness and the assertion of the superiority of the white race, whereas the Colorados, originally sneered at by the Blancos as savages (*salvages*), on account of their more liberal ideas, which embraced the aborigine and the emigrant alike, have always stood for the wider conception of democracy. At certain times in their history the Colorados have even accepted the title of "savages" as a compliment to their liberalism; to their maintenance of the primal rights of man. Thus, and not otherwise, have the colours of the two parties a real significance, and the red of the Colorados is also a cry back to the French Revolution, the influence of which

on South American democracy has been profound. I have already mentioned in my passing reference to the home of Garibaldi in Montevideo, that that great champion of liberty commanded a Brazilian regiment in support of General Rivera when General Oribe was laying siege to Montevideo, and that the city was defended principally by French, Italians, and Brazilians against the onsets of the Blancos, until Oribe was eventually crushed by the Argentine general, Urquiza. This historical fact is entirely in support of what I have written, and will help to elucidate the party origins. In these later years, although the politics of the country are still split up between Reds and Whites, it has become more common to refer to the latter as Nationalists, they themselves having adopted that title. Hence appears a distinct and appreciable difference between the two political camps; almost as much, indeed, as between Radicals and Conservatives in Great Britain.

As might be supposed from what I have very roughly indicated as to the respective origins of the two parties, the Blancos are strongest in the provinces, and draw most of their support from the agricultural and stock-raising classes, while the Colorados preponderate in the capital and the larger towns, where modern ideas of democracy find a more fertile soil. The policy of the Blancos is exclusiveness—"Uruguay for the Uruguayans" might be its battle-cry, but, paradoxically, not for the original Uruguayans—while the Colorados are for encouraging immigration in every way, for the building up of a large and active population, without the slightest regard to racial origins, believing that, once radicated in the country, the whole would weld itself into a complex nationality, just as we see in the making in Argentina.

It may be fortunate for Uruguay that the Colorados have been in power for many years, and are likely to dominate its politics for many years more. Yet not altogether fortunate, as the supremacy of one party over another is good for neither, and leads to all sorts of governmental abuses, although it seems to me that Red supremacy is better for Uruguay than White. The

population is much too small for so fruitful a country, and to discourage the foreigner from becoming a citizen of the Republic, as the policy of the Blancos would tend in their devotion to narrow Nationalist ideals, might retard the clock of progress for generations. The crying need of Uruguay is population, and not even the Colorados as a party display sufficient energy in encouraging immigration, though individual leaders grow eloquent on the subject and talk at great length about what might be done, without being able to move the mass swiftly enough along the path of progress.

I would not have you think that the Red Party has a monopoly of the truer patriots. There are too many of its leaders whose sole ambition is to get their hands into the public treasury, and in this they succeed all too well. Politics form the profession of most men with ability beyond the common, and place-seeking is the order of the day. The Socialist movement, which has recently gathered great strength in the Argentine, is still in its infancy in Uruguay, and was represented at the time of my stay there, if I remember aright, by only one member of the House of Deputies, Señor Frugoni, who fought incessantly against everything in the shape of public expenditure which was not calculated directly to benefit the workers, and who was one of the four deputies that opposed in July 1913 the increase of the payment of the national representatives by £2, 10s. per day. Jobbery and bribery are rampant in the administration; the Government is regarded by the ruck of politicians as their milch-cow, and though all public offices are remunerated modestly enough, there are numerous ways and means of greatly augmenting official salaries. The smallness of the population and the intimacy which exists between all the members of the better classes naturally lay the officials open to every form of personal temptation, and I never heard that "Deliver us from temptation" was a popular prayer among them.

It would be an easy matter to give numerous examples of the abuses that exist, but one will suffice. A burning question for many years in Montevideo had been the paving of the principal streets with asphalt in place of the

stone sets, or *adoquines*, with which they had been laid for generations, and which, as I have already mentioned, made traffic over them extremely noisy and unpleasant. The contract for this work attracted much competition from abroad, and one European firm was even encouraged to bring over workmen, material, and machinery for the treatment of one short street as a sample of their work. The said work appeared to me in every sense satisfactory, and as the firm is a large international organisation, capable of handling a contract of any dimension, having paved the streets of many a city, it was natural to suppose that it would be chosen to carry out the street improvements of the Uruguayan capital. But no, a local ex-hotel-keeper was favoured with this important contract! The manner in which he organised it was a splendid lesson in the art of how not to do it. The principal avenida was torn up, traffic dislocated for weeks, yet no asphalt was laid, because the enterprising contractor had omitted to secure the asphalt before removing the cobbles. Certain streets were barred to traffic for months on end, mountains of dug-out earth were beaten hard under the feet of pedestrians, who had to climb over them on their way to and from their houses, so that, when eventually they were removed, they were so solid that the workmen had to break them up with pickaxes. Everywhere one was met with barricades of stones and earth; confusion reigned supreme. I was denied the pleasure of seeing the Avenida 18 de Julio laid with asphalt, but believe that it has now been accomplished in the months that have rolled away, although I should not have been at all surprised to learn that the work was still going on.

The greatest scandal of all, though of a different genesis, is that laid at the door of President Batlle y Ordoñez, and may yet assume the importance of an international dispute. During the presidency of his predecessor, an international syndicate, in which I believe both French and English shareholders invested several millions of money, was granted a concession to carry out a huge enterprise, which would so vastly enhance the appearance of the town and add to its wealth that, once

effected, not even Rio de Janeiro could be cited as a finer example of a modernised city. At the present time the poorest part of Montevideo is that lying along the southern margin of the promontory, eastwards towards the suburb of Ramirez. It has a rocky fore-shore, and the water there is comparatively shallow, so that it would be possible to reclaim a considerable amount of land along this side of the town, and build a magnificent marine drive, extending all the way from the oldest part of the city to the suburb mentioned, and thence linking up with the fine promenade at Pocitos. Many maps of the city are now in circulation with this improvement shown as though it actually existed, the great highway by the waterside being marked as " Rambla Sud América."

All the preliminary work of surveying and getting ready for the actual construction of the sea wall, and the reclamation from the water of an immense new area for the extension of the city, was carried out by the foreign company, under its duly authorised concession, its recompense being determined by the lease for a certain number of years of the land reclaimed. Then President Batlle came into power and calmly " squashed " the whole affair. This high-handed action of his was based upon the belief that it would be possible for the municipality to carry out the improvement and enjoy to the full the increased revenue which would immediately result from the new land made available for building, as well as the enhanced value of all the property along the southern shore. The undertaking is, of course, hopelessly beyond the compass of native enterprise, and the action of the President may be ascribed to that vivid imagination of which we have already heard as part of the mental makeup of the Uruguayan. He by no means carried with him the sympathies of his party in this matter, and many of the newspapers of Montevideo would grow as indignant over the scandal of the Rambla Sud as the enterprising European promoters of the scheme themselves.

Mention of this subject serves to raise the question of a very grave defect in the constitution of the Republic. It is a strange anomaly that in a country which prides

itself upon its democratic spirit, its President should be endowed with powers that are little short of dictatorial. This is its legacy from the old days of military predominance, when the Presidency went to the military officer who could secure command of the army, just as surely as the Prætorian Guard used to make and unmake the Cæsars of Rome. As a party, the Colorados are in favour of reform, and would like to see a diminution of the power which the constitution places in the hands of the President, but Señor Batlle y Ordoñez, who, not so many years ago was a struggling journalist—and, as editor of *El Dia,* continued to combine journalism with the business of President—took the initiative in a new constitutional "reform" in 1912, which speedily resulted in his becoming the most unpopular man in the country. His earlier career had been that of a loud and strenuous democrat, and his first presidency gave fairly general satisfaction, but when he returned for a second time to the seat of power, his actions soon ceased to be those of an essential democrat.

Still he maintained a measure of public sympathy for the able manner in which he handled national affairs—as the constitution with all its faults works well, provided the President uses it only for the good of the country—but the imperious spirit which he developed, and his harsh treatment of political opponents speedily changed the attitude of the people, and when he launched his extraordinary scheme for reforming the constitution, he found himself almost alone, with the overwhelming majority of senators and deputies opposed to him. Being a man of virility, he refused to trim his sails, and went straight ahead with his reckless campaign, denouncing old colleagues who had fallen away from him in terms of unmeasured abuse in his daily paper, and refusing to give any of them the personal satisfaction of a duel, that being incompatible with his office of President. A sort of comic opera situation thus developed, the President as journalist lashing about him at his own sweet will in his editorial columns, but refusing to meet the victims of his wrath at the point of the sword or pistol in hand, as many of them invited him to do.

The reading of some of Señor Batlle's articles in favour of his proposed reform might have left any one unfamiliar with the real import of the movement with the impression that he was that rarest of mortals among statesmen ancient or modern : the man who finds himself endowed with powers so dangerous, if exercised without discretion, that he wishes to curtail these for the protection of his fellow-countrymen and to free himself from the temptation of abusing them. Day after day he used to hold forth in the editorial column of *El Dia*, on the dire possibilities that might succeed to a country that placed itself under the almost autocratic control of one man, on "the instability of unipersonal power," and "the anti-democratic character of absolutism." To the onlooker all this was vastly amusing, and to the intelligent mass of Uruguayans the intention of the proposed reform was as transparent as glass. Señor Batlle urged that an *ejecutivo colegiado*, to consist, I think, of seven members, like the Swiss Federal Council, should be elected to co-operate with the President in the government of the country, and that from this executive body each new President might be chosen. In this way, he contended, it would be possible to limit the authority of any President by placing the executive power in the hands of a group. Of course, it was obvious to all thinking people that what he was after was merely to secure, before the end of his four years of office (28th February 1915), the election of seven of his personal friends to form this new executive, so that when he had to withdraw from the Presidency he could still, from his home at Piedras Blancas, work the puppets, and the chief of the puppets would be his successor. He laid much stress in his newspaper advocacy of the *ejecutivo colegiado* on the example of Switzerland, which he was fond of quoting as the ideal of a democratic state, but in no respect was there the slightest resemblance between the Swiss method of government and that proposed by him. The Swiss Federal Council is elected by the Federal Assembly, and consists of citizens who hold no other public offices and are engaged in no business or profession. But the seven (or it may have been

nine) who were to share the responsibility of the Uruguayan President and thus intensify by seven or nine times the dangerous character of the Presidential power, were to be neither representative of the people nor of the Colorado Party, but merely representative of President Batlle.

A more preposterous suggestion could not have been made by the temporary ruler of a sane people, and the surprise was that the President could even muster his stage army of standard bearers and demonstrationists who used to parade the town in favour of the "reform," while he himself was afraid to venture from his suburban retreat to the Government House,—where he ought to have been in residence—more than once every two or three months and at unlikely hours. They used to have a healthy habit in Montevideo of shooting a President who abused his power, and Señor Batlle was so familiar with the past history of his interesting little country that among the numerous articles published by him in *El Dia* to illustrate the instability of the present constitution was one giving a list of all the Presidents from Rivera onward, with notes of the disturbances which occurred during their terms of office, how so many of them had to fly for their lives, how some were killed, and few indeed completed their term without witnessing insurrections and sanguinary disturbances. During his own previous term of office, the revolution of 1904 occurred, and he had a narrow escape from death by the explosion of a mine. In the succeeding four years of Señor Claudio Williman's presidency, two revolutions occurred, one of these assuming serious proportions. Hence President Batlle did not unduly flaunt his personality in public places during our summer in Montevideo, in marked contrast, I was told, to the manner of his previous presidency, when he went about freely everywhere and was probably the most popular man in the Republic.

The most interesting episode in his strange campaign against popular sentiment was the publication in his own journal of several paragraphs in black type headed *Permanente*, which roused the ire of every person of good taste throughout the Republic, and welded for once the

whole press, Blanco and Colorado, into one. As this incident throws a vivid little sidelight on the politics of the country, I venture to translate the paragraphs in question, which were reprinted daily in the Presidential journal, and have probably only ceased to appear since the death of the aged politician at whom they were aimed :

"*Permanent*

"It is an undeniable fact, and well-known that Dr. José Pedro Ramírez in 1873 purchased the vote of the Deputy Isaac de Tezanos for the sum of 40,000 pesos, in favour of the candidature for the Presidency of the Republic of his father-in-law, Dr. Don José María Muñoz.

"It seems very probable that the same occurred with regard to the votes of the deputies Hermógenes Foroso and Vicente Garzón.

"From publications in *El Siglo* of that period, it would seem that at the same time as he was thus purchasing these, Dr. José Pedro Ramírez was accusing the Gomensor faction of having offered nearly three times as much for the votes of the same deputies—which he well knew to be a calumny, since he himself had purchased them for much less.

"The result of these infamies was the military mutiny of 1875, and five lustres of misfortunes for the country.

"All this notwithstanding, the Nationalist Party, the Constitutionalists that still remain, and a few disaffected Colorados are rendering homage to Dr. Ramírez, whom they proclaim as the first, or one of the first citizens of the Republic.

"Those who so act are corrupting public morals and robbing themselves of authority and prestige."

This extraordinary presidential - journalistic attack on an aged politician, then so feeble and near his end that he died a few months later, was occasioned chiefly because the journal *El Siglo*, one of the most influential of the Colorado newspapers, with which Dr. Ramírez, as a young man, was connected, and with which certain of his

The Calle San Martín, Mendoza.

A Glimpse of the River Mendoza.

THE NATURAL BRIDGE OF PUENTE DEL INCA, ON THE TRANSANDINE ROUTE INTO CHILI.

relatives are now associated, had, in common with the entire press of the country, strongly opposed the President's suggested reform. For nearly forty years the country had chosen to forget that Dr. Ramírez had so acted in 1873, and he himself at that time publicly made confession of what he had done, and withdrew from his journalistic post as an act of penance, although assuredly he had in no wise sinned against the spirit of that time. The spectacle of the President of the Republic using the columns of his own private journal thus to attack the aged publicist who, in the forty years following this admitted transgression, had done much to merit the good opinion and win the homage of his fellow-countrymen, ranged every journalist of any prestige against President Batlle, and brought, as I well remember, streams of telegrams from distant parts of South America, from eminent statesmen and the leading newspapers, sympathising with the victim of the President's attack.

What may be the ultimate outcome of those strange events of the summer of 1913 I do not know, but perhaps I have said sufficient about the politics of the country to show that there is room for improvement. At the same time, to do justice to Señor Batlle y Ordóñez, I recognise in him a really strong man, and regret that his second term of office should have been so marred by ill-considered and anti-democratic suggestions of constitutional change. He had previously won a reputation for political honesty which, even among his bitterest enemies, I never heard called in question, and much that he did even during his second stormy administration was entirely for the good of the country. I remember that at the height of his battle with the Chambers and the public, he promulgated a new law for the protection of animals, accompanied by a presidential message worthy to be printed in letters of gold by the R.S.P.C.A., and circulated throughout all Latin-America. He even went so far as to prohibit boxing matches, as *el box*, a growing passion in the Argentine, was beginning to acquire popularity in Uruguay. Had his energies been more wisely directed and his undoubted strength of character applied to the furtherance of certain

much-needed public improvements and to the real widening of the democratic basis of the constitution, he might have made his second administration a landmark in Uruguayan progress.

Progress is inevitable, and if it has been retarded in Uruguay by the frequent revolutionary disturbances, it has been none the less real. As a matter of fact, we are apt to overestimate the importance of these revolutions. Before the dawn of the modern commercial era, which has so greatly developed the capital city, revolutions were doubtless vastly disturbing and made the life of the community somewhat burdensome. But it is surprising to note how large a proportion of the population have survived these supposedly sanguinary affairs. You will see far more elderly people in Montevideo than in Buenos Ayres, where men of over fifty-five are rarities in the streets. The fact is that Uruguayan revolutions have degenerated into something very much akin to the duel in France, and they are usually fought where there is likely to be the least danger to property, as Whites and Reds alike have come to appreciate the advantages of modern domestic comfort, and the more beautiful villas there are erected in the suburbs and surroundings of Montevideo the less likely are revolutions to occur. Most of those of recent date have been really very little more serious than the old election rioting that used to accompany political changes in our own country.

One effect of revolution, however, has been to produce a remarkable shortage of horse flesh throughout the Republic. On the outbreak of an insurrection, the Government used to "commandeer" horses everywhere, and would clean an estancia of all its useful animals, handing over to the owner so much worthless paper, which he was supposed to be able some day to redeem for the loss of his horses. Not only so, but his *peones* would be pressed in like manner into the Government service, armed with rifles and sent out to fight the revolutionaries. After periodic losses in this manner, the estanciero adopted the policy of breeding and maintaining just as few horses as

he could possibly do with. Result: in Uruguay, a country where horses should abound, the cavalry are insufficiently mounted, a very considerable proportion of the Government troops being without horses. This fact, by the way, is the best comment that can be passed upon Viscount Bryce's paragraph quoted in the earlier part of this chapter.

We have heard about the warrior spirit of the Uruguayan, but, strangely enough, it does not manifest itself in a warrior nation. There is no system of military service in the Republic, such as that of the Argentine. Nay, until very recently the army was looked down upon by the better-class families as a profession for their sons, and was no more than the happy hunting-ground of all sorts of adventurers, the rank-and-file being chiefly niggers, Indians, and half-breeds, while many of the officers were themselves either of negro or Indian blood. Even to-day, when men of good family are looking to the army for a career, and military training is being organised on European lines, the army is still composed in large part of undesirables and is used entirely as a Government machine. Both political parties have hesitated at compulsory service for fear of each other. The Colorados have carefully nursed the army, during their long spell of power, as so many paid fighting men to back up their party at such times as the Blancos take arms against it. Here, again, it will be seen there is room for improvement in Uruguayan affairs.

I had not intended in these notes to be led into any lengthy discussion of Uruguayan politics, as that is a subject which tempts one into such labyrinthine by-ways that it is best left alone, and yet it is difficult to say anything about the country in general into which political considerations do not enter. I should have preferred to have enlarged rather on the literary side of the people, which engaged me even more than the politics and the warlike spirit—which, by the way, used to seem to me curiously out of place when I passed the extremely modest little building, about the size of a suburban police station, that does duty for the Uruguayan War Office. But I

find it difficult to touch with any satisfaction on all the subjects that occur to me as worthy of note.

The literary activity is certainly remarkable when we bear in mind the extremely limited public to which Uruguayan authors can appeal. Two very stout volumes of a critical survey of Uruguayan literature were published at the end of 1912, and these were but the advance-guard of others to follow, the work being designed to occupy several bulky tomes. The roll of Uruguayan authors in poetry and prose is truly a formidable one, though I doubt if more than two names would be known in England, and these of living authors whose reputations, but not their works, may be familiar to a small circle of English critics. Juan Zorilla de San Martín is the great poet of the country, and José Enrique Rodó its leading philosophic writer. Both are famous throughout Latin-America and Spain, and both very remarkable men, who have had to look to politics as well as to literature in their struggle for a living.

Señor Rodó, who is one of the deputies for Montevideo, is recognised as a master of Spanish style, a great critic of literature, and a philosopher in whom there are many points of contact with Lord Morley, as they belong to the same liberal school of thought. Withal, he is one of the last of the Bohemians, so far as that implies absolute disregard for sartorial display and the unbusinesslike ordering of his daily life. You will meet him at all strange hours of the night wandering about the streets, lonely and contemplative, and if you glance at his shirt cuff when shaking hands you will find it soiled and scribbled over with many pencilled notes. He has all the old-world courtesy of the Spaniard, with the wider outlook of the American mind, and, above all, a profound admiration for English character and Anglo-Saxon civilisation. His opinion is sought on great public questions and on matters of literature from all parts of South America, and I have often thought it strange that this rather shabbily dressed and retiring gentleman whom I used to meet wandering lonely in the dusk up side streets, and with whom I would stop and gossip for five or ten minutes on my way

home, was the object of admiration of literary circles wherever Spanish-American men of letters gathered together—*el gran Rodó*!

Señor Zorilla de San Martín is of a different type, shorter in stature and more pronouncedly Spanish in appearance, with the darting fire and restlessness of the imaginative Oriental rather than the careless repose of his philosophic contemporary He is essentially a poet, though his signature appears on all the bank notes of Uruguay, by virtue of some official post he used to hold. He has also represented his country at the Court of Spain, and been honoured in many ways by the nation which is justly proud of his poetic achievement, for in *Tabaré*, his epic of early Spanish life in Uruguay, he has produced one of the modern Castillian classics. I found him a perfervid Shakespearean, also a keen admirer of Carlyle, whose portrait holds the place of honour in his study, although he confessed that it was a struggle to follow the sage of Chelsea in the original, and he most frequently read him in French translations. Neither of these eminent authors, by the way, though both owning indebtedness to our English literature, had acquired a speaking knowledge of our language, French appealing to them, as it does to the great majority of the educated Latin-Americans, more readily than English.

One thing that struck me not only in the literature of the country and in the manifestations of its political thinkers, but in all the evidences of its daily life, was how slightly indeed has the tremendous modern development of the Argentine affected Uruguay. Just as the great current of emigration passes its shores and does no more than dash a little spray, in the form of a few stray emigrants, into Uruguay, so the progress of the Argentine has affected hardly at all the life of Uruguay. It is a distinct and highly individualised entity. Though essentially Spanish in character, and originally part of the vice-royalty of Spain, Uruguay had to secure its independence, not from the motherland, but from Brazil, of which it was a province up to 25th August 1825. There is much talk among Argentine statesmen of the chauvinist variety of

annexing it to the greater Republic, but geographically it is not meant to be Argentine territory, the River Plate on the south and the Uruguay on the west being natural boundaries, while the Brazilian frontier is artificial. Less likely is it ever again to pass under the control of Brazil, and it really serves a useful political purpose as something of a buffer state between the two great Republics of the southern continent.

The most notable Argentine influence to be detected in Montevideo is the passion for highly polished boots! I have often been amused to notice workmen on their way from their tasks carefully dusting their boots with their handkerchiefs to keep themselves "in the movement." Like all little countries it is intensely proud of itself, tenacious of its independence, and conscious of a certain superiority to both of its great neighbours in the higher standard of intellectualism which it has developed. Talk of Argentine annexation to an Uruguayan, and you will speedily see that warrior spirit of which we have already heard a good deal.

In the preceding chapter certain distinctions between the social life of the two republics have been mentioned, but not the prevalence of the old Andalusian custom of love-making. This is one of the features of Montevidean life that gives a quaint touch to the street scenes, as every evening the lovers may be observed standing on the pavement outside the barred windows, talking to the girls within. This, I fancy, is similar to the Mexican custom known as "playing bear," and very strange it looks to the wanderer from other shores. If a young man falls in love with a Montevidean damsel, he must find some means of being introduced to her father and asking permission to pay court to his daughter, for which purpose two nights of the week will be set apart, when he is at liberty to visit her in the presence of her family, and this, mark you, takes place before the lovers will have exchanged a spoken word. The sweetheart is not supposed to meet the young lady at any other time except on those appointed evenings, not even in the street is he expected to stop and talk to her, and he can only take her to the theatre duly

chaperoned by a sister or other relative. The courtship, too, is only permitted on the distinct understanding that the young man intends to propose marriage to the young lady, anything approaching our casual English courtship being rigorously ruled out. Then comes the ceremony known as *cambio de argollas*, or change of rings, to which, much as we should invite a large wedding party, all the friends of the sweethearts are bidden; presents are given, and the engaged couple present each other with a ring. When the marriage time draws near, the lover must himself make all arrangements for the house, endeavouring to interpret as best he can the taste of his future wife, who takes no part in these preliminaries, until another ceremonial occasion, known as the *visita de vistas*, when, accompanied by some friends and her future husband, she goes to see the home he has prepared for her. These customs, chiefly of Spanish origin, are more observed in Uruguay than on the other side of the River Plate, and help, among many others, to emphasise the differences that exist between the two peoples.

It is well-known, of course, that Uruguayan credit in Europe has not stood as high of recent years as the splendid possibilities of the country ought to warrant, due to the fact that a great deal of the money borrowed in the past for public improvements has found its way into the wrong pockets, and also in some degree to the high-handed action of President Batlle in regard to the affair of the Rambla Sud. In 1913 the treasury had fallen so low that it was not able to pay all the Civil servants their salaries, but a new loan had just been floated at the time these lines were being written, which would enable the Government to pay its way for some time to come, and it is to be hoped that the spirit of international friendship and co-operation which has worked to such splendid issues in the Argentine, and is really part of the Colorado policy in Uruguay, may so develop that this highly favoured little country will turn its attention in a more businesslike and earnest way to the development of its great natural resources.

One of the curses of Uruguay is the prevalence of consumption, to combat which an admirably managed

association is in existence, and a great annual collection is made on *el Dia de los Tuberculosos,* 1st September. The extraordinary energy with which this movement has been taken up, the immense sums of money realised by the collections throughout the Republic, and the admirable way in which the whole thing is organised by the Uruguayan Anti-consumption League, were proofs to me of the genuine spirit of public service that does exist in the country, and evidences of what that spirit may yet achieve.

CHAPTER XXII

FROM THE RIVER PLATE TO THE ANDES

EARLY in April we made another journey to Buenos Ayres, and thence to Ensenada, the port of La Plata, where, in the company of friends, I had to bid good-bye to my wife, with whom the climate of the River Plate had dealt none too gently. Just a year before we had, all too blithely, left Old England to revel in the sunshine of the golden South, and now one of us, after a year of many changing weathers, was gladly setting sail for the grey old land, resolved never again to say one word against its climate; while the other would no less willingly have said adieu to the River Plate, but that matters of importance held him to South America and the promise of many new scenes and far journeyings for well-nigh another year.

It was with a curious sense of loneliness that I found myself back in Montevideo, not at our old quarters in the Calle Sarandí, but comfortably accommodated in the Hotel Oriental, for some three weeks more, ere I too had to bid good-bye to the River Plate. Those few weeks in that hotel, which is situated hard by the quay and is the favourite house of call for all English voyagers making a flying visit to the port, went past much quicker than I had hoped. I found it greatly improved since my earlier visits, so that it had assumed almost an English aspect in the matter of appointments, while the *cuisine* was excellent. The brother and sister who conduct it showed a very gracious spirit of service to their guests, and I noticed that in view of the increasing popularity of their establishment with English visitors, the lady was beginning to study our rough island speech, of which

at that time she knew only a few words, though she spoke French fluently in addition to her native tongue.

Many nights of billiard matches at the English club linger in my memory of these concluding weeks, and particularly I recall the happy, smiling face of one of the members there, who went about radiating joy because he had just managed to arrange for leave of absence in October. His wife—like so many of the wives of the English exiles—had been forced to return home a year or so before that time, and the seven months that now separated him from wife and home seemed so short by anticipation in comparison with the lonely months he had put behind him, that you might have thought he was setting sail next day. I fear there are many sad hearts among the English on the River Plate, and many lives being poorly lived, for one encounters scores of husbands left lonely in these towns because their wives have found the life so little to their taste, or the climate with its sudden changes from hot to cold too much for their physical resistance. Can anything be more unsatisfactory than thus to wear away the best years of one's life? Several Britishers with whom I became acquainted, whose duties kept them on the River Plate, had lived there alone, with only triennial visits to their wives and families in England, for periods ranging from ten to fifteen years. Some of these gentlemen had made, or were making, considerable fortunes, but I must confess I envied none the wealth which they were securing at so great a sacrifice of domestic happiness.

Still, I would not have you think that my thoughts were tinged with melancholy when I stepped aboard the old river steamer *Eolo*, on which so often I had been a passenger between the two great cities of the Silver River, and bade good-bye to a group of friends, among whom was no fellow-countryman, to look for the last time on the dancing lights of the fairy scene which the bay of Montevideo presents each night to those on shipboard. In Montevideo our time had passed, on the whole, agreeably; excepting one tremendous storm of rain and hail, when fiercest thunder rolled and lightning

swept the streets in blinding flashes, it had been a time of sunshine and fair weather—sunshine tempered with refreshing breezes—so that, after all, we had found something of which we went in search.

I remember well how changed was the scene on arriving in the early morning at Buenos Ayres, where torrential rain was falling. Through the mud and slush I drove once more to the old, familiar hotel, and nothing but the most essential duties of the day took me out of doors, for it rained " as if the heavens had opened and determined to empty themselves for ever," and next morning I wakened to the rain thundering on the roof with unabated vigour. So it continued all that day, while I made furtive dashes here and there, saying a few hurried good-byes, visiting the bank, arranging travelling accommodation for my journey across the continent and over the Andes to the city of Santiago de Chile. The train was to leave about eight o'clock on the Sunday morning, and so admirable is the accommodation for passengers' luggage that if your heavier baggage is not delivered the previous day it runs great risk of being left behind in the morning. This I discovered somewhat late in the evening, and a hurried packing ensued.

Still in the streaming wet I saw the last of the sodden city that Sunday morning, and found myself in a particularly crowded train, with three travelling companions. One of these was the most talkative and genial of Argentines I have met, whose family history was speedily at my disposal, and much of whose companionable character came, I doubt not, from the French origin to which he confessed. Full of a delightful admiration for all things English, except our language, which he had found too hard a nut to crack, he proved the best of travelling companions, having made the journey from Buenos Ayres to Valparaiso many times before. He was the publicity manager of a very famous Anglo-American firm of advertising chemists, and I can assure them they are admirably served, as I found his knowledge of the journalistic conditions of the Argentine thoroughly sound in every detail on which I was able to test it, and that

meant a very representative test, as it had been an important part of my own occupation in the country to familiarise myself with journalistic conditions.

The second of my travelling companions was a typical Argentine of the town-hating variety. There was nothing of the gaucho in his blood, and I judged him to be entirely Spanish in origin, of that fair type which could pass for English, but he was a lover of the open spaces and the wild life of the Camp. Wiry and slim, with blue, inquiring eyes, he had travelled far, and was familiar with many parts of Europe, although he had just completed some five years in the wilds of Paraguay and the Gran Chaco, where I believe the lovers of primitive life can have more than their fill. He recounted many of his experiences among the wild Indians of the Chaco, and showed me numerous photographs he had taken there, with all the pride of a schoolboy. Here was none of your desperadoes of the wild places, though he carried a big enough Browning in his belt and the usual long knife of the gaucho in a sheath over his hip. These accoutrements struck me as strangely unsuited to the man, who, in general appearance and in the quietness of his demeanour, would have seemed far more in place perched on a high stool in a counting-house.

The third of my companions was a red-headed youth from Christiania, on his way to Valparaiso, where a fellow-Norwegian was managing a successful business and had offered him a post. He spoke English well, but Spanish not at all, and made the most elephantine attempts to pronounce the simplest words, much to the merriment of our other companions, who had at first marked him down *un inglés*. It was something of a wonder to us how he had come so far without mishap, as he showed so little ability to deal with the ordinary difficulties of travel in foreign lands, and, as the Franco-Argentine remarked to me, he had *poca cabeza* or " little head." But I suppose there is a special providence that watches over such travellers as he and brings them safely to their journey's end.

The rain continued as we sped along through the flat

and uninteresting country. Every road was a running stream, and ditches were swollen into rivers. Any prospect more dismal or less appealing to the affections than the Argentine Camp in time of rain, I do not know. And at this time the rain meant a great drop in the temperature that sent all Nature a-shivering, so that the dripping herds and the sodden sheep on the far-reaching pasture lands through which we passed were objects of pity, while the mud-splashed horses and the dripping drivers were supreme pictures of wretchedness. From shanties here and there by the railway side, grey faces peeped out at the train, as one of the events in their dreary day, and the little country towns were so many houses in seas of mud. I remember we passed some ostrich farms, and these birds, at no time suggestive of the life joyous, looked the saddest of bipeds. They are of a different breed from those that are reared in South Africa to supply our " 'Arriets " with their " fevvers," and are used for supplying the feather dusters, or *plumeros*, with which lazy servants throughout the Argentine flick the dust from furniture to walls and back again from walls to furniture—an operation of infinite amusement and no utility.

I remember little of our various stopping-places except Junin, the great railway centre of the Buenos Ayres and Pacific Railway, on which we were travelling, and where are situated its engineering works. The station was thronged with English people, many of whom had come down to see the train go through, as that is one of the amusements all along the line, the young people in the remoter country towns dressing up to promenade the stations as though these might be pleasure piers. Junin is some four hours' run from the capital, and is typical of most Argentine towns, with its earthen streets which are periodically ploughed and rolled, and so remain quite passable for a few days after that operation, but for the rest of the year alternate between the conditions of river-bed and dust-heap.

The little station of " Open Door " I remember. We could see in the distance the buildings and fields of the

great asylum, which I should very much have liked to visit. This is one of the most remarkable institutions in the Argentine, for here many hundreds of insane are employed in all sorts of healthy labour under the supervision of a famous alienist, whose methods of treatment are entirely original and have been the subject of much discussion. I remember reading in the pages of M. Clemenceau, who wrote a most interesting chapter on his visit to this great asylum, that the superintendent told him so wonderful were the results of studying the tastes of the lunatics entrusted to his care and placing them at congenial occupations, that he often thought he was the only insane person among all the inhabitants of Open Door. Why this English name should have been chosen for the place I do not know, for to English ideas the association of lunacy and the open door does not seem particularly desirable.

My Franco-Argentine companion was entirely pleased that the rain continued, for that meant a more agreeable journey in passing through the almost desert land across which the railway runs in the heart of the continent, as in dry weather, and despite closed windows, travellers become covered with the fine, black dust which blows through every chink and cranny, making that part of the journey dreaded by all. Even in those days of rain there was a slight deposit of grey dust on everything in our carriage, but I confess to no recollections of discomfort, not even at meal-times, except that the food set before us was by no means princely, and the fruit in particular would have been thrown in the dustbin by a London costermonger. Vaguely I remember lighted towns and the darkening night, and then awakening, still in the dark, but with the most delicious of sweet morning air penetrating the carriage as we stood still in the station of Mendoza.

This would be nearly six of the morning. There was much hurrying of porters and shifting of luggage from the express into the Transandine train waiting on the other side of the platform. In the dining-car of this, coffee was steaming and rolls and butter ready for the

travellers. We speedily secured our seats for the mountain journey on which the Transandine train had to set out about seven o'clock. And now, in the grey light one could see in all directions the dim forms of rugged hills, and presently the dawn came, swiftly and bright, lighting up the nearer vine-clad hills and showing us great dim mountain masses westward, where the mighty Andes stood between us and the Pacific. It was a beautiful scene, and thrilled me with that strange feeling which the hills must ever bring to those who have been born and lived among them, especially after a year in which I had not set eyes on any rising ground save the little hummock of the Cerro in the bay of Montevideo.

The time left to one for a glimpse of the town was of the briefest, and it was a sleeping town I saw. I had intended to spend two days in Mendoza on my way into Chili, and made all arrangements accordingly, with the high approval of the authorities at the Buenos Ayres end. My luggage all bore large labels for Mendoza, so that by no chance should it be taken on to Chili while I remained in the Argentine town. In the summer-time the international trains go three times a week, and in the winter-time but twice. I had positive assurance that the thrice-a-week service was still running in this first week of May, so that I could spend two days in Mendoza between trains. In the preceding year the Transandine Railway had been closed for four months, owing to the severity of the winter weather in the mountain passes, and I was anxious that in the event of the winter of 1913 rivalling that of 1912, I should not be among the passengers "held up" in these snowy wilds. I felt I was running it quite closely enough in determining upon a two days' stay at Mendoza merely to study the town, and when the guard of the train informed me in the course of a casual conversation that only two trains a week were running and I should have to stay four clear days before I picked up the next connection over the Andes, I forthwith determined to continue my journey, especially as I had found such agreeable companions.

But now arose the question of my luggage, which I

had so elaborately marked that it might not by any chance be carried beyond Mendoza. I sought out the representative of Villalonga, the Pickford of the Argentine, and explained the situation to him. Looking at my voucher, he remarked that there was no necessity to make any change, as the luggage, according to the voucher, was all consigned through to Santiago! The luggage inspector, with a gang of porters, was employed in shifting the baggage from the trans-continental train to that which had to climb the mountains, and he also assured me that it did not matter in the least where the luggage was labelled for, as it would all go on to Santiago. And I had been at such pains to provide for its unshipment at Mendoza!

I greatly regretted not being able to linger in this fresh and attractive town, which, under the bright dawn of that autumn morning, seemed to be a place where one might have sojourned very pleasantly for a few days. The streets of the new town, built entirely since the disastrous earthquake of 1861, are for the most part wide and in fairly good condition, many of them lined with shady trees and a stream of fresh water running in the gutters. But I was taking no risks in the upper Andes, as I remembered the experiences related to me by certain travellers, a year before, who had been snowbound at Puente del Inca, and reconciled myself to having no more than a glimpse of Mendoza when it was just turning on its pillow and thinking of getting up. (I lived to regret this, as several colleagues joined me in Chili at intervals of months later, and all had good journeys, the Andes remaining "open" all the winter.)

The sun was radiant when, a little after seven, we steamed out of Mendoza station and crept in among the verdant foot hills of the Andes, where all around us were signs of vegetation and natural conditions utterly distinct from those of the Atlantic side. There was a bracing touch of cold in the morning air, and yet a feeling that here was the most delightful of climates, with sunny slopes where the grapes ripened in far-spreading vineyards, the sight of which transported one at once to the

The Inca's Lake in the Andes, as I saw it.

The Christ of the Andes.

The great statue erected on the Argentine-Chilian frontier to commemorate the settlement of the boundary dispute between the two nations. The Transandine tunnel penetrates the mountain some little distance below this point.

pleasant land of France, and I can imagine that the many French settlers who have come to Mendoza, attracted by the great and growing wine trade of the town and district, will often have the illusion that they are still at home.

The railway, all the way from Mendoza almost to the Pacific, follows the course of rivers, which at first run eastward from the watershed of the mountain frontier and then westward to the ocean. The scenery is by no means sensational in its beauty, as the train threads its way among the gentler valleys watered by the river Mendoza for some forty or fifty kilometres westward of the city. But as the ascent becomes more precipitous and the clatter of the rack and pinion slackens to the slowest of tunes, while the engine crawls, with much puffing, laboriously upwards, the panorama of the mountain heights grows very beautiful, and unlike most mountain scenery of Europe.

Wild and barren are the hills, and lifeless and dead they seem, for rarely does a bird flit across the scene, and few cattle or sheep find pasturage after we have passed the junction of the rivers Mendoza and Uspallata, between forty and fifty miles westward of Mendoza. There is a great stillness among these mountains, a feeling of cold and cheerless solitude. Here we are among the waste places of the earth, and yet they lack the Dantesque majesty of rugged grandeur and fantastic outline, having instead a certain rhythmic monotony of form varied only by their extraordinary and sensational colouring. Great patches of heliotrope and purple, long zig-zag streaks of green, immense blotches of yellow—vivid as mustard—bright spots here and there of red and gleaming blue, and large tracts of oily black—such are the colours I recall among these gigantic volcanic masses, where an almost endless variety of mineral substances give those unfamiliar tints to the treeless and grassless heights. Sometimes, indeed, I found that what looked like a great patch of sulphur, on nearer approach proved to be a thin yellow grass upon which those strange animals, the llamas, are able to feed; and it was, I think, at the station of Zanjon Amarillo, where we had reached a height of some

7350 feet, that I first saw two or three of these quaint beasts of burden, who stopped cropping this scanty herbage to gaze at the train with their questioning eyes, in which there is always a suggestion of indignation.

These wayside stations, of which there are many on the route, are almost the only signs of habitation, and it is difficult to imagine that anywhere among these forbidding hills human beings are so luckless as to have their homes. Everybody at the station seemed to be shivering with cold, as the bright sunlit sky of the morning was now, in the early afternoon, glooming over with grey, foreboding a snowstorm, and I thought I had never seen anything more charged with melancholy than the little plot of graves beside the station of Zanjon Amarillo. Some dozens of tiny wooden crosses and withered wreaths decorated this loneliest of cemeteries. I suppose most of them who were sleeping their last sleep alongside this lone little railway station had been employed in the making of the line, for there is surely naught else but the making and maintenance of the railway to induce men to inhabit these cheerless wastes.

From time to time, of course, little groups of prospectors are wandering among the mountains, looking for favourable spots where mining may be attempted, but so far that industry in this region is of the slightest. We carried with us in our train a number of young Englishmen, employed as sectional superintendents of the line, who had been on a visit to Buenos Ayres, and at various points they were dropped off with much hand-shaking and good wishes, to begin another spell of lonesome, but, perhaps, not uninteresting work. Their conversation touched the varying merits of certain distances which ought to be allowed between the telegraph posts, and it was surprising to learn how greatly opinions could differ on that subject.

As we approach Punta de las Vacas, a few miles beyond Zanjon Amarillo, the ascent suddenly stiffens, and the railway now performs the characteristic corkscrew journey of all Alpine lines. This station is at the junction of the Cow River (*Rio de las Vacas*) with the

Mendoza, but whence the name of the former I cannot guess, for it seemed a region where *vacas* would fare badly. Southward we had now a view of the volcano Tupungato, but when we had laboriously climbed another twelve or thirteen miles to Puente del Inca, we were just in time to see, away to the north, the summit of Aconcagua, the monarch of the Andes, being blotted out in a snowstorm which in a few minutes more was upon us, quickly filling the empty barrows about the station with whitest flakes and enticing most of the passengers to engage in the primitive pastime of snow-balling. At this point, 9000 feet above sea-level, where there is quite a good hotel, with thermal baths that attract many visitors in the summer-time, we find one of the few curiosities of the route, a natural bridge of volcanic matter over the stream, but I imagine he was a lonely Inca who gave his name to it, as this is surely the farthest limit to which Inca civilisation reached southward from Peru and Bolivia.

The train now continued its journey through a white world ; the Andes had disappeared as if by magic. Snow and white sky everywhere, so that it strained the eyes to look out of the window, and the increasing cold made us don our thickest wraps and muffle up, while the rarefied air began to make breathing somewhat difficult. Along the route it was strange to pass, every little way, an Indian railway labourer, standing at times on the very edge of a precipice that swept downwards into the mysterious white depths beneath, and holding in his hand the spade with which he had been at work on the approach of the train, or perhaps a signal flag with which he had indicated that all was clear at some dangerous corner, but invariably looking entirely resigned to the fate that had cast him thus to labour for the scantiest fare in these upland wastes, where, by the railway side, we passed from time to time the rude huts in which the Indian peones huddled like animals.

I remember that the station at Las Cuevas presented quite a lively scene, a number of railway engineers and officials, wearing their thick ponchos, having come out to the verandahs of their wooden houses, which stand back

some short distance from the station and are connected therewith by a wooden bridge. I felt that if one had any particular desire to pit himself against the primal forces of nature and the rude red life of savage things, here was the station to get off at, 10,500 feet above sea-level, but I was glad to stay in the train, and to pull my travelling rugs the closer around me, as it panted still upward, and presently entered the famous tunnel penetrating the summit of the Cordillera Principal, precisely where the frontier line runs between the Argentine and Chili.

When we emerged on the other side and immediately began to descend, we had bid good-bye to Argentina, and one of the strangest and most moving scenes I have ever witnessed presented itself. We came out upon a colossal amphitheatre from which, to the north-west, the mountain swept down from the Lake of the Inca—seen dimly through the driving sleet and snow on our right—into a white mysterious abyss some two thousand feet below, where dark objects such as the rocky shoulders of lower hills seemed to be floating in an eerie sea of vapour. The snowstorm had lessened and was turning now to rain, but the scene was awesome in its effect upon the observer descending these uncanny slopes into this vague new land.

And in such fashion, at the sleet-veiled threshold of Chili, I, who little more than a year before had set out in search of sunshine, take leave of my reader for the present.

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Printed by
MORRISON & GIBB LIMITED
Edinburgh