

# FROM OX CART TO MOTOR CAR IN THE ANDES

BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

IN THE SERIES OF ARTICLES ON SOUTH AMERICA

WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY HERMIT ROOSEVELT AND FRANK HARPER

*After crossing the Andes by rail from the Argentine into Chile at a point northeast of Santiago, Mr. Roosevelt and his party spent some time in Santiago and Valparaiso, and then went south by rail. The most interesting and picturesque part of the trip then came. The itinerary of the return across the Andes into the Argentine is indicated on the map that accompanies this article. The region through which the party traveled, and which is described in this article, is so little known even in Argentina that when the party arrived in Buenos Aires they were besieged by newspaper men to tell them something about the country. Hardly a soul is met upon the journey until Bariloche is reached, and only a few straggling settlers are seen upon the vast dry plains of Patagonia between Bariloche and Neuquen. In two years, however, the Southern Railway will probably have pushed its tendrils right through from Neuquen to Bariloche, and then onward over the Andes into Chile, while the Argentine Government on its part is pressing forward the work of irrigation. If all goes well, the next ten years will see a great influx of settlers into this rich section of country.—THE EDITORS.*

WHEN the time came for us to leave Chile, we went southward on the railway to Puerto Varas. Incidentally I may remark that the railways in Chile are owned by the State, and that the men I met who were best informed and most trustworthy expressed great regret that they had not been kept in private hands. These men stated that there was always a deficit in the management of the railways, and that they were a burden on the Government and unprofitable to the citizens generally.

The railway passed through the wide, rolling agricultural country of central Chile, a country of farms and prosperous towns. As we went southward we found ourselves in a land which was new in the sense that our own West is new, none of the settlements being like those we had already seen, with their ancient historic past (I use the word "ancient" in its relative and American sense). Middle and southern Chile were in the hands of the Indians but a short while since. We were met by the fine-looking representatives of these Araucanian Indians, all of them now peaceable farmers and stock-growers, at a town of twenty or thirty thousand people where there was not a single white man to be found a quarter of a century ago.

We reached our destination, Puerto Varas, early in the morning. It stands on the shore of a lovely lake. There has been a considerable German settlement in middle and

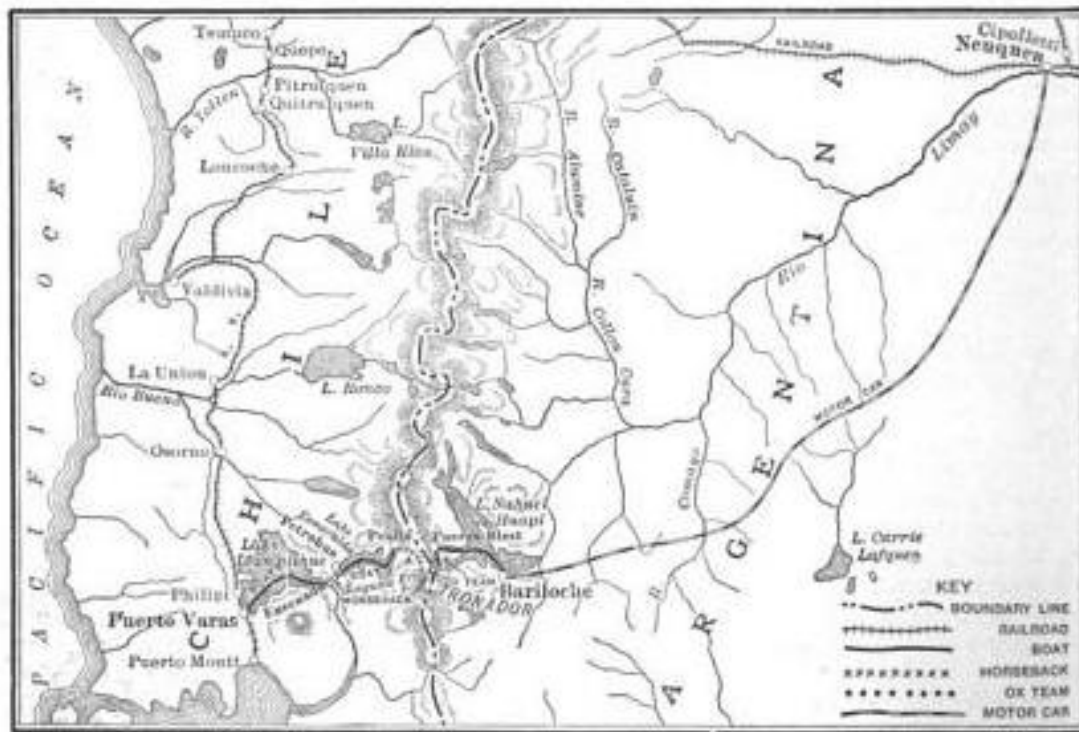
southern Chile, and, as everywhere, the Germans have made capital colonists. At Puerto Varas there are two villages, mainly of Germans, one Protestant and the other Catholic. We were made welcome and given breakfast in an inn which, with its signs and pictures, might have come from the Fatherland. Among the guests at the breakfast, in addition to the native Chilean Intendente, were three or four normal school teachers, all of them Germans—and evidently uncommonly good teachers too. There were school-children, there were citizens of every kind. Many of the Germans born abroad could speak nothing but German. The children, however, spoke Spanish, and in some cases nothing but Spanish. Here, as so often in the addresses made to me, special stress was laid upon the fact that I represented in my country and in my own person the cause of religious liberty, of the absolute equality of treatment of all men without regard to creed, and of social and industrial justice; in short, the cause of liberty in body, soul, and mind, in things intellectual and spiritual, no less than in things industrial and political; the liberty that guarantees to each free, bold spirit the right to search for truth without any check from political or ecclesiastical tyranny, and that also guarantees to the humble their bodily rights as against any man who would exploit or oppress them.

We left Puerto Varas by steamer on the

lake for a four days' trip across the Andes, which was to end when we struck the Argentine Railway at Neuquen. This break in the Andes makes an easy road, for the pass at its summit is but three thousand feet high. The route followed leads between high mountains and across lake after lake, and the scenery is as beautiful as any in the world.

The first lake was surrounded by a rugged, forest-clad mountain wilderness, broken here and there by settlers' clearings. Wonderful mountains rose near by ; one was a snow-clad

southwest, called Tronador, the Thunderer, is capped with vast fields of perpetual snow, from which the glaciers creep down to the valleys. It gains its name of thunderer from the tremendous roaring of the shattered ice masses when they fall. Out of a vast cave in one of its glaciers a river rushes, full grown at birth. At the western end of this lake stands a thoroughly comfortable hotel, which we reached at sunset. Behind us in the evening lights, against the sunset, under the still air, the lake was very beautiful. The



THE MAP OF THE ROUTE ACROSS THE ANDES TO NEUQUEN

See key to the map, which shows the means of traveling used

Mr. Roosevelt and his party started from Puerto Varas, Chile, in a small steamer and sailed across Lake Llanquihue to Ensenada. Then the party rode on horseback as far as Petrolhue. At this point they took another steamer across Lake Esmeralda. The party then started again on horseback for Lake Faja, Argentina, which they crossed, and west by a wooden railway, the cars of which are drawn by oxen, to Lake Nahuel Huapi, where they boarded a steamer bound for Bariloche. From that point the party made a four-hundred-mile motor-car ride to Neuquen.

volcano with a broken cone which not many years ago was in violent erosion. Another, even more beautiful, was a lofty peak of virginal snow. At the farther end of the lake we lunched at a clean little hotel, then we took horses and rode for a dozen miles to another lake ; this is called Esmeralda Lake, or the Lake of Los Santos. Surely there can be no more beautiful lake anywhere than this ! All around it are high mountains, many of them volcanoes. One of these mountains to the north, Punti Agudo, rises in sheer cliffs to its soaring summit, so steep that snow will hardly lie on its sides. Another to the

peaks were golden in the dying sunlight, and over them hung the crescent moon.

Next morning, before sunrise, we were riding eastward through the valley. For two or three miles the ride suggested that through the Yosemite, because of the abruptness with which the high mountain walls rose on either hand, while the valley was flat, with glades and woods alternating on its surface. Then we got into a thick forest. The trees were for the most part giant beeches, but with some conifers, including a rather small species of sequoia. Here and there, in the glades open and spaces, there were masses of many-

hued wild flowers; conspicuous among them were the fuchsias.

A dozen miles on we stopped at another little inn, and then climbed through a wooded pass between two mountains. Its summit, near which lies the boundary line between Chile and Argentina, is somewhere in the neighborhood of three thousand feet high; and this is the extreme height over which at this point it is necessary to go in traversing what is elsewhere the mighty mountain wall of the Andes. Here we met a tame guanaco (a kind of llama) in the road; it strolled up to us, smelled the noses of the horses, which were rather afraid of it, and then walked on by us. From the summit of the pass the ground fell rapidly to a wonderfully beautiful little lake of lovely green water. This little gem of a lake is hemmed in by sheer-sided mountains, densely timbered save where the cliffs rise too boldly for even the hardiest trees to take root. As with all these lakes, there are many beautiful waterfalls. The rapid mountain brooks fling themselves over precipices which are sometimes so high that the water reaches the foot in sheets of wavering mist. Everywhere in the background arose the snow peaks.

We crossed this little lake in a steam-launch, and on the other side found the quaintest wooden railway, with a couple of

rough hand-cars, each dragged by an ox. In going downhill the ox is put behind the cart, which he holds back with a rope tied to his horns. We piled our baggage on one car, three or four members of the party got on the other, and the rest of us walked for the two miles or so before we reached the last lake we were to traverse—Nahuel Huapi.

Here we were met by a little lake steamer, on which we spent the next four hours. The lake is of bold and irregular outline, with many deep bays, and with mountain walls standing as promontories between the bays. For a couple of hours the scenery was as beautiful as it had been during any part of the two days, especially when we looked back at the mass of snow-shrouded peaks. Then the lake opened, the shores became clear of wood, the mountains lower, and near the eastern end, where there were only low rolling hills, we came to the little village of Bariloche.

Bariloche is a real frontier village. Forty years ago Dr. Moreno, who was with us, had been captured by Indians at this very spot, had escaped from them, and after days of extraordinary hardship had reached safety. He showed us a strange giant pine tree, of a kind different from any of our Northern cone-bearers, near which the Indians had camped while he was prisoner with them. He had



PHOTOGRAPH BY KERMIT ROOSEVELT

#### A VIEW ON LAKE LLANQUIHUE

Showing on the right one of the settlers' clearings along the lake shores, and in the background the snow-clad Andes. The mountain with the broken cone is a volcano



PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK HARPER

IN THE FOREGROUND IS THE WIDE, RUSHING RIVER WHOSE SOURCE IS IN THE  
CAVE OF THE MIGHTY TRONADOR IN THE BACKGROUND



PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK HARPER

BEAUTIFUL ROSES IN THE FOREGROUND, WITH THE SNOW-CAPPED PEAK  
OF TRONADOR IN THE DISTANCE



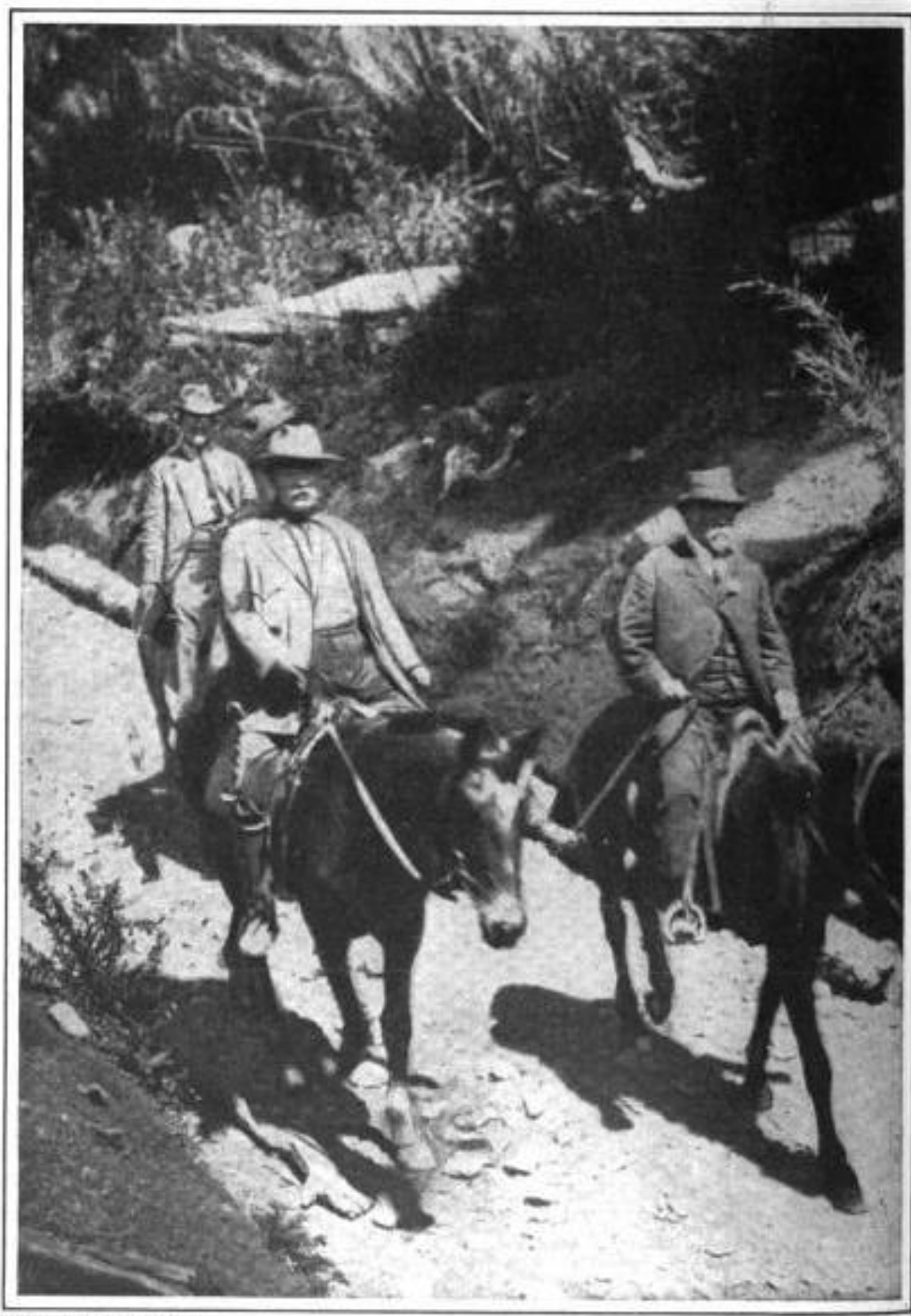
PHOTOGRAPH BY KERMIT ROOSEVELT

LOOKING AT TRONADOR FROM ONE OF THE BRIDLE PATHS  
IN THE MOUNTAINS



PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK HARPER

VIEW OF TRONADOR FROM A LITTLE FARM-HOUSE IN THE ANDES WHERE THE PARTY  
RESTED FOR A FEW MINUTES TO CHANGE HORSES



PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK HARRIS

**TRAVELING THROUGH THE ANDES**

On the left is Colonel Roosevelt, on the right Dr. Moreno, and in the back the Chief of the Argentine Department of the Interior



PHOTOGRAPH BY KERMIT ROOSEVELT

#### IN THE OX-DRAWN CART

The little wooden railway between Lake Fria and Lake Nahuel Huapi—<sup>11</sup> the quaintest wooden railway, with a couple of rough hand-cars, each dragged by an ox.



PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK HARPER

**TAKING THE BAGGAGE FROM LAKE FRIA TO LAKE NAHUEL HUAPI**

This little railway is made entirely of wood, including the tracks on which the carts run.



PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK HARPER

**ON LAKE FRIA**

"A wonderfully beautiful little lake of lovely green water." The last but one of the lakes crossed by the party.



persuaded the settlers to have this tree preserved, and it is still protected, though slowly dying of old age. The town is nearly four hundred miles from a railway, and the people are of the vigorous, enterprising frontier type. It was like one of our frontier towns in the old-time West as regards the diversity in ethnic type and nationality among the citizens. The little houses stood well away from one another on the broad, rough, faintly marked streets. In one we might see a Spanish family, in another blond Germans or Swiss, in yet another a family of gaucho stock looking more Indian than white. All worked and lived on a footing of equality, and all showed the effect of the widespread educational effort of the Argentine Government; an effort as marked as in our own country, although in the Argentine it is made by the nation instead of by the several States or Territories. We visited the little public school. The two women teachers were, one of Argentine descent, the other the daughter of an English father and an Argentine mother—the girl herself spoke English only with difficulty. They told us that the Germans had a school of their own, but that the Swiss and the other immigrants sent their children to the Government school with the children of the native Argentines. Afterwards I visited the German school, where I was welcomed by a dozen of the German immigrants—men of the same stamp as those whom I had so often seen, and whom I so much admired and liked, in our own Western country. I was rather amused to see in this school, together with a picture of the Kaiser, a very large picture of Martin Luther, although about a third of the Germans were Catholics; their feelings as Germans seemed in this instance to have overcome any religious differences, and Martin Luther was simply accepted as one of the great Germans whose memory they wished to impress on the minds of their children. In this school there was a good little library, all the books being, of course, German; it was the only library in the town.

That night we had a very pleasant dinner. Our host was a German. Of the two ladies who did the honors of the table one was a Belgian, the wife of the only doctor in Bariloche, and the other a Russian. In our own party, aside from the four of us from the United States, there were Colonel Reybaud, of the Argentine army, my aide, and a first-class soldier; Dr. Moreno, who was as de-

voted a friend as if he had been my aide; and three other Argentine gentlemen—the head of the Interior Department, the Governor of Neuquen, and the head of the Indian Service. Among the other guests was a man originally from County Meath, and a tall, blond, red-bearded Venetian, a carpenter by trade. After a while we got talking of books, and it was fairly startling to see the way that polyglot assemblage brightened when the subject was introduced, and the extraordinary variety of its taste in good literature. The men began eagerly to speak about and quote from their favorite authors—Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Camoëns, Molière, Shakespeare, Virgil, and the Greek dramatists. Our host quoted from the Nibelungenlied and from Homer, and at least two-thirds of the men at the table seemed to have dozens of authors at their tongues' ends. But it was the Italian who capped the climax, for when we touched on Dante he became almost inspired and repeated passage after passage, the majesty and sonorous cadence of the lines thrilling him so that his listeners were almost as much moved as he was. We sat thus for an hour—an unexpected type of *Kaffee Klatsch* for such an outpost of civilization.

Next morning at five we were off for our four-hundred-mile ride across the Patagonian wastes to the railway at Neuquen. We had been through a stretch of scenery as lovely as can be found anywhere in the world—a stretch that in parts suggested the Swiss lakes and mountains, and in other parts Yellowstone Park or the Yosemite or the mountains near Puget Sound. In a couple of years the Argentines will have pushed their railway system to Bariloche, and then all tourists who come to South America should make a point of visiting this wonderfully beautiful region. It is impossible for me not to believe that in the end it will be developed for travelers much as other regions of great scenic attraction are developed. Thanks to Dr. Moreno, the Argentine end of it is already a national park; I trust the Chilean end soon will be.

We left Bariloche in three motor cars, knowing that we had a couple of hard days ahead of us. After skirting the lake for a mile or two we struck inland over flats and through valleys. We had to cross a rapid river at a riffle where the motor cars were just able to make it. The road consisted only of the ruts made by the passage of the great



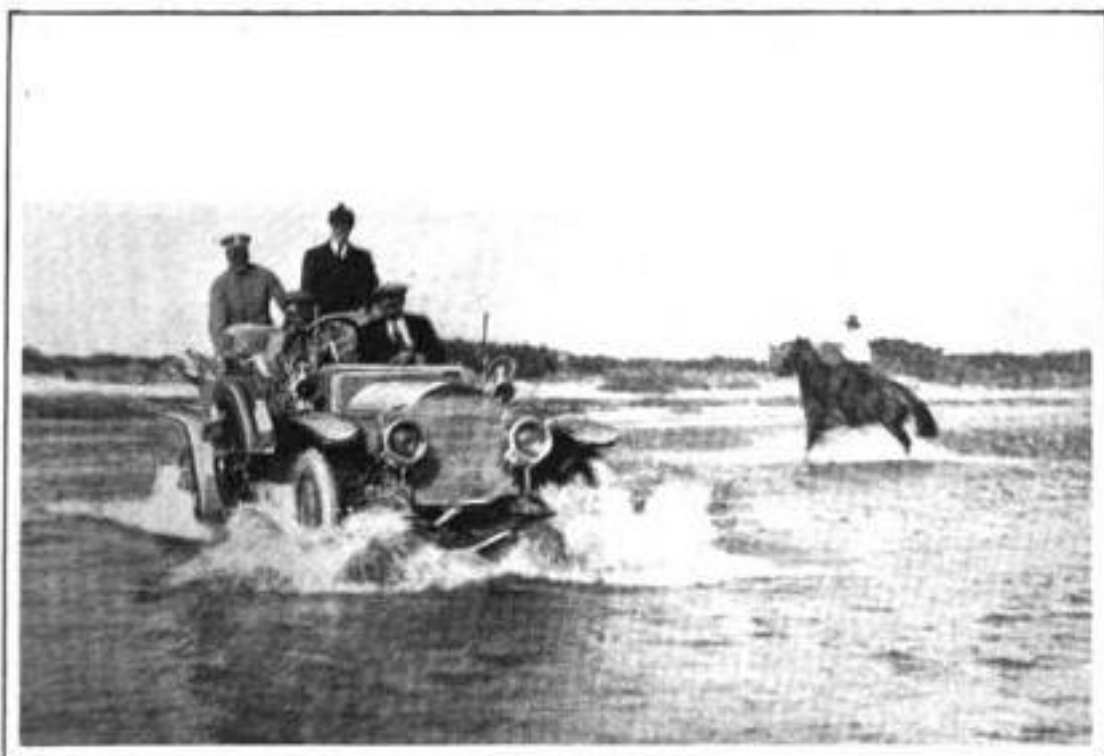
PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK HARPER

TWO ARGENTINE GAUCHOS PULLING ONE OF THE AUTOMOBILES OUT OF THE HEAVY SAND AND DEEP RUTS MADE BY OX WAGONS.



PHOTOGRAPH BY KERMIT ROOSEVELT

COLONEL ROOSEVELT IN HIS INDIAN PONCHO WATCHING A GAUCHO, WHILE THE MOTOR CARS ARE PREPARED FOR A NEW START



PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK HARPER

**MOTOR-FORDING ONE OF THE WIDE, RAPID RIVERS IN THE PATAGONIAN "WASTES"**  
These rivers will one day supply water for the vast irrigation works planned by the Government in this section of Argentina.



PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK HARPER

**ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS ONE OF THE AUTOMOBILES WOULD  
FAIL IN CROSSING A SMALL STREAM**

This picture shows the men digging out the mud in the stream and inserting stones in order to build a causeway under the wheels.



PHOTOGRAPH BY KERMIT ROOSEVELT

**THE GREAT TWO-WHEELED CARTS CARRYING HIDES AND WOOL FROM THE RANCHES  
TO NEUQUEN TO BE SHIPPED EASTWARD**

It is often a journey of three or four weeks across the lone plains, the men camping and resting their mules by the roadside



PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK HARPER

**COLONEL ROOSEVELT AND DR. MORENO WITH FOUR ARGENTINE INDIANS**

The Indians now remaining are, like our own Indians, fast becoming civilized, and there are but few now left in their savage state. Indeed, the Indian on abandoning paganism drops the title "Indian" and calls himself in contrast "Christian."

bullock carts, and often we had to go alongside it, or leave it entirely where at some crossing of a small stream the ground looked too boggy for us to venture in with the motor cars. Three times in making such a crossing one of the cars bogged down, and we had hard work in getting out. In one case it caused us two hours' labor in building a stone causeway under and in front of the wheels—repeating what I had helped do not many months before in Arizona, when we struck a place where a cloudburst had taken away the bridge across a stream and a good part of the road that led up to it on either side.

In another place the leading car got into heavy sand and was unable to move. A party of gauchos came loping up, and two of them tied their ropes to the car and pulled it backwards on to firm ground. These gauchos were a most picturesque set. They were riding good horses, strong and hardy and wild, and the men were consummate horsemen, utterly indifferent to the sudden leaps and twists of the nervous beasts they rode. Each wore a broad silver-studded belt, with a long knife thrust into it. Some had their trousers in boots, others wore baggy breeches gathered in at the ankle. The saddles, unlike our cow saddles, had no horns, and the rope when in use was attached to the girth ring. The stirrups were the queerest of all. Often they were heavy, flat disks, the terminal part of the stirrup leather being represented by a narrow metal, or stiff leather, bar a foot in length. A slit was cut in the heavy flat disk big enough to admit the toe of the foot, and with this type of stirrup, which to me would have been almost as unsatisfactory as no stirrup at all, they sat their bucking or jumping horses with complete indifference.

It was gaucho land through which we were traveling. Every man in it was born to the saddle. We saw tiny boys not only riding but performing all the duties of full-grown men in guiding loose herds or pack-animals. No less characteristic than these daredevil horsemen were the lines of great two-wheeled carts, each dragged by five mules, three in the lead, with two wheelers, or else perhaps drawn by four or six oxen. For the most part these carts were carrying wool or hides. Occasionally we came on great pastures surrounded by wire fences. Elsewhere the stony, desolate land lay as it had lain from time immemorial. We saw many flocks of sheep, and many herds of horses, among

which piebald horses were unusually plentiful. There were a good many cattle too, and on two or three occasions we saw flocks of goats. It was a wild, rough country, and in such a country life is hard for both man and beast. Everywhere along the trail were the skeletons and dried carcasses of cattle, and occasionally horses. Yet there were almost no carrion birds, no ravens or crows, no small vultures, although once very high up in the air we saw a great condor. Indeed, wild life was not plentiful, although we saw ostriches—the South American rhea—and there was an occasional guanaco or wild llama. Foxes were certainly plentiful, because at the squalid little country stores there were hundreds of their skins and also many skunk skins.

Now and then we passed ranch houses. There might be two or three fairly close together, then again we might travel for twenty miles without a sign of a habitation or a human being. In one case there was a cluster of buildings and a little school-house. We stopped to shake hands with the teacher. Some of the ranch houses were cleanly built and neatly kept, shade trees being planted round about—the only trees we saw during the entire motor journey. Other houses were slovenly huts of mud and thatch, with a brush corral near by. Around these houses the bare dirt surface was filthy and unkempt, and covered with a litter of the skulls and bones of sheep and oxen, fragments of skin and hide, and odds and ends of all kinds, foul to every sense.

Every now and then along the road we came to a solitary little store. If it was very poor and squalid, it was called a *pulperia*; if it was large, it was called an *almacen*. Inside there was a rough floor of dirt or boards, and a counter ran round it. At one end of the counter was the bar, at which drinks were sold. Over the rest of the counter the business of the store proper was done. Hats, blankets, horse gear, rude articles of clothing, and the like were on the shelves or hung from rings in the ceiling. Sometimes we saw gauchos drinking at these bars—rough, wild-looking men, some of them more than three parts Indian, others blond, hairy creatures with the northern blood showing obviously. Although they are dangerous men when angered, they are generally polite, and we had no trouble with them. Hides, fox skins, and the like are brought by them for sale or for barter.

Order is kept by the mounted territorial

police, an excellent body, much like the Canadian mounted police. These men are alert and soldierly, with fine horses, well-kept arms, and smart uniforms. Many of them were obviously mainly, and most of them were partly, of Indian blood. As I have already explained, I think the Indian blood on the whole a distinct addition to the race stock when the ancestral Indian tribe is of the right kind. The Acting President of the Argentine during my visit, the Vice-President, a very able and forceful man, wealthy, well educated, a thorough statesman and man of the world, and a delightful companion, had a strong strain of Indian blood in him.

Indeed, it seemed to me that the people I met used "Indian" as having a theological rather than a racial significance. In one place where we stopped four Indians came in to see us. The chief or head man looked like a thorough Indian. He might have been a Sioux or a Comanche. One of his companions was apparently a half-breed, showing strong Indian features, however. A third had a full beard, and, though he certainly did not look like a white man, no less certainly he did not look like an Indian. The fourth was considerably more white than Indian. He had a long beard, being dressed, as were the others, in shabby white man's garb. He looked much more like one of the poorer class of Boers than like any Indian I have ever seen. I saw this man talking to two of the mounted police. They were smart, well-set-up men, thoroughly identified with the rest of the population, and regarding themselves and being regarded by others as on the same level with their fellow-citizens. Yet they were obviously far more Indian in blood than was the unkempt bearded white man to whom they were talking, and whom they and their fellows spoke of as an Indian, while they spoke of themselves, and were spoken of by others, as "Christians." "Indian" seemed to be the term reserved for the Indians who were still pagans and who still kept up a certain tribal relation. Whenever an Indian adopted Christianity in the excessively primitive form known to the gauchos, came out to live with the whites, and followed the ordinary occupations, he seemed to be promptly accepted as a white man, no different from any one else. The Indians, by the way, now have property, and are well treated. Nevertheless the pure stock is dying out, and those that survive are being absorbed in the rest of the population.

The various accidents we met with during the forenoon delayed us, and we did not take breakfast—or, as we at home would call it, lunch—until about three o'clock in the afternoon. We had then halted at a big group of buildings which included a store and a Government telegraph office. The store was a long, whitewashed, one-story house, the bedrooms in the rear, and all kinds of out-buildings round about. In some corrals near by a thousand sheep were being sheared. Breakfast had been long deferred, and we were hungry. But it was a feast when it did come, for two young sheep or big lambs were roasted whole before a fire in the open, and were then set before us; the open-air cook was evidently of almost pure Indian blood.

On we went with the cars, with no further accidents and no trouble except once in crossing a sand belt. The landscape was parched and barren. Yet its look of almost inconceivable desolation was not entirely warranted, for in the flats and valleys water could evidently be obtained a few feet below the surface, and where it was pumped up anything could be grown on the soil.

But, unless thus artificially supplied, water was too scarce to permit any luxuriance of growth. Here and there were stretches of fairly good grass, but on the whole the country was covered with dry scrub a foot or two high, rising in clumps out of the earth or gravel or sand. The hills were stony and bare, sometimes with flat, sheer-sided tops, and the herds of half-wild horses and of cattle and sheep, and the even wilder riders we met, and the squalid little ranch houses, all combined to give the landscape a peculiar touch.

As evening drew on, the harsh, raw sunlight softened. The hills assumed a myriad tints as the sun sank. The long gloaming followed. The young moon hung overhead, well toward the west, and just on the edge of the horizon the Southern Cross stood upside down. Then clouds came up, boding a storm. The night grew black, and on we went through the darkness, the motormen clutching the steering-wheels and peering anxiously forward as they strove to make out the ruts and faint road-marks in the shifting glare of the headlights. The play of the lightning and the rolling of the thunder came nearer and nearer. We were evidently in for a storm, which would probably have brought us to a complete halt, and we

looked out for a house to stop at. At 10:15 we caught a glimpse of a long white building on one side of the road. It was one of the stores of which I have spoken. With some effort we roused the people, and after arranging the motor cars we went inside. They were good people. They got us eggs and coffee, and, as we had a cold pig, we fared well. Then we lay down on the floor of the store and on the counters and slept for four hours.

At three we were up again, and started as soon as the faint gray of the dawn enabled us to see the road. The sunrise was glorious. We came out from among the hills on to vast barren plains, and drove at speed over them. Before leaving we had had bread and coffee, and ten hours later, at two in the afternoon, we halted at another little store, which, curiously enough, was kept by

Syrian immigrants, and there ate another meal of cold meat, eggs, and bread, and resumed our journey. At one spot we struck a couple of miles of heavy sand, and here we were met by some mounted police, who with ropes helped two of the cars which stuck at intervals.

It was then after sunset, and when we reached the Rio Negro all light was just dying out of the sky and a heavy storm was coming up. There is a rope ferry across the river, and after some argument with the ferryman, who objected to crossing in the storm, we managed to get over, and then, driving the cars through fiords and up sand-hills as best we could, we reached the train at ten o'clock, after eighteen hours' hard going. We were healthily tired and hungry, we had had a delightful trip, and we slept well that night.