

# GOOD-BY TO ARGENTINA

BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

**A**FTER leaving Neuquen by train [see Mr. Roosevelt's article in *The Outlook* for May 23] we arrived next morning, December 3, at Bahia Blanca, a thriving Argentine seaport town where several railways reach the ocean. It is the headquarters of the Argentine navy, and we breakfasted on one of the Argentine warships. And a fine set of men the officers were. No man could be with them and not respect and admire them. And it was a fine thing to see the work that was being done in building the great dry dock.

That evening we continued in the train to Buenos Aires, and reached it in the morning. The heat had begun at Buenos Aires. It was a little too hot to be altogether pleasant in the daytime. Yet at night the city was attractive in a way that after nightfall cities can only be attractive in hot weather—when people live out of doors as much as possible, when the parks are filled with prettily dressed girls, and when men and women saunter by under the lights of the streets on their way to or from restaurant or theater.

We saw a typical and very attractive sight on the one evening which on this occasion we were able to spend in Buenos Aires. It was

the last night of the flower festival, which took place in one of the big parks, and we drove out to see it. Stands had been erected along the edges of the chief drives, winding and twisting as the drives wound and twisted, and extending for a total length of probably a couple of miles. In these stands groups of women and girls, with a few men, were gathered, all well provided with multitudes of little bouquets of flowers and wearing their best and most attractive gowns. There was, as is so often the case in Latin countries, that curious democracy in enjoyment which we of the North find it so difficult to achieve, in spite of our more genuine political democracy. The leaders of the social world were there in rough wooden stands, and there was also present every respectable family of moderately well-to-do people who cared to come. Past the stands drove the dense stream of slow-moving automobiles and carriages, some of them being dressed up for the occasion with great elaboration. These were filled with men, in some cases with women and children, all also provided with masses of little nosegays. Brilliant electric lighting made everything as plain as in the daytime. The stands and the carriages kept up a con-

stant interchange of nosegays, pitched gently or sometimes hurled with considerable force, always with laughter and entire good humor and courtesy. The lights, the dresses, the laughing, excited faces, and the movement of the flying flowers made a gay and attractive feature.

In the afternoon at the Club Hipico, an association of army officers and civilians who have done much for improving the breed of horses, we saw some first-class jumping sports, the men riding with the dash and skill which one always looks at with admiration. Then the Club formally made me its Honorary President, and presented me with a handsome horse fully equipped with an equally handsome gaucho saddle and bridle. It was ridden by a gaucho. It was an exceptionally fine horse, and the equipment in every detail was worthy of the horse. No man could have been given a gift which he would value more than I value this. I had become deeply attached to my Argentine friends, and they were kind enough to act as if the attachment were returned.

Perhaps one reason why I got on so well with these Argentine friends was because I found that they and I were thinking and puzzling over the same problems. When Colonel Reybaud's eldest son, a gallant young fellow of twenty, serving his year as an enlisted man in the army, called on me, I felt toward him just as I would toward one of my own kinsfolk, and I absolutely sympathized with the father's pride in the boy, and also with his determination that as the boy grew up he should work hard, earn his own living, and make his own place in the world. In Buenos Aires, as in New York and Chicago, one of the chief problems among men of any means, and especially among people of large means, is how to make the young men rise level to their opportunities.

Unfortunately, in both the Argentine Republic and the United States too many of the men who make fortunes seem utterly to ignore their duties as fathers. All readers of "Captains Courageous" will remember the picture of the American multi-millionaire who was so busy in earning a fortune that he did not have time to pay any heed whatever to his son's education, while the mother lavished on the boy a fondness which took the criminal shape of permitting him every indulgence and letting him grow up so as to be a curse to himself and every one around him. In reading this story it

always struck me that Kipling himself hardly appreciated the outrageous misconduct of the father whom he was describing. Certainly the average wealthy man, and perhaps especially the average self-made man, seems to have little idea that lack of thought and painstaking supervision over his sons may be well-nigh criminal; and a mixture of neglect and indulgence, together with lavishness in supplying money, offers the best possible chance for the complete ruin of any boy both for this world and the next. No wealthy class, whether the men are hard-working men of business or mere triflers of elegant leisure, can justify itself unless the boys are brought up with freedom from vicious extravagance and selfish indulgence, and unless they are trained to work hard and to respect themselves and others.

On the afternoon of December 5 we started by train to Asuncion, the capital of Paraguay. On the road to the station we had a novel experience in the shape of a storm so heavy that it was practically a cloudburst. Buenos Aires is on flat and low ground. These sudden heavy rainfalls flood the streets. This one happened to catch us on a rather low street, and literally, not figuratively, this street and those in the neighborhood were changed into foaming torrents, which finally became a couple of feet deep. All the traffic was temporarily stopped. We saw two motors not only brought to a halt but so flooded that the water finally broke into the body of the car. In our case we hired a driver of a cart with a spiked team of three percherons to fix a chain to our car and drag us a hundred and fifty yards to slightly higher ground, where we were able to take up our interrupted journey.

Some sixty miles out from Buenos Aires we were put on a ferry-boat, and for four hours we steamed along the channels of the Paraná delta, until we got to the other side of the river. It was a beautiful evening, and in the sunset, and then when the half-moon hung overhead, the low, swampy country seemed most attractive. However, mosquitoes swarmed and came onto the boat and into the cars in myriads, giving us our first foretaste of the experiences that were to be ours for the following few months. But we slept comfortably under our mosquito-bars.

All the next day we were passing through the provinces of Entre Rios and Corrientes, which lie along the lower Uruguay and lower Paraná. It was a beautiful country, and a

most interesting railway ride. In the very early morning there was broken and rolling land. After that we passed across great plains, either flat or so gently rolling that we could generally see the houses or the trees in a stream bed a couple of miles away. Now and then we passed attractive little towns, the houses picturesque and pleasant-looking, and some of the larger ones obviously comfortable to live in. There was a fair amount of land under cultivation, but for the most part it was pasture land, the great pastures divided by wire fences and containing herds of horses and cattle, and now and then a flock of sheep. In places for miles the country would be covered with palm trees, there being more palms than I had ever seen in a like area save in the Egyptian delta. They did not grow close together, and often there were no other trees mixed with them. They simply stood in the pasture lands, while the many-colored horse herds and the droves of cattle fed among them.

There has been much less immigration to this part of the country than to most other parts, and it was in these provinces, especially the northern one, that the revolutionary habit died hardest. There was a provincial revolution but six years ago, which was only ended by the intervention of the Federal Government. The gaucho is still a prominent figure here. We saw these splendid horsemen everywhere as we passed along in the train and at the well-kept, attractive stations where we stopped. The stirrups usually were only big enough to hold their great toes, and the soft moccasin-like shoe that many of them wore was obviously made with this fact specially in view. Two or three times I saw one who was barefoot. There were a number of boys riding barefoot.

It was a picturesque sight to see the riders loping easily along some old road or herding the horses and cattle. The usual great two-wheeled carts, heavily laden with wool or hides or other market stuff, passed along the broad roads, each drawn by half a dozen horses harnessed three abreast. All over the country districts of the Argentine there is a strong preference for two-wheeled over four-wheeled vehicles, and on this day most of the ordinary driving rigs which we saw also had two wheels.

The ranches and the houses of the gauchos were scattered, sometimes in clumps, sometimes isolated, over the country. Some of

the larger houses were placed in shady groves of trees; occasionally there would be some big tree which looked like the ombu tree that we had seen in the pampas of the South. More often there would be a grove of trees, either native or eucalyptus or lombardy poplars. Many of these larger ranch houses were attractive residences. So were some of the smaller ones which were whitewashed, with gardens and groves and hedges. The poorer houses were made of sun-baked bricks, with thatched roofs and sheds. Picturesque enough these were, too, as evening came on and cooking fires were kindled outside them; or else the women, in blue and pink and white gowns, sat in chairs where the shadows protected them from the westering sun. The children, mostly black-headed, but some with light heads, played all about, and groups of young girls with vividly colored dresses strolled together along the highroads. The men and big boys came cantering back from their tasks. They swayed loosely in their great gaucho saddles. They wore straw hats, and serapes round their shoulders, and the loose baggy trousers which all these horsemen of the South use, and which are so unlike the garb of the Mexican riders or of our own cowboys. There was evidently a very strong Indian base to all this population. Some of the men and women showed more white than Indian blood, but the reverse was generally the case.

There were ostriches in the fields, so tame that they walked unconcernedly off thirty or forty yards from the train. There were many plover and many burrowing owls, evidently at home in the daylight. The oven-birds had built their mud nests on the telegraph posts. For long stretches every third or fourth post would carry such a nest. There were graceful long-tailed flycatchers and many other birds, only some of which I recognized, and even these would not be recognized by my readers if I gave their names. Once I heard a mocking-bird—I think the same bird which I had heard already in the neighborhood of Buenos Aires—and he seemed to me to be, on the whole, the sweetest singer to which I had ever listened. But there were many other bird songs.

Altogether, it was a beautiful and attractive country, with an individual and very picturesque life of its own; a country that is going forward, perhaps not as fast as most other parts of Argentina, but in safe fashion.