

IN RIO DE JANEIRO¹

BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

THE FOURTH ARTICLE IN THE SERIES
ABOUT SOUTH AMERICA

THROUGHOUT Brazil I was received both by the people generally and by the Government with a cordial generosity that was meant to be taken as an earnest of genuine good will for the United States. I was much impressed by the character of the men at the head of public affairs—both by their intellectual ability and by their sober force and earnestness. In Rio I called on and was received by the Senate, the Chamber of Deputies, and the Supreme Court. It was a handicap and a source of sincere regret to me that I could not speak either Portuguese or Spanish. Some of the men I met spoke and understood English. Many of them spoke and understood French. All were most courteous and forbearing as regards my linguistic shortcomings, and I was able to get much of enjoyment and of profit out of the various conversations.

It is often said that in order that we of the United States may understand and get on with our neighbors to the south of us we must realize that there is a fundamental difference between us and them in ideals and habits of thought and ways of life. Doubtless this is true to a degree. Every nation has its own special peculiarities and special points of difference from even the most closely allied of other nations. But I must confess that in my brief stay in South America so far what has most vividly and deeply impressed me has been, not the points of difference, but the points of unity with my hosts. As soon as we got below mere conversational banalities we were almost certain to strike matters of real consequence at which they and I looked from the same standpoint. I certainly felt very much at home with my hosts, and they were courteous enough to act as if they felt at home with me. They were as energetically and intelligently interested in business development as our own people. They were as much interested in governmental efficiency and honesty. They were as patriotic and as proud of their country.

I was greatly struck by the ability and cultivation of most of the men whom I met who are leaders in public life and in the other activities of the community. I was also struck by the fact that in so many of the essentials—the "fundamentals," as Cromwell would have called them—their ideals were the same as those of our best men at home. For example, they are quite as alive as we are to the need of developing a genuine patriotism. They realize that no man can be of any use in the world if for this patriotism he substitutes a washy internationalism. One phase of this patriotic thought is full appreciation of the fact that any man who seeks to give artistic or literary expression to achievement can do it with most efficiency if he works in accordance with his own national ideals and by preference in his own country. The men who best expressed the new spirit in Brazil showed a cordial desire to see Brazil learn from foreign countries, together with a no less determination of purpose that everything brought in should be, not copied, but changed and adapted to meet the genius of the Brazilian people and the peculiar needs of Brazil itself. They felt that mere copying of foreign models rarely amounted to much, although the study of foreign models for adaptation and inspiration is often indispensable. They felt that the Brazilian painter or poet who moved to Paris usually lost all power of doing the kind of work which he might have done if he had stayed at home, and at the same time never became anything more than a fourth-rate foreigner. They believed that the Brazilian should be a Brazilian, and not a *réchauffé* Frenchman or other foreigner. I need hardly say that I heartily agree with these views. A little can be done by wealthy Americans for the cause of art by importing the pictures of old masters and by endowing students who go abroad to study—but only a little; even supposing that in this way more good can be done than I am willing to admit, it is nothing compared to the good that would be done if these men would spend their wealth in creating and endowing an art school in

¹Mr. Roosevelt's first article on Rio de Janeiro appeared in *The Outlook* of December 20 last.—THE EDITORS.



A DOORYARD IN PETROPOLIS, A SUBURB OF RIO DE JANEIRO

America, to which the best foreign teachers would be brought, but wherein men would of necessity learn to work in their own atmosphere, with their own traditions, and among their own surroundings. We in the United States have done good work in architecture, but never when we have merely copied foreign models instead of adapting them to our own uses. There are few more ridiculous and lamentable sights than certain houses of American multimillionaires, perfect and entirely servile imitations of French châteaux or other European buildings pitchforked down into some mountain solitude, or else jammed against one another in Newport, with no earthly relation of any kind, sort, or description to anything whatever either in the life of the owners or the history of the

surroundings. There are styles of architecture of our own which it would be well indeed for artists of genuine taste, ability, and originality to develop. Such seemingly unpromising material as the American farm-house has been developed into beautiful and characteristic buildings, as witness, for instance, the house of the Popes, near Farmington in Connecticut. Some of our railway stations, our big bridges, our mercantile buildings, our sky-scrapers in the mass, and some of our libraries, are eminently satisfactory—especially when the artist has the sense even in minor matters to use American material, as when for decorative purposes he uses the bison or bison's head instead of that beast of outworn and threadbare conventionality the lion.

I was not a little impressed to find that some at least of the judges of the highest national court in Brazil understood my attitude toward the American judiciary more clearly than is seemingly the case with many American judges. They all realized that the judge-made laws to which I objected were nine times out of ten judge-made laws devised by great corporation lawyers. They understood thoroughly that I was dealing not with the exercise of the judicial function at all, but with the exercise by the courts of purely legislative functions, functions which I was assured the Brazilian Court was particularly anxious to avoid. I expressed my real gratification and surprise at finding that they so clearly understood the purpose of the new movement in America so far as it affected the judiciary. They clearly understood that I was really seeking to perpetuate, and not to abolish, the influence of the courts, and that I did not even desire to "reduce" the judges to the level at which they were in all other countries save the United States, but to continue to utilize their extraordinary powers in the only possible safe and permanent way by permitting them to exercise their legislative functions subject to review by the people themselves. I wish that the great corporation lawyers and their clients, who are the backbone of the opposition to this proposal, would realize that the courts can keep their

very great power only on condition of not trying to make this power absolute and arbitrary. If they will consent not to insist on arbitrary and irresponsible power, they can still keep very great power; but if they grasp at too much, they will be in danger of losing all, and of ultimately awakening such hostility that in the revolt against what they have done that is arbitrary and reactionary they will be deprived not only of the power they have abused, but also of power which it is well that they should be allowed to keep. The speaker who made the address of welcome to me put the matter clearly when he said that while a question of simple *justice* ought not to be decided by popular vote, yet the determination as to what *laws* were necessary was peculiarly a question for the decision of the majority of the people.

The great majority of the members of the administration and of the Supreme Court and of the men of the highest rank in all departments of life in Brazil are of pure white blood. A percentage, however, have some Indian blood in their veins, and are very proud of the fact—as they ought to be, and as is now the case in Oklahoma, for instance. One delightful Senator whom I met, General Pinheiro Machado, a man of power, both physical and intellectual, a ranchman from the southernmost province of Brazil, came in this category. This man was a fine fellow, lithe, sinewy, eagle-faced, who had in the past shown himself to be a formidable fighting soldier, and who, I was told, was now one of the two or three most influential statesmen and politicians in Brazil. He had never been out of Brazil, and, although a rich ranch-owner, had in his youth led the life of the *gauchos*—the wild cattle-herders, the cowboys of South America. These *gauchos* made a somewhat wild and lawless, but a bold, hardy, and patient type, and I was genuinely sorry to learn that the breed was tending to die out—the statesman in question informing me that he himself was almost “the last of the *gauchos*.” The President likewise has Indian blood in his veins—precisely as has been the case within my own



PHOTOGRAPH BY F. HARPER

THE ENTRANCE TO THE PALACE GUANABARA, LOOKING DOWN THE AVENUE

knowledge with three or four of the members of the United States Senate.

A traveler passing hastily through a country, even though, as in my case, he has unusual opportunities for observation, can do little more than record his impressions. Yet these impressions sometimes have a value of their own. I was assured on every hand that Brazil is a real democracy. There is universal suffrage, and the people as a whole take a keen and intelligent interest in the working of their government. Moreover, it certainly seems that they are less apt to be misled than portions of our own electorate by appeals made in the name of democracy which really have nothing whatever to do with democracy. Again and again in the United States we have seen constituencies



THE REMARKABLE SUGAR LOAF MOUNTAIN AT RIO DE JANEIRO

which elected some man because he refused to wear a cravat, or did not wear socks, or went without a collar. I was assured that in Brazil any effort to curry favor with the people by antics of this kind would merely excite derision. If a man were a very able man, then he might be pardoned an idiosyncrasy of a laughable character; but he would be lost if for a moment he was believed to be affecting such conduct under the impression that it showed that he "sympathized with the people." A few of the public men I met were men of good private fortune, although of course not rich men in the sense that our multimillionaires are rich. Most of them were men of moderate means. They were not only very courteous, and obviously on the whole cultivated, but they showed an innate refinement that made it a pleasure to meet them.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lauro Müller, widely known to our people by his visit to the United States last summer, is of German parentage. I can perhaps give the best idea of him by saying that as a statesman and man of the world he reminds me more of the late John Hay than does any other public man of any country. Yet Mr. Müller's grandfather was an ordinary peasant immigrant who worked with ax, pick, and shovel, and his father was a small shopkeeper (I repeat this with his consent). The future Foreign Minister began in a store at \$8 a month, and his career has been just such as that of the men who because of their careers we like to think of as typical of the United States. He studied at night, he attracted the attention of his employer by the excellence of his work, he managed to

get admitted to a military school, and did so well in it that he secured a commission in the army, and became colonel of engineers before he went into civil life. He is as enlightened and progressive, as energetic and capable a public servant—in short, as useful a public servant—as we can show in all the United States.

Throughout my stay in Rio I had detailed to me as aides Colonel Pederneiras, of the Brazilian army, and Lieutenant Moreira, of the Brazilian navy. The Colonel is now the head of a smokeless powder factory modeled on the best factories in our own country. The Lieutenant is a graduate of the Brazil Naval School, which in its turn has been modeled on Annapolis—for whereas in the days of the Empire Brazil was apt to look to England for example, so during the days of the Republic she has been apt to look to the United States both in matters governmental and in matters industrial. Intellectually France has always been the model in Brazil, and my experience leads me to believe that among most of her people of all classes, ranging from statesmen and scientists to young girls, French books are even more commonly read than Portuguese. I visited

the Naval School, and was immensely struck by the personnel and equipment. Evidently the training is good. As for my two aides, I need only say that I felt that they were like the best of the men in our own services—and to those who know the United States army and navy as well as I do there can be no higher praise.

I feel that I ought to keep a check upon myself so as not to be overenthusiastic, and I am writing after only a brief experience. Yet, looking at things as coolly as possible, I do find it difficult not to use superlatives when I deal with the beauty and healthfulness of the surroundings of this city, the cleanliness and the progressive spirit of the city itself, and the charm and power of the public men I met. The immense strides that have been made both in private business and in actual public business of the practical type, such as the turning of Rio into a modern and in most respects a model great capital, impressed me more than I can well say.

It has been said that Brazil has not developed a national type. I do not agree with this view. Doubtless the type is not as clearly fixed as in the United States; and



THE MUNICIPAL THEATER AT RIO DE JANEIRO



THE PALACE GUANABARA AT RIO DE JANEIRO

equally without doubt, as in the United States and in every other country which is growing, the type itself tends to change. But the change is due to growth, and does not mean any break in continuity. There is a well-marked Brazilian type, the foundation of which is the old Portuguese stock modified by three centuries of colonial existence and one century of freedom. The great European immigration of the last few decades, which is mainly from the Latin countries, but which has also included Germans and Slavs, has modified this type, but has not fundamentally changed it. The sons of these immigrants become Brazilians precisely as the sons of the immigrants to the United States become Americans. They lose their separate languages and fuse. This applies as much to the German and English immigrants as to the children of the Portuguese, Italians, French, and Spanish immigrants. There is nothing more absurd than to talk of the possibility of any European power obtaining possession of any portion of Brazil. The sons of the immigrants from the very nation itself would be the first to take up arms on behalf of Brazil against that nation. I met men of high position who were the sons or grandsons of Germans, Englishmen,

Frenchmen, and Spaniards. All were Brazilians and nothing but Brazilians. All conform to the national type, though doubtless each strain has contributed something of value to that national type, exactly as has been the case in the United States.

Altogether it is impossible for the observer to visit Rio de Janeiro without being struck by the extraordinary progress that has been made of recent years. The city is one of the most beautiful, attractive, and healthy of all the great capitals of the world. The other cities in the country districts are following in its wake. Brazil is throbbing with the energy of a new life. The only possible threat to this new life and to the immense progress accompanying it would come from disorder and turbulence—that is, from any outbreak either of revolutionary or separatist activities. I do not believe that there will be such turbulence or disorder. If there is not, the immense territory, much of it virgin and of extraordinary fruitfulness, which lies within the boundaries of Brazil will witness a literally astounding development during the next two or three score years. Unless all signs fail, the twentieth century will be the century of the growth of South America.