

GLIMPSES OF PARAGUAY

BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

ON the morning of December 7 we found ourselves in Paraguay. [See Mr. Roosevelt's article "Good-by to Argentina," in *The Outlook* for May 30.] It was a rich, fertile, well-watered country, level, with a few hills, and for the most part grassy or swampy plains, broken by clumps of trees or stretches of forest. It was not thickly populated, and it was evident that it was in no way developed to the extent of its possibilities. There was a little agriculture, there were patches of sugar-cane, groves of bananas and oranges, but most of the country was used for grazing. The cattle were for the major part the old longhorn stock, which has been bred out farther south.

Continually we passed through villages, and the inhabitants were usually down at the well-built, attractive railway stations to look at the train as we passed or to speak to us when we stopped. It was Sunday, and we saw girls and women in parties of half a dozen riding to the *pulperias*—the little stores, which are not only stores but bar-rooms also. The women were often barefoot, but their bright blue or red or green bodices and skirts gave them a gay appearance, and they were sometimes decorated with flowers. The countrymen—the peasants—lived in picturesque cabins of mud bricks, with thatched roofs. There were of course many poor buildings in the little towns, but even in the smallest towns there were also some that were well

built and attractive. Frequently the men whom we saw riding beside the train were barefoot, with just big toes thrust into the small stirrup rings. Most of the ordinary people, especially the peasants of the lower class, showed strong traces of Indian blood, this blood being dominant in them. But it is a mistake to assert that the lower classes in Paraguay are pure Indian. The lower classes are predominantly Indian, and the upper classes predominantly white; but there is a strong strain of Indian blood in the upper classes, and of white blood in the lower classes; and there is no hard and fast line of demarcation. On the contrary, the colors and the social classes shade into one another by countless gradations. Many of the women, children, and men of the poorest class were obviously almost of pure white blood, and many of our cultivated and charming hosts, who stood highest in the social life of the country, showed strong signs of Indian blood; in some it was even predominant.

In the countries we had hitherto visited the Indian languages are mere dying and isolated fragments, important only in the sense that the Indian languages of the United States are important. But in Paraguay the original Indian language as originally developed and perpetuated by the Jesuit missionaries is still one of the two languages which are almost equally commonly in use. This Indian tongue, the Guarany, belongs to the

widespread family of Tupi Guarany tongues spread from the north of the Amazon to the Paraguay. It is in universal use throughout Paraguay, and almost everybody understands and uses it. The lower classes in many cases speak Spanish only with difficulty, as a foreign tongue; many of the young men and girls of the middle classes who speak Spanish well nevertheless use Guarany in their own households; and even the most prominent citizens speak it colloquially when addressing their servants. For example, the President of the Republic, an able and powerful man, a successful business man, is the son of a German-Swiss father and a Paraguayan mother. His wife is the daughter of a German father and a Paraguayan mother. Neither of them could speak German, and neither of them had ever been out of the country except to go to Buenos Aires. But, in addition to Spanish, they spoke Guarany fluently, the President being able to make election addresses in it. At a dinner I sat by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and when he had some request to make to the waiter he made it in Guarany.

Paraguay is a very old settled country, the capital city, Asuncion, being considerably older than Buenos Aires, and three-quarters of a century older than any settlement of English-speaking people in the United States. It was for long practically under the control of the Jesuits, who Christianized the Indians and protected them from white aggression; and it was largely this attitude of protecting the Indians against the whites that finally drew down such wrath on the Jesuits as to bring about their expulsion. By the time they were expelled Guarany had become firmly fixed as the tongue of the Christian Indians. The Jesuits translated various books into Guarany. But after their expulsion every effort was made to discourage its use and to make Spanish the sole language of the land. The first book published in Guarany since the expulsion of the Jesuits was a translation of the four Gospels by the English Missionary Society. I was given by a German lady, Countess von Bülow, long a resident of Asuncion, a copy of the Sermon on the Mount printed in parallel columns in Spanish and Guarany. The Guarany rendering of "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" is "Hohúpýtŷ mbaé yporaéteba humí oguêrecó potŷba ycorazo haécuéra hábarehé ohecha-baéra Túpá-me." The Bible Society has

done much in helping the translation of the Scriptures into Guarany. The Catholic Bishop of Paraguay sometimes preaches in Guarany, and when the Positivists, who are a very active body in Brazil and Chile, exactly as in France, undertook a propaganda in Paraguay, some of their professors expounded their faith in Guarany.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs was greatly interested in the language, and told me much about it. I said to him that I hoped that as soon as possible some Paraguayan scholar would make a collection of the folk tales and poetry which must flourish abundantly in the Guarany tongue. He told me that I was right; that there was very much poetry, mostly of love, and a great number of folk-tales, many of which were interesting. One of the Guarany songs which is very short he repeated to me. It expresses exactly as any Occidental love poetry would describe, and with much the same use of similes, the lover's desire for his mistress—the world-old song of praise and desire. The Guarany dialect stands on a totally different footing from the ordinary Indian dialects. Many Spanish words have been adopted into it, and it has become the conversation medium of a people who, though with much more Indian than white blood in their veins, have nevertheless inherited, although in simple form, a European culture. The Paraguayan peasant who speaks only Guarany and a little Spanish is a Christian whose ways of life and habits of thought are more nearly akin to those of the poor inhabitants of out-of-the-way nooks in southern Spain and Italy than they are to those of the wild Indians. In short, at the present time Guarany in Paraguay occupies much the position that a century or two ago Magyar occupied in Hungary, and while of course it may die out, it is also possible that it will persist, just as Magyar and Finnish and Basque, all three non-Aryan tongues, have persisted in Europe.

Asuncion, where we spent forty-eight hours, is a delightfully picturesque city, although the streets are badly paved and the lighting is poor. It is much more like an old-time Spanish-American city than it is like Rio or Buenos Aires or Santiago. It has a peculiar charm of its own. The houses are, with few exceptions, only a story high. They have deep pillared porticoes, high ceilings, and long windows, and within there are open courtyards, crowded with flowers and beautiful trees and surrounded by galleries. Some-

times pictures are painted on the walls, inside and outside. Sometimes the walls may be colored rose or blue instead of being left white or gray. Often the houses have gardens about them. The whole city is bowered with strange tropical trees. Some at the time of our visit bore masses of red or pink flowers, others bore yellow flowers, others lilac or blue, others white. There is a trolley line in the streets and automobiles; but I was informed that both are of the most recent introduction, the trolley lines having been built six months before our arrival, and the first automobile brought in not much more than a month before we came. The old methods of transit and carriage have not been affected. Bullock carts and mule carts pass to and fro, and strings of women, on donkeys, with red bodices or black mantles. Riders from the country come in, often bare-footed; one very shabbily dressed man wore on his bare feet two handsome silver spurs. The market-place is filled with chattering and bargaining women. After sunset people sit in the little plazas, and the fragrance of the glowing tropic plants comes in gusts on the air, while the girls of every shade, from pure white to dark Indian brown, lean from the windows, singly or in groups, and the men walk the streets or sit at the little tables in the open-air cafés. There were two picturesque and attractive hotels—although this does not mean that visitors must expect to avoid an occasional tropical drawback to their comfort. Personally, thanks to the courtesy of an ex-President of the Republic, I was lodged in a big, handsome house with a lovely garden; it had deep porticoes, and long windows which could be opened wide to let in the cool night air or completely darkened to keep out the midday sun.

The President took us on his yacht, or gunboat, for an afternoon's run up the river and back. We went to a place known as Villa Hayes, so named after ex-President Hayes, whose memory the Paraguayans esteem because under his direction an arbitral court sat in a case between them and one of their powerful neighbors, and the decision was in their favor. The United States cannot make a practice of interfering unasked in quarrels between its neighbors, but where both sides seek its good offices they should always be given.

The trip on the river was very pleasant. The company on the boat included as pretty and well-dressed women and girls as one

would see anywhere, while I was fortunate enough to meet some very intelligent and cultivated men. If a man cannot enjoy the social life of Asuncion, with its high-bred, polished, and kindly men and women, he may be sure that the fault lies with him and not with his hosts. There are a number of students who had studied in American colleges and universities, others who had studied in Europe. These offer admirable material for citizenship, and can be of real help to their countrymen, always provided, of course, that they keep in touch with these same countrymen of theirs so as to know not only their needs but their demands and possibilities, and therefore the ways in which they can really be helped.

In Paraguay, as elsewhere, men to whom I talked sometimes incidentally remarked that history had shown that it was not possible to have as high civilization in the tropics as in the cold and temperate regions. I always answered that we must not dogmatize about history from insufficient data. The average man tends to speak as if a century indicated a remote historic past, and as if a thousand years was practically infinity. As a matter of fact, we can trace back civilization for nearly ten thousand years; and for many tens of thousands of years previously there must have been growing some partial civilization of which we have now lost all trace. The earliest civilizations of which we have any full and clear record, those of the Nile and Mesopotamia, were placed, one in sub-tropical, and one in very warm temperate, conditions. During the thousands of years that they flourished all the colder regions of the earth, even including Greece and Italy, were the seats of barbarism. Then for a thousand or fifteen hundred years more the highest civilization did not spread northward beyond Greece and Italy. Civilization, especially as it has been the product of cold northern regions, is historically a very modern affair; and from the standpoint of the paleontological record of man's life on this globe it has occupied but a minute of time.

The really extraordinary feat that has been accomplished by those responsible for making the city of Rio de Janeiro what it now is shows that we must beware of dogmatizing overmuch as to the inability of the tropics again to sustain a high civilization. Dr. Kruse, in his laboratory outside of Rio, Dr. Brazil, in his laboratory outside of São Paulo, are pioneers in the work of extirpating the deadly

diseases which have been the most fatal obstacles to the growth of an energetic civilization in the tropics. Effective warfare against these deadly diseases, for the most part borne by insects, by microbes, or even by low fungoid plants, has really been carried on only for the last two decades. The next half-century or century may show such advances in our power of grappling with the evil forces of tropical nature as to enable man not only to live but to keep his full energy in the tropics. If so, the tropics may once more become the seat of the highest civilizations.

Paraguay has suffered in the past chiefly because of its repeated revolutions, which have prevented the industrial growth of the country. After she, in agreement with the other South American countries, secured independence from Spain she fell under a series of very extraordinary dictatorships—dictatorships of a character such that under them it was quite impossible that the capacity for self-government could develop. Then came the frightful slaughter of the war which Paraguay waged against the triple alliance of Brazil, the Argentine, and Uruguay. With an obstinate courage that had in it a quality of high heroism, Paraguay for five years defended herself against an overwhelming superiority in strength, and at least three-fourths of her male population died, and multitudes of her women and children as well. Since then it is natural and inevitable that the growth should have been slow. Nevertheless, the Paraguayan people have admirable qualities, and all, high and low,

have a feeling of devoted affection for their country. They have a rich land, and if they can but achieve political stability and order their development will proceed as rapidly as that of their great and prosperous neighbors. The twentieth century is the century of South America.

Already there are prosperous industries in Asuncion. I call to mind, for instance, a great German mercantile firm and the English bank. At the station we were met by an old friend, one of our own countrymen, G. L. Rickard, who afterwards went up the river with us, a thirty-six-hour journey, to his ranch. He lives across the Paraguay, on the western side of the river. He already has forty-two thousand head of cattle, and the company to which he belongs has purchased a large tract of land at twenty-five cents an acre. There is an excellent chance for business success in Paraguay. Of course in such a country a man must have special qualities to enable him to succeed; but if he has those qualities he will succeed.

Education is moving forward in Paraguay, although not as fast as it has moved forward in certain other South American countries. They have started an organization of Boy Scouts, who paraded in my honor just after I had visited the Art Museum, where some devoted men are deserving well of their country by doing all that they can for the cause of art. In one vital essential the life of Paraguay is on a thoroughly sound basis. I don't think I ever saw a country where there were more babies!

