

Buenos Ayres and home to England.

I was rather sorry for myself when I started for Argentina. While I was staying in Sao Paulo with Kate I climbed up a hill, made still more slippery by the storm, and fell heavily on my right wrist. The doctor bound it up, put it in a sling and told me not to use it for three weeks and that then all would be well with it. Three weeks passed, my hand was unbound and all was not well with it. It was as stiff as a piece of wood. I was not only sorry for myself that I should not be able to carry back any picture~~x~~ record of a new country but I began to feel that I should never be able to draw again.

It was a voyage of four days in a fast ship from Santos to Buenos Ayres, and my wrist was no better at the end of it than it had been at the beginning. Eva had to help me in every way. The sea was calm; we had nice cabins, the one given to my brother and Eva seemed particularly pleasant. Our return journey was already booked in the Roal Mail ship, "Amazon". I should part with Edward and Eva at Santos and return to England alone.

Our ship stopped for a few hours at Montevideo. We landed and drove through the city on our way to lunch with one of my brother's friends who lived in the suburbs. Montevideo seemed

to me like a pleasant country town, not like the capital city of a state. I cannot remember one important building in it. Our ship crossed the wide estuary at night and we arrived at Buenos Ayres at about eight o'clock in the morning. I could no say the same of that city as of Montevideo. If I had only visited it for an hour I could not forget what I had seen of the capital city of Argentina. What impressed me most besides its fine buildings were its huge granaries and grain lifting towers. They ranged along the wide La Plata river and although I found them too wide-spread and formal for a picture yet they were fine to look at with their immense dark shapes silhouetted against a curtain of dull pink. While I was there the river was waveless. It is so wide that nothing is to be seen of the further shore. It never looked flat to me but seemed to hang vertically like a background curtain in a studio and a curtain carefully chosen for the sake of the quality of its strawberry and cream colour to go well with the dark towers. It must have brought down much scarlet mud from the red lands.

Edward had taken rooms in a popular hotel kept by an English-woman. When we were taken up in the lift we found it decorated with smelling white flowers and maidenhair ferns. This was in honour of a wedding that was taking place in the hotel between a young rancher up country and a girl just arrived from England. When we down to lunch Eva, as usual, cut up my food for me.

Edward found out that there was a regatta to be held that

day at Tigre. We could drive there and on the way back we should pass the famous racecourse and see something of the racing that would be going on.

The weather was lovely. When we had driven beyond the houses of the city and beyond the group of tall Eucalyptus trees that grew on the outskirts we came to a country very strange to me. After the abounding growth of Brazil it seemed arid and poor but one feature in the landscape struck me very much. There were few trees to be seen there in those days besides weeping willows. Groups of them were round the untidy shacks which took the place of our cottages. They were growing in a straggling fashion along our road and when we walked by the river (a tributary of the La Plata), we walked under an avenue of weeping willows.

The river at Tigre looked far from Beautiful to me. It was deep down with straight high banks as if to control inundation. While walking along under the drooping trees I noticed that Eva looked very pretty but had a far away, unseeing expression. I thought it might be the flickering shadows of the leaves sweeping over her face that made her look unreal.

When we were driven back we halted on a high piece of road where it looked over the big oval of the race course. Races were going on and we were in good time. The speed of the horses as they rushed past us seems in my memory the speed of horses in a film. I had not seen such fine ~~creatures~~ creatures before not have I since. When we drove under the red barked

Eucalyptus trees on our way back to the hotel I again noticed Eva's face. It was deadly pale and I realized that she was ill. The doctor had to be sent for and he pronounced her to have a virulent type of influenza. We learnt afterwards that the cabin on ship board given to her and Edward had been vacated at Rio by a couple so ill with influenza, that they had been taken straight to hospital in an ambulance, yet the cabin had not been disinfected ! That night my brother cut up my dinner for me.

The next day Eva said that she wished to sleep and drove us out into the air. We saw it would trouble her if we did not go and we decided to take a tram as far as it would ~~take~~ carry us to the outskirts of the town - the outskirts in the opposite direction to that we had taken to Tigre. The top of the tram was open and we sat on a long sideways seat. We reached a desolate and dried up country, flat and uninteresting. The only objects I saw, which I remember with any clearness, were plants with small round scarlet berries that looked like the winter cherries that we grow in pots in our greenhouses. If they were winter cherries they flourished there by the wayside as weeds. We were nearing the city again when my brother said to me : "I am ill, Mary. I am afraid I have caught the influenza. You cannot nurse both of us. I shall go to the English Hospital." I was dismayed but I felt he was right. He went off to the hospital the next morning. The waiter cut up my meals for me.

I now spent my time in going from Eva to Edward - from the hotel to the hospital - morning and afternoon. They were both anxious about each other and I was anxious for both. More so at first for Eva but very soon far more for Edward. The hospital was some way off. I took a tram there and the first day when trying to come back I lost my self. I had not noticed that no trams met me and I wandered about the streets trying to find the one down which ran a tram that would take me back to the hotel. Buenos Ayres is built like New York in rectangular blocks. Having learnt where to catch a return tram I did not fail again but I often did not take one but walked the distance. I met and passed very smart ladies. I was soon told that I lived in the city where the best dressed ladies in the world lived. Their smartness could not be dimmed by the blackness of the clothes they wore. It was the beginning of Holy Week. No shops had any articles in the windows that were not black. In a big window of a millinery establishment were displayed black hats of all fashionable shapes and in the centre was a life sized black marble bust of Christ with a crown of thorns round his head. When I walked forth and back I walked on the other side of the road to that shop.

Eva began to get better and could listen to me when I read aloud to her. We happened to have only one book with us - "The Reminiscences of an Irish R.M.". I finished it. We wanted another and there were possibilities in Buenos Ayres of

buying English books but we held our hand and did not venture to buy any or flowers or indeed any luxury in the then state of our finances. After some days I dared not buy a newspaper even. Neither of us are fond of card games but on Good Friday when all shops were shut we took the advantage it gave us and borrowed from our chambermaid a pack of not very clean cards with two missing. All these absurd difficulties came from Edward having come with a letter of credit to a Bank in the city and having neglected to call there the first day we arrived. He was too ill the second day and in Holy Week all the Banks were closed. What money we had we had spent gaily the first few days, little thinking of what straits we should come to. We were afraid that even when Easter had passed our difficulties might not be over. Edward was becoming more and more incapable of doing any business. From my report Eva felt dissatisfied at the way he was being looked after in the Hospital. She asked me to go and see the English doctor who was its head and beg him to arrange that my brother should have a special nurse who would herself prepare his food. I went to the doctor's house. The finding of the house was difficult, the interview still more difficult for he was a formidable man, very rough in his manners. I succeeded in rousing his interest and he promised his help. That was a great relief but it did not enable us to get any money. Also we were puzzled as to whether to cancel our journey back in the "Amazon". Our time in Argentina was passing away.

I went downstairs to lunch one day feeling very low. I

had been to the hospital. Not having enough money even for the tram and being very tired I had taken a cab, and ordered it to wait at the hospital for me. I found the new nurse cooking some food for the invalid over a lamp but the invalid was too weak to speak. My only comfort was that the nurse was cheerful and seemed to understand what to do. I made the most of that. I got back into the cab and drove to the hotel and ordered the porter to pay my fare and put it down in the bill. I went into the restaurant not so tired as usual in body but miserable in my mind. The debt for the cab to the hotel weighed on it. I felt that I did not know what I should do in the future. That little empty purse in my pocket cast an astonishingly big shadow over me. The waiter cut up my food for me in his usual grave and detached way.

I saw some fashionable black-dressed ladies sitting at a table near mine who stared at me and evidently disapproved of my coloured, and by no means new, dress. Even when it was new it would not have been up to the Parisian standard of Buenos Ayres and the sun and the storms of Brazil had by now worked their will on my wardrobe. I felt my helplessness and wished heartily that I had not been in such a grand hotel and if tears did not fall into my plate it was a wonder.

A note was handed to me. It was from the lady proprietor of the hotel asking me to come and see her in her room. I felt that I turned pale. I went to her with my mind in a mist of

alarms, not knowing what I was in for. I was conducted to a private part of the hotel and the door was opened for me into a richly and heavily furnished room. I saw, sitting in a comfortable armchair, an elderly lady with an intelligent face. Tremblingly I sat down. I was soon cheered. She told me that she had two grandchildren staying with her and that their nurse - quite a young girl - was the daughter of a bone setter, well known among the ranchers up country. The girl felt that she had her father's talent, had heard of my wrist from the waiter, and wished to be allowed to try her hand at curing it. The lady said that she would give the nurse permission to treat my hand but if I accepted the offer I must know that she herself would not be responsible for advising me to do so. There must be no question of payment as it would cause the girl professional difficulties. With immense relief and no fears I accepted the offer and my treatments were to begin the following morning. When this was settled the lady told me how much she regretted a sad event that had taken place which had cast a gloom over the hotel. The girl who had been a bride for so short a time had come back to the hotel as a widow. The funeral was to-day. In a few days the poor girl would return to her home in England. Her husband had refused to let his headman break in a fine young colt, wishing to break it in himself. A quarrel ensued and the man shot his master and fled. I had been already depressed in spite of new hope for my hand and I now felt more so



for when I went up to my room I found the light was hung with black. Inexpressably dreary!

I walked to the hospital. I found my brother quite different. He had taken some food. He was no longer dazed. He could talk to me and told me what I was to do to get money and we were, he said, on no account to cancel the berths in the "Amazon". My depression vanished although I was still alarmed at his extreme weakness.

I had a treatment from my nursemaid the next morning. She said that she must give me a very painful time as she had to do in a few days what should have taken weeks. I nearly fainted over it that first day but I felt sure that she would succeed and she did succeed.

We had to wait for the Banks to open again after Easter. My brother gave me a cheque for the amount I mentioned that we should need for our hotel. Alas and alas, I had asked for far too little. When I had named the sum he was too weak to think out that what I should consider ample for an hotel in England would not be enough for one of the best hotels in Buenos Ayres. Edward was to be taken to the ship in an ambulance. I could not get at him that last day. We had not enough money left to tip the maids. We made pretty speeches to them and ransacked our trinket boxes for gifts. I had already given my best brooch to my nursemaid-masseuse so my trinket box became very light. We had to choose whether to slip away, not tipping the hotel porter, and driving in a cab to the Docks, or to tip him, take

an outside porter and walk. We chose the last. Eva held her head high and told the hotel people that she was well and would ~~enjoy~~ enjoy the walk, but she drooped when she got beyond the range of the imposing hotel porter's eyes. After that proud start she was forced to sit humbly on shop window projections or on any house steps that came our way, I standing in front of her to shield her from curious eyes. At last we reached the docks and got on board the "Amazon" in time to see Edward carried from the ambulance to his cabin where Eva joined him.

While the "Amazon" was still by the quay at Buenos Ayres I remained on deck. There was plenty to see on the quay. The President of Argentina was to voyage to Rio on our ship to pay a visit to the President of Brazil. The crowds that had gathered to see the President off were dressed in their best. The ladies were no longer in black clothes but in new, smart, coloured costumes. It was the first time that I had seen ladies taking out looking glasses and powdering their faces and touching up their lips in public. Many of them did this when they arrived on the sunny quay. I remember I felt a Victorian scorn for them.

During the journey to Rio the President was guarded by a watchful entourage. All day long he sat on deck with a circle of men round him all sucking matea from little bowls through silver pipes.

It was a sad day when I had to part from Edward and Eva

at Santos. They were both, after four days at sea, quite well. I thought when I was bidding them good-bye, that I was also bidding good-bye to Brazil for I had no intention, being alone, of landing at any port. But my farewell to Brazil was not, after all, to be said in Santos.

I did not enjoy my voyage back in the big "Amazon" as I had enjoyed my voyage out in the little "Thames". The passengers were not quite so friendly and there were too many of them. I sat at the First Officer's table. Opposite to me sat a lively Chilean lady. She was pretty, witty and catty. The stories she told to amuse her audience all round her were so alarmingly broad that I again felt Victorian. Her husband was a quiet, kindly man.

When the ship arrived at Bahia we were told that it would be anchored in the bay from early morning until ten o'clock in the evening. Any one who wished to do so could land. To my great surprise the Chilean lady and her husband asked me if I would be their guest in an expedition to the town. About six or seven people were joining the party. I said "yes" at once. I wanted to see Bahia very much.

The party was taken across the bay to the quay in a sailing boat. The sea was a vivid blue. The lower town on the shore, where the descendants of the negro slaves live, as well as the upper residential and shopping town on the cliff shone brilliantly in the morning sunshine. A strong young negro

managed our boat and did the elaborate tacking necessary for there was an adverse wind and it took a long while to go a very little way. He sometimes leapt past us as the wind slackened or tightened the rope of the sail. Then he would stoop low down in the boat holding the rope or stand swaying guiding the ~~skip~~ big sail to swing this way or that. His attitudes were fine and all his joints were as supple as a young leopards. I found that it was my turn to shock the Chilean lady. It is not at all the thing in the opinion of any one from Chile to look at a negro not even, as I found out later, for a European lady to look at a negress. I erred in that way several times after I had been told that it was not good form. However I felt sure that my eyes were given me for seeing all that I could of the fine things of the world, not for shutting them up against any of them. I wondered why my hostess wished to land in what had been the great slave city, but I fancy it was just to visit the shops in the upper town.

My host did not pay the boatman on our landing but ordered him to meet us that evening to take us back to the ship. He explained to us that it would never do to pay him or there would be no certainty of a boat to take us back. We went to the upper town by the electric lift. The ladies shopped. I had little money by now to spend it on the rubbish they bought. No native work seemed to be sold in the upper town. After lunch we wandered round. The market place was planted with a tree that I

had not seen before with bright/light green leaves, red flowers and with brown seed vessels like giant bean pods about two feet long.

We had separated during the day but we all met together in ~~at~~ a restaurant for supper - a very gay meal. It was discovered that we were a little late in starting back so we had to prepare quickly for our return journey. The electric lift was very near the restaurant so no one was really anxious. We were just going to sally forth when suddenly the electric light went out in the room! It was out in the street! The whole town was in total darkness! We heard that the electric lift would not be working so we had to find our way through the black night to the oil one. The gentlemen of the party went in front, hurriedly and yet hesitatingly. We were going through, there was no doubt, very slummy streets and lanes. One of my brother's friends in going through Bahia by night was stabbed in the back. Thinking of this I allowed myself the luxury of believing that I was in a dangerous and romantic situation. How easily could I be tripped up by some rubbish in the street and left behind. I was not left behind. We found the oil lift and were deposited on an untidy and almost totally dark quay. We went quickly along hunting for our boatman. There were a few negroes about with dim lights here and there. They could tell us nothing about him so at last another negro had to be persuaded to take us. I heard my host tell his wife that we should be lucky if our boatman did not stop in the middle of our passage and demand an

exorbitant sum before he would take us further; we might, he added, in any case be too late as the "Amazon" would wait for no one. I wished I had not heard his remarks.

The wind was with us. We heard the impatient hooting from the ship. I think the excitement of catching it affected our boatman for he made strenuous efforts and did not stop to demand extra pay. If he had done so our chances of reaching England in the "Amazon" would have been small indeed. We were met by a very angry captain because he had had to keep his ship waiting for us. I was sorry for our first boatman not having had his fare but I was told that he would get it out of his next passengers. I looked back at the barely seen black silhouette of the huge cliff that carried the city of 365 churches. The massive shape got lower and lower and soon I could see it no more. I said good-bye to my land of light in the darkness of the night.

When I arrived at Harston I found an invitation card waiting for me to a big "At Home" to be held in the University Arms Hotel in Cambridge. I arrived back in May and this was one of the first social functions for the May gaieties. I went to it looking forward to seeing all my friends. Little more than three weeks had passed since I had been watching a smart crowd of well dressed ladies on the quay at Buenos Ayres. I was startled by what I saw of the ladies of Cambridge in their best clothes. Were those clothes indeed their best? Did my friends

always look like that in May week ? Did I look like that ? I had gone thousands of miles and had been taught at least one thing by Argentina - that we English ladies at our finest cannot rival those of Argentina in dress and that those of Cambridge are not in the running at all.

How delightful it was to be welcomed back after six months stay away ! Dress, what was it ? Nothing ! Friendship ? Everthing !