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ARGENTINE REPUBLIC.



Zuesada (V. G.)

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1888.

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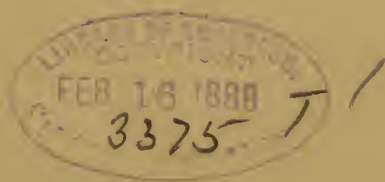
Vicente S. Lussada

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*From Columbus
May 20 1888*



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ARGENTINE REPUBLIC.

Argentine Republic, sometimes simply called **ARGENTINA**, is a federal republic of South America, taking its name from the river La Plata ('River of Silver,' a misnomer). It has an area of 1,125,086 sq. m., including the unsettled territories on the north and the south, but the organised and settled provinces occupy less than one-half this area. The whole country is more than ten times larger than Great Britain and Ireland taken together. The republic is made up of fourteen provinces and a number of territories as follows: (1) The coast provinces of Buenos Ayres, Santa Fé, Entre-Rios, and Corrientes; (2) the Andean provinces of La Rioja, Catamarca, San Juan, and Mendoza; (3) the central provinces of Cordoba, San Luis, Santiago del Estero, and Tucuman; (4) the northern provinces of Salta and Jujuy; (5) the territory of the Pampa; (6) the territories of Neuquen, Rio Negro, Chubut, Santa Cruz, and Tierra del Fuego in the south (these together comprising the greater part of what is known as Patagonia); and (7) the northern territories of Misiones, Formosa, and Chaco. On the west, the Andes divide this republic from Chili; Bolivia bounds the country on the north, while Paraguay, Brazil, Uruguay, and the Atlantic Ocean form the eastern limit. The great island-group of Fuegia, on the south, belongs partly to this republic and partly to Chili.

The physical features of the country are easily described; except for the sub-Andean foot-hills, and a few other local and unimportant hilly or mountainous tracts, nearly all the country consists of vast plains or pampas. The northern plain region (the Chaco) is in part densely wooded; but most of the Pampas country is open, presenting wide ranges of treeless pasture, varied by patches of huge thistles and other coarse plants. In the Patagonian region there are extensive districts completely covered with stones and shingle, interspersed with clumps of thorny brushwood, and having in the hollows many strongly saline ponds or lakes.

The native animals include the guanaco, the fox, the skunk, the chinchilla, the nutria, the biscacha, and various species of ant-eater, armadillo, deer, and peccaries. Thousands of wild cattle and horses, descendants of stock of Spanish importation, inhabit the remoter districts; but the systematic pasturage of live-stock (the main industry of the country) is reducing the range of the wild cattle. Bird-life is singularly rich and varied. The rhea nandu, or American ostrich, is one of the most remarkable species. Humming-birds, parrots, and flamingos are among the conspicuous birds.

The climate in the extreme north is very hot, for it lies north of the tropic of Capricorn. The more remote southern territories have an extremely bleak, windy, and disagreeable climate, but are not really so cold as might be expected from their relatively high latitude. But the country in general enjoys an equable, temperate, and healthful climate. The littoral region is subject to high winds, called pamperos, which often extend far out to sea. The people of the country are mostly Spanish in

their language and descent, but there are many Italians, French, and other European immigrants. The Gauchos, or herdsmen of the plains, are a hardy and spirited, but ignorant race, often of partial Indian descent. Some of the Indians of the remote districts have become skilled in the rearing of flocks and herds. Agriculture has of late been rapidly extended. Wheat, maize, flax, and linseed are exported; but the chief staples of export are skins, hides, hair, bones, bone-ashes, horns, phosphorus, ostrich-feathers, wool, tallow, dried and salt beef, beef-extract, fresh meat (frozen), and live animals. The recent great extension of the railway lines has done much to develop the country. The greater part of the republic is well watered and highly fertile, but there are extensive regions of waste land. The various fruits of European culture all find the conditions for growth in this country. The imported vine and the apple-tree in some places have so spread that they form great thickets, and afford much food even to the wild tribes of the southern territories. Sugar-culture thrives in the NW. and north. Wines, spirits, and dried fruits are extensively produced; a valuable product of the north is *maté*, or Paraguay tea.

The mineral resources of the country are comparatively undeveloped. In the sub-Andean regions, chiefly to the NW., some gold, copper, lead (said to be valuable), and silver are obtained. Salt, iron, alum, lime, marble, cement, and coal, are among the minerals of the country. Rich deposits of gold are reported to occur in Patagonia.

The principal seaport is Buenos Ayres, the capital and largest city. Situated on the great La Plata estuary, its commerce has been hindered by the shoalness of its

water-approaches; but extensive engineering works have in part overcome the difficulties of navigation. The Patagonian coast has many large bays, but is very dangerous, and is also deficient in good harbour facilities. The rivers Paraná and Uruguay, with their large tributaries, are important channels of trade. The principal articles of manufacture are cattle-products, sugar, spirits, flour, furniture, &c. The manufacturing industries are receiving much attention. The population of Buenos Ayres in 1886 was 398,498. Among the other large towns are Cordoba (50,000), Rosario (45,000), La Plata (26,000), Mendoza, Tucuman (26,000), Corrientes, Santa Fé, Gualeguay, Gualeguaychu, Paraná, Salta, San Juan, San Nicolas, and Santiago. Rosario de Santa Fé, Corrientes, and Paraná are important river-ports, and the first-named has a very large trade. Ensenada (adjoining the town of La Plata) and Bahia Blanca are sea-ports of rising importance. The nearly completed Trans-Andean railway will probably divert much of the direct trade of Chili to Argentine ports. At present there is very little trade and not much overland communication with Chili, owing to the difficulty of crossing the high intervening mountain-ridges. The commerce of the country is very largely with Great Britain and France. France purchases over one-fourth of all the Argentine exports, and Britain takes about half as much of the exports as France. But of the Argentine imports, nearly 40 per cent. is received from Great Britain. The United States have only a very limited direct commerce with the Argentine republic.

The Roman Catholic is the established religion, but others are tolerated. Education is provided for by law,

and many schools are sustained at public cost; among them being normal, mining, agricultural, and training schools. There are universities at Buenos Ayres and Cordoba, and connected with the latter is the national astronomical observatory.

The population of the country in 1869 was 1,736,922; in 1882 it was officially estimated at 2,942,000 (less than 3 to the square mile), of whom 1,907,000 were Argentines, and no fewer than 339,000 of Italian birth, 161,000 Spanish (very many of whom are Basques), 153,000 French, 51,000 English, and 54,000 German and Swiss. The large number of Italians is a conspicuous feature of the population. Much of the increase is due to immigration, nearly 400,000 immigrants having entered the country in the five years, 1881-86; of whom 70 per cent. were Italians, 10 per cent. Spaniards, and 8 per cent. French.

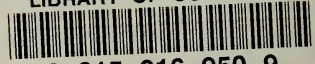
The government is closely modelled upon that of the United States. In the executive, legislative, and judicial departments alike, is this resemblance very conspicuous. The total debt of the republic amounts to more than £42,500,000; and loans have also been negotiated by several of the provinces separately. The budget for 1887 showed an estimated income of £9,700,000, and an expenditure of £9,475,000; but for some years past the annual expenditure has exceeded the annual revenue. The army and navy are recruited by voluntary enlistment. In 1886 the army strength was 8720, including a large proportion of officers; and the national guard was returned at 347,653. The navy included 3 iron-clads, 6 gunboats, 8 torpedo-boats, all of good classes, and over 20 other steamers, mostly of a small size.

In 1886 the length of railway lines open for traffic was 3350 miles (extending from Buenos Ayres to Mendoza, with a projected extension across the Andes to meet the Chilian railways, and to Tucuman), and 815 miles more were in course of construction. Above 15,000 miles of telegraph-wires stretched through the country, and over them about 600,000 messages passed within the year. There are about 600 post-offices, and the service in 1885 carried over 20,000,000 letters, and 15,000,000 newspapers.

The river La Plata was visited by the Spaniards in 1516, and the country was colonised in 1535, when Buenos Ayres was founded. For many years the country was regarded as a part of Peru. The progress of the colony was not more hindered by the bloody wars which prevailed with the natives for a hundred years, than by unwise legislation at Madrid. In 1776 Buenos Ayres became the capital of a new viceroyalty. In 1806 that capital was occupied by a British force under General Beresford, but the town was soon besieged and compelled to surrender. In 1808 the British forces under Whitelock assaulted the town, but after very severe loss, were themselves compelled to capitulate. In 1810 the colonists founded a local provisional government. A sanguinary war for independence followed, which did not cease till 1824. Spain acknowledged the independence of the country in 1842. The first half-century of Argentine autonomy was much disturbed by revolutions. The Brazilian-Argentine war against Paraguay (1865-70) was interrupted and followed by renewed revolts at home. But latterly the great material progress of the country has been accompanied by an equally re-

markable movement in favour of stability of government and the repression of factions. The policy of the government towards agricultural immigrants is highly liberal. An interesting colonial experiment has resulted in the establishment of the town and territory of Chubut, in Patagonia, peopled mainly by Welsh settlers. No other South American country has made such widespread and rapid improvement as this. See Mulhall, *Handbook of the River Plate* (1884); M. F. Paz Soldan, *Geografia Argentina* (1885); Lady F. Dixie, *Across Patagonia* (1880); G. Bove, *Patagonia Terra del Fuoco* (1883); and the recent British and American *Consular Reports*, some of which are full of important and interesting information.

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