land, but how it was not till 1904 that Negritos and Talara began their prolific output which, in 1929, reached the peak of 13,386,000 barrels.

Meanwhile, having "done" the oilfields, the human side of Talara interested us the most. International Petroleum is nominally a Canadian firm—and is as pro-British as any internationally owned oil corporation can be. There were a large number of Canadians, Americans and English working at Talara. All were only too pleased to see fresh English faces and during our four days' stay made every facility available to us and gave dances at their club. The mouth-organ band played at the Club and the Concert Party gave a revue at the local cinema.

Talara was a rift of Saxon efficiency in a morass of South American barbarity. Here were well-tarred streets and traffic signs, here was activity and well-controlled industry. English more than Spanish was spoken. Panagra air-liners dropped in with mail posted three days before in New York. Golf, polo and football were all played with somewhat sandy energy. In fact Talara, like Colon, was an unexpected and very welcome break.

PAITA

We left Talara at 0600 on 14th September and anchored off Paita at 1000 the same day. The sight of this port was depressing. It consisted of a wide-mouthed bay bordered by high, bare and yellow cliffs, at the foot of which huddled the small town of Paita with the railway disappearing inland as its only sign of modernity.

Yet Paita was busy. Cotton, its principal export, was selling well. Panama hats, made in Catacaos, were also handled. These hats are made chiefly in Guayaquil, but other countries also manufacture them—in fact Panama hats are made in most South American countries except Panama.

The Mayor of Paita was disturbingly pro-British. He was a deaf old gentleman with a kind old face and was desperately anxious to do all he could to honour England in return for our courtesy in visiting his town. On the first night he delivered

himself of a long and energetic speech to some 20 officers and the town council, consisting mainly of insanitary hoboes and villainous-looking priests. He spoke in Spanish, referring to Shakespeare, Nelson and Byron among others. He spoke forcibly, and as he was somewhat lacking in teeth there was no obstruction to the torrent of rhetoric which he directed mainly at an officer who understood not a word of Spanish. Not quite certain whether he was being honoured or insulted, the officer's attitude became slightly hostile. This, however, went unnoticed.

Forewarned is forearmed and the Captain got up to reply with another Spanish speech composed in advance by one of the ship's interpreters. Only those "in the know" realized that this speech had little to do with the Mayor's and that ladies were addressed though none were present. However, the spirit of friendliness was, by this time, white-hot. Ship's officers showed remarkable self-control in the suppression of all outward signs of laughter and we were then conducted to a near-by club—the town band playing with enormous gusto and officers and town council marching together in column of fours.

Paita was not a noble city and Piura, the inland capital of the province, little better. A very old railway, owned by the Peruvian Corporation (a British concern), connected the two. Although the car journey took barely an hour, the train, with its old-fashioned carriages and its oil lighting, never made the trip in less than three hours. Thus free travel on the railway lost its attractive flavour.

It was with few regrets that we sailed on Thursday, 17th September, for Chimbote. Amost any place, we felt, would be better than Paita. But we had omitted guano in our calculations. . . .

CHIMBOTE OR SMELLS, SMELLS AND SMELLS

If the railway at Paita was old, the one at Chimbote was hoary with antiquity. Seventy years of age, only one of its four original engines had survived—and that engine was the

only motive power on the line. Its maximum speed was slightly over 12 miles an hour, and the permanent way was so uneven that the whole train rocked dangerously from side to side.

Chimbote's only other claim to modernity was a level stretch of sand on which planes from Lima alighted. Lima was only two hours away by air and the seaplane flew down one day and collected our mail.

But what of Chimbote?

To begin with guano. This commodity is lavishly supplied by the millions of birds which call Chimbote home. Those who were not on deck when the ship anchored, soon realized we had arrived. Guano is not a passive smell, it is arrestingly active. And nothing penetrates so quickly into every unexpected corner as a good ripe stench.

Chimbote is a splendid natural harbour. It has good accommodation for a fleet and is almost landlocked. The village, apart from having a 70-year-old Frenchman as its Mayor, was unimpressive and dirty.

Much time was spent in picnic parties and efforts to shoot the numerous duck reputedly seen by the Sub. One picnic party thought they had found alluvial gold in a river—and though it was probably some kind of quartz, no proof has yet been given either way. So *Ajax* may still number a gold-rush among the many enterprises started. . . .

Meanwhile the ship was painted in readiness for Callao—our next port of call—and by the end of our seventh day in the wilderness we were only too glad to weigh anchor and sail south for Callao.

LIMA—CITY OF KINGS

In Lima history lurks round every corner. Its very name conjures up the proud pageantry of kings, the regal splendour of the Spanish Empire's capital, the dignity and greatness of the first city in the New World. It was in 1530 that Pizarro began his conquest and in 1535 that he founded the city of Lima with its noble cathedral in which he lies buried. From then until 1821 Lima was the seat of the Viceroy whose

authority and power was scarcely less than that of the King of Spain.

In 1821 Peru's independence was declared and the glory faded. Nowadays Lima is a fine modern city—the best laid-out of any on the west coast. It has fine squares and broad streets. It has traffic control and speedy trams . . . yet, although it is a city of over 300,000 souls, it has no postal delivery of any kind and only one post office. Perhaps no one writes letters in Peru.

We arrived at Callao, the port of Lima, on Friday, 25th September. Most of the Peruvian Navy, bought second-hand from England, was in harbour . . . and the Captain had a strenuous round of calls to make. The most interesting personality was Colonel Lembke, the Prefect of Callao. Colonel Lembke was an old Etonian and served for many years with the English Army. He was a close friend of the President's and had personal responsibility for the President's safety—no small matter when you take a glance at the record of Peruvian Presidents. South American politicians must find it difficult to insure their lives.

Callao is a scrubby-looking town—unimpressive and featureless except for its staunch fortress, whose massive walls look capable of resisting even the highest of high explosives. But half an hour is sufficient for Callao. You then make your way to the tram-stop and board a fast American tram, which takes you the eight miles to Lima at a speed reaching 50 miles an hour.

Lima is very different. Perhaps the most inspiring of its buildings is the Foreign Office. This is the one-time palace of the Duke of Torre-Tagle and conveys more vividly than any other building the spirit of Lima. It is stately and dignified. There is a Rembrandt on the walls and finely carved doors of blackened wood that suggest down to every detail the life that used to be led in these *salons*—the powdered wigs, the full basket skirts, the picturesque courtesy . . . and when you think of a picture like that, you must also remember that outside these fine thick walls, outside the gentle shelter of the patio, lay a nation enslaved, living under animal conditions and under the savage dominance of Inquisitorial Spain.

The cathedral, too, is a fine building and some of the carving most delicate. Here, embalmed in a glass case, lies Pizarro—the man who destroyed a civilization and turned South America into a Spanish colony. Few of us had ever before seen a body "pickled" and we were forced to marvel at the art of men who could preserve the human body so well that after 400 years its shrivelled features might still be recognized.

Lima sees the sun rarely. The foothills of the Andes touch the city limits, and through this and sea currents it is almost perpetually under a cloud. Even so, it seldom if ever rains.

Sport in Lima was arranged through the good services of the Lima Cricket Club. A highly successful concert was given by the ship's concert party and the harmonica band went on the air.

While at Lima, too, Colonel Grippo contrived to arrange several trips on the Central Peruvian Railway up to Rio Blanco (11,501 feet), and managed to slip a barrel of beer on board each train.

The Central Peruvian Railway is the highest standard gauge railway in the world. At its highest point it attains an altitude of 15,806 feet at "La Cima" on the Marococha branch line. The highest point on the main line is a short distance from Ticlio, nearly in the centre of the Galera Tunnel, at an altitude of 15,693 feet. To reach this height the regular passenger trains pass over 41 bridges, through 61 tunnels and over 13 zigzags—a journey taking nine hours thirty-two minutes' running time, with an average rise of 27 feet per minute being maintained for 172 kilometres.

During the early stages of construction some 8,000 men found employment, while the loss of life through accidents and disease was considerable.

The building of a railway between Lima and Oroya was first mooted by a Mr. Henry Meiggs, an American, in 1868. With the approval of the Peruvian Government, he prepared a plan and approximate cost of the work. On 3rd April 1869 the estimated cost of construction of a railway—27,600,000 sols (a sol at that time being worth 4*s.*)—was placed before the Government. This estimate was approved and on 20th January 1870 the Commission commenced to appropriate the right of way.

Owing to a concession previously granted, and in force at that time, the Government were unable to concede to Mr. Meiggs the right to construct a public railway between Lima and Callao. To overcome this difficulty, however, he purchased on his own account the necessary land between these two points and built a private railway, over which he hauled the construction material for the new railroad.

The first portion of the line was opened the next year as far as Cocacharra. This was on 9th February 1871, and various positions were opened between this date and May 1878, but in 1879 construction was suspended during a war with Chile. Meanwhile Meiggs died and the Peruvian Corporation Ltd. was formed in 1890 to resume the work. Casapalca was reached in 1892, and Oroya in January 1893. Since the completion of the main line several branch-lines have been constructed, the latest being the Huancayo extension, which was finished in 1908.

The morning chosen for our trip turned out dull and sunless. A special coach was attached to the passenger train at Desamparados Station, Lima, a barrel of *cervéza* put on board, and off we steamed. Sun soon began to pierce the mist and as we rose we found ourselves bathed in hot sunshine. Fruit, sugar-cane and maize grew by the wayside, and cotton and bananas were also seen on occasion.

At Chosica, the City of Perpetual Sunshine, beauty began to be mingled with novelty. This village, 2,821 feet above sea-level, has one of the most up-to-date hotels in Peru and has become one of the principal health resorts of the country. San Bartolome was our next stop, and this village is known as the fruit garden of Lima. In spite of supplying Lima with most of its fruit, the natives were quick to offer us "ready-use" supplies of lush-looking fruit together with gargantuan bunches of violets and carnations.

It was after San Bartolome that the real climb began. The locomotive had been reversed and we proceeded backwards up a sort of vertical "Z" track. On reaching the angle of the

"Z," the train was braked and the engine transferred to the front end again, in which position it stayed for the rest of the journey.

Rising suddenly and almost vertically in this way, the grandeur of the scenery suddenly leapt into focus and we began to sense something of the might of the Andes. Moreover, the feat of engineering entailed in building the track on which we were travelling gave us other cause for wonder. At Kilometre 84½ we crossed the longest and highest bridge on the Central Peruvian Railway. This was Verrugas, 575 feet long and reconstructed by an American bridge company after the old viaduct had been washed away in 1889 by a cloudburst and avalanche 250 feet above the valley. Verrugas is the name given to a mysterious disease which renders all the district within a radius of 30 miles of the bridge unsafe for human habitation.

Through numerous tunnels and over various bridges we next came upon Surco. This village is largely dependent on the brisk trade in violets which it carries on with the passengers of the Central Railway. Many of us returned to the ship looking like a horticultural show, as large bunches over a foot in diameter could be bought for the equivalent of 6d.

The next point of interest was Viso, the first double zigzag. In the construction of the railway it was discovered that the only way to avoid heavy tunnelling, squeezing round sharp curves or resorting to exceptionally heavy grades necessitating cog-wheels, was to zigzag up the mountain-side—that is to say, the train is backed up a vertical "Z" track into a siding and then goes ahead again and up the next incline—the only thing needed being a couple of points. Looking out of the window, there seemed to be mighty little between us and a drop of 500 feet or more. The Central Peruvian is not a railway I should care to negotiate during the landslide season.

At Rio Blanco our coach was detached and a few minutes later we were on our way down on the back of the down-coming train. None of us made use of the oxygen cylinder, though the height (11,501 feet) was clearly noticeable in the rarity of the atmosphere.

BELOW RIO BLANCO

The journey down was taken at great speed, and if we did arrive in Lima tired and dirty, we were also richer in experience. Few people get the chance of travelling to such a height in such comfort.

For a large part of the way a new metalled road follows the railroad track closely. This highway runs from Lima to Oroya, and has just been opened. It is almost as big a feat as the construction of the railroad, and it follows the "Via Real" of the Incas.

POLITICS

No tengo destino, no tengo papel,
No tengo dinero—so I'll go to hell,
No tengo trabajo—so what shall I do?
Caramba! Caramba! me voy al Peru.

(Old Hobo's Song)

Peru cannot be left without a word on the political situation. We visited the country at a most interesting time—namely, about a month before the Presidential Elections. Feeling was at its most apprehensive. While the ship was at Talara, Jorge Prado, who was fancied by the *Daily Mirror* as Peru's next President, came on board *Ajax*. He was nearing the end of an aerial electioneering campaign, in which he figured out he would have visited every village in the country. The high cost of this feat of exhibitionism he no doubt intended to reclaim when he got into power. Too bad, he lost.

The only other candidate of any note was electioneering under grave difficulties, since he would have been arrested had he appeared in public. "Apra" was the name of Raoul Haya de la Torre's party, and its policy was reputed by the ruling class to be communism, but on examination seemed to be little more radical than the policy of an English National Government.

When the day arrived the Apra candidate was elected and, as had been expected, the result was promptly annulled by the Army, who stepped in and extended General Benavides' term of office for him. Thus is a free election conducted in South America . . . though it must be admitted that in this case it

is probably the wisest thing that could have happened. Political unrest is the most serious hindrance to Peru's prosperity, and though the country is one of the most potentially rich in the South American continent, mismanagement of her official affairs would be certain to cancel out any advantage to be gained from the development, enlightened or otherwise, which foreign firms are making of Peru's many resources.

CHAPTER XX

CHILE—THE SLENDER COUNTRY

DETERMINED FRIENDSHIP

WE spent more time in Chile than in any other South American country, and in three months visited towns in almost every region. We had been told that in no other country should we receive the warm welcome that Chile would accord us . . . and this proved to be true. Speeches, banquets and general expressions of friendship were showered on us in every port. Some were genuine: others were obviously not. Summing up the general attitude in Chile, I should say that affection for Great Britain was sentimental rather than deep-rooted, artificial instead of genuine.

Those in uniforms or in Government employ might be expected to greet us with friendliness. They did. But the English who lived in Chile and who worked in the country had a very different story to tell. Indeed, it needed no great powers of observation to penetrate the thin veneer of international courtesy.

Chile has caught the modern disease—nationalism. "Chile for the Chileans" is a popular slogan, and in following this principle the inhabitants of this (comparatively) small country ban all foreign goods that can be made in Chile and hinder in every way the trading of foreign firms. At Iquique, for instance, there are two railways. One belongs to the British Nitrate Company, is well run and has done much to develop the north of Chile. Alongside it the Government has built another track—manifestly less efficient but "National." Two months before our arrival the bankruptcy of the British railway was almost assured since the Government refused to renew its concession. This "final straw" was in addition to the numer-

ous other obstructions, such as control of fares and insistence that so many passenger trains be run . . . at a loss.

Whisky is 30*s.* a bottle ; so is English gin. The gin made in the country was almost undrinkable and acted like poison. "Panagra"—the international air-line—is forbidden to carry passengers between towns in Chile unless the full fare on the National air-line is first paid. All the evils of an entirely selfish nationalism are beginning to sprout. It is purely because of a deficit in the Exchequer that Chile has not, like Japan, built up her Army and Navy to absurd and unnecessary limits.

I talked to a stationer in Valparaiso. The only moderately good paper I could buy was prohibitively expensive. I asked why, and was told the story of the National paper factory. A clever Chilean, it seems, owned a broken-down pulp-mill and paper-works. This concern had never paid, but ingenuity came to its rescue. The Chilean spoke to his friends in the Government. Shortly afterwards a crushing tariff was imposed on all foreign paper imported. "National Industry" flourished, one man became rich and Chileans had forthwith to accustom themselves to using an inferior home-made paper in preference to a high-quality foreign product which used formerly to cost the same. Thus is world trade disorganized.

Perhaps because we spent so much time in Chile, perhaps because Chile may have been the most degenerate country we visited . . . whatever the reason it was impossible not to notice how every industry, every trade, every product was exploited by a few clever men. For instance, potatoes.

Whilst at Antofagasta and Valparaiso it was most difficult to get a supply of potatoes. The common spud was accounted a luxury. Why? There were islands in the south of Chile with mountains of potatoes waiting to be removed. How was it that a potato up north was worth almost its weight in gold? The answer was simple. Shipping magnates had combined to force the price up—in addition there was a shortage of this vegetable in the Argentine, where they fetched a good price. Chilean potatoes accordingly went to Argentina, through the good services of those who controlled shipping : the farmers in the south became rich and the rest of Chile suffered.

New rubber tyres were at a premium. In Santiago and Valparaiso buses were more often than not operating with treadless tyres. To avoid the heavy import duty, a smuggling organization was at work on the Argentine frontier. Cars went over from Chile without spare tyres. A few days later they returned—this time with a new spare on the back.

And the peso 140 to the £ sterling. And at one time the peso was worth seventeen pence—as many marooned Englishmen will tell you along Chile's 3,000-mile coastline.

Like the natives of all small and impoverished countries, progressive Chileans were self-assertive to a degree. It was impossible to make an appreciative remark on another country without having the leering expression "But in Chile much, much better" thrown in your face. To which there can be no rejoinder but polite silence.

The average Chilean male lacked any morals—as far as women were concerned. The women, on the other hand, were strict Catholics and full of superstitions that must have vanished from England and America a full century ago. They were heavily chaperoned and lacked the faintest spark of independence. Many Chilean girls were undisputed beauties but dumb as doorposts. The idea of exercise was totally foreign to the Latin-American mind, and to find an elderly woman who was not a moving mountain of flesh was indeed a rarity. In Chile there is no divorce law, but an army of lawyers flourish through their ability to discover legal flaws in marriage contracts, thus annulling the deal. Chile, in fact, was riddle-raddled.

Yet it must not be thought that Chile was especially worse than other countries. Most of the foregoing applies to the rest of South American states. Argentina and Brazil are somewhat more evolved—but cultural development was at much the same level.

How many times were we faced by the saying : "But in Europe, you think us all Indians and savages—no?" And how many times did we politely reiterate our diplomatic denial of this statement? Yet, looking back, I'm not so sure. . . . Indians and savages did you say? . . .

IQUIQUE—THE DERELICT CITY

Of all towns in Chile, Iquique is probably the hardest hit to-day : and of all towns in Chile it was there that we got the warmest welcome.

English and Chileans alike, united by the collapse of the nitrate industry, seemed genuinely glad to see us and entertained us with every resource at their disposal. From Monday, 5th October—when after circling the Esmeralda buoy in homage to Captain Prat, we anchored shortly after nine o'clock—till after lunch on Monday, 12th October, our time was taken up continuously by parties, dances and expeditions to the nitrate *oficinas* up on the pampas.

The Masonic Hall was packed every night and Mr. George Wood, in conjunction with Colonel Grippo, organized free beer. Ship's orchestra and harmonica band returned the compliment by giving entertainment almost every evening. The ship's concert party performed at the Municipal Theatre and the gunroom strove valiantly at basket-ball for the honour of the ship. Moreover, at the Victoria Pavilion a boxing exhibition was arranged. Ship's boxers fought with each other, as also did the shore boxer—thus promoters and public were alike satisfied and both sides parted in an amiable mood, being certain that if they *had* fought each other they would *undoubtedly* have won.

Riding for the officers was arranged by the Chilean Army (and whose horse lay down exhausted after its exercise ?) and a football match was lost to the local side.

A large number of us took advantage of the nitrate railway's offer and spent a day inland at an *oficina*. Iquique is on the great northern desert, and one's principal memory was of dirty yellow sand. This is a universal feature of Chile's nitrate region, which lies between latitude 19 and 26 south. The country is barren, lacking any sign of vegetation on account of the absence of water. The people of this region informed us that when last they had rain the whole country-side was luscious with shrubs and flowers. Throughout the length of this district and parallel to the Pacific runs the Cordillera de la

Costa—the coastal range. This line of mountains is like the rest of the country—unfruitful. It occupies a belt of land 36 miles wide and its height varies from 3,000 to 6,000 feet.

The interior side of this range, unlike the coastal side, which is sheer, descends gradually to a high plateau. Across this longitudinal valley spurs of the Andes extend like great lions' paws, and it is here that the Andes reach their highest average height—their lowest passes being at some 12,000 feet. In these foothills are fertile valleys and offer the only possible ground for habitation in the nitrate region.

It is said that the Incas used saltpetre as a manure for their crops before the arrival of the Spaniards, who used it for the manufacture of explosives. The real development of this belt of saline deposits began in 1830 with the European discovery of the fertilizing properties of nitrate, and the industrialization of this discovery dates somewhere about 1878, when J. T. Humberstone introduced the "Shanks" process of lixiviation then in use in Europe for the elaboration of potash.

During our stay in Iquique some of us had the honour and pleasure of meeting "Don Santiago" Humberstone, and also of visiting the *oficina* Humberstone, named after this great character. The whole Chilean nitrate industry owes this old gentleman almost all its development. Chile, in fact, recognizes this. In 1925, the Asociacion Salitrera bestowed on him a gold medal. The following year His Excellency the President, Don Emiliano Figueroa, awarded him the high honour of the medal "Almerito." The former honoured the technician, the latter the Christian spirit of fellowship which always dominated his actions. In 1930, at the Centenario del Salitre (Nitrate Centenary), he was the guest of the President—and during our stay we learned that King Edward VIII had awarded him the "Order of the British Empire."

The *oficinas* where the nitrate is extracted from the caliche (nitrate-bearing stratum) are scattered over the pampa. This means that food, water, power and railways have all to be driven to the nitrate plant. This has all been done. Water is brought down by pipe-line from the Andes, food by railway

from the sea, and towns have sprouted in the barren pampa—towns containing shops, hospitals, cinemas and libraries.

Caliche is the hard earth-crust. It contains nitrate of soda, potash salts, calcium, magnesium and iodine compounds mixed with gravel and clay. This layer varies in thickness and is usually very hard. It is broken up by drilling or dynamite, and taken away in lumps to the factory. Here mechanical crushers break them into small pieces. Travelling belts and elevators carry this substance up to enormous rectangular tanks at a higher level. Here it meets with boiling water, a muddy-looking liquid results and lixiviation takes place. This liquid contains large quantities of nitrate in solution. It is then drained off into other tanks and the nitrate crystallizes. When dry it is ready for " bagging " and for despatch to any part of the world except Egypt. Why not Egypt? Because nitrate for Egypt must be pink.

Nitrate is normally white, but it so happened that the first consignment sold to Egypt had some impurity in it which turned it pink. From then on Egypt would buy no nitrate unless it was this colour—considering all other kinds to be impure. So nowadays one tank is always doctored to specification.

Carbonate of soda, sodium sulphate and perchlorate of potash are nitrate's by-products, but by far the best known is iodine. Chile produces almost all the world's supply of iodine, and yet production is far, far in excess of demand. Anyone able to discover a new use for iodine (apart from making people swear) can be certain of gaining a fortune nowadays—but so far no inventor has come forward.

Production of nitrate has had large fluctuations. From the beginning of the industry, when, in 1879, 250,000 tons were produced, output rose to 2,800,000 tons in 1913. Post-war crises and the discovery of synthetic nitrate have reduced annual output to something like 450,000 tons. Iquique's boom years were 1925–9. It was then that the railway laid in its four immense Garrett engines—the largest in the world—and was forced to work them 24 hours a day in shifts. In those days, Iquique must have witnessed scenes such as one

only sees in a gold-rush film. Money was so plentiful that even when the Town Council had filled their pockets there was still enough to tar all the roads. It was in those days that the railway built up a reserve fund of over a million pounds.

For many years, too, the export duties levied by the state formed 50 to 60 per cent of the total national revenue. It is probable that no other region in the world has so supported the State as the nitrate district of Chile. And now, with all this mineral wealth barely tapped, only 16 out of 134 *oficinas* are working.

However, those which were working contained cheery enough souls—as those who did the trip discovered. On our arrival at the *oficina* we found all the boy scouts and girl guides lined up on parade to honour us. I say lined up, but the lining was somewhat uncertain—especially as units kept disappearing to talk to friends further along. However, intentions were of the highest—as were those of the almost unbelievably tuneless band which announced our arrival by rendering " God Save the King " in the manner of Paul Whiteman playing the Rhapsody in Blue. Hardly were we given time to recover before the Commander (E) was observed to be taking the salute from serried ranks of boy scouts and girl guides of an average age of eight or less. This fine ceremony concluded (without casualties), we were led in to lunch, where Chilean beer and wine of the Tinto and Blinko varieties helped to wash down course after course of an interminable Chilean repast. That meal is graven in our memories.

About 3 o'clock the return journey was begun. Two or three of us did it on the footplate and, apart from getting slightly scalded and very grimy, enjoyed the experience. Private impressions can more than fill in the gaps in this narrative, so no more need be said—yet I doubt if any of us will soon forget the lunch-time music with which the band regaled us. Ten brass instruments, all playing in different keys (and some different tunes), have battered their way into at least one listener's memory.

The population of Iquique is shrinking rapidly. There are barely 200 British left, where there were once well over a

thousand. The one-time sports club and racecourse is being converted into an Air Force aerodrome. The "white gold of Chile" has failed Iquique, and by 1940 one resident reckoned the town would be no more than a fishing village on the fringe of the inhospitable desert.

ANTOFAGASTA

Our entrance to and departure from Antofagasta were pure musical comedy. We were berthed alongside for the first time since Colon. As the ship slid along the mole a military band hove into sight and, having formed up just where we hoped to place a gangway, burst into "God Save the King." Now "God Save the King" is all very well, but played in two halves and with each half played twice, it is apt to lose some of its dignity. Moreover, the bandmaster's speed (full gallop) was more suited to Latin than Saxon temperament. Valiantly maintaining straight faces, we stood to the salute while berthing arrangements came to a standstill. Eventually the *himno nacional de los ingleses* came to its end and faces and arms relaxed. The bandmaster, however, sensing a big tactical victory, immediately cracked on full steam and broke into the interminable Chilean National Anthem. This was too much for all concerned and smiles gave way to irrepressible laughter.

Such was our entry into Auntygofaster on Tuesday, 13th October. A similar ceremony took place on leaving the following Tuesday. "She shall have music wherever she goes."

Antofagasta, which looked just as barren from the sea, certainly had more activity than Iquique. It owed this to the Antofagasta-Bolivia Railway, which assured it of a regular transit trade (it was Bolivia's main outlet to the ocean), to the copper mine at Chuquicamata, and to the giant nitrate *oficinas* of Maria Elena and Pedro Valdivia.

Yet, even so, Antofagasta was shrinking. "Trade was not as it had been," we were told, "and what with nitrate being so low in price, etc., etc." A walk round this grimly com-

mercial town confirms this statement. Antofagasta is suffering from the general decay which has set in all over northern Chile since the world depression of 1931. There seems to be little prospect of its recovery.

But in Antofagasta as in Iquique everyone was very hospitable, though more casual. The railway gave us the run of their tennis courts and the concert party gave a small show in the Railway Rancho (or club-hall), seating about 200.

The Captain and two officers went up to Chuquicamata copper mine and also saw over the Pedro Valdivia nitrate works. When we were in Buenos Aires the following January we read with dismay that Chuquicamata had blown up and some 300 people were believed to be dead.

Antofagasta's water came 70 miles across the sandy pampa, and this made residents think twice before they left a tap running. It also seemed to discourage the use of water as a drink, and Antofagasta was one of the hardest drinking towns visited in South America.

A feature of Antofagasta's harbour was the phosphorescence of the sea-water. Returning to the ship after dark, the whole harbour appeared to be full of silver fish of varying sizes, and the slightest movement in the water was detectable by reason of the phosphorescent lake. The lazy movement of some old seal was the signal for thousands of small fish to dart to safety, and in consequence the water was a shimmer of light.

Apart from the usual round of balls, parties and picnics there is nothing else of interest to record, and though we were scheduled to spend five days at Coquimbo, our thoughts were already concentrated on Valparaiso—the Pearl of the Pacific.

COQUIMBO—THE SHODDY NEIGHBOUR

We had been told that Coquimbo was the beginning of vegetation in Chile. And so it was. A good deal of it was human. In fact country-side and population shared it about fifty-fifty. Coquimbo was also reputed to be the spot where Drake's treasure lies buried and treasure-seekers are even now at work hopefully digging.

The British Community was small and a bitter feud separated the two main families. Ten miles away to the north lay La Serena, capital of the Province . . . and compared with this old Spanish town, with its lavish display of flowers and its grey stone buildings mellowed by time, Coquimbo seemed very much of a shanty town. La Serena was renowned for its flowers and its women. During our stay only the flowers were on view.

In Coquimbo the Great God Mañana exercised his sway. Along the main street ran the railway and the street was untarred and in its natural state of mud. The reason was that Coquimbans were always expecting the railway to be taken up—there had been some rumour about it many years ago. Well—they're still waiting and Coquimbo's Piccadilly is still impassable after rain.

In much the same way as the Home Fleet in the autumn proceeds north to Invergordon, the Chilean Fleet comes to Coquimbo for exercises. Probably they enjoy it even less. Though one local resident informed me that Coquimbo was "just a whirl of gaiety." . . .

At Coquimbo the ship was given a smart new coat of paint in preparation for Valparaiso, and sailed thither on 27th October, getting in the following morning.

VALPARAISO—OR PARADISE LOST

Only fifty years ago Valparaiso was one of the most important cities in South America. It was to the West Coast what Buenos Aires is to the East—namely, a terminal port. The largest ships then built made Valparaiso direct from London via the Straits of Magellan. At Valparaiso cargo for Peru, California and Canada would be transhipped—for those were the days before the Panama Canal. In those days, too, "Chile" meant "Valparaiso" even more than it does to-day. Everyone of importance lived in Valparaiso. Embassies and Consulates were there and Santiago, the capital, was a small neglected town of a quarter its present size.

The opening of the Panama Canal severed Valparaiso's

main artery. Trade with North America collapsed with a dizzying crash ; transit trade vanished. Colon and Balboa, not Valparaiso, became America's clearing house. . . . Valparaiso's death-knoll had been sounded.

It was then, also, that Santiago began to develop into a modern city. In the ten years from 1920 to 1930 land values boomed, skyscrapers were run up and electricity was exploited as in no other city. Santiago went modern. Embassies and Consulates-General moved to the seat of government. A new and up-to-date aerodrome came into being. To-day Santiago is still growing though no one quite knows where the money is which pays for the construction of new blocks of offices, flats and enormous luxury hotels.

But of Santiago more later. Meanwhile we were entering the harbour of Valparaiso, passing the Chilean battleship *Latorre* (ex-H.M.S. *Canada*) and, from our berth alongside Chilean destroyers, watching the mist trying to clear from the bay. Some of us were bitterly disappointed in our first glimpse of the "Vale of Paradise"—others were merely expectant.

Whatever previous illusions we had concerning this city about which so many adventure stories have been written—one was certainly exploded. Valparaiso was not a great city. Unlike Buenos Aires, which seems to be the work of one man, Valparaiso lacks grandeur and is frankly commercial. Your eye is caught by rusty cliff railways and by cheap-looking advertisements. Valparaiso gives the impression not of a fine well-planned city but of a mining dump which has grown up without altering its nature.

So much for first impressions. Maybe it was the cold damp mist in the bay, maybe it was the strange feeling of blue uniform (not worn for well over six months), or perhaps it was merely that we had expected the Pearl of the Pacific to be gleaming for our benefit on arrival that caused our disappointment—but whatever we felt as we entered harbour, our opinions were rapidly to change for the better and few of us left Valparaiso without our own circle of friends and without voting it one of the best ports visited during the Commission.

The Chilean Navy is very pro-British. A liaison officer was appointed (and proved invaluable), we were allowed to oil in the harbour, and a great deal of entertaining was exchanged between Chilean and *Ajax* officers.

Meanwhile we began to find our way about Valparaiso. We arrived at an auspicious time—exactly 400 years ago, in the autumn of 1536, Valparaiso had been founded. During our stay preparations were being made for a miniature "Wembley" to be erected as a fourth centenary exhibition. Judging by the progress made up to the time of our arrival, that memorial show was going to be late—but maybe it would do as a hangover for 2036. . . .

Since 1536 Valparaiso had been through many disasters—a good number connected with the British Navy. However, nothing unfortunate happened during our stay and we left the place in peace and not, as Drake had done, in pieces.

But earthquakes, famines, tidal waves and fires were also among Valparaiso's misfortunes. The Spaniards burnt it in 1817, two big fires in 1843 and 1858 continued the good work, and in 1906 an earthquake and its attendant conflagration put "paid" to a prosperous town. But however dead Valparaiso may be it certainly won't lie down, and to-day it is counted as the most important coastal city on the west coast of South America.

Owing to an outbreak of typhus at Talcahuano, our next port of call, the visit was cancelled and we were given another week-end at Valparaiso. With the exchange at 140–142 pesos to the £ sterling you could almost buy Chile for 6*d*., and those pesos didn't get much chance to burn a hole in our pockets.

The most expensive thing in Valparaiso was a taxi. The journey between Viña and Valparaiso could be done in tram or bus for just over a penny, yet to travel over the same journey in problematical comfort and in an antique sedan smelling of old clothes cost you between five and six shillings. Almost the cheapest article, on the other hand, was a large bottle of beer, which cost just under twopence. *Cerveza* was

a harmless pilsener drink and even the table-mats were marked "this beverage is non-alcoholic." The truth of this statement was only too obvious.

Valparaiso society lives mainly in Viña del Mar. This garden city is about 9 kilometres to the north and, apart from what was perhaps the finest hotel in South America, contained, as its hub, the casino. Everyone in Chile is a sentimentalist about the casino at Viña del Mar. Chilean women dream of the fashionable dances they have been to or will attend there, Chilean men gamble on the roulette or baccarat tables and hope that the opulence of the place will have its desired effect on their fiancées. And the foreigner goes there half expecting it to be one of the outer halls of paradise and half ready to discover it a "lousy joint."

The casino is brilliantly floodlit outside, and inside has a hothouse air of expensiveness. It is pleasantly panelled and upholstered, there are thick carpets to sink into and innumerable little page-boys in scarlet uniform. The dance-hall has a good floor, there are frescoes on the wall done by an American woman artist, and the lighting, if not good, is ordinary. Moreover, prices, to us, were cheap. What, then, was missing? Nothing, perhaps, that you could lay your hands on—and yet there was. That something may be called individuality. The casino at Viña del Mar, like the Hôtel Majestic at Caracas, lacked all trace of distinction. There was nothing at all extraordinary, nothing you specially remembered about the place. It was . . . just a dance-hall. The band was featureless and the general air of all was a faintly bored disinterest. Compare this with the Alvear Palace Hotel in Buenos Aires with its indirect lighting and its three orchestras (and we visited B.A. out of season also), with the Urca Cabaret at Rio de Janeiro, or with any of the big Hamilton hotels.

But the Viña casino made money all right. Profits were estimated at 7,000,000 pesos a year—and 7,000,000, even in pesos, is not to be sneezed at.

Apart from the casino, Viña could lay claim to the finest sports club on the west coast. Well-watered fresh green grass was a tonic to see and a pleasure to play on. Doubly so after

the barren desert of the north, and, looking back, we realized we had sighted no such turf since leaving Bermuda.

Night life at Valparaiso gave an especial spurt during our 18 days' stay. Perhaps the "Fiestas de Primavera" (Spring Carnival) had something to do with it, or perhaps it was just the spirit of "making the most of our opportunities"—something certainly started an unprecedented run on the Post Office Savings Bank and made us pour pennies, pounds and pesos into Chilean cabarets and dance-halls.

Two lots of 48 hours' general leave were given (the first since Malta), an officer flew across the Andes to the Argentine, and the President's wife died. None of these events had any connection. The Captain attended the funeral of la Señora Alessandri and laid a wreath on behalf of the British Navy. One or two officers stayed a night in Santiago, and an account of the trans-Andean flight is attached:

THE SPELL OF THE ANDES

There used to be three ways of dealing with a high range of mountains. Now there are four. In the old days you might (i) climb it; (ii) go away or (iii) sit down and say, "Yes, it *is* a large mountain, isn't it?" and then go to sleep. My previous reaction has always been (ii) or (iii), but I have invariably felt that something ought to be done about (i).

And then I found out that a few years ago someone had foreseen my dilemma and had invented another way out of it—namely, "flying over the top." All of which does very little to explain why, when the ship was at Valparaiso, I took 48 hours' leave, went up to Valparaiso, flew over the Andes and into Argentina for lunch one day, and that same afternoon flew back again.

I did this through the courtesy of Panagra (Pan-American-Grace Airways Inc.) in consideration of something over $100—and was generally considered by my messmates to be something more than a lunatic. $100 being over £20, perhaps they were right . . . but the only justification I can give is that, given the chance, I'd do it again.

I stayed overnight in Santiago and learned, as I shaved the next morning, that there was fog up in the Pass and that it was possible that flying might be cancelled. A little later I first came into contact with Panagra service. Two wise-cracking American officials, a portable weighing machine and a silver coach took turns in impressing me with their respective efficiency. The early morning ground-mist still hung round Santiago when we set off for the airport, which we reached in 20 minutes.

"Los Cerillos" is new, attractive and luxurious. The Chilean customs officials were courteous and created no gratuitous difficulties. We watched the silver air-liner come taxi-ing up. Two hooters blew and we walked out on the field.

I met the Purser. Each air-liner carries two qualified pilots and a purser. Panagra service has to be felt to be believed. In the *Santa Ana* the Purser was also a qualified pilot but he happened to be English instead of American so he couldn't fly the machine.

"Which side shall I sit?" I asked.

The Purser shrugged his shoulders.

"You'll see plenty either side," he said. "Aconcagua will be on your left and Tupungato on your right." He put a strap lightly across me. "Maybe you won't need this. We'll see how it feels up at 14,000 feet; sometimes you get it bumping about."

I looked round the interior of the plane. So this was modern aviation! Each of the 14 seats had a little tube and a button. I pressed my button. There was a slight hiss.

"Oxygen," observed the Purser; "some people figure they can't take the height. But this cabin is air-conditioned, you won't notice it."

There was a slight tremor and a dull roar. The port engine had started and was followed almost immediately by the starboard. Their combined noise was less than that heard in the average British light car.

"You've got rubber all round," said the Purser, who seemed

interested in answering my endless questions, "you don't have to raise your voice." Neither did I.

Scarcely without noticing it, we had moved to the far end of the field. We turned into the wind. The low roar deepened; we began to gather speed—faster, faster—soon, I thought, I'll be high up in the eternal snow and the sunlight. My heart beat faster. Everything was going faster. Speed! Movement! . . . suddenly, without warning, the noise died away. The pace lessened. Sadly we veered towards the aerodrome buildings, where a white-overalled man stood, his red flag fluttering in the breeze.

"Too bad," murmured the Purser, "guess we've had another radio from the Hump." He smiled wryly. "Still, Panagra doesn't have accidents," he consoled me. I reflected that if they never left the ground, air crashes were, indeed, likely to be few.

I took coffee with a feeling of savage despair. After all, I could get a glimpse of sun through the low clouds. Wasn't this safety business exaggerated? Over-cautiousness is as stupid as recklessness. My railing against Panagra sharpened when I learnt that at 2 p.m. the German mail-plane had left Mendoza for Santiago. If they could fly, why couldn't we? At 160 miles an hour the journey from Argentine to Chile takes about 1 hour and 15 minutes—less than it takes to get across London.

At 5.30 that evening Panagra were vindicated. For at 5.30 that German mail-plane still hadn't landed.

"Why?" I asked respectfully.

"Oh! I guess he's been milling around waiting for a chance to see the field—he'll land south where the mist isn't so bad."

The next morning the sun shone as it only knows how to in Chile. Still, I had to be back on board that night. Was it worth it? It would mean flying over to the Argentine for lunch and catching the Transcontinental plane from Buenos Aires back in the afternoon. I looked at my ticket; I looked at the clear sunlight. Worth it? A thousand times yes!

Panagra greeted me with an assured smile.

"You're going to have the most perfect trip you've ever taken. Not a cloud in sight over 1,000 feet."

I almost panted to reach my seat in that comfortable liner. Hell! Must we show our passports all over again? Would that hooter never go? From inside the waiting-hall I devoured the *Santa Ana* with my eyes, took in every detail of her huge insect-like fuselage, so smooth and streamlined that it scarcely needed an engine to make it fly, absorbed her two thick wings with their three yellow stripes, and pawed the tiled floor in impatience to get away, to climb high up into the Andes in the snow and the sun.

"No chance of the weather breaking?" I asked anxiously.

They laughed.

"Say, you're in America now, not England. The weather's fixed like this for a month."

I bowed to superior knowledge. What a pity, I reflected, that Panagra hadn't fixed the weather yesterday. Then I could have stayed the night in the Argentine.

"Travelling light—huh?" This was the Captain, a smart young American with a set of teeth that might have been the dream of a tooth-paste manufacturer. He threw away his cigarette.

"If you're just lunching in the Argentine," he said, "I'll introduce you to our ground manager at Mendoza. He's a charming man. Britisher, too," he added.

The hooter went twice. Restraining an excitement that threatened to get out of hand, I walked calmly out to the plane, hoping that everyone would immediately mistake me for a wealthy automobile manufacturer or some such person who never went anywhere except in an aeroplane. . . .

This time we did take off, though the movement was so smooth that it was impossible to say when we were air-borne. We climbed with speed. Santiago slipped into nothing under a light ground-haze.

"And there," said the Purser, "are the Cordilleras." I looked across the cabin at the range of mountains—was it 20, was it 50 miles away? In the air all sense of distance vanishes.