CHAPTER XXIV

ARGENTINA AND URUGUAY

OUR trip from the Falklands to Buenos Aires was uneventful. We had almost caught up on our programme on leaving, so there was no need to hurry. All our efforts were concentrated on getting the ship cleaned up before joining the flag. The cold winds of the South left us, and for the last two days of the trip we had wonderful weather—clear skies and warm sun.

We were to have rendezvous with the *York* at 2030 on Sunday, 24th ; however, she was in sight at about 1900, and by 2000 we were steaming in line ahead up the Rio de la Plata. Station-keeping again, after six months on our own, seemed strange. Away to the north the lights of Montevideo showed as a twinkling line across the horizon ; many ships were passing up and down the river, presenting a picture reminiscent of the Thames Estuary at night. We were eager to meet civilization again after three months in harsher regions.

We arrived at Buenos Aires early next morning. As we steamed cautiously up the narrow channel, a competent tug directing our passage, the city presented a fine appearance : a long water-front doubly lined with trees, behind which rose numerous skyscrapers. We berthed stern to *York's* quarter-deck in the new docks. The forenoon was punctuated by continual " Stills " on the bugle, as a stream of officials and diplomats came and left the flagship. Our fears at appearing dirty by comparison with *York* were soon put at rest. However, we soon became a centre of attraction for the leisured classes ; a constant stream of smart American cars came

slowly past us, their occupants gazing with open mouths at the ships.

A run ashore showed one little of the city, for it is the fifth largest in the world, and would take weeks to know. The old town, to which one first comes on landing, is built with narrow streets laid out in the American block system. Tram-lines fill most of the road-space, whilst at crossings cars dash from one street to another with no apparent system of control. It is said that the Argentine equivalent of our " Highway Code " decrees that the safest way to get over a crossing is to spend as little time on it as possible. This area soon gives way to the new city, which has sprung up within the last ten years and is still expanding rapidly. Here we find long wide avenues, lined with plane trees, and with buildings of noble proportions rising on either side. The Argentines are justly proud of their capital, and are driving new roads through the more crowded area. Unfortunately they have chosen for the hub of this system a particularly ugly obelisk to which all roads are to lead.

Like any other great city, all nationalities may be seen in the streets. Cafés overflow on to the pavements in Parisian style, and there may be seen Argentine business men with their straw boaters and cigars, Greek merchants, Nordic seamen and American tourists. The shops in the centre of the town are good, the Calle Florida bearing a striking resemblance to Bond Street, without the buses. No description of Buenos Aires is complete without some mention of the " colectivos." These vehicles have evolved from the taxis, and are, I think, peculiar to the city. Small, fast motor-buses, they seem to be everywhere. They have developed a service that is comparable to that of our London buses, for one can get almost anywhere in the city or suburbs in one. Their drivers are infernally reckless, and every one of them carries evidence of former crashes. They are reported to be ruining the taxi-drivers.

Buenos Aires is essentially a city which owes much to British influence and (we must use the hateful cliche) business enterprise. All the railways were originally built on British

capital; the trams are British owned; the Underground (unique in South America) is due to British enterprise; the local "Frigorifico," where one can see a live bull transformed into bully beef without a pause, is a British concern; and even in these days of decadent merchant shipping, the "Red Duster" is easily the ensign most frequently displayed.

The flat delta on which the main city is situated is surrounded by the tributaries of the River Plate, all of them exuding water of a dirty brown colour, although, strange to say, their back-waters harbour many "week-end" resorts similar to Henley and Maidenhead. Mosquitoes and moths are more in evidence, however, than on the Thames.

During our stay great interest was being taken in the progress of the Spanish revolution, fresh bulletins of which were being posted up in the big newspaper offices as and when received. It was notable that any such office posting bulletins had the support of at least three policemen armed with six-shooters presumably to discourage a clash between the holders of varying views.

We were most fortunate in the weather. During the summer months (October to March) it is often very hot indeed, and we were lucky in striking a cool spell. At the same time the sun kept out for us, so that the numerous sporting fixtures were carried out successfully. Amongst these was a series of contests with the *York* at soccer, cricket and water-polo, and we managed to show them that newly commissioned ships had a lot to learn.

I think most of us enjoyed Buenos Aires. It was expensive, and that discouraged extensive amusements in the town on the scale to which we had become accustomed in Chile. All cinemas cost 2*s*. 6*d*. at least, often more. However, the hospitality extended by the British community was most generous. The ships' companies were very well looked after at the Seamen's Mission. Concerts, dances and other amusements were arranged for every night, and there was a welcome waiting for all. We should like to record our thanks to the Reverend Ward Hall and his helpers. Visits were paid to the Anglo Frigorifico, and a description of such a visit is given below.

We were right royally entertained by the English Club and the Hurlingham Club, which latter deserves special mention, not only for its hospitality but for its foresight in planning its grounds a considerable distance outside what were, at the time of its conception, the city limits. The Hurlingham Club, with its luxurious club-house in the old English style, and its grounds very reminiscent of the "Old English Village," is still safely beyond the conceivable limits of Buenos Aires, while other sporting clubs have long since had to be absorbed or surrounded by the encroaching city.

The most striking impression of Buenos Aires is its air of prosperity and security. In no other city of the South American continent has this air been so pronounced. Even allowing for the fact that one-third of the total population of the Argentine are citizens of Buenos Aires, and that the conditions in that city are no more similar to those in the remainder of the Republic than chalk is to cheese, one cannot but feel that Argentina has a great future, and that if she only continues on the lines already followed she will be an example, not only to her South American apposites, but to many European states as well.

NOTES ON THE FRIGORIFICO

The wail of the dinner-hooter dies away and the workman settles down to his lunch. As he opens his modest tin of corned beef it will never occur to him that this tin of meat is the product of a factory probably many times as big as the one in which he works himself. Yet the "frigorificos," as the corned-beef factories are called, are amongst the biggest industrial organizations in South America. The frigorifico which some of us visited in Buenos Aires is but one of a score, or more, operating on the banks of Rio de la Plata. Nevertheless it finds employment for several thousand hands and can easily deal with 25,000 cattle per day, as well as a similar number of sheep and pigs.

The first thing that the visitor sees is hundreds of steers, sheep and pigs, all of them carefully graded for size, weight

and condition, and confined in large pens according to their various grades. It is at once apparent that all the animals are in good condition in spite of the fact that some of them arrived in Buenos Aires only after a long rail journey from the pampas of the interior. Any animal which is not perfectly sound on arrival at the frigorifico is sent across to the " sanatorium " to be cured and fattened before killing. The cattle in the pens are handled by gauchos on horseback, and it is noticeable that the animals are never beaten or hurried in any way. The gaucho can move a herd of cattle by skilful manœuvring of his horse in much the same way that a mounted policeman at home can control a crowd of people in the street.

From the pens the cattle are driven through a bath over which there is a strong shower, and after this, their final wash, they walk up a long sloping gangway to the killing floor (the top floor) of the factory. Here the cattle are led by threes into small narrow pens, each of which is only just big enough to take three steers. The pen is so small that with three steers in it there is no room for any of them to move, and whilst they are thus standing still each is felled by one sharp blow of a hammer just between the horns. The side of the pen is raised and the unconscious steers are raised by the hind legs to hang from pulleys which run on rails near the ceiling of the room. In less than half a minute from being felled the steer is actually killed by having its throat cut. Still hanging from the pulley, it then passes from one man to another in a big (and very clean) room. Each man has one little job to do, such as skinning the hind legs, removing the head, and so on, until in the short space of forty-five minutes the carcass has been cleaned, skinned and dressed and is ready for inspection before being sent down to the chill-room.

Each side of beef is carefully inspected and any portion of meat which is not sound (as, for example, a bruised part where the steer had had a knock) is cut out. Waste is not allowed in any degree and meat which is rejected as unfit for consumption is sent, together with other offal, to an

adjoining works where the fats are extracted and used in the manufacture of soap.

On another part of the same floor, sheep and pigs are being killed. The sheep are not driven up the gangway to the killing floor but are led up it by a tame ram who is kept for the purpose. This ram is quite a pet and, judging from his meek expression, one can only imagine that his daily task of luring thousands of sheep to a sudden death leaves him without any qualms of conscience. The sheep and pigs are hoisted by one hind leg and each is killed by a single knife-thrust through the neck about five seconds after being lifted from the ground.

Entering the refrigerating rooms is like stepping from the Equator to the Antarctic. The " cool " rooms, in which meat is " chilled," are at zero temperature (Centigrade), whilst the " cold " rooms, where meat is hung to be " frozen," are several degrees below zero. These rooms are close beside the wharf and chilled or frozen meat can be taken along specially cooled corridors right to the ships in which it is to be exported. Meat exported in the carcass, however, represents no more than half the trade of the frigorifico and there is still much to be seen inside the factory.

The thinner cattle are referred to as canning cattle and the beef they produce is stripped from the bones and cooked in large steam ovens. It is then chopped up and fed by machine into cans. These cans, of all conceivable shapes and sizes, are made in the factory, most of the work being done by automatic machinery. After each can is filled the lid, in the centre of which is a tiny hole, is soldered on. The cans are then placed in a sealed chamber and all the air exhausted from them, the tiny hole in the lid being sealed with a blob of solder whilst the cans are still in the chamber. The sealed cans are then placed in the steam oven and the cooking of the meat is completed. At the same time the heat ensures that the contents of the can are sterilized. All the cans are then stacked in a warm room for several days, and should any one of them, by some mischance, be not properly sterilized, the meat will begin to ferment and swell. This swelling is

immediately apparent and the can, of course, is destroyed. It only remains to affix labels and " So-and-so's Corned Beef " is ready for export. Several other products are canned, such as picnic hams, lambs' tongues, etc. There is even a department where canned fruits are produced.

There are also several " incidental " products of some importance. The cooked meats department, for example, produces more than 150 varieties of sausage, polony, etc. This surprisingly wide range includes sausages of every size, shape and colour, many of them not immediately recognizable (from external appearances) as being edible objects at all. Hams and bacon are cured and many of these are exported both cooked and uncooked.

For the benefit of its employees the management runs a canteen where upwards of 1,000 hot lunches are served daily, the average price of a three-course lunch being about 6*d*. The kitchens are separated from the canteen by a partition in which there are several " pigeon holes." Through each of these holes one particular dish is served, the whole being worked on the penny-in-the-slot principle. A workman comes to the steak-and-chips window, drops his 20-cent piece into the slot, and in a few seconds a hot plate of excellent food appears in the window for him. He has already had a plate of soup for 10 cents and a roll of bread for another 5. A portion of pudding at 10 cents will bring the total up to 45 cents, which, in English money, amounts to 6¾*d*.

The whole of the frigorifico is run on the most modern industrial lines. Surely Henry Ford never guessed how far beyond the motor industry his mass-production system would extend.

We left Buenos Aires on 1st February. The forenoon was spent in navigating the passage down the River Plate to the open sea, and at 1400, after dropping our pilot, we turned South again towards Mar Del Plata.

We arrived at the " Brighton of the Argentine " on Tuesday, 2nd. *York* was given a berth alongside while we lay at anchor in the harbour. The Argentine Depot Ship *Belgrano* and a few small gunboats were the only other vessels in port.

We had heard something of Mar Del Plata in Buenos Aires. Here, with the pick of the Argentine social and business circles on holiday, we should be given a really good time. All the luxuries of modern civilization we should see and enjoy—oh, yes, Mar Del Plata would be wonderful in season. After our brief week's stay, however, general opinion in the ship was that with the amount of money which those people had, we could find a very much better place to spend it. Mar Del Plata is grossly overrated. It has a brief season of two and a half months—mid-January to the end of March—and for the rest of the year the place is dead ; the beaches are deserted except for a few of the local residents ; the network of roads are no longer a death-trap with carelessly driven American automobiles ; the hotels and clubs put up their shutters and the little town appears in its true colours—a small uninteresting settlement with no very useful purpose.

We were there in the height of the season. Argentina, as many as could afford it, was " enjoying " the best holiday in the country. Although bourgeois Argentina is also present the ways of the rich are the standard, and everyone strives to live more closely to the accepted style. Their daily round seems as fixed as that of any city clerk : bathing, tennis, cocktails, dinner and gambling are all allotted their times during the day, and certain items in the day's routine are almost compulsory, for instance all the best people must take a walk on the " Rambla " between 6.30 and 7 p.m. Needless to say, we found this form of life scarcely agreeable, and we were glad when we could shake this false and artificial atmosphere from us.

The town has been built in a long straggle along the coast. The harbour, formed of two moles built out into a small bay, is some one and a half miles to the south of the centre of the town. Between them stretch the bathing beaches or *playas*. Around a large square are built the principal hotels and clubs, while inland is situated the commercial town, with its shops and railway stations. Along the coast roads are built numbers of expensive villas used by the better classes when they come down for their holidays. Roads have been built connecting

up the various districts, and every year they have a motor race round the town. The town itself has little of any real interest. It is perhaps interesting to note that at one time Mar Del Plata defied the traditions of South America and built a bull-ring, and started holding bull-fights; but before long the Government intervened and stopped the practice. It is a matter of opinion whether the country will have benefited by this or not. The arena is now used for more humane sports.

The surroundings of the town are unattractive. Great stretches of pampa sweep away to the horizon. Near the coast there are plenty of trees, but farther inland they become scarcer and the scenery becomes harsher. This great plain is occasionally off-set by an *estancia*. These are the homes of the great landowners—when they are not tasting the pleasures of Buenos Aires, Paris or London. Trees are planted, a luxurious house is built, gardens and parks laid out, swimming pools, tennis courts, until one can scarcely believe that beyond the fringe of those parks lie great bleak stretches of pampa. During the ships' stay many took the opportunity of visiting one of these *estancias*, and saw for themselves the magnificence with which they are laid out. Here is an account of the visit to the De Cobo *estancia*, some 20 kilometres from Mar Del Plata.

ASADO

On Thursday, 4th February, a combined party from the two ships was invited to visit the De Cobo *estancia* near Mar Del Plata. To catch the 9-o'clock train the authorities organizing the trip thought it necessary to land at 0700. However, the odd two hours were easily spent riding round the town in ancient tram-cars looking for the right station. Mar Del Plata boasts several stations, and by instinct we went to the best, which was quite an imposing-looking place. However, it was not from thence that humble stopping trains to the country would start, and so we moved on to the right one.

The train journey was quite short—half an hour. The country was flat and uninspiring, but it was relieved frequently

by woods and fields which marked the cultivated regions. De Cobo stands on the edge of the great plains or pampas which form the cattle-grazing area of the Argentine. The train made a special stop at the *estancia* station, and there we found waiting for us cars, lorries, horses and carts, and last but by no means least, a group of fiery mustangs. The sailors were left to take their choice, and a small and valiant band approached the animals while most people made sure of a seat on the trucks. We jolted off along the dust track and soon entered the *estancia* boundaries. Great avenues made the way through a forest of handsome trees, and as we went along the "horse marines" flashed past, one in five giving some appearance of being in control. We debussed in a large open space on the boundaries of the gardens. We were shown the site of the *asado*, and were then told that we could wander where we liked.

As is apparently the general rule for these places, the house and grounds were laid out in magnificent style. A lovely old house set in a group of tall trees, its mellow walls covered with ivy, lawns stretching down to a mirror-like lake—the whole picture passes description. It seemed a veritable paradise in that parched and colourless land. The gardens were very extensive and all well cared for. Beyond them lay the park lands through which we had driven. The grandfather of the present chatelaine is reputed to have planted two million trees to form this park, for by nature the country is bare and treeless. Beyond that again lie the pampas—great stretches of flat country with occasional shrubs. We were taken out there to witness the sport of catching rheas, the South American ostriches. A group of gauchos start in a corner of a vast field and chase the birds along the fences. The rhea is faster than a horse, but has not so much stamina. As they passed us the gauchos were almost abreast of them, the small grey birds striding along with the thundering hoofs of the horses gaining on them every second. Each gaucho carries a leather thong having two or three tails, to which are attached lumps of lead. These they whirl round their heads, and as they come up with the bird they fling it with uncanny

accuracy at the bird's flying legs. The action is the same as a good rugger tackle, the bird just flopping to the ground. The gaucho then either kills it or lets it go again, for the practice is largely kept up as a sport.

This entertainment over we returned to the *asado*. This very fine South American custom is a variety of our picnic. Whole sheep are roasted over great fires, turning slowly on the spit. Tables are laid out in a glade in the wood. Salad and dessert are prepared, and finally the sheep are cut up, and large hunks of meat are served out to the tables. The proper way to eat is to pick over the dish and eat your choice in your fingers. We were provided with plates and knives and they helped us somewhat. It was uncanny to watch the gauchos fasten their teeth on one end of a long hunk of meat and slice off the requisite amount with a huge knife, somehow avoiding cutting off their noses in the process. Epinados, a kind of Cornish pasty, followed, and then great piles of fruit—peaches, pears, oranges, apples—all washed down with liberal quantities of beer or chica.

It was a magnificent meal, and sleep came easily after it until time to return to the ship. Some indefatigables, however, insisted on getting the long-suffering horses to earn their keep, and the thud of hooves was to be heard until the end. One and all enjoyed the trip immensely, and the general opinion on leaving was that if Mrs. De Cobo wanted a tenant for the nine months of the year when she was absent, well, there were plenty of volunteers.

MONTEVIDEO

I do not think that Montevideo left a very deep impression on any of us. As we approached on the morning of Tuesday, 9th February, it appeared to be a city of some distinction: the tall buildings of the main town standing up on the peninsula on which it is built gave the impression of a miniature Manhattan: to the east the long sea-front stretched away to Carrasco, while on the western side of the harbour the suburb known as Cerro clustered round the anthill-like hump from

which it takes its name. The capital of Uruguay turned out, however, to be a very ordinary South American city with no very distinctive features at all.

We had met the *Exeter* wearing the Broad Pendant of Commodore Harwood the evening before, and thus once more the South American Division had come into being. With three ships it seemed doubtful whether we should get a billet alongside, for the wharfage was known to be limited. However, all was well and we were given a berth at the seaward end of the harbour some way from the other ships. We were within easy reach of the dock gates and yet were free from the smells of the cargo wharves. A fresh sea-breeze blew through the ship and kept it delightfully cool. The docks were cluttered up with river steamers. Top-heavy, three-decked vessels, some had brought holiday-makers from Buenos Aires to taste the pleasures of Punta Del Este, while others were preparing for long trips into the interior of the continent, up the muddy Paraguay River. We were comparatively free from the usual interchanges of diplomatic courtesy, for a very convenient warehouse hid us from the flagship.

Montevideo was in carnival. Whole holidays were the rage, and elaborate systems of coloured lights had been rigged up in the main streets. Most of the shops were shut, and all the wealthy people had left the city for one of the seaside resorts. A walk round the town left one with mixed feelings. The first object that met the eye was the large white building by the dock gates, reminiscent of the Shell Mex building on the Embankment. This massive structure housed the Port Administration, Navy Office, etc. Under its shadow lay part of a grimy district of narrow streets, merchants' premises, brothels and slum-houses. Ancient trams (under British management) clanked their way through these dismal thoroughfares, and all the squalor of slum life could be seen on every side. By striking up into the heart of the town you soon came to the first of a series of well-kept plazas, each with its statue of a national hero and its flower-beds. These are linked by two parallel streets of modern appearance; lined with trees, with good shops, cinemas and restaurants, they compared favour-

ably with some of the streets of Buenos Aires, and on Saturday night the effect was heightened with the coloured carnival lights tracing patterns in the sky. Unfortunately part of the Uruguayan conception of good clean fun consists of ether-squirting. Each reveller is armed with a small syringe filled with liquid ether. This when squirted at the back of your neck feels as though a bucket of cold water has been upset over you ; when squirted in your eye it feels as though you have been blinded—and you probably have been, for a few minutes at any rate. This jolly practice somewhat detracted from the attractions of the city (even for those who fought the enemy on their own ground and introduced the murderous weapons into the ship). However, many of us found the usual amenities worth sampling. It was not expensive, but it was not cheap either. The concert party gave a show in a dilapidated old theatre, and we were all glad that it was so well received. Lieutenant (E) Roberts, its founder and main strength, was leaving us the next morning for home in the *Alcantara*. When in years to come we save up enough money to sit in the stalls at the Adelphi for the first night of his Christmas revue, we shall have quite a line to shoot in the foyer.

Montevideo possesses a very fine water-front. There is a dirty beach to the east of the town, and from there eastwards runs a very fine motor road, following the coast line round several bays, each with its residential quarter, hotel and restaurants. The biggest of these is also the last—Carrasco. A first-rate hotel is the centre of this the most fashionable quarter of the capital.

The streets of Montevideo seem full of buses, and most of them are British Leylands. The trams and the railways are also British, but in spite of that the British colony is comparatively small—some 800. In the old days, when we maintained a small dockyard there, and when British capital was being busily invested in the country, it was larger. In consequence we did not see very much of the British community, though we experienced the results of their efforts on our behalf. Three ships must have seemed rather a handful

for them. An *asado* was given for the ships' companies by the Frigorifico Nacional in Cerro, and several sporting fixtures were arranged. Six days passed quickly and we sailed on the evening of Sunday, 14th.

Uruguay is passing through a period of economic recovery. Trade is expanding and the country is in quite a sound position. Now that she has discovered that cattle farming is not the only industry that will prosper, her economic future seems assured. As a nation, however, the Uruguayans are disappointing, and as we steamed north past the long line of twinkling lights from the harbour to Carrasco, the words of a recent travel book came to my mind : " Montevideo—a line of lights—a promise of fairyland not fulfilled."

CHAPTER XXV

BRAZIL

PASSAGE from Montevideo to Rio was hard work. The Commander-in-Chief kept us busy at all hours of the day and night. Peaceful merchant ships must have been alarmed to meet modern warships playing a game of glorified hide-and-seek in the dark, for " shadowing " was a regular favourite. However, we all looked forward with eagerness to the city of Rio de Janeiro, with its harbour contesting with Sydney for the title of the most beautiful in the world.

To drop down on Rio de Janeiro out of a cloudless sky, to circle nonchalantly round the famed Sugar-loaf mountain, and to glide gently past what seem to be fields of skyscrapers, is to see Rio at its most dramatic. But to taste the real magic of this most perfect of South American cities, you should enter the harbour by boat. We steamed into this famous harbour at dawn on Thursday, 18th February. The heat of the day had not yet begun, and as the three ships cut their way through the tranquil waters we witnessed an unforgettable scene.

Anticipation, though it whets the appetite, often ruins the meal. Too much has already been written about the capital of Brazil. Mere mention of the word " Rio " is the excuse for prose patches that groan under superlatives and whose clash of colours results less in purple than in puce.

We were therefore suspicious of " the world's most marvellous harbour." Something invariably goes wrong when one tries to confirm other people's impressions. Travel, if it does nothing else, teaches you to approach each new place in a spirit of expectancy but with a mind swept clean of the enthusiasms and prejudices of other men. And for the

traveller with a quick eye and a quiet appreciation, Rio has more unexpected beauty than any other South American city.

I would say that morning is without doubt the time to get your first glimpse of Rio. True, you will only see the " Fingers of God " mountains in rough silhouette, but the sun will be acting like a golden floodlight on the Rio, which inevitably attracts your attention and which burns itself, scene by scene, on your memory. You will be on the port side, your glasses trained to catch a glimpse of the cage swaying its way along a spidery wire to the top of the Sugar-loaf mountain. In a brief glance from the starboard side you can take in Nictheroy, where the English colony have their headquarters, but there is little else to attract your attention. On the port side, however, Rio is busy unveiling itself.

First comes the Leblon Beach with its curve of white sand and its air of suggested seclusion. It is here that the Rio Country Club has its buildings and here that the Anglo-American society of Rio forgathers. Then after a small cusp of headland the magnificent arc of Copacabana Beach, perhaps the most famous of South American plages, sweeps gracefully round to the narrow harbour entrance, underlining in gold the uneven stretch of white skyscrapers that give the keynote to modern Rio.

I have yet to read a book on Rio that does not condemn the skyscrapers for some supercilious reason. They have been called " cribs of North America " and " man's blot on a God-made paradise." They are supposed to detract from the beauty of the surrounding mountains and to interrupt the rhythm of Rio's buildings. I could see no reason for either criticism.

The first impression you get of Rio is of harmony. Everything is instinctively " right." This is particularly noticeable from a height, such as the Corcovardo mountain, and I could not help feeling that large tall buildings were in keeping with the spirit of Rio, while ordinary-sized houses seemed higgledy-piggledy.

Having decided that you like the skyscrapers and having

watched the Sugar-loaf cage reach its destination without the wire breaking, you turn and find that you have now passed the entrance into the world's finest harbour. You are struck by the sense of size which seems everywhere to be the motif—in the mountains, in the way the city stretches over the hills and along the dockside, and in the skyscraper "A Noite" which juts up to heaven opposite your berth.

York secured alongside with *Exeter* and ourselves in the stream. The *Exeter* was seen wandering round the harbour most of the forenoon, admiring the scenery and seeking a comfortable billet. We found the heat to be intense as the day drew on; however, after early rumours to the contrary we worked tropical routine.

With our pounds converted into milreis at a most favourable rate (though no comparison to the "peso chileno"), we stepped ashore and, avoiding the ubiquitous guides, walked up Rio Branco, the first street in the capital. Perhaps you were tempted to buy one of the butterfly-wing trays which make such brilliant patches of colour in the shop-windows, or perhaps you felt more inclined to sit out on the pavement sipping the finest coffee in the world while cosmopolitan Rio passed before your eyes. At any rate, sooner or later you must have found your footsteps taking you towards the Sugar-loaf mountain.

The journey is made in two stages. The first hop is the shorter and lands you on the Urca mountain. On your way up you pass over the ruins of a barracks—a grim reminder that Brazil is still under martial law, though ordinary life seems little affected.

On the Urca is the restaurant with perhaps the finest view in South America. Away below you in a series of sweeping curves lies all Rio, its perfect layout fading in the sunset and then reappearing picked out by the Neon signs and the long festoons of waterside lights. Here, as dark creeps on, you can dine high above the city's bustle and contemplate the work of art that lies below you.

Leaving this restaurant and not at all certain that your stomach will like being swayed about in a cage nor that your

head will approve of the abrupt rise to over 1,000 feet above sea-level, you climb into the aerial carriage. A bell rings and with hardly a jerk you find yourself sailing high over the tree-tops of a small jungle. Up, up, up . . . occasionally the cage creaks and you think wildly of insurance policies, but most of the time you are absorbed in this sunset panorama of Rio that is falling away from you in such perfect perspective.

On the top is a miniature park where, marooned from civilization, you may sit and watch the colours change over the water.

When you have seen another Brazilian night safely launched, you return to the fleshpots of Copacabana. The main casinos, as well as the principal cinemas, are all fitted with refrigeration. I know of no panacea so unfailing in the tropics as a cool atmosphere. And a few carnival dances (one of which may last a good half-hour without a break) will make you bless the American ingenuity that allows you to expend so much energy without feeling the worse for it.

Many men took the opportunity to visit the Christo Redempto on its lofty perch on Mount Corcovardo. You make for the Corcovardo funicular station. Here you will be greeted by a courteous little man who first of all dispenses tickets and then leads you to his curio-stall. Hurrying over butterfly-wing ash-trays and books of photographs, he will eventually bring a slim book to your notice. *O Rio Maravilhoso* is the title, and it gives all kinds of information, together with a short history of the enormous concrete Christ which dominates Rio from the top of Corcovardo. Mr. Soares will not press you to buy this book. Quite casually he lets fall that he has already sold 12,000 copies in various parts of Brazil and in a very short time you discover that this strange little man who describes himself as St. Peter (Corcovardo presumably being heaven) is also a poet with two or three slender books to his name. Enthusiastically hoping that your journey to the top will be memorable, he shepherds you into the little train, waves his arms and the journey has started.

Half an hour later you find yourself 2,000 feet above Rio and negotiating the last stretch to this statue, whose height

without foundations is over 90 feet and whose width between the tips of the two outstretched arms is over 80 feet. The Christ of Paul Landowski is, apart from being a work of art, also a feat of engineering. The design and balance of such a mass of concrete had to be such that it would survive the fiercest storm. Experiments were begun in Paris in 1924, but the statue was not unveiled until 12th October 1931. It is now floodlit at night with great effect. This is a recent innovation, and when the first experiments were made, the more illiterate of the population, who still cannot read or write, fell down on their knees in the street at the sight of this realistic white Christ floating high in the sky without visible support.

Perched high on this crag of Corcovardo, life seems far removed from the flurry and scurry of a big city and the clash of man's ambitions—yet the tide of that ceaseless struggle has even washed up against this gigantic Christ. An observant eye will pick out bullet marks over the left eye and in the right hand. This happened in the last communist revolution a bare two years ago.

And now, while you are looking at the statue, mist has swept up from the sea and the view has disappeared. It is like flying blind—all visible bearings have vanished and you are in the midst of a swirling, fathomless sea of fog.

Just as you are wondering whether it is worth while waiting for a break, you hear the drone of an aeroplane. Sunlight breaks through a rift in the midst and lights up the Copacabana beach far below. Suddenly a silver bug crosses your line of sight and identifies itself as the German transatlantic air-mail carrier—a vivid reminder that Rio is now within three days of London.

The vapour dissolves and like a flashlight the sun illuminates the panorama below you with a brilliance that seems intensified by the mist which obscured it before. You gaze down spell-bound on the capital of the one-time Brazilian Empire, on the second city of South America and on the New York of the United States of Brazil. It is on places such as Corcovardo that the immensity and the unexplored possibilities

of Brazil strike with particular force. In actual size Brazil is larger than the U.S.A., and how many Englands is that?

We all enjoyed Rio. Favourable rates of exchange made a run ashore well worth while. Trips were arranged to places of interest, while many hired cars and toured round the neighbourhood. The British community were most kind, and I am sure that when the *Exeter* and ourselves slipped out of that harbour on Wednesday, 24th, we all envied the *York* her additional day and hoped that we should one day get a chance of revisiting that harbour of paradise.

Two factors hold up the development of the country. One is the backwardness of the native population and the other is the lack of communications. The attempt to govern an area as vast as Brazil from the capital explains why aviation is more advanced here than in any other South American country. It also explains why 18 months after the last rebellion martial law is still in force.

A cursory acquaintance with educated Brazilians leaves you with the impression of their very real superiority over other South Americans. To begin with, they are descended from the Portuguese, whereas the rest of South America has sprung from the less virile Spanish colonists. Again, they speak the curt almost guttural language of Portuguese, while the rest of the continent expresses itself in Castilian. In their Navy, under the guidance of a U.S. Naval Mission, which has been in Rio since August 1936, a fine tradition is arising of service for the sake of service.

An example of the new Brazilian outlook was brought home vividly to me one evening when I wished to see a certain film. Unfortunately I bought the wrong paper—namely, one from São Paulo, the second city in Brazil and 200 miles to the south. Unable to find the film I wanted in this paper, I decided on another and stopped a passer-by to ask him the way. He glanced at his watch, pursed his lips and said: "It's two hours by plane, you might be just a little late for the evening performance."

Slowly Brazil is evolving. Once education and honest government have consolidated the country, the United States

of Brazil will take their place among the first nations of the world. They already have in Rio de Janeiro, with its 1,800,000 inhabitants, a worthy capital and a city that has no equal in the world.

CEARA, BRAZIL

We arrived at Ceara, in company with the Commodore, South America, in *Exeter* at 1600 on 1st March. As we approached it appeared an uninviting country—long sand beaches backed by dark green forest, low-lying except for the dim shapes of some mountains behind. The town straggled out along the southern side of the bay, and we anchored some 2 miles away from the pier.

We heard something about surf at Ceara, and we were soon to see what was meant. The bay is exposed to the Atlantic rollers, which cause quite a large swell, and from the ship we could see those same rollers breaking at the shore end of the pier. As the ship was rolling as if she was in a real sea, no boats could be lowered with the crane, which again meant that the only boats available would be the cutters. The outlook was distinctly gloomy.

More details came through about the social programme. Fifteen officers from each ship were required for the Consul's cocktail party leaving ship at 1730. Further details unknown. Fifteen victims were selected and a cutter under sail was brought alongside. To the accompaniment of unwarranted gloating from those detained on board (for duty) the happy party set out—dress No. 10's neg. swords. It soon became apparent that the expedition was not being treated with the solemnity that was its due. Various frivolous remarks were passed concerning the conduct of the boat, but soon land was in sight and we anchored about 50 yards from the pier. Looking round for the means by which to complete the journey, we saw a native pulling boat approaching. With a certain amount of confusion the party transferred and were ferried to the pier, where agility and patience brought their reward. The gallant band having been mustered and no casualties

being reported, the local British community took charge and drove us up to the Vice-Consul's house. In the cool of his garden we met the rest of the colony, after which we split up into private parties for dinner. Everything was completely organized. We were entertained royally by our respective hosts, and later everyone forgathered again at a seaside club where, in spite of Lent, which is observed very strictly, they had arranged a dance in our honour. I am certain that few of us on going ashore had expected the evening to finish as it did. Later we were faced with the problem of re-embarkation, as the R.M. phrase has it. Booth's agents had kindly placed their steamboat and surf-boat at our disposal, and we commenced the difficult task of getting into one or other of them. It may have been a change in the tide or it may have been a change in us, but it appeared very much more difficult than the landing. One of our number was unfortunate in jumping at a spot where the boat had been before the last comber had taken it elsewhere, and reported the water as "quite warm, thank you." After long minutes all were safely afloat and we proceeded to the ships. It took just over an hour to cover the distance from the cars to the ship.

Next day all available officers were occupied in *Exeter* entertaining the few brave guests who turned up for the division's "At Home." A few equally brave libertymen went ashore to watch a football match, and, perhaps (one never knows) to listen to the band, both of which were functioning ashore. In two cutters their adventures were much the same as ours, except that on return to the cutters they found that no tug was available and there was a two-mile pull between them and their supper. Our acquaintance with the Ceara was therefore limited—except for the pier, which we got to know quite well. The British community, however, gave us the very warmest welcome, and we are sorry that we could not have made it easier for some of them to come and see us.

Ceara is the capital of the province of that name, and so is known locally as Forteleza to distinguish it. It depends

for its prosperity mainly on rubber, tobacco, coffee and other tropical plants. The yield from these varies directly with the rainfall, so that a really good shower is the best gift its people wish for. Let us wish them, therefore, more and better rain.

CHAPTER XXVI

BARBADOS—EXERCISES—REGATTA

SOON after leaving Ceara, we crossed the line for the second time, and two days later we commenced a great "War" game. This kept everyone on the move for three days and we were glad to see Barbados appear on the horizon, symbolic of a few days' rest at least. By this time the whole of the West Indies Squadron, less *Dundee*, and two Canadian destroyers, were present.

Barbados is the most easterly of the West Indian islands, and had been the scene of our untimely departure to the realms of the "brass-hatted head-hunters of the Mediterranean" in September 1935. It is perhaps the pleasantest of the islands, free from famine and earthquakes, snakes and mosquitoes, while hurricanes have not visited the island more than twice in the last 125 years. The temperature is very regular, and for the greater part of the year does not vary more than a few degrees above or below 70° F. Even in the hot summer months it is rarely hotter than 82° F. Life is easy and unhurried, the natives being past-masters in this form of existence. It seemed that we had not left "manana" behind in South America.

Barbados is not beautiful, otherwise we might have expected some slightly more romantic name than "Los Barbados"—the island of beards—the name given to it by the Portuguese in 1536 because of the bearded fig-trees which they found there. Somewhere about the time that the *Mayflower* sailed for America, a London merchant with 40 white men and a handful of negroes set out for Barbados in the *William and John*. They landed and founded "Hole Town"—or, as it is

now known, " Jamestown." Thus was founded the first settlement, and from small beginnings have grown the many towns of to-day. The people are religious and under the patronage of their many saints the population has multiplied. On an island of 166½ square miles, slightly smaller than the Isle of Wight, there are 10,000 whites, 150,000 blacks and 40,000 mixed. In spite of a colour bar more rigid than in most islands, everyone seems to be happy and contented living in their parishes of which there are eleven : Saints Michael, George, John, Joseph, Thomas, Philip, Andrew, James, Peter and Lucy—how she managed to get there would be interesting to know—and Christchurch.

In the churchyard of St. John's Church is the grave of Ferdinando Paleologues, the last descendant of the Christian Greek emperors driven out of Constantinople by the Turks. His coffin was found behind the organ loft during repairs to the church at one time. While on the subject of coffins we might mention the peculiar incident which took place at Christ Church in 1820. The " Barbados Coffin Story " has been told many times and many are the explanations put forward, though no satisfactory solution has yet been found. In the parish of Christchurch there is a vault which belongs to the Elliot family. In 1807 a Mrs. Goddard was buried therein, and in February 1808 Mary Anna Chase, an infant buried in the same vault in a leaden coffin. At this opening of the vault Mrs. Goddard's coffin was in its proper place. Again in July 1812 Dorcas Chase was buried in the same vault and on it being opened it was discovered that the leaden coffins were out of position. This happened several times until 1820, when the vault was emptied, and has remained so ever since. The vault is dug in the ground, about two feet in the live rock, and the descent into it is covered by a large block of Devonshire marble which takes four men to move it. There are many eye-witnesses of these strange doings, and much has been written on the subject.

Scotland for whisky and Barbados for rum ! Your first taste of the island is a literal fact. Many try but few succeed in making anything like the " Planter's Punch " or a " Rum Swizzle." You may follow the recipes carefully, but they are never quite like those you get in the island.

We found that America was discovering this ideal holiday island ; heaven forbid that Barbados ever becomes anything like Bermuda. At the moment one can swim in the clear blue waters by the Aquatic Club and laze beneath the palms on the coral beach of the Yacht Club. In the country are quiet sandy coves and here one can escape and be alone. The evenings one can spend dancing in one of the several hotels, which if not first class are sufficient for most tastes.

Before and after a visit to Barbados one thinks of sugar, the industry of the island, and a trip round the island reveals how dull and uninteresting are the acres and acres of canes. The natives chew it constantly as they work, but I found it insipid and very unlike the rich brown sugar which is manufactured from it.

During our short fortnight one and all were obsessed with regatta fever. Unfortunately the prevailing wind was not obeying the local rule for the time of year, and a heavy swell and choppy surface rendered Carlisle Bay most unsuitable. It was therefore decided to hold the regatta in the Virgin Islands, but practice had to be done under very bad conditions. We went to sea for exercises for a couple of days each week, and finally left on 22nd March.

The trip from Barbados to Tortola was utilized for another tactical exercise. Throughout Monday, Monday night and the following forenoon we hunted the *York*. Several intriguing situations occurred and the exercise was finally cancelled on Tuesday. Later we heard that an accident had befallen our seaplane, which was being operated from the *Apollo*. The latter unfortunately dropped it in the drink, giving its crew their second opportunity for a little display of aquabatics.

We arrived at Tortola, British Virgin Islands, on Wednesday, 24th March. With the easterly wind beating in between the surrounding islets the conditions seemed worse if anything than at Barbados. However, as a result of a conference in the flagship we moved on to Virgin Gorda, some 9 miles away, and here we came upon the perfect regatta course. Feverish

preparation on Wednesday evening, and the great day brought a light cross-wind and ideal pulling conditions.

THE REGATTA—1937

Poor old *Ajax* seems fated never to win a shield or trophy in Squadron or Fleet competitions or to have a gig that is as other gigs are. Perhaps we gain enough renown in other spheres. Anyway, this year's regatta was the same old story: if only we had a better gig we would have won the regatta; and if only someone in the Stokers' whaler had not caught a crab at the winning post we would have won an Open Whalers' cup. But still we did put up a very respectable performance, winning five races outright, getting full points in another as only the *Scarborough* beat us, and getting two seconds out of a total of twenty races. With average points on gig races we would have won the Cock, our gig's crews were all average or above.

The regatta course under the lee of Virgin Gorda Island was excellent; there was no swell but a slight cross-wind helped to show us we were not pulling up the Thames, and the temperature was quite pleasant for rowing.

The Veterans' skiff won the first race of the day for us with ease. Under the immense pressure exerted by P.O. Curtis's braves the skiff progressed rather like a flying fish, touching the water from time to time. The handsome win of our Seamen's cutter was rather unexpected after the trial races, but they certainly had the prettiest stroke of any cutter's crew in the regatta. The Marines' whaler we expected to win, and they certainly did it in style, there was not another whaler near them. The Daymen just got seen off after a very exciting race. Luck seems against them, as they scored a second last year too in a much larger regatta, and they certainly deserved to win with all the training they put in. We cannot discuss the gig races without almost shedding a tear. We saw crew after crew of ours, pulling a very pretty stroke and going all out, pass by the ship either last or very nearly. They will have to be content with a mental victory.

There was one disappointment in that the Stokers' cutter did not come in as high up as we expected, but they can be well excused by virtue of being up against the winners of the Open Cutters' race. If the crew had managed to settle down earlier in the season we might well have seen them leading; the spirit and strength was certainly there in the race. The Seamen's whaler provided us with a pleasant surprise in the afternoon by coming in a good second to the *Scarborough's* whaler, and as the latter was not in the regatta for points we got first place if not first prize. Our whaler must be congratulated on its great advance over the previous week's display.

The Boys' and Young Seamen's cutter provided us with the best race of the day by beating the *Apollo* after a very equal race all down the course. Neither side was giving an inch, and our cutter kept it going to the last moment. The Stokers' whaler followed, in which we were again successful by a very handsome margin, in view of which and their previous display at Barbados it was decided to let them represent the ship in the Open Whalers' race.

Finally in the All-comers our centipede gig got a very good second place in spite of the boat. Pulling a quick stroke, it had no time to lose its way.

Our resultant place of fourth was certainly not our deserts. The final points were as follows:

1st, *Apollo*	138	3rd, *Exeter*	120
2nd, *York*	125	4th, *Ajax*	111
	5th, *Dragon*	90	

Apollo certainly deserved her win, but at the same time had just had a West Indian cruise where is little for ships' companies to do except regatta practice. On the other hand, Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires, our last ports, are certainly not designed for rough sport of that sort, nor could we have fulfilled our duties of "showing the flag" and at the same time concentrated on serious regatta practice.

Good Friday, 26th March, 1937.—A day of rest.