

# Valley of the Rio Negro



ALONG THE RIVER

THOMAS FALKNER, in his book, speaks of the Rio Negro as the largest river of Patagonia. It is not only the largest river of Patagonia but, next to the La Plata and its two large tributaries, which do not, however, belong to Argentina alone, the largest of the Argentine Republic. Roughly speaking, it drains a large triangular piece of territory lying between 36 and 42 degrees of latitude south, with the base following the line of the watershed between Chile and Argentina and the apex resting at the mouth of the river on the Atlantic coast just south of the fortieth parallel of latitude. Falkner gives quite a list of names for this stream, of which the Indian name of Curu Louvu has been retained to this day in the Spanish translation of Rio Negro.

It is not to be wondered at that the Spaniards neglected the inhospitable coast of southern Argentina in those early days of conquest and settlement. No one could be expected to settle down in an unattractive and desert country while there was an unlimited supply of more desirable lands closer at hand and to be had only for the asking or taking. It is only when the good land has become exhausted and when railroads and science make the

no floods of any magnitude since the great inundation of 1839 caused the town of General Roca to be moved from the old site of the fort near the present station of Rio Negro to a safer location about two miles away. The winds of the southern Pacific lose most of their moisture on coming in contact with the cold peaks of the Cordilleras and then sweep down across the Patagonian tablelands like an ocean gale. They often last for days, obscuring the sky and landscape with clouds of dust and are at times of such velocity as to hurl small-sized pebbles, but they are most frequent in spring and summer, and when once over are soon forgotten in the delightful weather which otherwise prevails—warm or very hot days, according to the time of year, usually with breeze and cool nights always, with the temperature seldom below 20 degrees F. in winter. The climate most closely resembles that of the interior of the state of Washington. As snow seldom falls, the abundance of verdure which follows every winter rain is available for grazing cattle and sheep.

Good Place for Hunters. Hunting is very good, as many kinds of game are plentiful; the guanaco, the small silver fox, the skunk, the Patagonian hare, three species of



INDIANS OF THE VALLEY

desert more accessible and more easy and certain of remunerative development that the eyes of the colonist are turned toward the less attractive, says Walter Fischer in the Bulletin of the Pan-American Union.

The most convenient method of reaching the valley today is for the traveler to take the train which leaves Buenos Aires at 6:37 in the evening, arriving at Bahia Blanca at 9:25 the following morning. Leaving Bahia Blanca again at 9:55 on one of the tri-weekly trains he reaches Neuquen at 10:25 that night; there he passes the night in a hotel or inn, leaves at 5:20 in the morning and gets to the end of the line on a mixed freight and passenger train at either 10:30 or 12:45 noon, according to which of the bi-weekly trains he happens to have taken.

Crossing the Rio Colorado, a rather shallow and rapid stream, the railroad follows the river for about 75 miles and then strikes southwesterly across the first narrow place to the Rio Negro, which it reaches at Choele Choele. From Choele Choele the traveler follows the valley of the Rio Negro, which is wider below that point and continues to narrow as one approaches Neuquen.

River is Dark and Swift. We are more particularly concerned with that part of the valley extending eastward one degree of longitude, or about sixty miles, from the junction of the two rivers to the small station of Chichinales. The valley is narrow here, not more than ten miles from bluff to bluff, with the fertile, irrigable land north of the river about half that width at its widest and narrowing down to almost nothing where the rivers meet. The Rio Negro itself is a dark and silent, deep and rapid stream; a steamer is said to take only as many hours to make the down trip as it takes days to ascend the swift current.

The melting of the Cordilleran snows of an causes considerable worry to the inhabitants, but there have been

# INDIA'S NEW YEAR DAYS

THEY CELEBRATE THE OCCASION FREQUENTLY BY KNOCKING OFF WORK AND HOLDING FUNERALS. SOME BURY THEIR DEAD, SOME BURN THEM AND SOME FEED THE CORPSES TO BUZZARDS.

INDIA beats the world for the number and variety of its New Year days and this is so because of the large number of races and religions.

When a traveler who expects to spend some time in the country goes to the bank with his letter of credit, usually a card is handed him on which is printed the various holidays. This is for his convenience, so that he will not let himself get out of funds and go to the bank in a hurry, only to find it closed on account of some holiday. The holiday may be Christian, Mohammedan or that of any one of the numerous Hindu sects.

When the usual card was given me in Bombay, says a writer, I noted the number of these holidays which were ascribed to New Year. They did not exactly bear out the humorous description of every day in the year as a New Year day, but there seemed hardly a month of the Christian calendar which did not have at least one New Year designated, and in some months there were more.

Kalsidoscopic Bombay observes all these New Year days because the stream of Asiatic life which circulates through it includes all the civilization and all the races and religions of the Orient, with some additions from the Occident. The spirit is one of catholicity.

All the races and all the religious sects observe the New Year of the Christian calendar, because British rule of India is reflected in this day; but they also observe the New Year of the different races and religions among themselves, at least to the extent of knocking off work.

Whether in Bombay or Benares, the monkey temple has its throng of Hindu worshippers, and the Mohammedans often are not unwilling to share in the observance to the extent of foregoing their business activities. The Hindus on their part are apt to think it a shame to work on a Mohammedan New Year day when the Moslem population may be through the Jumma Musquid mosque. So it goes all round the circle of New Year holidays.

There is a simple arithmetical method of calculating the time from the Hegira in the terms of the Christian era, but the easier way is to accept without question the fact that such and such a day is the New Year of the Mohammedan era. Similarly, the New Year of the Buddhists and the Brahmans and the Jains and the Sikhs may be accepted without bothering about the calendar.

The British New Year in Bombay, or Calcutta, or Delhi is much the same as in England. While the Christian New Year is formal and stately on account of British authority, it has less standing than the New Year of the Parsees, because it is a single day's observance, while the Parsees take two days. The year I happened to be in Bombay was the Parsee Yazdegerdi, 1276, and the New Year days came on September 13 and 14.

On this day I was afforded the opportunity of witnessing the Parsee religious observances, or Zoroastrian services. It was in the Allibless Hagh, on the Charni road. Their churches or temples of worship are free from architectural pretensions without and within. They are more like an ordinary hall.

In this temple the women were gathered at one end of the room and the men at the other end. In the space between was a stand holding a lamp with the eternal fire under glass. The

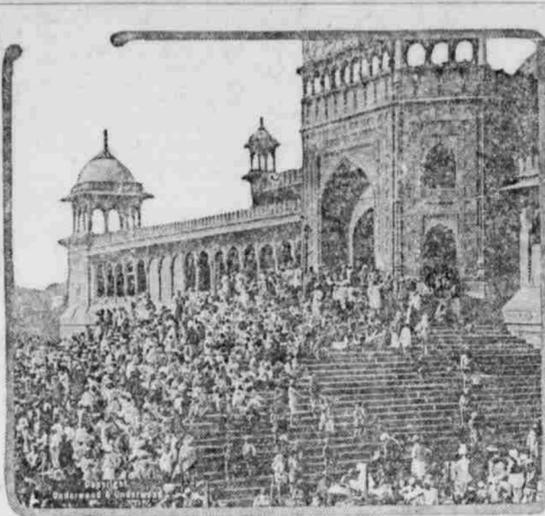
## KNOWN FACTS

Phrenology was at one time forbidden by law, as being dangerous to religion.

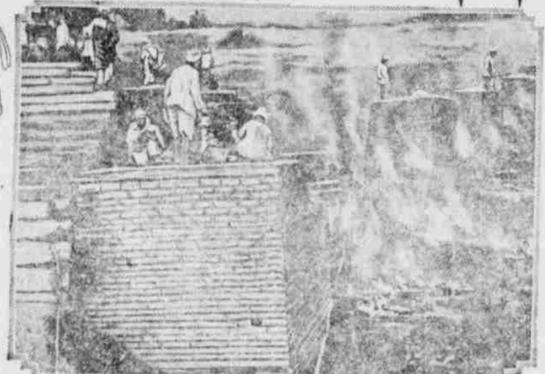
The consumption of salt in the United States amounts to almost 160 pounds per capita.

One bricklayer can lay about 1,500 or 1,600 bricks in a day of ten hours, leaving the joints rough.

Financially the United States is stronger than any other country on the face of the earth.



NEW YEAR TEMPLE WORSHIP



BURNING THE DEAD IN INDIA

name was very clear. A venerable bearded priest stood beside the lamp. His discourse was earnest and solemn. Both man and woman hearers were very attentive.

The ceremonies of worship are quite simple, but the mysteries of the faith may be less so. The Parsees who have been educated in England and many of those whose English education has been obtained in Bombay resent the designation of fire worshippers.

One of them gave me a monograph, written by a Parsee barrister in London, which explained the creed of the followers of Zoroaster as one of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, with the sacred flame as a symbol of the effulgence of the deity. It is not denied, however, that contact with Hindus and Mohammedans has caused corruptions to creep into the creed. The Hindus and Moslems regard the Parsees as fire worshippers.

It was on a New Year day that I drove out to Malabar hill, where are located the Towers of Silence, or the Parsee cemetery. Every traveler takes this drive. It is past the other cemeteries, Christian and Mohammedan burial grounds and the Hindu burning ghat. The cemetery of the Christians is no longer used, but on almost any day there will be Mohammedan funerals and Hindu cremations.

On this day there were two Mohammedan funerals and three parties of Hindu mourners, with their respective burdens at the burning ghat.

Malabar hill is the choice spot overlooking the Arabian sea. Within the cemetery grounds are flagstone steps, shaded walks and arbors and bowers. A luxuriant vegetation covers the rocks, and there is everything that goes to make a beautiful garden of flowers.

The towers of Silence, of which there are five, are hardly towers at all. They are about 275 feet in circumference and perhaps 25 feet high. The material is whitewashed stone and cement or mortar. A near approach to the towers is not allowed to strangers to the Parsee creed, nor is entrance permitted to the fire temple, where the sacred fire is kept alive and seven kinds of incense are burned.

A model of the towers is shown in the registry room and an attendant explains them to visitors. The attendant explained to me the circular rows in which the bodies were placed—one for the children, one for the women and one for the men. When the bodies have been stripped of their fleshly covering by the vultures, which takes perhaps half an hour, the bones remain for a while, and are then dropped into a well in the center, which is provided with drains and water flushes. Charcoal is the chief purifier.

On this New Year day there was a Parsee funeral, which could be observed only at a respectful distance. There were the four professional body bearers, with the bier on their shoulders, and a procession of perhaps fifty

## High Financier.

She—What did Jinks do with his summer hotel?

He—Rented it for a munitions factory. Now, I guess the fire insurance companies will come across.—Albany Argus.

## Two Reasons.

Mr. Slack—Loan me two bits, will you, sah?  
Mr. Baggy—Sorry, sah, but I isn't got none, and, 'sides, I aims to spend dese yuh two bits mubst!

mourners in their white robes walking two abreast, each pair holding a handkerchief. The Parsee accounts say that the body is received by two bearded attendants at the entrance to the towers, and that by them the shroud is removed and then vultures do the rest. This is probably what happened that day.

All I could note on this occasion was a sudden movement of the vultures in the palm trees. There seemed to be hundreds of them. They paused for a minute on the outer edge of one of the towers and then disappeared within. In a few minutes they reappeared.

The Parsee method of disposing of the dead is, perhaps, as the Parsees say, more sanitary than the Christian burial in the earth, or even than the Hindu cremation. It meets the tenet of their faith that fire, water and earth are too sacred to be polluted. But the western mind cannot become accustomed to it.

In conclusion, it may be said that there are other New Year observances in India besides the New Year of the Christians, Mohammedans, Hindus and Parsees. There is a Chinese colony in Bentuck street, Calcutta, and the Chinese there observe the New Year as they do in the United States, or in any other section of the world in which they are found.

## AUSTRIAN YOUTHS IN WAR

The Austrian newspapers are devoting considerable space at present to the part played by schoolboys in the present war. They are affectionately termed the "war boys" and in the operations in eastern Galicia they were of great assistance to the troops.

In some of the artillery battles, especially those which centered around Czernowitz and Weinberg, schoolboys in large numbers braved the shells and carried water and ammunition for the troops.

After a battle they would go over the field and gather pieces of shrapnel and the shells of cartridges to be made over again into ammunition. Occasionally a boy thus sacrificed his life, but this did not deter the ardor of his companions.

Many of the boys followed the infantry regiments and fought and slept with the soldiers in the trenches. The boys who remained at home took the place of their fathers and brothers who were at the front.

The story is told of a fourteen-year-old youngster who all alone managed the biggest hotel in Czernowitz. He looked personally after his own cashier and bookkeeper. Other boys peddled goods among the soldiers and so earned a good living for their mothers.

Some became guides, and many an army automobile had as guide a bright schoolboy who sat beside the chauffeur and showed him the right road.

It is said that when the history of this war is written the schoolboys of Austria will deserve a prominent place in its pages.

## Playing Safe.

"Is it best to drink water before, during or after meals?"

"That question has never been definitely settled," answered the other man. "Indeed, there has always been so much doubt on the subject that I am rather inclined to avoid water as a beverage."

## Ouch!

"The price of quinine has doubled since the war started."  
"Yes, that is one of the bitter things about the war."

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## It Did—And It Didn't.

With a groan and a snort the express stopped at the wayside station, because the signal stood at danger. On the platform stood a number of passengers waiting for the next train—a slow. Glad of the chance of traveling more quickly, they began to open the carriage door and enter. The guard's face turned purple with wrath. Rushing wildly along, he signaled to the daring passengers to keep back. "Stand away, there!" he ordered. "Stand away! This train doesn't stop here!"

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## Expression of Gratitude.

"Have you been reading the war news?"

"Yes," replied Miss Cayenne. "And I must say one thing for the censors. They have done everything in human power to spare our feelings by making the terrors of war as uninteresting as possible."

## To Prevent the Grip

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## The Real Thing.

Little Lenny—What is a miser, paw?

Paw—A miser, son, is a pocket edition of mankind.

A genius is usually a person who has the reputation that he could do wonderful things, if only—

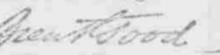
The Difference. The mistress of the house found Truda, the cook, very busy writing at the kitchen table, though it was past time for getting dinner. For a half minute perhaps she watched the laborious process of literary composition. Then she spoke with anxiety. "How much longer," she exclaimed, "are you going to be over that beggarly post card?" Truda looked up indignantly. "Beggary post card!" she said. "Beggary post card! I'd have you know that this is no beggarly post card! Not much! It is a field post card, it is—to the exempt reservist, Hieronymus Weindler, with the Third Bavarian army corps, Fifth Bavarian Division, fourteenth regiment of infantry, second company."

## One Man's Wisdom

Said She—What do you think of that singer's high note?  
Said He—I can't indorse it.

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