

The Editor Writes Home From---

SOUTH AMERICA

(Number Eleven)

March 12, 1939, heading up to Rio.

Tomorrow we shall ooze into the tropics, where we shall swelter for nearly two weeks. We cross the Tropic of Capricorn shortly after leaving Santos, Brazil, tomorrow evening and we do not cross the Tropic of Cancer until after we pass the Virgin islands on March 25. If you want to know the truth, it is hot, and in order to get this letter off by air mail tomorrow I am sitting in my cabin, sans most everything.

Evening clothes mean evening clothes in Montevideo where we were yesterday. When a member of our party asked to see an evening wrap, in the London and Paris store, she was taken to the night-gown department. It was a wonderfully fine, big store and we had one of the eight clerks who speak English.

Upon our return from Buenos Aires to the railway station at Mar del Plata, we took an auto to the dock and our fellow passenger was Fred Laub, of Akron, O., who in 1909 toured Europe and while enroute fell in with a group from K. U. headed by Edward Hubach, then head of the voice department. He recalled the names of several who were in the party, including Kate Reynolds, now married and living in California, and Agnes Husband, now Mrs. Waldemar Geltch, who is at present in Europe.

The heck of being away from home is that when at home we have a fine group of writers who handle the news, and when I am away, and supposed to be having a good time, I become a reporter on a full time schedule, and grind away on my machine in my cabin, with the air conditioners and fan going full force, while I know it is delightful on deck. I doubt if I have ever seen the sea look more beautiful than it did this morning. A wonderful deep blue, which now and then a skillful painter reproduces on canvas.

Letters written after leaving Santiago, Chile, were carried around the southern tip of the continent and more than a thousand miles up the east coast before being mailed at Mar del Plata, Argentine, because the only stop was at Punta Arenas in the Straits of Magellan which does not have air mail connections. Regular mail out of that port is very slow. Many of our passengers wished to send postcards from this "most southernmost city in the world," but they, too, which were put in the mail chutes will probably not be delivered in the United States until about two weeks after we return home.

We shall never forget the beauty of the harbor at Valparaiso, Chile. Those who know me best realize that I do not like to stay up too late, but when our ship slowly moved from the dock, we stayed on deck, altho a heavy dew was falling. Such magnificent beauty is far too infrequent for one to neglect. The stars shone with brilliance, and one could picture that the lights of the city, in its vast setting of mountains, was a very part of the vault of heaven.

After nearly two and a half days at sea, during which we resumed our heavier garments, we saw off starboard, or to our right, thru the heavy mist and intermittent rain, the shadowy form of Cape Pillar, whose high and barren rocks mark the northwestern limits of that portion of South America known as Tierra del Fuego. What seemed to us a solid mass of ice and snow capped land was in fact five large islands and we did not see the main body of the southern island until we reached Punta Arenas, or Magallanes, the southernmost city of the world.

With an annual rainfall of 120 inches, one can hardly expect good weather in the strait, and perhaps our day was better than the average. At least the clouds lifted now and then long enough to let us see the great glaciers. At this time it was too cold and wet to stay outside the glassed-in decks, and passengers wore furs and overcoats.

It is astounding how quickly the ice and snow give way to the warmer waters of the Atlantic, for half way thru the straits there is evidence of forests and pastures, in which millions of sheep are pastured. There are so many sheep here that the fiercest pack of wolves from Siberian wastes, if dropped down here, would die of heart failure.

To the tourist who wishes to buy things indicative of the places thru which he passes, Punta Arenas is a disappointment as nothing of native make is sold, the whole business of the city being based on sheep, mutton and wool. The natives do not

have articles made from native wool as their wool is shipped to England from which come their imports.

Oats grow rank and are cut for hay, but how the hay is cured remains a secret to me. We are glad that we visited the famous Silver Fox farm, altho it did not come up to our expectations. Gulls in vast numbers are the sanitarians who keep the ocean from being befouled by the offal from the refrigerating plants. The oxen are large and their yokes are attached to their horns, with ropes or straps. The city claiming a population of 30,000 does not occupy as much ground as the average city in the States of one-third the size.

It is said that the temperature ranges from a rarely reached high of 77 degrees to a low of 14 above. It is too cold for comfortable living, and it rains some every day.

Advance information failed to tell us of the size and beauty of Mar del Plata where we disembarked for our visit to Buenos Aires. From the boat, aside from an attractive beach, there is little to see of the city, but going ashore for a ride, is found one of the newest, cleanest, most attractive cities of homes ever seen. Mar del Plata vies somewhat with Montevideo, capital of Uruguay, as a summer resort. Probably the sporting, gambling element goes to Montevideo, which altho wide open is still beautiful, while the more sedate, who wish their investments to be in their own country, have their summer homes in Mar del Plata. As the crow flies it is about 250 miles to Buenos Aires, and about the same distance, in a straight line, by water from Mar del Plata to Montevideo. However it took our train something over six hours to take us to the wonderful capital of Argentine, the third largest city in the western hemisphere.

The trip was hot, dirty and tiresome. The American Express, which is directing our tours, had expected a better train. Only one car in three had a "retrete," which according to an old Spanish custom is used by both sexes. There are no drinking fountains and no fans. There were five dining cars on the train, and a surprisingly complete luncheon was served. The waiters were experts in pitching food from a platter to a plate and seldom fouled or beamed the passengers.

Wines or other liquors were available to all who wished them, as extras; and bottled water was served to others. Fruit was also passed during the ride, without charge.

I have lived with people in general for many years, but they are still past my understanding. Just why old ladies should travel nearly 15,000 miles, just to sit inside a closed window, with their eyes on their knitting, or other fancy work, I cannot understand. They could knit more comfortably at home and at much less expense. But you find them on every trip and their closed windows, with blinds, shut off most of the scenery.

Just across from us was a quartet playing bridge. One of the ladies, a little blonde, whose husband seemed twice her age, laughed continuously. Everything seemed a big joke to her and she reminded me of that celebrated bird in Africa, whose peculiarity is, that just before it stops singing it begins again.

We had been advised to dress for Buenos Aires as we should dress at home in September. This time the weather was more like that of a Kansas September, than one in New England, and it did not cool off as much as we had hoped during the night.

I expect that most of our readers know that the greater part of Argentine is a great plain. It looks as if it had been laid out by the wash of millions of years. The soil is deep and rich, yet with the Atlantic alongside its entire eastern border, and with no hills or mountains to shut off the rain clouds, it has its dry and its wet seasons.

From our train we could see at a great distance a grey bank, which looked like Missouri river bluffs,

but everywhere else it was level ground, upon which millions of cattle and sheep grazed. The land is largely owned by a comparatively small number of owners, who have fine homes both on their ranches and in Buenos Aires. The workers do not fare so well and live humbly. In addition to the cattle and sheep there are many horses and a few hogs.

There were great fields of corn, but strange to us were the vast fields of cultivated sunflowers, with the large blossoms occasionally seen in gardens at home. I failed to ask the yield of the sunflowers, but it must be heavy. Produce men, at home, will tell you that they are used in various feeds.

Among the birds seen from the train were some as large as turkeys, whose plumage looked like that of a Plymouth Rock chicken. My guess is that they were some type of wild turkeys. Certainly they were not condors as someone suggested. I saw emus and ostriches. It was probably the game preserve of some rich landowner.

W.C.S.