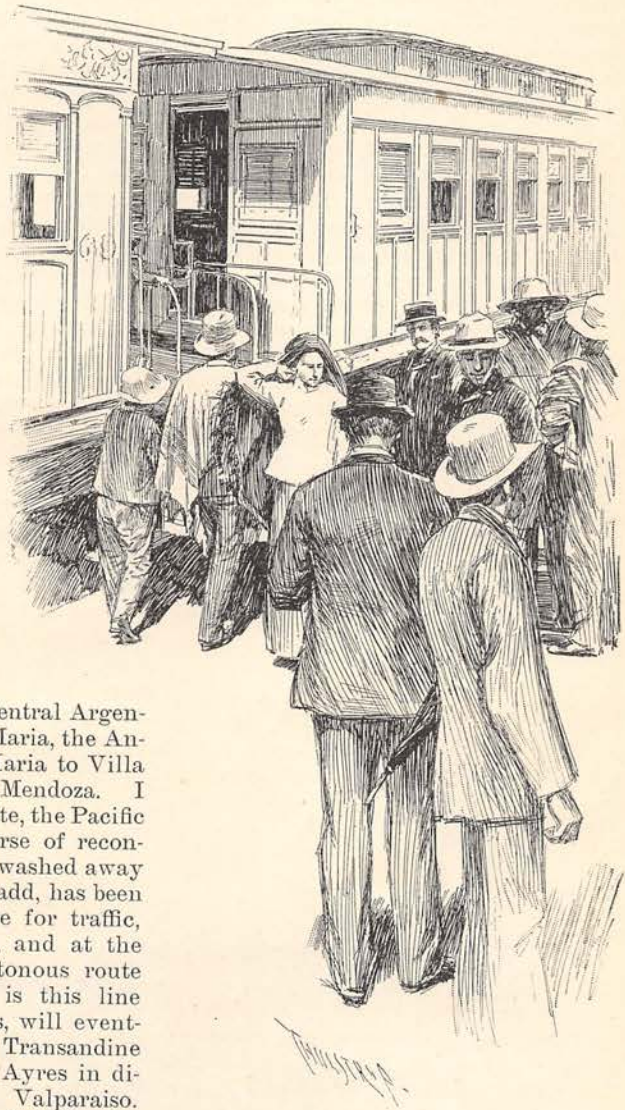


ARGENTINE PROVINCIAL SKETCHES.

BY THEODORE CHILD.

ON arriving in Buenos Ayres in January, 1890, owing to the excessive heat, which had driven the well-to-do people away from the capital to their country houses, to Montevideo, or to the fashionable bathing resort of Mar del Plata, the moment was not favorable for studying the city; and so, after a few days spent in gathering first impressions, I started from the Central Railway Station for a transcontinental trip, my intention being to take advantage of the warm months and ride over the Cordillera to Chili. In normal times two routes are open to the traveler: the Railway Buenos Ayres al Pacifico, across the pampa to Villa Mercedes; or the Railway Buenos Ayres, to Rosario, the Central Argentine, from Rosario to Villa Maria, the Andine Railway, from Villa Maria to Villa Mercedes—and thence to Mendoza. I chose, perforce, the latter route, the Pacific Railway being then in course of reconstruction, after having been washed away by floods. The line, I may add, has been raised, and is now available for traffic, and offers the more direct, and at the same time the more monotonous route across the continent. It is this line which, as its name indicates, will eventually connect with Clark's Transandine Railway, and place Buenos Ayres in direct communication with Valparaiso. However, I was not sorry to take the other route, which has the advantage of more variety of scenery, and also of passing through Rosario, the second city of the republic in population and commercial importance.

I went with some curiosity to the Central Station at Buenos Ayres to take my ticket. It was my first experience of railway travelling in South America. The Central Station is a modest wooden building, without pretensions of any kind,



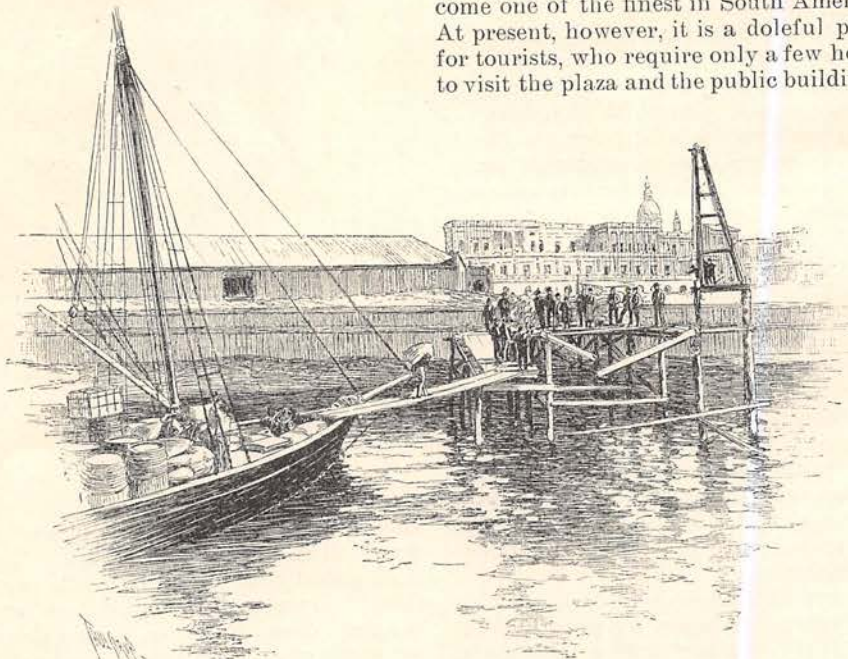
AT A RAILROAD STATION.

and quite unworthy of the immense traffic which daily passes through it. There is no superfluous formality on the part of the employés or of the public, and when the train draws up in the station there is a furious rush for places. The cars are on the American plan, with seats on each side and a gangway down the middle, enabling one to pass from coach to coach

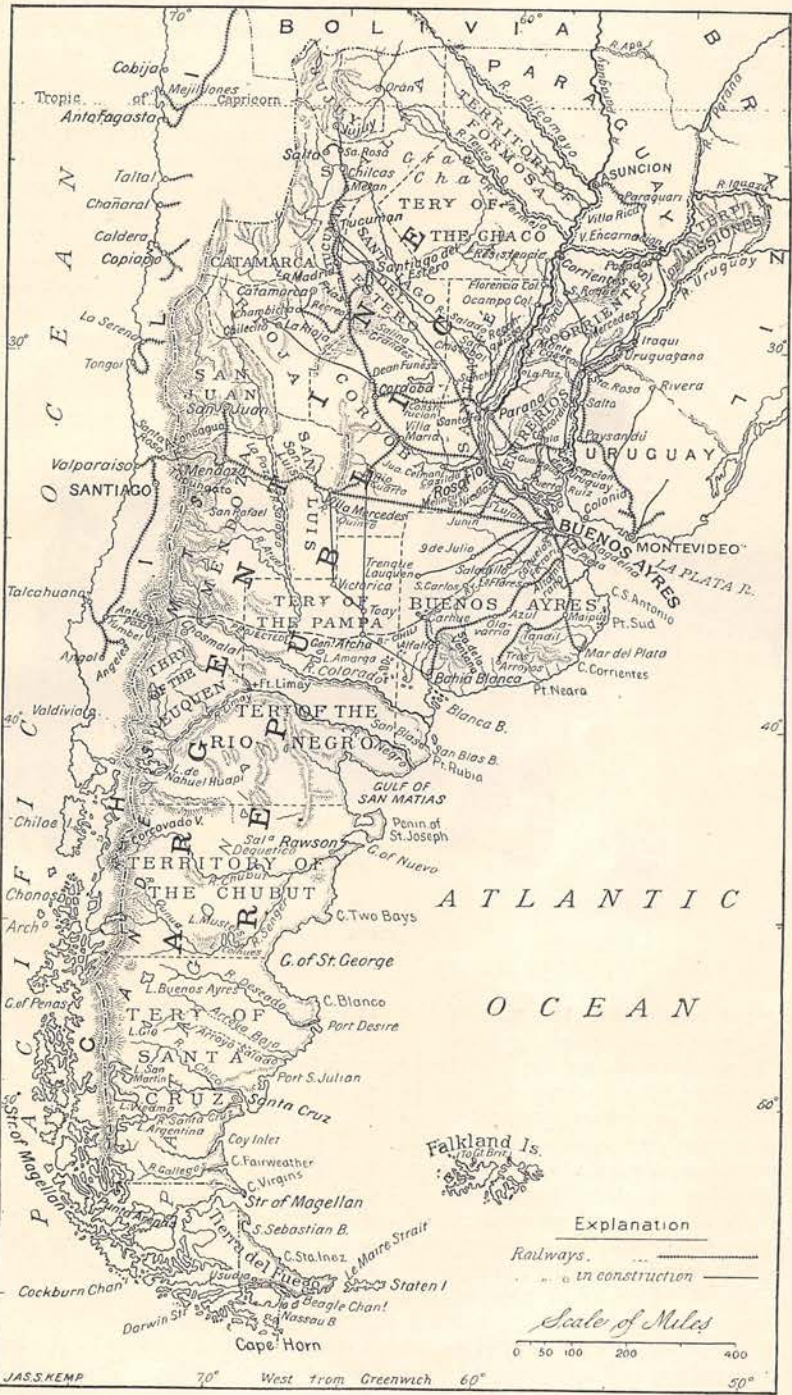
the whole length of the train. No sooner have we started than a man walks through the car selling books, French, English, and Spanish, more especially translations of Xavier de Montépin's novels, with bright chromo-lithographic covers. Then comes a boy selling newspapers—*La Prensa, La Nación, Le Courier de la Plata, Standard, Herald*. Next follows a vender of *pastillas y bonbones*, whose official title is that of *confitero*, and who during the seven hours' journey made very frequent apparitions in the car, bringing to this one a cocktail, to the other an eggnog, and to another a tall glass full of soda-water and fruit syrup. All this struck me as being commendable, comforting, and comparatively civilized. As for the landscape, I was soon obliged to confess that it was terribly monotonous. Near Buenos Ayres the line skirts the suburb of Belgrano, where there are many handsome villas, and then the country becomes flat and often marshy grazing land, beyond which, in the distance, you catch a glimpse now and then of the river Paraná. All this land is divided into squares, and enclosed

with fences made of crooked wooden posts and three or four lines of wire. Trees are very rare. Occasionally, near the river, are patches of reeds, stunted willow, and low shrubs of the acacia family; but generally the view is limited to interminable pastures, dotted with cattle, interspersed with flocks of white birds of the stork tribe, and black clouds of crows and wild-ducks, while occasionally some great vulture or eagle is seen soaring in the air, waiting to prey upon the carcasses of beasts that are strewn alongside the track, victims of the cow-catcher. The small towns and villages along the line have brick houses, and seem busy and prosperous. At one of these—San Nicolas—there was half an hour's halt for dinner, and the meal was well served and good in quality. Then the train steamed onward through the brilliant summer evening, and at 7.40 P.M. we arrived at Rosario, after a journey of seven hours and a quarter from Buenos Ayres.

Rosario is a vast business town, laid out geometrically, with straight streets and blocks of uniform dimensions, and situated on a plateau commanding the Paraná River. The situation is admirable, and the city is certainly destined to become one of the finest in South America. At present, however, it is a doleful place for tourists, who require only a few hours to visit the plaza and the public buildings,



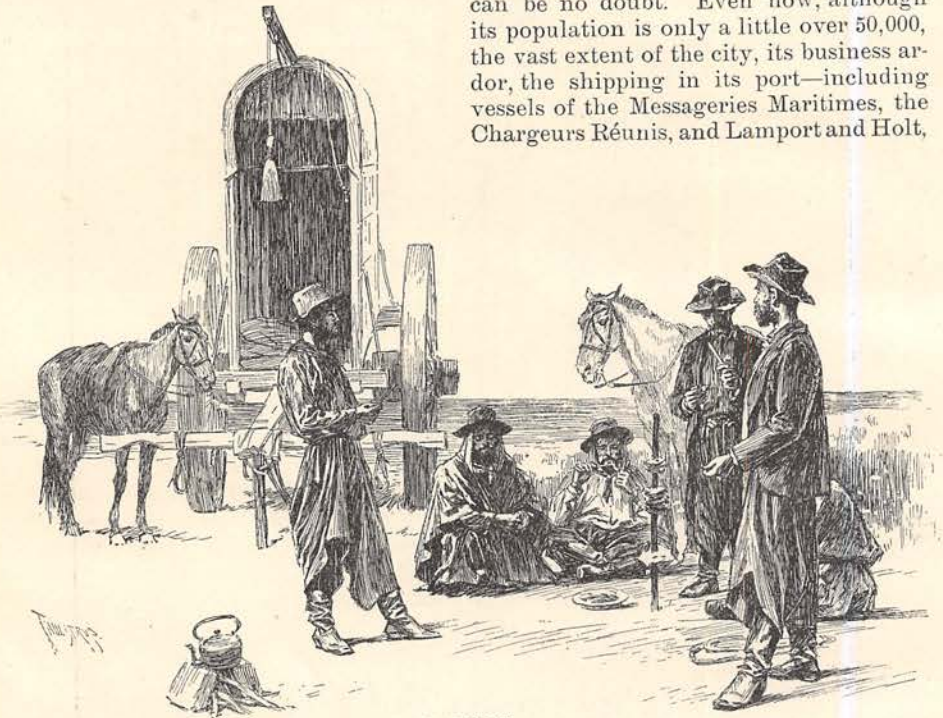
PORT OF ROSARIO.



MAP OF THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC.

and to stroll through the principal streets, where there are some fine shops and handsome business blocks. On one side of the plaza is a large church, whose white dome and towers are conspicuous from afar, but when you approach you find that the dome and towers are the only parts of the

bears witness to the commercial activity of the town. Rosario is the natural port of the provinces of the interior of the republic, Santa Fe, Cordoba, Tucuman, Santiago, Salta, and Jujuy, with which it is in direct railway connection. In course of time, too, railways will place it in communication with Bolivia and with Chili. About the great future of Rosario there can be no doubt. Even now, although its population is only a little over 50,000, the vast extent of the city, its business ardor, the shipping in its port—including vessels of the Messageries Maritimes, the Chargeurs Réunis, and Lamport and Holt,



GAUCHOS.

building yet completed; the rest of the edifice is rough brick, which, as I was informed, has been waiting for its stucco facing for the past eight years. But in Rosario nobody cares for churches; it is a city of business men, and particularly a city of young men, who, after office hours, find distraction in clubs, bar-rooms, immense cafés, and billiard saloons. Such establishments seem to be peculiarly frequent in this town. The port of Rosario, on the Paraná River, is at present in a terrible state of disorder, but from morning until night there is a din of pile-driving and dredging, and in the course of a year or two we may expect to see there a fine line of quays. Meanwhile the quantity of ships anchored in the river, or lying alongside the warehouses and wharves,

that come directly from Bordeaux, Havre, Antwerp, and Liverpool—impress one with the present importance and the greater future of this modern and thoroughly European city.

The following evening I bought a ticket for Mendoza, and settled myself for the night in a commodious but very dirty sleeping car built at Wilmington, Delaware. In the morning I was disappointed to find the landscape still flat and monotonous beyond description, less green than in the province of Buenos Ayres, but divided into squares in the same way with posts and wire. The towns are generally at some distance from the line, and their silhouettes are utterly unpicturesque. Toward Sampacho I noticed some huts built of sun-dried bricks. In the way-



HOTEL CLUB SOCIAL.

side stations the type of the Italian navy seems to predominate, though a little local color is given by the dark-skinned semi-Indian *china* women, and by an occasional *gaucho*, or native peasant, wearing the baggy Oriental trousers called *cheripa*, a leather waistband ornamented with a profusion of silver coins, and a short jacket, or else the characteristic South-American *poncho*. To my disgust, the men and women are not more interesting than the landscape, which becomes more and more unpicturesque as we proceed westward. The gray, sun-burnt plain, whose level monotony is broken only by tufts of bunch-grass and low dunes of yellow earth, stretches in all directions as far as the eye can reach. Hour after hour, through blazing sun and blinding dust, the train jolts along. At last we reach Villa Mercedes, where we stop an hour. The station here is crowded with *gauchos*, Indian women smoking cigarettes, provincial ladies in Parisian costumes, men wearing showy cravats, *peones*, laborers, farmers, and miscellaneous European types, mostly with Latin features and flashing black eyes. The restaurant was full of people eating and drinking in democratic promiscuity, but without disorder or roughness. The room was immense,

and at one end was an assortment of bottles and brands of liquors, beer, and refreshing drinks which astonished me by its variety. In the centre of South America, at this distant railway junction, I was not prepared for such overpowering evidences of urban civilization.

After leaving Villa Mercedes we enter the province of San Luis, where there is much wood and very little water. In the north this province is wild, hilly, and covered with timber, in the south the bare pampa continues, and throughout it is very thinly populated and very poor. The line crosses the brown Rio Quinto by means of a suspension-bridge, and then rises rapidly until the long Sierra de San Luis breaks upon the view. All the afternoon we enjoy this pleasant change of picturesque prospect. After the exasperating treeless flatness of the provinces of Buenos Ayres and Cordoba, the sight of hills, verdure, and woods is an unspeakable relief. Still it is a long and wearisome journey, and after a second night spent in the dusty sleeping car it was with no little satisfaction that we heard the guard's voice at five o'clock in the morning crying, "*Arriba, señores, arriba!*" (Up, gentlemen, get up!)

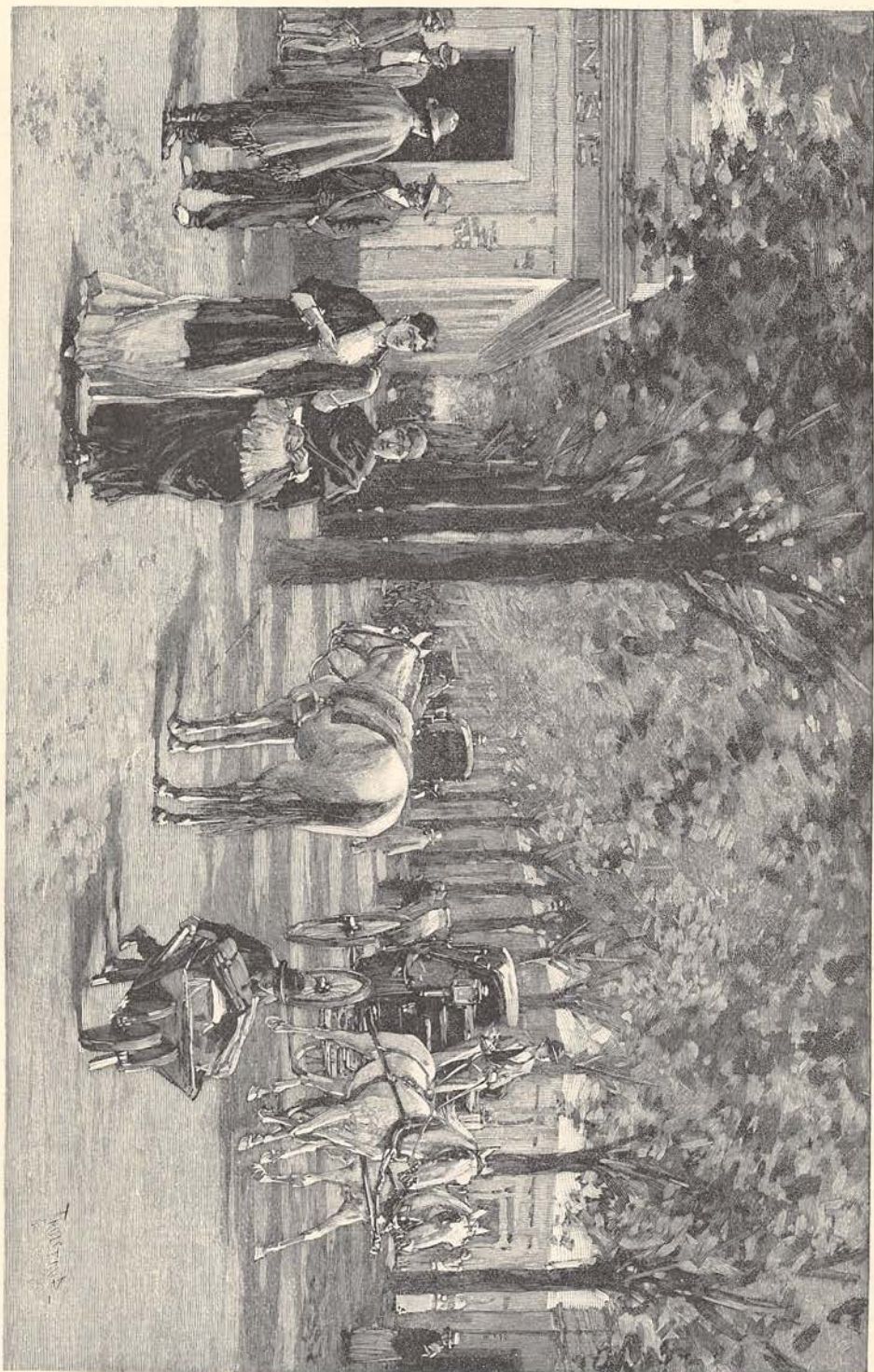
We were passing through a green and

fertile country covered with vineyards, orchards, and luxuriant trees. Ahead of the train the Andes towered up into the clouds, the morning sun gilded the snow-capped peak of Tupungato, and the vision of mountain and valley, the contrast of rugged barren rocks and soft smiling vegetation in the plain below, the brilliant purity of the morning sunlight, the warm freshness of the air, the perfume of the vineyards, the rippling of the innumerable rivulets and irrigation canals on either side of the line, all tended to produce a sensation of exquisite expectation. Mendoza! We had arrived at the end of our journey.

Mendoza is one of the very few towns of the Argentine Republic which produce at once a favorable impression upon the visitor, and leave in his mind souvenirs that remain satisfactory—at least from the picturesque point of view. The plan is the usual rectangular division into uniform chess-board blocks. The streets are twenty-five and thirty metres broad, with wide sidewalks, shaded by lofty and luxuriant Carolina poplars; there are five large plazas, each planted with trees and shrubs; indeed, the town might be described as a group of shady avenues placed in the centre of an immense park or garden, for the environs, stretching away to the lower spurs of the Andes, are covered with brilliant green vegetation, kept fresh, even in the height of the summer heat, by the abundant waters of the river Mendoza and other natural and artificial streams. And this summer heat is not to be trifled with. Already at six o'clock in the morning the sun begins to sting, and on certain days a hot wind blows from the province of San Juan which would render the town unendurable were it not for the shade trees and the watercourses, one of which runs along the principal street, the Calle General San Martin, partly through an open canal and partly below the sidewalk, which is formed of planks laid across the stream, here confined in a brick aqueduct. In every street fresh water is running down the gutters night and day. An evidence of the heat met my eyes when I entered the court-yard of the Hotel Club Social: several of the guests were sleeping in the open air on iron bedsteads placed under the colonnade. This hotel consists of a handsome façade with two wings, in one of which is the restaurant, and in the other

a café and billiard-room, a central *patio* planted with trees and flowers, and surrounded by a colonnade, under which are the bedrooms, with carpeted floors, iron bedsteads, Louis XV. marble-topped tables, Renaissance wardrobes, and other comparatively luxurious and expensive furniture that one is not prepared to see in so remote a town. However, subsequent experience accustomed me to find in the wretchedest villages of the Argentine, and even in the miserable cottages of the *gauchos*, pieces of showy furniture and objects of luxury entirely out of keeping with the surroundings.

The hotel, like all the edifices in Mendoza, is only one story high, built of adobe, or sun-dried bricks, decorated with stucco mouldings and ornaments, and painted white. This kind of construction has prevailed universally since the old city was destroyed by an earthquake in 1861. The new city, situated to the north of the old one, is, of course, composed of modern buildings only, generally in good order, neatly painted, and with considerable luxury in the wrought-iron gates of the *patios*, and in the elaborate iron gratings placed over the windows, according to the old Spanish custom, which is still observed throughout the Argentine. As for public edifices, there are none worthy of special mention or of a monumental character. The shops are, for the most part, vast and lofty bazars, with great quantities of merchandise piled up to the ceiling on shelves, and without any attempt at artistic window-dressing. During the daytime the city is a desert of brown dust and glaring sunlight. In the early morning, however, there is considerable movement, especially in the Calle San Martin, where you see groups of mule-drivers and mountain guides, bullock carts laden with square bales of compressed hay, wagons drawn by three mules harnessed abreast, two-horse cabs and victorias tearing along, and raising clouds of dust. The cabs in Mendoza cost so little that the servants hire one to go to market. Indeed, owing to the system of one-story houses, the 30,000 inhabitants of the town are scattered over a great superficies, and the light victoria is as indispensable there as the droschka is in Saint Petersburg. In the morning, too, you see the country people and *gauchos* riding about the streets, wearing the inevitable *poncho*, and taking pride in the



CALLE GENERAL SAN MARTIN.

1851

elaborate ornamentation of their saddles and stirrups. Outside the shops groups of mules and horses are seen tethered. On the sidewalks are women going to or returning from market, dark-skinned *chinas*, with more or less Indian blood in their veins, wearing light cotton dresses, black shawls sometimes drawn over their heads like a hood, and their hair in two long braids hanging down their backs. These pendent braids I found to be characteristic of the *china* and Indian women in all the parts of South America that I visited. At night the streets become once more animated. The Calle San Martin and its shops are brilliantly lighted with paraffine lamps. The belles of Mendoza are seen making their purchases, and afterward taking a turn on the Plaza Independencia on the nights when the military band plays. Sunday afternoon is the great time for the promenade along the Corso in the Calle San Martin. Down the centre of the street runs the tramway, without which, by-the-way, no South-American town is complete. Two shabby municipal employés, mounted on equally shabby steeds, stand at each end to mark the limits of the Corso, and from five to seven o'clock there is a continuous procession of public and private carriages, landaus, barouches, victorias, spiders, each drawn by a pair of horses. The young bloods ride up and down on horseback, smoking cigarettes and displaying their fine clothes. Seven, eight, or nine times the procession passes up and down; then all Mendoza goes to dine; and the review recommences on foot on the Plaza Independencia between nine and ten. Meanwhile, during the afternoon promenade, we must not forget to note the windows of the houses in the Calle San Martin, full of spectators; the front rooms with whole families seated in all the splendor of their Sunday clothes, and watching the movement of the street; the sidewalk in front of the Governor's house, where the Governor, his wife, his brother, his daughters, and other relatives are seated on chairs according to their rank; while on the opposite sidewalk the military band plays in their honor. As for the costume of the promenaders, it is absolutely correct. The men wear silk chimney-pot hats, and the women gay Parisian hats and dresses of bright colors trimmed with a profusion of lace. Such is the Corso, and such is the only amusement that the Mendocinos

have. Life there is terribly dull. "C'est embêtant; il n'y pas même un beuglant!" exclaimed in despair an enigmatical Parisian lady whom strange adventures had led to this distant provincial capital. No, there is not even a café concert, and yet the young men declare that they never go to bed before two o'clock in the morning. What do they do? They go to their club and gamble. Every Argentine is a born gambler.

All the Mendocinos that I met were enthusiastic in the praise of their province, and in extolling its viticultural and pastoral riches, to develop which needs only capital, cheap railway freights, and an honest administration. Like the other Argentines whom I had met, I found the Mendocinos to be loquacious and indefatigable critics; but there seemed to be no ideas amongst them of united action and energetic citizenship. Thus, disappointed with my first experience of the republic, I spent a few more days in visiting various estates, where I found the employés for the most part living in comfortless and slovenly huts. I visited also the famous Trapiche Vineyard, belonging to Señor Tiburcio Benegas, which is a model of order and fertility; and last of all, the ruins of old Mendoza, consisting of the shattered walls of the churches of San Agostino and of the Jesuits, which rise in picturesque and mournful grandeur against the vast background of green plain and mountain solitudes. Then I bade farewell to Mendoza, and crossed the Cordillera, with the intention of spending some time on the west coast, hoping also that in a few months the Argentine crisis would become less intense, and the great republic appear under more favorable colors on further acquaintance.

On returning to the Argentine capital in May, I found the economical and financial crisis more acute than ever, and at the same time there was a commencement of political agitation which promised no good. After making a few observations I once more abandoned Buenos Ayres, and made various excursions north and south, with a view to seeing the country. Alas! I must confess that of all the lands I have visited, the Argentine is the most anti-picturesque and the most monotonous, with the exception always of the mountainous regions, which are still to a great extent inaccessible to ordinary travellers, and



RUINS OF THE CHURCH OF SAN AGOSTINO, MENDOZA.

much more so to commercial enterprise. The vast territory extending from the Pilcomayo and the line of latitude 22° south down Tierra del Fuego—upward of 2000 miles long, with an average breadth of 500 miles, and with a total area* of 1,200,000 square miles—may be divided into four great natural sections: the Andine region, comprising the provinces of Mendoza, San Juan, Rioja, Catamarca, Tucuman, Salta,

* Official statistics give the area as 4,195,000 square kilometres. The chief of the Statistical Bureau, Mr. Latzina, calculates the area at 2,894,257 square kilometres. No trigonometrical survey has yet been made, nor any census taken of the actual republic.

and Jujuy; the Pampas, extending from the Pilcomayo on the north to the Rio Negro on the south, and including the Gran Chaco, the provinces of Santiago, Santa Fe, Cordoba, San Luis, Buenos Ayres, and the Gobernacion de la Pampa; Patagonia, comprising the three Gobernaciones of the Negro, the Chubut, and Santa Cruz; and the Argentine Mesopotamia, between the rivers Paraná and

Uruguay, including the provinces of Entre Rios, Corrientes, and Misiones.

Patagonia is still mainly occupied by a fine race of friendly Indians, whose chief business is hunting, and colonization proceeds but slowly. The Chubut Valley, where there is a Welsh colony, is much vaunted by persons who are interested in the sale of land in those parts, but at present there is little trustworthy evidence to be obtained, owing to the difficulty of travelling, there being as yet no trunk lines south of Bahia Blanca. The same is the case with the Rio Negro, which, however, is likely to be eventually opened up to pastoral industry by the building of

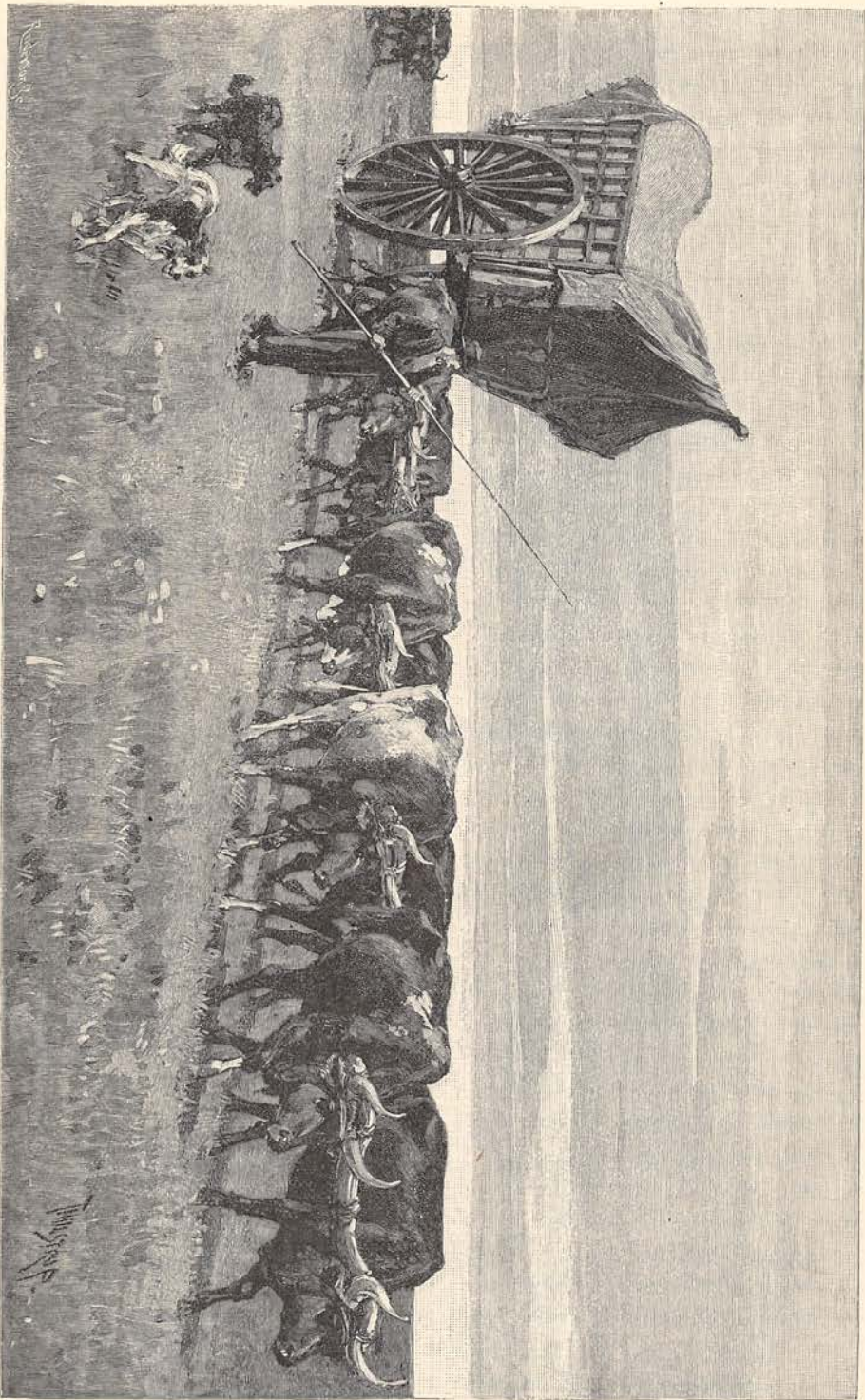
the projected railway between the rivers Colorado and Negro, from the bay and port of San Blas, latitude $40^{\circ} 35'$ south, across the Andes to Valdivia, in Chili. The Andine region is at present thinly populated. The development of agriculture there is dependent upon irrigation works, which require capital; the mineral wealth cannot be utilized for the want of means of cheap transportation. In Tucuman the sugar industry has acquired a certain development, but is not increasing, and the tendency now is to transport the industry to the more accessible banks of the Paraná River. Meanwhile, in the Andine region, besides agricultural and pastoral enterprises, the surest and most flourishing industry is wine-growing. Now we come to the pampa, of which we caught a glimpse in the journey from Buenos Ayres to Mendoza. Another more important section of the pampa may be visited by means of the various lines of the Southern Railway Company, the best-managed enterprise in the republic.

The station of the great Southern Railway on the Plaza de la Constitucion at Buenos Ayres is a vast and handsome building, which will bear comparison with the best modern railway stations in Europe. The monumental marble staircase and entrance hall, the offices of the administration, the waiting-rooms, and the arrival and departure platforms, spanned by a tasteful iron roof, are all as fine as anything of the kind in the Old World. The adjoining goods station and depots are of enormous extent, and during the season form the great wool market of Buenos Ayres. The plan and distribution of the various services are most conveniently arranged. The rolling stock of the great Southern Company for passenger traffic is, like the station, of the most modern and improved description, built in England, the ordinary cars on the North-American plan, and the sleeping cars on the European system, with compartments of four beds. This company runs also vestibule trains between Buenos Ayres and La Plata, and these cars, likewise built in England, are fitted up with the greatest luxury, and provided with every convenience that a traveller can desire. I confess that I was agreeably surprised to find such an admirably appointed railway in the new republic. In the Old World, even in these days of international expresses and through trains from the

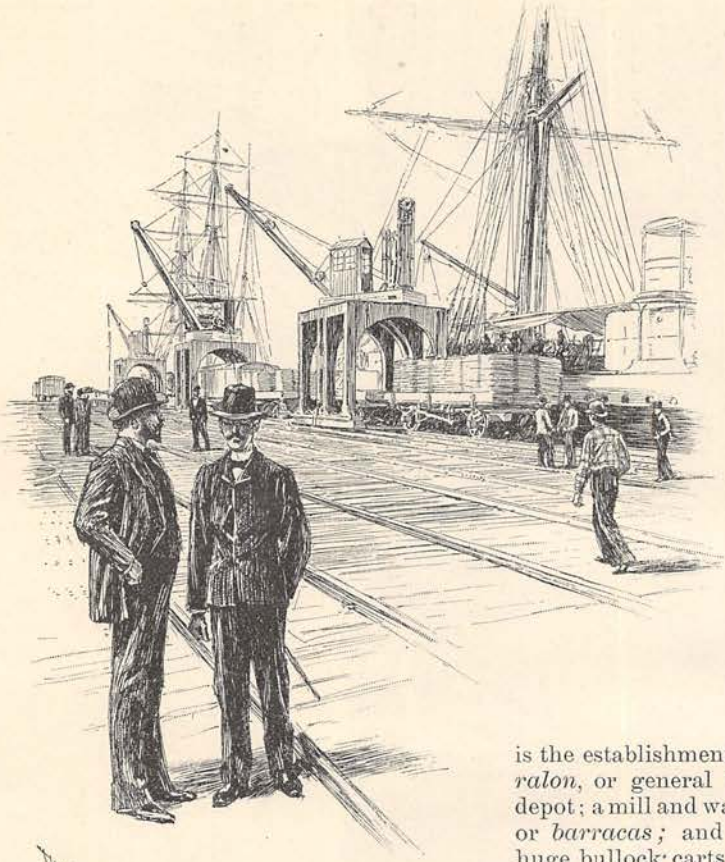
Bastille to the Sublime Porte, the public is not accustomed to such splendor as the Buenos Ayres great Southern Company offers to the *nil admirari* Argentine farmers.

One evening in May I took my seat in a sleeping car, with a ticket for Bahia Blanca. The track is $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet gauge; the car broad and commodious, with a table in the middle; the fittings in excellent taste; the walls and roof of natural woods ornamented with carved panels, and with a profusion of mirrors. The Argentines delight in looking-glasses, and demand them both in place and out of place. With the exception of this one point, the decorations of the sleeping cars would delight the heart of William Morris. Another detail which I noticed on closer inspection was the absence of blinds or curtains, and the explanation of this phenomenon was given to me subsequently by the manager: "The public would steal anything loose." A similar reason for a similar fact was given to me in Chili, and also a few years ago on the line from the Piræus to Athens, where the cars are likewise without curtains. *Que voulez-vous?* Man is not perfect.

The express started at 7.30 P.M., and in the bright moonlight we caught glimpses of the warehouses and shipping of Barracas, and then of several pleasant little towns in the vicinity of the capital, dairy farms, market gardens, and villas dotted along the line. Soon we enter a region of corn fields, and further on the sheep farms become visible, the flocks gathered in black patches on either side of the line. The next morning we wake up in the midst of the interminable monotony of the pampa. The horizon appears circular, as if we were on the sea; not a single hillock breaks the evenness of the boundary line; the land stretches away in all directions, gray and green, covered with grass of varying fineness, sometimes rough with thistles and tufts of bunch-grass, sometimes smooth and velvety like a garden lawn; not a tree is to be seen; the only objects that catch the eye in the immensity of blue sky and grayish-green plain are the straight lines of post and wire fencing, herds of horses and horned cattle, flocks of sheep, flights of wild-ducks, geese, swans, crows, *tero-tero*—which resembles the plover—partridges, deer, and ostriches. In the air you see hawks soaring, and occasionally an eagle



PRAIRIE SCHOONER.



BAHIA BLANCA, NEW MOLE.

or an owl perched on the telegraph pole ; while alongside the track, at intervals, the rotting carcass of a horse or cow, killed by a passing train, or a sinister arabesque of bleached bones, picked clean and lying on the grass as the birds of prey left them, evokes visions of pain and slaughter. From time to time we notice groups of a few box-like huts of burnt brick scattered over the ground, and in the vicinity some human beings toiling. This is a colony, or a *centro agricolo*. Gradually some of these colonies grow into villages or little towns, and then they are honored with a railway station, around which the box-like huts are grouped more closely, with, conspicuous amongst them, a general store and an Italian drinking shop—the Café Fonda Roma or the Hotel de Genova. The next stage in the growth of the town

is the establishment of a *corralon*, or general hardware depot ; a mill and warehouses, or *barracas* ; and then the huge bullock carts from the colonies in the interior are seen arriving in long caravans, or grouped in the neighborhood of the station. These immense carts, or *carretas*,

built in the same form fore and aft, and nicely balanced on their enormous axles, are generally driven by Basques, and throughout the Argentine they precede the railways ; afterward, as the railways extend their course, these "prairie schooners" continue to run as local feeders, groaning and grating over the secular ruts and swamps which are by courtesy alone termed roads.* Such places are Pigue and Tornquist, which are in course of development from colonies into towns. In contrast with this kind of settlement

* The first *carreta* was built in Tucuman, more than 300 years ago, for service between Buenos Ayres, Bolivia, and Peru, Tucuman being the nearest point where good timber was to be obtained. These carts, drawn by six or eight yokes of oxen, traced the roads, which are still the main roads of the republic, and the original model both of cart and of road has been faithfully perpetuated.

must be noted the vast *estancias*,* owned by private individuals or companies, such as the Casey Estancia, or Curumalan estate, of ninety square leagues, which is served by three stations, and traversed by the Southern Railway over a distance of nearly fifty kilometres. This *estancia* comprises the largest stud farm in the Argentine.

Here the landscape becomes a little less monotonous, thanks to the hills of the Sierra de la Ventana, to avoid which the line describes a curve, and finally, after crossing the Naposta River, arrives at Bahia Blanca at 2.50 P.M., having made the distance of 444 miles in eighteen hours, not counting the long stoppages.

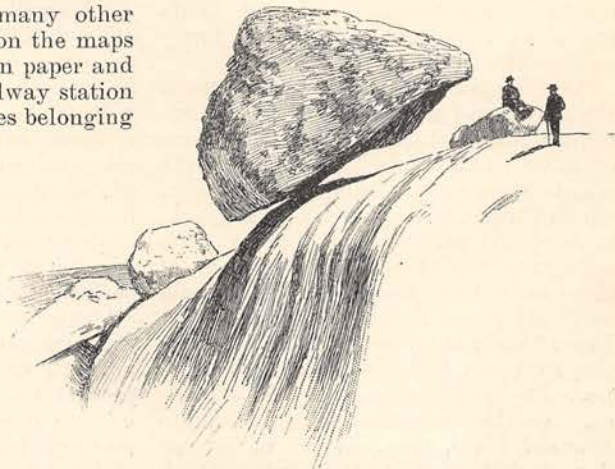
The country around Bahia Blanca is absolutely flat. The environs of the town are occupied with *quintas* and *chacras*, that is to say, small holdings devoted to careful culture of vegetables, lucern, and vines. The grape thrives very well in these parts, and viticulture will doubtless become in time one of the important industries of the southern part of the province of Buenos Ayres.

The town of Bahia Blanca is incipient and unlovely. There is a vast and neglected plaza surrounded by unpretentious edifices—the church, the municipal buildings, the police station and barracks, the houses of the English, Danish, and Spanish consulates, a few large general stores, two immense cafés and billiard-rooms, and a dreadful Hotel de Londres. The streets are rather swampy; one only is paved; and altogether it is as dismal, dull, and dirty a place as one could wish to see. Its greatness, like that of many other towns marked in big letters on the maps of the Argentine, is mostly on paper and in the future. Near the railway station are some extensive warehouses belonging

to the German consul, where wool is baled on a large scale, and shipped from the port of Bahia Blanca, distant by rail five kilometres from the town. The population of Bahia Blanca is estimated at 13,000.

The port is approached across a desolate marshy waste, terminating in mud banks, which at low-water are alive with small crabs. There is a channel formed by the estuary of the rivers Naposta and Sauce Chico, permitting vessels of eighteen feet draught to go up to the mole which has been built by the great Southern Railway Company, and provided with fine hydraulic cranes and capstans for handling cargo and shunting trucks. At present this fine mole, which may be compared with the Muelle Fiscal of Valparaiso, seems somewhat in advance of the requirements of the port; for, except during the wool season, the ships that discharge railway iron and coal at Bahia Blanca have to leave with ballast. Like all new ports, too, that of Bahia has a bad reputation, because it has been used by unscrupulous ship-owners for the purpose of wrecking old vessels and pocketing the insurance money. Enthusiasts, however, maintain that the port has a great future. There is a scheme for building docks and quays along the mud banks, where a few miserable wooden huts may now be seen, and two lines of railway are in construction or in project which would certainly have a great influence on the development of the place. One of these lines is Busta-

* I have purposely avoided descriptions of life on the South-American *estancias*. Previous travellers have written copiously about the subject, and satiated us with verbiage about *gauchos*, rounding-up or *rodeo*, branding, sheep-shearing, and what not. The incidents of pastoral life are more or less the same all over the world. The South-American *gaucho* is the brother of the Northern cow-boy, and from the point of view of picturesque and strongly marked character, the cow-boy is perhaps the more interesting figure of the two.



ROCKING STONE, TANDIL.



COUNTRY HUT.

mante's concession from Buenos Ayres to Talcahuano, *viâ* Carhue, General Atcha, the Antuco Pass, and Yumbel; and the other is the Northwestern Line from Bahia Blanca through General Atcha to Villa Mercedes, which would make Bahia Blanca the natural port for the province of Mendoza. Near the port of Bahia are some important salt-works, finely equipped and very productive.

Another branch of the great Southern Railway runs from Buenos Ayres to Tandil, a distance of 247 miles. This town of 11,000 inhabitants is situated in the midst of picturesque hills of blue granite, which furnish paving stones for the capital, and for other towns that are rich enough to buy this luxury. On one of these hills is the famous rocking stone, so nicely poised that it will crack a nut. From Tandil the line goes to Tres Arroyos, 120 miles, which will shortly be connected by an extension with Bahia Blanca. Another branch runs from Maipú to Mar del Plata, the Newport of Buenos Ayres, a fashionable watering-place which successful speculation has brought into

existence and prosperity since 1887, and which already boasts casinos and hotels of the most luxurious and completely civilized description. All the country traversed by the above railway lines is devoted to pastoral and agricultural industries, and the landscape, with the exception of the hilly district of the Sierra de Tandil and the Sierra de la Ventana, is always the same—bare pampa, with stretches of marshes and small lakes abounding in wild fowl. As for the *estancias*, towns, villages, and colonies, when you have seen one you have seen all, and all are equally unpicturesque. The life, too, has become less fertile in picturesque incidents since the enclosure of the land with wire fences, which makes the management of the herds much simpler, and enables the *estancieros* to dispense with the guard of mounted *gauchos*, who are now to be seen only in the very distant interior. At present the majority of the population has no particular character, being composed of Italian and French immigrants, of Basques with red or blue cloth caps, and a few native *gauchos* with broad

belts constellated with silver coins, long *ponchos*, and wide Oriental trousers like petticoats, generally black, but sometimes striped with brilliant colors. Nowadays, however, the *gaucho* is losing his individuality, abandoning his peculiar costume, and becoming assimilated in dress and habits with the swarms of miscellaneous Europeans who have peopled the modern Argentine, and made the hundreds of colonies and towns that have sprung into existence within the past ten years. To visit these young centres of so-called civilization is no pleasant task.

In a new country the traveller must not be particular, much less exacting; above all, he must not expect to find refinement amongst the inhabitants, whose whole efforts barely suffice to sustain the combat against the elements. Still, I cannot refrain from noting the impression of sadness and disgust produced by the sight of the towns and colonies of the

pampa, and by a glimpse of the life that the inhabitants lead. Verily the majority live worse than brutes, for they have not even the cleanly instincts of the beasts of the field. Their houses are less agreeable to the eye than an Esquimau's hut. The way they maltreat their animals is sickening to behold. Rarely do you see the face of a man, woman, or child that does not wear a bestial and ferocious expression. In the villages there are no clubs, no libraries, no churches, no priests, rarely even a school. The men and women work, eat, and sleep, and their only distraction is the grossest bestiality, gambling and drinking in the *pulperia*, with occasionally a little knifing and revolver-firing. During my whole stay in the Argentine, and in all the centres that I visited, I was struck by the utter absence of moral restraint, and by the hard materiality of the faces of the people, from the highest down to the lowest.

SILENCE AND SOLITUDE.

BY ANNIE FIELDS.

GODS of the desert! Ye are they
 We shun from childhood's earliest breath;
 Our passing joys are but your prey;
 Ye wait the hours from birth to death.

Over soft lawns where blossoms sleep,
 Under warm trees where love was born,
 I see your haughty shadows creep,
 And wait to meet ye there, forlorn.

Afar on ancient sands ye rest,
 Carven in stone, where ancient thought
 Wrapt ye in terrors—shapes unblest,
 Dreadful, by might of ages wrought.

But not alone on Egypt's shore
 Sleeps the great desert: everywhere
 Where gladness lived and lives no more,
 There is a desert of despair.

Strange messengers! Your brows of gloom
 Haunt every creature born of earth;
 Ye follow to the darkened room;
 Ye watch the awful hour of birth.

Ye show the lovely way-side rose,
 Whose antique grace is born anew,
 To eyes of grief. Grief only knows
 How tender is the sunset's hue.

Gods of the desert! By your hand
 Through the sad waters are we brought
 Into a high and peaceful land
 To drink of fountains else unsought.