

**ARGENTINE, PATAGONIAN,
AND CHILIAN
SKETCHES, WITH A
FEW NOTES ON URUGUAY**

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Argentine, Patagonian, and Chilian sketches, with a few notes on Uruguay by C. E. Akers

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C. E. AKERS

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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

ARGENTINE, PATAGONIAN,
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CHILIAN SKETCHES,

WITH A FEW NOTES ON URUGUAY.

BY

C. E. AKERS.

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PREFACE.

THE subject matter of these sketches was collected during a residence of two years in South America as the Special Correspondent of *The Standard*. It is with the kind permission of the Editor of that journal that I am able to make use of portions of articles published during 1891-2.

C. E. AKERS.

14, ARLINGTON STREET,
February, 1893.

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I.
THE ARGENTINE POSITION.

THE common remark that Argentina is a country of great natural riches is, no doubt, quite true. Unquestionably it is so in pastoral wealth and in lands well suited to agriculture—one might also truthfully add that for concession mongering and jobbery during the last few years it has had no rival. But the majority of people, more especially foreigners, who have no personal knowledge of the Argentine Republic, and those who only visit the City of Buenos Aires, or certain well-known centres, do not grasp the real position. There is no such thing as an Argentine nation. True, there is a so-called National Government, and it is established under an elaborate and intricate written Constitution. In reality, however, it has very limited power over the fourteen Provinces that profess to recognise it as the head of the Republic. In matters of taxation and internal economy the Provincial Governments know not the National Authority. Even at La Plata, the seat of the Government at Buenos Aires, which is only two hours distant by train from the Federal capital, the Provincial authorities work in an entirely independent manner, and practically defy the Federal

Government to dictate any measures that may not coincide with the views of the Governor and officials of the Province.

Time will, of course, work many changes in respect to the relations of the Provinces towards the Central Government; but it is necessary to look the situation squarely in the face as it actually stands to-day. The Provinces are nothing more or less than independent States. Each has its own administrative machinery, its own Chambers of Senators and Deputies, and a complete staff for each Governmental department. Every Province has bodies of troops—they may be called National Guard or police—but none the less they are armed soldiers sustained by the Provincial authorities, nominally to preserve internal order, in reality as a menace to the National Government, to show that no kind of interference with or infringement of Provincial rights will be tolerated. The Provinces are jealous of one another, and equally so of the exercise of any power over them by the Federal head. They know that the establishment of a homogeneous Government throughout the wide area now known as Argentina would deprive them, to a very great extent, of access to the sources of patronage and jobbery that now allow hosts of officials to live a life of idleness and extravagance. The railway communication which has already been established throughout many sections of the country must naturally tend towards removing many of the prejudices and insulated ideas that existed a very few years ago, when a journey that can now be

accomplished in twenty-four hours occupied as many days. But not until the educational system of Argentina is developed far beyond its present limits is it possible that any general assimilation of manners and character will be reached. The example of Spain is of primary importance as a comparison on which to base an opinion. That country, with many greater advantages than Argentina possesses, is still only in the infancy of its civilisation as a combined whole. The South looks upon the North in the light of a foreign country. So it is in Argentina. The country consists of a series of disintegrated portions, and at any moment the whole fabric is liable to become embroiled in disputes caused by Provincial factions.

The present jealousy of the Provincial Governments towards the National Centre is the result of prejudice born of ignorance accentuated by personal consideration for place and power: the only feasible means of eliminating this great source of impediment to progress is by introducing a system of education that will be liberal and wide-spread in results, solid and deep-rooted in effect. That this need is not unrecognised is shown by the fact that at the opening of Congress, in May last, President Pellegrini laid stress on the fact that want of education was one of the great evils that the country was suffering from at the present time. The Chief Magistrate was undoubtedly right. But the statistics furnished by the Department of Education show that new facilities are not wanted so much as a proper system. At the close