

RECOLLECTIONS
OF
UN MÉDICO DE CAMPAÑA

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Scene - a consulting room in a city hospital with its white coated student assistants in attendance on the physician or surgeon as the case may be. Enter a lad from the adjoining crowded waiting-room. An examination is made and questions put to the patient. "Where are you from?" - some little country village is mentioned in the answer. "Who attended you?" - "Dr. X". "Only *un médico de campaña*" says one of the students to the other, who answers with an expressive look of disdain or a contemptible shrug of the shoulders as if to say "What can the poor blighter have known of the case. We, unfledged yearlings though we be - we'll soon put the matter right, and we inwardly know that when fully qualified "*médicos*", nothing will induce us to abandon the city flesh pots, and bury ourselves in the country districts and become despised *médico de campaña*, unhonoured and unsung, whose brass plates will never shine on the Harley Street of that particular city which at present we adorn by our youthful wisdom".

Now the writer was possibly, yes, probably, one of the students referred to, and yet it was written in his book of Fate that for over a quarter of a century - a professional lifetime - he was to practice the gentle art of medicine, surgery and midwifery in what is known in the River Plate Republics as the "*campo*", and become in the language of the country "*un médico de campaña*".

Times and customs have changed vastly in the last thirty years in this part of the world, and the modern young doctor who takes up a country practice and drives to his cases in a six cylinder car fitted with balloon tyres knows little of those far away days when I first landed on the hospitable shores of the Eastern side of the River Uruguay - Banda Oriental as it was called by its more powerful and slight disdainful neighbour in the West.

I had graduated in the University of its Capital City where I had been born and educated, and after an trip to Europe and a round of some of its best medical schools, felt full qualified to deal with all the ills that afflict humanity, which is very much more than I feel at present; for which confidence, thanks be to the gods that protect inexperienced youth. Without their aid, given probably with a tongue in the cheek, no young man would dare to assume the responsibility of medical advisor to the mother of a large family or lay down the law to a man old enough to be his grandfather.

And so I arrived at the country of my adoption and future labours. A pleasant land blessed with many physical and natural characteristics not possessed by the land of my birth. There the countryside or "*campo*" as it is styled locally, corresponding to "the bush" in Australia, is one vast plain or "*pampa*" over which meander sluggish rivers and streams, bereft of natural tree growth, and though of great wealth due to its productive soil, extremely

monotonous to the eye. Here, though only separated from the former by the mighty estuary of the Rivers Paraná and Uruguay, the scene completely changed.

A rolling country watered by numerous rivers and “arroyos” whose banks are thickly wooded with a variety of trees and bushes, flowering or otherwise. In the Pampa it is possible to travel hundreds of miles without seeing a stone of any description, on this side there are numerous outcrops of granitic formation and kopje like appearance. Bird life is remarkably abundant, and probably in few parts of the World are a greater variety of feathered species to be found - of which more anon - whilst gaily coloured butterflies flitting amongst the blossoming trees and wild flowers that carpet the ground, add another pleasant note to the scene.

It was principally due to the abundance of stone that I found myself in my new surroundings, for I had undertaken to take charge of the medical work connected with the working of some large quarries owned by an English firm of Contractors, then engaged in the construction of a new port in the city across the water.

It was my first job. I was entirely alone and on my own; my nearest professional confrere lived thirty miles away, and so it was not without a certain amount of pride and self-satisfaction that I first stepped into the prettily situated bungalow assigned to my use, to be known henceforth as “The Doctor”, and supposedly holding in my hands the reins of life and death, an object of as much fear and awe to the children as the village policeman.

A short description of the village and what its policeman stood for will not be amiss, and may be interesting to those not acquainted with South America and its Republics. This particular village, however, must not be taken as a type of others of this part of the world, for it was the property of an English Company engaged in public works and so possessed characteristics not found elsewhere. Its houses were constructed of stone, a material seldom if ever used in buildings in the county. The occupiers were, with few exceptions, connected with the Works. The Company also owned part of the surrounding land and ran a cattle and sheep farm or “estancia” as it is called here, and inland were to be found many similar estancias, some of many square leagues in extent, others of a few hundred acres. Agriculture had not been introduced, and with the exception of a few patches of “maíz” or Indian corn grown for local consumption, cattle and sheep raising was the one and only industry.

Towns and villages were mostly situated on the larger rivers, for railways were few and far between. Our nearest townships were thirty and forty miles away respectively, and so we were to a certain extent isolated and had to rely on our own resources. Roads were little better than dirt tracks, dry and dusty in Summer, and frequently impassable in Winter after heavy rain when the rivers

and “arroyos” overflowed their banks and, if needs be, a swimming horse was the only way across.

I had more than one unpleasant experience in connection with flooded rivers. The following is one of many.

Close to the village ran a small river, the ford of which in ordinary circumstances was not more than a few yards in width and foot or two in depth. One morning after a heavy rainfall, being anxious to visit a serious case, I attempted to cross it in a four wheeled coach with two horses. But I had misjudged the depth and force of the current, the horses lost their footing, and I was soon forced to dive overboard and swim for the shore. Clad as I was in a heavy mackintosh and top boots, it was only by the aid of a friendly willow that I was able to pull myself up the steep bank of the river and catch a glimpse of my horses in the distance, their heads barely visible above the flood. Fortunately the front part of the coach became detached, and they were able to land half a mile further down the river where they were found quietly grazing near the gate of the local cemetery, which doubtless they thought would be a likely enough place to meet their late owner.

Life in the campo, in the days before Henry Ford became a power in the world, would have been impossible without horses, and to the doctor they were an absolute necessity.

Brave, sturdy little beggars they were, barely higher than ponies; they would go at a lolling gallop for mile after mile over rough and smooth, by day or night, literally smelling their way in the dark, for they never faltered or stumbled unless a shoe were loose. Nor did they expect a dry stable or warm mash on their return home, for were they not “criollos” - of the country - and accustomed after a hard day’s work to be turned out into the nearest paddock to browse on the scanty grass, and be prepared to go another twenty or thirty miles the following day. Many a league I rode on my rounds and never did my mount fail me, and did I lose my way on a dark night, I had but to give him his head to be sure that he would find his way home without further guidance on my part.

Of course I had many a spill, for whilst galloping over the rough campo, a hidden hole might bring down the horse on his nose and the rider a cropper over his head. The art of falling off gracefully is soon learnt, and when long and light stirrups are used, and only the toes inserted in the irons, little danger is experienced and probably the horse is the more surprised of the two when he sees his rider sitting on the ground picking burrs off the back of his head.

Horses have played a very important part in the history of the country, just as they did in the Boer War, which owed its prolonged Guerrilla phase to the extreme mobility of the Transvalliers.

The War of Independence and numerous revolutions could never have been accomplished without the aid of horses.

No one can live a lifetime in a South American republic without entering somewhat into its political life, and in my rounds I heard much political talk. In one of Gilbert and Sullivan's operas there is a song which states 'that every little boy and girl that's born into this World alive, is either little a Liberal or else a little Conservative!' In like manner I found that every native born man or woman was either a Red or a White, as the two political parties were called, and no amount of persuasion would induce them to change their "colour".

All foreigners soon after arriving in the country were supposed to favour one or the other. The Reds were, and had been, in power for some years, and being the only medical man in the district and of some local influence, I was immediately sounded as to my party feelings.

Soon after my arrival, I had called on one of my confreres in the neighbouring town. A staunch party man, with a no less enthusiastic wife where politics were concerned. She, in the course of conversation, asked me what party I favoured. "Señora", I replied, "I am a foreigner and know nothing of the country's politics". She insisted that I chose a colour, and so, to please a young, handsome and "simpática" woman, I gallantly replied "Señora, in that case, your flag is mine!" What was my surprise, later in the day, to learn that a telegram had been despatched to the Government Authorities, to the effect that the new doctor was "one of us", and I soon after received my nomination as police doctor and local representative of the Board of Health! I must admit however that I managed to sit on the fence and was on good terms with the opposition party, partly due to another fortuitous incident.

A well-known medical man of strong political opinions, whilst travelling through the district, called on me and stayed the night. Politics were not mentioned for he was "agin the Government". Next morning on rising, I was surprised to see a large number of "White" adherents in the garden talking and discussing with my visitor, and much to my surprise, several of them congratulated me and thanked me for my hospitality. It turned out that my visitor was on a political tour and was actually engaged in organizing a revolutionary movement, and made use of my house as a "rendezvous". A dirty trick but all's fair in love and war.

The following year, a revolution did actually break out. It was the latest and so far the last of that long series of armed revolts that were so common in South American Republics during the first fifty years of their independence, and which have caused them politically to stink in the nostrils of the more staid European countries.

And so I hark back to my friends the horses, for without their aid political armed upheavals would have been impossible in the country. The party that possessed the greater number of horses was able to keep the field the longer.

A general round-up of riding horses was always the first symptom of political unrest. The few country police were recalled to headquarters; the pacifically inclined citizens of fighting age promptly disappeared across the water to the neighbouring republic, whilst the rest donned the only military insignia worn, which consisted of a broad ribbon round the hat, white or red, according to the party favoured, and mounting their horses, rode to their respective concentration camps.

So the merry game began, continued, and was only finished when after much marching and countermarching over the land, cattle and horses became scarce, wire fences were destroyed, and ammunition and financial resources exhausted. A certain amount of fighting and skirmishing occurred, but the regular troops were more or less confined to the larger towns to quell any disturbance, and as most of the railways and telegraph lines were cut, the mounted bodies of irregulars who were here today and there tomorrow could seldom be located exactly, and a pitched battle was a rare occurrence. In the end the heads of the opposing parties would meet in conference, a truce would be agreed to, whereby important jobs were more evenly distributed amongst the bosses, whilst those who had left their hearths and homes to fight for the cause returned to find themselves poorer if not wiser men.

There was little or no animosity displayed by the opponents after one of these affairs; for were they not all good patriots with a perfect right to their own opinion?

Many were the yarns spun of their adventures whilst on active service. Some of the old hands had been in every little rising since boyhood and had attained high rank.

I remember an old "Coronel" who was a great source of merriment. He could neither read nor write but needless to say was a very important personage in his own eyes.

On one occasion, when in charge of a small military station, he was called up by telephone by the President of the Republic. "To whom am I speaking?" he said. "To the President" came the reply, upon which the old boy promptly dropped the tube of the receiver, stood stiffly to attention, and gravely saluting answered "At your orders, your Excellency!"

It was also related that accompanied by a young aide, he was being hotly pursued by the enemy after an engagement. The youth, who was riding ahead, called to the old man to come on faster. This was too much for his dignity. "You

- - - young snipper snapper” he said, “who are you to teach me how to run away, don’t you know that I have been doing that all my life!!”

Personally I was put to little inconvenience by these uprisings. Not being a citizen of the country, I was not called upon to serve nor were my horses requisitioned, for without them I could not perform my duties and both parties looked to me to attend their wives and families during the absence of their menfolk. Some of the neighbours would send me their horses for safe keeping, and mothers beg a certificate of ill health for their sons in an endeavour to keep them home.

It was not without reason that the well-known English writer, W. H. Hudson, in a historical romance of this country, called his first-published book “The Purple Land that England Lost”; for its soil has been dyed with the blood of its people when fighting successively the armies of Spain, Portugal, England and Brazil, and finally when independence had been attained, political factions striving for mastery carried on a ruthless warfare for close to fifty years.

In those days of its history, no mercy was shown to, or expected by, the wounded or prisoners, and a general throat cutting after a victorious action solved the problem of providing hospitals for the former and escorts for the latter.

To many of my readers it may come as a surprise to learn that the pleasant land of which I write had once been owned by England. English history, as taught in schools, says nothing of the British Invasions of the River Plate, so successfully begun, so ingloriously ended; but the fact remains that it was held and governed for almost two years by England, and to quote the words of Hudson

“...it was won, not treacherously, or bought with gold, but in the old Saxon fashion with hard blows and climbing over heaps of slain defenders; and after it was won, to think that it was lost - will it be believed? - not fighting, but yielded up without a stroke by craven wretches unworthy of the name of Britons.”

Those days have gone, never to return let us hope. Political elections are carried out peacefully and fairly, perhaps nowhere more so, and though many still ride to the polls wearing their old colours, more arrive in motor cars, and even an aeroplane has been used to fetch a backward voter.

I have wandered far from the village and its works and it is high time that I return to my consulting room and dispensary, and attend to my patients. Who and what were they? In the early days practically all those employed in the quarries were foreign to the country. The native-born was not partial to spade

and shovel work and preferred to earn less money but live a freer life as “peon” or cowboy on “estancia” and cattle range.

Our best quarrymen were Northern Italians, though many of the foremen, gangers, and mechanics were Britishers. Some of these were old navy hands, a tough, hard living and hard swearing lot, each with his own particular nickname - Old Nobby, Smiler, Happy Jack, Scotty and Dublin, to name but a few - good fellows all who feared neither God nor man, had a profound contempt for all “niggers”, never learned to speak the language of the country and were most indignant if not understood by those under them.

Amongst the workers there were also representatives of almost every country in Europe. At one time I counted over twenty nationalities, so it was not always an easy thing to make oneself understood.

A Bulgarian would enter accompanied by a friend with a smattering of seaman’s English: - “This man he very sick”. “What’s wrong with him?” I would ask. “He d--d bad, he no can eat”, accompanied by pantomimic gestures more expressive than polite; upon which I would bring into play my whole battery of scientific research, and hand out a packet of Epsom Salts, possibly to find later on that a dose of Laudanum would have been more to the point.

Spanish, English, French, Portuguese or German one could manage but Bulgarians, Montenegrins, Greeks and suchlike, were as difficult to understand as newborn babes when it came to describing symptoms.

My outside patients were mostly natives of the country who had ridden or driven many miles for medical advice. A visit to the Doctor was not an everyday occurrence, so a whole family would make a picnic of it. Father, Mother, Grandpa, and half a dozen children would turn up and gravely sit around the consulting room and discover, one and all, that a bottle of medicine was absolutely necessary to their further existence, and like other so-called more civilized individuals, be deeply offended if contradicted in this respect.

Like all simple minded folk, they were full of faith, but at the same time suspicious and easily offended, and it was necessary to be very particular in giving instructions.

Many a laugh I had over some of their questions. I remember a patient riding twenty miles to ask whether the water taken with the medicine I had given him should be rain or well water. A father came a long distance to enquire if his daughter whom I had attended, could wash her face. She had been stung by a wasp fifteen days previously and I had not mentioned the subject of cleanliness. He was very apologetic as he explained it was necessary to have patience with women as they were always wanting “to fix themselves up”.

It is a remarkable fact that the closer to nature people live, the greater dread they have of light, air and water when ailing, and it was long before I was able to induce them to make use of these cheapest of all remedies, and shocked them terribly when, on entering a sick room, I first proceeded to blow out the guttering candle, and open the shutters and window, or wash down a fever-stricken babe instead of rubbing it with oil or white of egg as was their custom.

Before the advent of medical men in the campo, "curanderos", or curers, more commonly called quacks, were the only resource of the sick and ailing. They were generally old women, in many cases quite capable of giving advice in the ordinary troubles of the flesh. Many had a good knowledge of herbalism, and as in the country there are numerous plants possessing medicinal virtues, they often attained surprisingly good results in their treatments. I am old fashioned enough to believe that 80% of the drugs and compounds in use today could be advantageously substituted by other more simple vegetable products provided us by Nature.

A great number of these "curanderos" however were not content to employ nature's remedies, and magic, soothsaying and faith healing frequently played an important role in the process of a cure.

The Latin races are probably more susceptible to occult influence than others more phlegmatic or cold blooded. I have known Italians to sicken and succumb because they considered themselves affected by an "evil eye". Psychological influence is undoubtedly of vast importance in all the physiological processes in the treatment of disease, and in this respect there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy. That there were some "curanderos" who possessed the gift of healing by touch or by word, could not be denied though it was only by the evidence of my own senses that I was compelled to admit it. I know of numerous cases of cures effected by these means, but will only cite one of two which came under my own personal observations when I had been unsuccessful in procuring relief.

A woman suffering from asthma, had been treated by various medical men, myself included, but with only temporary results. One day on passing her house - she kept a wayside inn - I looked her up and enquired after her health. "I am quite cured of my asthma", she said, and proceeded to relate to me her experiences. One winter's night, an old man had sought shelter at the inn. He had no money, and only asked permission to remain until the following morning. The uninvited guest noticed that she was suffering from a bad attack of asthma, and offered to cure her. Although, as she informed me, she did not believe in "curanderos", she consented, up which the old man made her walk barefooted across the floor - and earthen one. He then proceeded to cut away the portion of the sod where she had stepped, replacing it in the opposite direction. This is called "turning the footstep", and appears to be a very usual

procedure in faith cures. Some words, unintelligible to the patient, were recited, and she was told she was cured, "and from that day to this, I have not had another attack of asthma", she concluded. Verily she had entertained an angel unawares. In olden and more mystic days, the unbidden guest would have been looked upon as a reincarnation of the Healing Christ.

In another instance, a young man - an Englishman- was suffering from the after effects of sunstroke. On hot summer days he was always troubled with a violent headache. On one such occasion, he happened to meet an old man who had the name of being a healer, and who offered to relieve him of his trouble. After laying his none too clean hands on the young man's head, and pronouncing an incantation over him, he declared that within a few hours he would feel better; and it was so, nor did he ever have a return of his trouble.

Another old lady, a patient of mine, was relieved of her chronic rheumatism by anointing herself with oil applied with the tail feather of a particular and rather rare bird.

Amongst other ailments, warts are especially amenable to word curing and disappear with remarkable suddenness after treatment.

What is more wonderful is that these word-healers undertook to heal animals, more especially horses, and many are the tales I have heard of their efficacy, though I never discovered what were the words used on these occasions.

There were also other remarkable so called cures of a more primitive and in some cases repugnant nature. A skunk's skin tied round the back of a patient was supposed to be a certain remedy for lumbago, and I once found a rheumatically old patient with a long defunct lizard round her neck, and, in another case of acute peritonitis, the patient was given to drink a brew in which a black hen had been boiled, feathers and all complete.

These so called cures had probably been handed down for generations. After all it is less than 300 years since similar remedies were prescribed by the best European physicians.

In a recent monograph on a book published in 1596 by the Court physician of the Duke of Würtemberg many remarkable prescriptions of like nature are given.

The brains of a fox, baked and taken on an empty stomach, is recommended as a cure for nausea and dizziness, provided the fox was caught by a dog in the forenoon with the moon in crescent in Virgo.

The right eye of a wolf and the left eye of a she wolf, dried and hung round the neck for three months was a panacea for epilepsy.

An extract of crickets was used as drops in cases of cataract; whilst a horse's hoof baked and charred in a new pot, ground to powder and mixed with oil proved an excellent salve for goitre.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that poor ignorant campo dwellers were easily induced to try other equally extraordinary concoctions and remedies, if learned doctors of the 16th century pinned their faith to others of like nature.

As police medical officer, it was part of my duties to prevent as far as possible the practice of medicine by unlicensed folk, but I generally found that to try to do so where "curanderas" were concerned only helped to increase their practice, as any opposition on my part was ascribed to professional jealousy. There were times, however, when it was necessary to warn them off the premises, more especially in mental cases, when their ministrations were apt, not only to increase the patient's trouble, but also cause a condition bordering on hysteria in the entire family.

One ancient witch-like dame, whom I had up, attempted to relieve a case of incipient lunacy by pretending to produce from the mouth of the patient, a whole litter of kittens which she conjured forth from her voluminous skirts. Possibly she was no worse than myself, who on one occasion practised a similar illusion on a policeman, who complained of a buzzing in his ear, declared that a beetle had entered it and was still alive, and not until he saw an insect, which I surreptitiously had placed in the water with which I syringed his ear, did he profess himself cured of his complaint.

More than once I was tempted to use faith healing and sometimes attained a measure of success. In one instance, a patient was brought to me on a couch. He had come a considerable distance and informed me that he was unable to walk, but was perfectly sure that I could cure him. The case was an obscure one, and probably the mind influenced the body to a great extent. Be that as it may, I forthwith proceeded to rub down the man's limbs and after a few passes, told him to get up and walk, which he promptly did, answering me that he was cured. I would not like to affirm however, that the cure was a lasting one, for like others when removed from "the light" his faith waxed dim and he suffered a relapse.

Of a similar nature was the cure effected in an ancient dame who complained of "a sinking feeling" in the hypogastric regions and professed to be relieved by teaspoonful doses of a mixture containing a small quantity of Worcestershire sauce - a condiment found in every out of the way place in the world, and a very present help in time of trouble.

Often, when making up a bottle of medicine for some garrulous old lady, I remembered the advice of our old professor of clinical medicine. "Remember",

he told us, "that it is all one to the patient and his friends what name you give his complaint, nor will they be likely to criticise your treatment, but beware of making a mistake in the prognosis, for if you tell them that he will recover and he fail to do so, they will certainly lose faith in you, and on the other hand should you assume too black an outlook and the case goes well, they will likewise look upon you as a false prophet." So here again, as in politics, it is often wise to sit on the fence and reserve your judgement until you are sure which way the wind blows.

Of all sciences, medicine is probably the most inexact as proved when dealing with simple minded folk with an intense belief in fate - the Kismet of the Oriental, with whom the Southern races were much in contact in early days, - and so it happened that a patient who under ordinary circumstances should have recovered, for no apparent reason would go out like a flickering candle, whilst others in a more desperate condition would suddenly take a turn for the better. It was simply a case of their "day" having or not arrived. "God willed it", and that was sufficient. A comforting doctrine no doubt but not a very satisfactory one to a young "Médico" who had not yet lost faith in the virtues of therapeutics or the niceties of a differential diagnosis.

If medical cases were sometimes treated in a rough and ready fashion - what about surgical cases? Now, I had been brought up in the antiseptic and aseptic school of surgery, trained in one of the most modern hospitals that prided itself on being absolutely up to date in matters surgical, and it came as a surprise to discover that in practice in the campo the danger of infection was of slight importance. Here again Nature looked after its own. True, she had no cause to put up a great fight, for the simple reason that infective germs were few and far between, and though there was always plenty of dirt about, it was mostly clean dirt, good old mother earth and honest sweat which never harmed any man with a good constitution fed on good fresh meat and hard talk, and washed down with numerous "mates" and a lot of "caña".

It was a day's journey to the nearest hospital and hours might pass before extra professional help could be obtained, so in emergency or accident cases, the coachman or and obliging neighbour was all the assistance obtainable and if, as sometimes happened, they went off in a faint at the critical moment, it was no joke having to keep an eye on the chloroform bottle, tie an artery in an amputated limb and attend to the assistant at one and the same time.

As a police surgeon, it was one of my duties to attend to all damages done by fights.

Police cases were far more numerous than they are now. Everyone carried a knife or pistol, and it was no uncommon occurrence for a card or racing dispute to finish up in a knife duel in which one or both parties were

more or less badly wounded. Accompanied by the “comisario” or local head of the police, and the J.P. of the district, I would set off to the scene of the fray, a ride of anything up to fifteen miles to render first aid, perhaps the only aid received, for knife wounds soon healed themselves, good fresh blood having wonderful healing properties and rarely did infection occur even in abdominal wounds. In one case I found my patient holding his protruding intestines on a soup plate. As they had previously been on the ground, the conditions were not exactly surgically aseptic, yet after a wash up with a kettleful of boiled water abounding in coffee grounds, the prolapsed bowels were replaced and the wound sewn up, and a prompt recovery resulted.

Another interesting case with a humorous sideline, was that of a man stabbed in the region of the liver. Twenty-four hours after the affray, I was sent for in a hurry, as the victim, so I was informed, had brought up half a bucketful of blood. True enough there was a bucket, but on close inspection what appeared to be coagulated blood, was in reality chunks of watermelon which had been eaten before the fight and only then rejected by the stomach.

Bullet wounds were generally more dangerous, and abdominal ones often proved fatal, as laparotomies could seldom be undertaken. The vagaries of bullets are inexplicable as was proved in the Great War. Would be suicides are frequently remarkably unlucky when they employ firearms in an endeavour to rid the world of their presence.

In one case an elderly man whose business affairs had gone wrong, shot himself through the mouth with a cavalry revolver. On my arrival shortly afterwards, I found him very much alive but complaining of noises in his ears, a not unlikely complication considering the size of the cartridge. The bullet had come out at the back of the neck without damaging the spine or any important blood vessels, and in a fortnight, the would be *felo-de-se* had forgotten his troubles in the excitement of recounting his experiences to his numerous friends.

Equally unlucky in his venture was another patient, who, on losing all in a horse-race, decided to blow out his brains; but the cartridge was an old one and his head an extra hard one, the bullet failed to penetrate the skull, and passing between the scalp and bone was extracted at the opposite side. He proved to be a very determined character, for on being taken to the police station he managed to throw himself down the well. Again he was unlucky, for the well was a dry one and he was hauled out a sadder if not wiser man.

Several years after, I met him on the road with a troop of cattle, and over a drink in the nearest “pulpería” or camp store, he informed me that he was doing well and was very pleased with life in general.

Whilst on the subject of police cases, a few words on the administration of justice may be interesting. To a new arrival, especially an Englishman, it was always a source of amazement, that a man who had badly injured or perhaps even killed another, would after a short time be about his work as if nothing had happened. In England, in the latter case, if found guilty of murder, the judge would have been compelled to condemn him to death, for, whether rightly or wrongly, there is only one degree of murder in English law.

The majority of these stabbing affrays are however, the result of a temperamental passion and if it could be proved that there was no premeditation and that the injured had provoked the injurer by word or deed, the penalty was sure to be a light one. After all, the chief cause of the trouble was in allowing men to carry knives during off hours, however necessary these might be for field work. Amongst Englishmen of a like social state, a brawl would have been settled by a bout of fisticuffs resulting in a black eye or a broken nose, though feelings might have been as high as if more lethal weapons had been used. Then again it must be remembered that the country was extremely democratic and sparsely populated, and it was more than probably that the prisoner at the bar, if not distantly related to the judge, was the son of his old nurse, or his coachman's brother, or the faithful "peon" of an old friend; wheels within wheels that acted as a brake on the progress of a case and rendered it impossible to hold the scales of justice with blindfold eyes.

Frequently, in those early days, the local J.P., the inspector of police and myself arranged the matter between ourselves, for, on the nature of the injury and the length of time of recover, depended to a great extent the punishment meted out. Here again though, politics played its part, and a staunch upholder of the party in power would probably be more leniently treated than a vigorous opponent of that same party, especially if election day was close at hand. Times have changed and judicial procedure is not as simple as it was. Let others decide whether the change is for the better.

I have mentioned before that infective germs were practically non-existent, or few and far between, and it was in child birth cases that this fact was most in evidence. We all know how extremely careful one requires to be in all obstetrical cases in a city, and even in hospitals or maternity homes where every precaution is taken, there is the ever present fear of infection. In fact, we are told that every birth should be treated as a pathological case. Nature, certainly, never intended that it should be so, and in practice in the campo, she was fully vindicated. Most birth cases were attended by more or less competent old women whose notions of surgical cleanliness were either extremely primitive or altogether non-existent and it was only in abnormal cases that I was sent for, and then often after many hours had passed and possibly much harm done.

I have no intention of entering into details. Were I to do so, some of my younger colleagues would probably consider me a romancer whilst my old teacher of the Dublin Rotunda Hospital would certainly turn in his grave.

The closer one lives to Nature, the more one realizes that Nature is perfect in her workings. There are only two things that necessarily must happen to all men. The one is his birth into the world; the other his departure therefrom, and when left to nature, both events are simple functions causing no pain or trouble to the newly arrived or the recently departed. Civilization so called, having violated the laws of Nature, has caused both to be surrounded by all kinds of difficulties and consequently birth and death beds are accompanied by trappings and medical ceremony which in most cases prove to be superfluous.

I would not have it thought that I am an unbeliever in modern medical methods but only try to convince those who have not had my campo experience, that child bearing, amongst the people I worked with, was an everyday natural occurrence, for which no special preparations were required.

Few were the women who lay in bed for more than three days, and many could be seen at their work the day following their confinement. The wife of a prosperous farmer living within a couple of miles of my house, brought into the world fourteen lusty babes in about the same number of years; but for none of them were my services requisitioned. It never occurred to her to employ a midwife and the husband or a neighbour rendered the necessary help. A couple of days saw the good lady back at the milking stool which she had probably left in a hurry to take to her bed.

Generally, a doctor's duties end with the death of the patient. In many of my cases, however, I was a more or less intimate friend of the family of the deceased, and had to make arrangements for the funeral and in the case of English speaking folk, read the service at the grave side. Amongst the native element a death is always the source of great excitement, I might almost say enjoyment to friends and neighbours, who flock to the house of the bereaved to attend the wake or "velorio" as the lying in state of the corpse is called.

Latin races are inclined to be rather pagan in the customs concerning the dead. The poorest man, who during his lifetime never possessed a decent suit of clothes, is, at his wake decked out in a new black suit and pair of boots with shirt front, collar and cuffs complete.

Until the funeral takes place, the corpse is never left alone, Immediately around it sit the female relatives and friends, whilst in an adjoining room are the men who refresh themselves with "mate" and "caña" and discuss the virtues of the departed or the whys and wherefores of his last illness. When these topics of conversation become bare, the talk is more general and next Sunday's

racas and the probable chances of Don Fulano's "zaino" against Don Sultano's "tordillo" are duly considered. Should the wake be that of an infant, the reunion is more enjoyable, for if the child has been baptised, it is called an "angelito" - little angel - so why mourn over one who has been transported to the regions of bliss and escaped sinless from this world of woe. In early days, it was not uncommon of an infant's wake to be accompanied by dancing and other festivities, and on more than one occasion an upset candle has set alight the gauze material with which the little angel was decked out, or perhaps a lover's quarrel has caused a free fight amongst the more romantically inclined. I understand that it was also customary, as in Ireland, to lend out the corpse so that others might show their sympathy by prolonging the obsequies.

Having buried my patient, I feel entitled to turn to a lighter and brighter subject - the Amenities of practice in the campo.

I was often asked by town dwellers when on their holidays, how I could possibly put up with the quietness and dullness of life in the campo, especially as I was city bred. Probably, had I been English born, I would not have stuck it for long, but being a South American by birth, I understood and sympathised with the so-called natives amongst whom I had been educated. Having a so-called dual nationality, I was equally at home amongst English or Spanish speaking people. The Englishman seldom if ever sympathises with what he is pleased to call a foreigner - though he may reside ever so long in the said foreigner's own country. I have known Englishmen who after twenty years residence could hardly make themselves understood in the language of the country, though their children were probably more proficient in it than their fathers' tongue.

It is a peculiar fact that the English as a race, are generally disliked by the Latin nationalities, more especially so by South Americans, but the Englishman - and here I include all Britishers - as an individual, is always respected and generally a great favourite and so being young and energetic, with others of like ilk, we joined in and helped organize feasts and junketings on National holidays.

No campo festival is complete without its "asado con cuero" and roast lamb. The former is essentially a dish of a cattle raising country and is probably the most wasteful form of meat eating in existence. It had its origin in the days when cattle were worth a few shillings per head. When a meal was required, a steer was lassoed in the open campo, ham strung and its throat cut, and after disembowelment, strips of meat in the hide were placed on the embers and roasted.

Only the best portions were eaten and very delicious they were, for being roasted in the skin they retained the juices and fat. Nowadays, it is a most

expensive luxury and probably to the next generation it will be a mere legend - a "tradición Nacional".

I have known as many as a dozen cows slaughtered to make a popular holiday and it was always an interesting sight to see the huge fire of wood embers surrounded by dozens of iron spits on which hung strips of meat in the hide, or an entire lamb or sucking pig. Bread and wine completed the meal, after which a siesta was indicated and probably induced by the lengthy speeches mostly of a patriotic nature. Spanish speaking people are fond of hearing themselves talk. On the occasion of an anniversary of Independence Day, one youth, after spouting for forty minutes had only got as far as the discovery of America. There still being four hundred years of history to talk about, most of us decided it was time to adjourn to the races.

Horse racing was in those days the national sport of the country and even now, when football has to a great extent taken its place amongst the younger generations, has its enthusiastic followers. The distance run varies from three hundred to five hundred yards, the former being preferred and racing takes place on prepared parallel tracks on a perfectly straight and if possible level course. As a rule only two horses are entered for a race, though handicaps, or Californias, as they are called in the country, are not uncommon, in which case there are three or four competitors.

The jockeys ride bareback, any extra weight being carried in a belt. The distance run being a short one, the result depended to a great extent on a favourable start, and as there is no time limit, it is often half an hour or more before the flag is dropped. This gives plenty of time for the onlookers to make their bets, and anything from a dollar upwards would be offered and taken, and much money lost and won on the day's principal race.

Another favourite sport was tilting at the ring. This was suspended from an arch under which the competitors raced their horses and endeavoured to carry off on a short stick or pencil, prizes being awarded to the successful.

Alas and alack, motor cars are rapidly ousting horses. The youth of today does not indulge in horse riding to any great extent, nor does the campo man spend his all on a well groomed horse and silver mounted gear, but drives to the races in a well appointed car.

The football field is more likely to attract the greater crowd to watch the local team fight its way to the top of the departmental division, for does not the country hold the World's Amateur Championship in Association football and did not the whole nation stand breathless as the finals were played in its capital's immense stadium, every detail of the match being wirelessly throughout the land, every goal accomplished being announced by flights of rockets and the cheers of crowds that stood around the loudspeakers!

During the autumn and winter months, shooting parties were organized by the owners or managers of the estancias in the district, many of these the property of Englishmen or Germans.

Partridge, hare, snipe and duck could always be depended on to provide a generous bag. Of partridges there are two varieties - the timón or perdiz chica, a native of the country, and the martineta, a larger and finer bird, imported from the other side of the River. Snipe were abundant in marshy districts, and afforded rare sport to the good marksman. As the land comes more and more under the plough, so the swamps tend to disappear and with them, snipe and duck are becoming rarer and shier. Hares were also an importation and at one time threatened to become a nuisance so numerous were they, but disease and agriculture has thinned them out, and whereas a bag of over a hundred could always be counted on in a day's shoot, a tenth of that number might not be seen today.

Where parties of more than two shot in company, dogs were not used. The guns deployed in a single line at intervals of ten yards, intervening spaces being occupied by the carriers, and no more enjoyable sport can be imagined than a walk though the grassy downland on a bright winter's day, accompanied by the sound of the whir of the partridge or the drumming of the snipe, and the pop-pop of the guns. Patients and their ailments were forgotten as one's neighbour generously exclaimed "Oh! Good shot Doc", or, in more sympathetic tones "Wiped your eye old man" as the case might be.

As midday approached, a sinking feeling in the hypogastric region and signs of smoke over a clump of trees near by, announced the luncheon hour, and the party was soon lying around a well provided award and making short shifts of a juicy roast lamb with trimmings, washed down by draughts of the light wine of the country or that more potent beverage, as distilled by Johnny Walker and known in these shoots by the name of "eye powder".

The gun seemed to be heavier after lunch and the pace slower, until the second breath again relaxed the stiffened muscles, and as the light of the short winter's day failed, tracks were made for the estancia house, where after a generous tea the bag was counted and distributed and another day of genial memories was added to a pleasant if not over eventful life.

The long rides and drives which were necessary in the course of my professional duties, would have been very irksome and monotonous to anyone but a lover of nature. The country is famed for its variety of bird life, and as I lived a short distance from the Delta of the two great rivers that go to form the Plate, and almost within sight of the Argentine Mesopotamia, aquatic birds were very numerous, whilst the thickly wooded banks of the rivers harboured songsters of every description.

I have counted close on a hundred varieties of birds within a radius of three miles of my house, which, if not a record, is a figure not easily beaten in any part of the world.

Unfortunately the natives of the country are not close observers of nature; indeed all Southern races seem to be singularly lacking in this respect, and it was most difficult to find anyone that could name birds more or less common.

When the Spaniards first arrived and colonized South America, they gave European names to birds that resembled their own; thus we have the thrush, sparrow, crow, partridge and many others, that belong to an entirely different variety or family.

The same applies to insect life and wild flowers of which there is an immense variety and but few with a local name.

And so, amongst the advantages of a campo practice can be counted the excellent opportunities for studying nature in all its glory. Even on a dark and moonless night, when riding alone, there was always the glorious firmament to admire, and to one born beneath the Southern skies, the Southern Cross with its two brilliant pointers was always a beacon and trusty guide. Possibly the finest celestial object it was my privilege to witness, was Haley's Comet which in the month of May of 1910 flung its vast luminous tail across the skies like a gigantic search light.

Sunsets were also a constant source of artistic delight. Nowhere are they more beautiful, and even seasoned mariners waxed enthusiastic over the magnificence of the Western sky at sunset in the Delta region. Flaming scarlet giving place to roseate hue, and that again to a softer pink to be followed by a pearly blue, whilst oft the much discussed "green ray" might be seen as the sun finally disappeared beneath the horizon.

Only a Turner could possibly reproduce on canvas such gorgeous colouring, and even he would be sadly disappointed at his own work, although the critic would doubtlessly consider the colours exaggerated and untrue to Nature.

As to the City worker there comes the day when he feels that he must get away for a holiday, a longing for the open spaces or the sea, so the thoughts of the dweller in the campo, every few months, turn, like those children of Israel, in the desert, to the flesh pots of Egypt, in my case, the great metropolis across the water, the reflection of whose lights could be seen at night on the horizon.

A hectic few days, to say nothing of nights, would be spent shopping, theatre going, seeing old friends, with a visit to the hospital, where with envious eyes, one watched an operation performed with all the conveniences and

comforts that only a modern hospital can provide, and compared it with this or that emergency case operated under very different conditions in some far away rancho. The knowledge that it had been successful was in itself ample reward, and helped to subdue a certain rebellious spirit at that at times reminded me that I was a professional exile, a mere campo doctor.