UP THE PARAGUAY.

Thirteen Hundred Miles on the Rio De Plata System into the Heart of South America.

Next to the Amazon this is the Biggest River System of the Globe—How it Surpasses the Mississippi—The Mighty Parana and Its Ten Thousand Islands, Some of Which are Floating Down to the Sea—Travels Through the South American Wheat Lands—The Mosquitoes of Fairy Rim—The Wonderful Beauty of the Parana—Strange Sights on the Paraguay River—Monkeys, Parrots, and Jaguars and Crocodiles Galore—South American River Boats and How They are Managed—Some Queer Table Customs, etc., etc.

Asuncion, Paraguay, Dec. 17, 1898.—Asuncion is in the very heart of South America. It is almost as far inland as a straight line from the Atlantic as Chicago; and the distance I had to travel on the rivers to reach it is greater than from Omaha to New York. Within the last five months I have penetrated the basin of the Rio de la Plata to a distance of more than 1,300 miles. At Buenos Ayres I was almost two hundred miles from the sea, and in coming from there to Asuncion on the Parana and Paraguay rivers I traveled 1,113 miles. On the first day out we steamed by the mouth of the Uruguay river in entering the Parana. Eight hundred miles further north we came into the Paraguay river, upon which I traveled more than 200 miles. The Paraguay is still navigable by small steamers for 1,400 miles north of this point, and just opposite—in the mouth of the Pilcomayo, which rises in the Andes—lies a tributary course flows through 1,300 miles of unexplored wilds before it empties into the Paraguay. The Parana itself is over 2,000 miles long. It rises in the mountains of Brazil and flows a distance of more than 1,200 miles before it swallows up the Paraguay at about 400 miles from its mouth.

THE BASIN OF THE PLATE.

The river system of the Plata, or of the Rio de la Plata, is one of the most wonderful of the world. The volume of the stream is greater than that of the Mississippi. It is surpassed only by the Amazon. It drains a basin more than half as big as the whole United States, and one which in fertility of soil and salubrity of climate is only surpassed by the basin of the Mississippi. The basin of the Plata is over 2,000 miles long. It is bigger than the basin of the Mississippi, and it is a question whether it has not more cultivable territory. Upon it tens of millions of cattle and sheep are pastured, and its wheat fields compete with our's in the markets of Europe. It has the most extensive plains of the globe, and it is a vast expanse of fairly good land.

It is a white man's country. The basin of the Amazon is tropical and malarious. That of the Plata is largely in the temperate zone. Its northern parts are like Louisiana or Florida, and in the south the summer climate is as temperate as that of our middle states.

It is the Mississippi basin reversed, the source of its rivers being in the hot country, where there are coffee and sugar lands and rubber trees, and its mouth in the rather cool lands of Uruguay and the Argentine, noted for their fields of wheat and corn.

This vast basin is formed in the shape of a great horseshoe, with the opening toward the Atlantic. The Andes and the ends of highlands which extend from the back and upper rim of the shoe, while the eternally sloping plains of Patagonia bound it on the south. In it are included the best of the Argentine, all of Uruguay and Paraguay and the large portions of Brazil and Bolivia. The most of it has been built up by the Parana or Rio de la Plata system, and both these rivers are still at their great work of earth building.

THE RIO DE LA PLATA.

You see this plainly in the Rio de la Plata proper. It is now a great bay of fluid mud that is a river. It is 120 miles wide at the Atlantic and narrows down to twenty miles opposite Buenos Ayres, which is the outer island. The width at Montevideo is about thirty-five miles. The fact is Rio de la Plata is so full of silt or mud that it dissolves the Atlantic for many miles out at sea. We refresh the inland seas of the coast of the ocean long before we entered its mouth, and the water seemed to grow thicker as we sailed to Buenos Ayres. The channel is too filling up with a sandy mud, and the Eads jetty system is proposed. As it now stands it brings down a quarter of a million tons of mud a day, and the sediment is so great that all the water used by Buenos Ayres is filtered by the city.

It took our steamer twelve hours to cross the Rio de la Plata to Montevideo, and from there to Buenos Ayres the ride required one night. At Buenos Ayres the steamers land you at the new docks, and passengers are not now taken ashore, as formerly, in carts or on the backs of men. The Port of Buenos Ayres has in fact as the docks and quays as any city of the world. It has within the past ten years spent $35,000,000 on its harbor improvements, and it is a question whether it has not more cultivable territory. Upon it tens of millions of cattle and sheep are pastured, and its wheat fields compete with ours in the markets of Europe. It has the most extensive plains of the globe, and it is a vast expanse of fairly good land.

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is navigable by steam for more than 1,200 miles, and were it not for a strip of falls and rapids along the eastern edge of southern Paraguay, it could be navigated for many hundreds of miles farther.

NOT AN OCEAN HIGHWAY.

The boats going up these rivers must all draw but more than ten feet, and those to the upper ports cannot have more than from six to nine feet. Even then they are liable to be grounded in the sand for hot weeks. You frequently see steamers that have been in Asuncion ever so far by the Parana for into the interior of South America. This is not true of steamers of eleven feet can go up the river as far as Rosario, a distance of 300 miles from Buenos Ayres and about 400 miles from the Atlantic, above this ships would stick fast in the mud. As it is our steamer, the Paraguay, was three days in this place, we only got four of water, stopped at night sides and again on our way to Asuncion for fear of the sand banks.

There is no good chart of the Parana. The river often changes its course, and it is also constantly cutting up and tearing down bars and islands within its channel. The water carry so much mud that a mass will form a bar, and in time will also build up an island. One of the largest islands in the river nearbeautiful Asuncion is a submerged bar large, and further up the stream there are hundreds of islands the soil of which has gathered about the water logged trees which have floated down from the forests of Paraguay and Brazil.

TEN THOUSAND ISLANDS.

For up the thousand one of our's impatient and take a trip with me up through the thousand islands of the Parana. Let us go up from the thousand islands of the St. Lawrence. They are nothing in comparison with the ten thousand islands of the wonderful river. There are indeed, so many islands that they have never been counted. As we go up the stream we pass by a great island one, so wide in places that among the islands you cannot see the banks. Some of the islands are covered with willows, feathery weeds line their shores and gnarly trees lean into the water