

BRAZILIAN DAYS AND NIGHTS

BY AAGE DRARUP NIELSEN

*[The following article is an extract from a book by a Danish physician who traveled into the Antarctic on a whaling vessel. It is entitled *Durch die Tropen zum Südpolarmeer.*]*

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No one who sees Rio de Janeiro to-day, lying among the gleaming waves of the mighty ocean and surrounded by blue mountains, can believe that only twenty or thirty years ago this city was a pesthole that filled every seafarer with fear. Even to-day the inscriptions in Rio's cemeteries tell many a tragic story of ships' crews, every member of which, from captain to cabin boy, died of yellow fever. More than one sailing ship from the north rotted in harbor at Rio while its crew rested in the red soil of the cemetery, and no one remained to take the vessel on her homeward course. The Italian Government was once compelled to dispatch an entirely new crew in order to take over a great warship that had come on an official visit, the entire crew of which had fallen victim to the devastating plague. Later the bones of the dead were taken to Italy and there buried. A great monument in the white cemetery remains to tell the story of the tragedy. But to-day one strolls out on the quay on the Place Quinze de Novembre into a country where slender palms and green branches wave friendly greeting to the traveler, and need no longer fear for his health.

The distinction of bringing about this change belongs to Dr. Oswald Cruz, the Brazilian physician who, trained at the Pasteur Institute in Paris, was called by President Rodriguez Alves in 1903 to reform the sani-

tary administration of Rio. Anyone who has any conception of the ideas of cleanliness that obtain among dwellers in southern lands will imagine what a gigantic task it was and what stern regulations were required to make this into one of the cleanest cities of the world within the space of a few years.

President Alves, who held office from 1902 to 1906, was a striking personality of unusual energy, and even to-day Brazil owes him a debt of gratitude. Characteristic for its impulsiveness was his action in having the most unwholesome quarter of Rio leveled in order to create a spacious avenue. With pencil and ruler he drew a line over the city map. Here the magnificent new street was to lie. He allowed the owners of the property through which the line ran to come to him and he ascertained the value of their houses. If their claims seemed reasonable, he added twenty-five per cent to the valuation, and in this way his new measure became instantly popular. After about two years the old quarter had vanished and along with it a precipice through which the presidential pencil stroke had passed; and in their place stood the magnificent Avenida Rio Branco, ready for use, two kilometres long, forty metres wide, and lined with stately buildings.

But not all of President Alves's reforms were greeted by the populace with joy. One was the excuse for a

little revolution. It concerned the introduction of compulsory vaccination, which the credulous populace regarded as a kind of poisoning. People assaulted the police, destroyed the street cars and electric lines, and threw up barricades throughout the city. Even in the military school revolution broke out. But the President, retaining his presence of mind, fortified his palace and sent what troops he had against the rioters. After the leaders of the uprising — a general and a colonel — had fallen in the street fighting, it was easy enough for him to restore order. When a week had passed, it was possible to go ahead with the vaccination.

In former days, Rio was always being swept by revolution and military revolts, which frequently smacked strongly of comic opera. If one party got control of the army and the customs, then the other would secure control of the islands and the forts in the bay, and of the fleet. The fighting was perfectly fair, though carried on with such a degree of fanaticism that the combatants stopped firing whenever a neutral steamer signaled through violent toots of her whistle her desire to enter the harbor. On the waterfront promenade, where one party's artillery was in position, the 'neutral citizens' could walk in peace and comfort in order to see how the revolution was getting on. At the price of ten milreis one could secure the privilege of firing a cannon at the revolutionists, and for twenty-six milreis one could have the privilege of firing at one of the little islands where some particular enemy lived whom the firer wanted to give an unpleasant reminder. It was all very idyllic.

In the year 1910 an occurrence took place that threw the populace into a paroxysm of terror. The crews of two big dreadnoughts that had just been brought back from England mutinied,

because of certain provisions for punishment in naval law. They struck down their officers and turned the guns on the city. A mulatto sailor, João Candido, made himself admiral, and threatened to hammer the whole city of Rio into dust. In the city not a single measure was taken to reduce these mutinous sailors to obedience. For four long days the city trembled, and then the National Assembly decided to make the punishments lighter and to declare an amnesty for the mutineers. However, the first thing that was done when the sailors came on shore was to take their leaders in custody, and the story goes that most of them vanished into captivity on Governador Island without leaving a trace.

There are none too many scruples in Brazil when it is a question of putting agitators out of the way. When, not long ago, Bolshevism began to show its head in Brazil, the whole group of agitators was dispatched to the inner districts of Northern Brazil, where the heat is intolerable and fever rages. When protest was raised against the treatment of these people, the protesters were invited to go themselves and see conditions with their own eyes. They went, to be sure, but it was noticeable that they stayed there. Since that time nothing has been heard of Bolshevism in Brazil.

A citizen of Brazil is seriously offended if a stranger betrays his ignorance of the fact that Brazil contributed to winning the World War. The Germans who have settled in the country maintain, however, that the only military activities of the Brazilians were target practice and the regulation of the German restaurants and business houses in Rio, or measures against the German colonists. In many cases the latter were driven out of house and home without consideration, and deprived of all they owned. Sometimes

this summary action carried its own revenge with it in a fashion that was not anticipated. Thus, in the idyllic little town of Petropolis, which lies far up in the mountains and is several hours by railway from other towns, the only regular baker, being a German, was driven out. The result was that the people had to put up with bad bread.

The Brazilians insist that the Germans themselves were to blame for the ill treatment they received. In the first days of the war flag-bedecked busts of the Kaiser and Hindenburg were displayed in the German quarters, and at every German success rockets were sent up, the victory was celebrated, and *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* was sung. This went on until the first Brazilian steamer was torpedoed, and the tempest broke loose.

Through the war Brazil came into possession of a considerable merchant-fleet consisting of surrendered German vessels. The Brazilians, however, are by no means remarkable as sailors. In the harbor of Rio we passed a former German freighter, flying the Brazilian flag, that had been three quarters of a year on the voyage from Cádiz with salt. With malicious satisfaction the Germans explained that the Brazilian crew sailed only with a favoring wind.

In spite of war, however, the hatred of Germany is not very strong, and there is an endeavor to resume business relations. This process has been aided by the way in which the Americans used the situation. The Brazilians constantly say that the country would have had to bleed countless millions in order to pay the exorbitant and increased price of goods imposed by the United States, in spite of all agreements and contracts, when it found itself selling its manufactures without competition.

Experienced dwellers in Brazil who have spent a number of years in the country, and have had opportunity also to become acquainted with other corners of our globe, have compared Brazil with Russia as it was before the war, both in its good and in its bad qualities. Although the two countries — so far as geographical position and national stocks are concerned — are as different as day and night, here in Brazil we find the same incredible natural resources and possibilities and the same incapacity of the people to turn them to good use; the same immense contrast between the riches and luxury of the highest classes, and the poverty of the lowest; the same innate love of country; the same pride in it, coupled with an exploitation of the state that is quite without limit.

While Russia lies sunk in hopeless chaos, however, development in Brazil goes forward with swift strides. In 1922 all countries were invited to partake in an exposition and celebration at Rio in memory of the centennial of Brazilian independence, and this event was celebrated in such dazzling fashion that the fame of the beautiful country of Brazil, with its rich future possibilities, was spread far and wide.

When a man has somewhat recovered from the first varied and overpowering impressions, he soon reaches the point where nothing in Rio can surprise him; he gives up trying to classify or understand what he sees, but takes it unclassified in his big chest of traveling impressions on the top of which the label, 'Rio de Janeiro,' is written, and in which variegated and beautiful memories are enclosed.

I shall always remember the Mercado in Rio, the magnificent market-hall where all the strange fruits and curious animals of Brazil are for sale, ranging all the way from armadillos, young leopards, poisonous serpents (very

much alive), tiger cats, and humming birds, to mangoes, bananas, and all the other products of the land, of whose name and mere existence I previously did not know. In the first cool hours of the morning, industrious activity reigns here if by chance the fishermen put in with great heaps of strange fish from the sea, which lie in the gleaming sunbeams glittering with all the colors of the rainbow, as if brought hither by magic from some far world of fairyland. I shall think, in time to come, of the banana merchants balancing their heavy-laden baskets on their heads, where for fifty reis a man can get big, fresh, fragrant fruit. I shall think, too, of the donkey-drivers who drive their animals down from the interior laden with heavy loads of bananas, and sell them for one or two milreis. Only a few miles from Rio, millions of these excellent fruits are hanging from the trees

and rotting because there is no one to pick them.

But, as I have said before, this is a land where one ceases to wonder at anything. One does not even feel any amazement that Rio alone, together with its nearest suburb, has almost five hundred kilometres of asphalt streets, of which the greater part are automobile roads or pleasure drives which lead through the most beautiful parts of the surrounding country, while in the interior of the land territory worth millions lies uncultivated because there are no commercial roads or railways. One day I went into a big store to see whether I might chance on a collection of poetry, in the study of which a Brazilian lady was helping me, and there I made the discovery that this people possesses a rich store of lyrics — even though an overwhelming proportion of the nation can neither read nor write.

ON NEVER GOING TO THE BRITISH MUSEUM

BY Y. Y.

[A recent proposal to charge admission to the British Museum has roused a good deal of protest in London — not all so good-natured as Y. Y.'s.]

From the *New Statesman*, March 17
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How enthusiastic the natural man is over museums and art galleries! Something in me responds as I read in a leading article in the *Times* that 'there is no reason why almost any Londoner should not, if the museums and galleries were always open for nothing, be able to constitute himself a connoisseur of beauty.' Not for me, I know, to con-

stitute myself a connoisseur of beauty after this fashion; but even I, who seldom enter a museum or art gallery except during a visit to a foreign town, have dreamed of spending long days in public buildings, from the walls of which the world's genius looked down on me, a trembling initiate, or in which the world's knowledge was preserved