

Translation.

" O N S L A N D " .

19<sup>th</sup> 16.5.03.

The Argentine Republic - Account of Mr.  
Visser's journey.

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On the 1st November, 1902, we left by tug for the "Gamo" a steamer belonging to the Argentine Republic and departed from Table Bay at 6 p.m. After a journey of 16 days we sighted land, the coast of America, where we steamed past the great town of Montevideo. We had fine weather during the journey and the sea also was calm, except when we left Cape Town, then it was stormy and this caused the inevitable sea-sickness which some had bad other; less so and many not at all. During the journey we saw many whales also some porpoises and dolphins; and these together with some ships which we passed contributed much towards lessening the monotony of the voyage. Before we saw land we could notice by the colour of the sea which was no longer so very blue, that we were nearing land. When we sailed past Montevideo we came into fresh water, which was of a light yellow colour, and this was the mouth of the river La Plata which flows through the Argentine Republic. For a whole day we sailed up this river, before we came to Buenos Ayres, the capital of the Argentine Republic. This river is very wide so that even at Buenos Ayres the land on the opposite bank cannot be seen. We landed at 12 o'clock on the 17th November, we went to an hotel, the Kaiser Hof, where we were well treated and where the arrangements, especially the bedrooms, are very good. The price at this hotel

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This is his  
first visit /

is 3 pesos, i.e. 5/3 per day. The town of Buenos Ayres is much larger and the buildings much better than I expected.

The streets are made of asphalt (a kind of cement) and wood, and are kept particularly clean. The town is traversed by electric and horse trams, by which travelling is very cheap. When we landed we were met by Mr. Green, who was formerly in Africa in connection with the emigration. We were received very kindly by the people of the country especially by the Government officials who did all in their power for us. During our stay in the town, which lasted until the 28th November we visited the Geological gardens where there are many kinds of wild animals, also the porcupine of South Africa and almost all the other wild animals, such as the eland etc., The Government gave us all possible aid to view the country, as the Government was most desirous that Boers should settle in the Argentine Republic.

During my stay in Buenos Ayres I tried to find out what part of the country was considered to be the worst, and I departed on the 29th November accompanied by Messrs Greyling and Botha, who had come with me from Africa to view the country, and a land surveyor who served as interpreter and guide and who together with Messrs Greyling and Botha traversed the country with me to Neuquen, a place in the province of Rio Negro in a westerly direction.

Before we left Buenos Ayres we had the pleasure to visit some farms in the vicinity and I found the land very fertile with beautiful plantations and trees, and

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the veld densely covered with good grasses many of which in South Africa only grow in well cultivated and watered gardens. For some hundreds of miles around Buenos Ayres the country is a level valley of black moorish ground, as smooth as I have never yet seen in South Africa, and the sheep, horses and cattle appear to cover the country well. This sight is particularly nice as all the cattle are very fat and healthy. Here agriculture is carried on on a large scale and one often travels for miles along lands of corn, oats, mealies, lucerne etc., Being acquainted with the districts of Malmesbury I must say that agriculture in those districts is mere child's play compared with that I saw in America. Further on the country becomes poorer and more sandy until one gets to Bahia Blanca, another sea port of the country. Here the land is sandy and poor. The sand appears to have been blown into hillocks in former times, and these are covered with a long coarse grass. Thence in a westerly direction to the great mountains of the country the land becomes more a kind of "Karos" or Bushveld. Here also there are indications that these regions are sometimes subject to drought; although the bushes were green, the grass appeared to be quite parched. The cattle, mostly sheep and horses, which we saw there, were however, fat, and when I returned and saw the districts of Beaufort West etc., the poor dry regions of America appeared to be good. These regions are crossed by two beautiful rivers, the Colorado and Rio Negro; and in these rivers especially the latter, there were little boats going up and down to bring the wood from the mountains to the

coast. At Neuquen, a place situated at the confluence of the Neuguen and Lirnay, we remained some days and there we met several people who were engaged in cattle breeding at the base of the great mountains of the country some hundreds of miles further west, called the Cordilleras, where these rivers rise. Our intention was to go to the tops of those mountains lying between the Argentine Republic and Chili, but as we desired again to meet the other farmers who were at Buenos Ayres and who at a certain time would depart southwards to Chubut with their families, it was decided to turn back there and to go in a northerly direction through the Province Pampa Central. The regions around Neuquen and the Province Rio Negro are considered to be the poorest in the Argentine Republic. The rainfall here is irregular and the ground is also not as deep as in other parts. Grass, is scarce there except along the river. The country is covered with a kind of Karroo bush particularly a kind of "vaal" bush of which the cattle is very fond. The cattle which we saw there mostly sheep and horses, were however in good condition. At a place called Roca, the water is taken from the river by damming up and irrigation is carried on on a small scale; and everything we saw there appeared to flourish. If one wants to go in for irrigation, there is a good opportunity here and the river always is so strong that small ships navigate it. In the Pampa Central we found a very level part, covered with grass which is however coarse and long and it is therefore not as good as in the other regions. The valleys are covered with thorn trees which agree with

the thorn tree or mimosa of South Africa, with this difference however that the trees are larger, have less thorns and have legumes about six inches long, which fall off at a certain season and are eagerly devoured by the cattle. We remained a week at Toay, the most westerly point on the railway, and visited the country around. Running water is not found there the country being too level, but at any place good water can be found in abundance from 10 to 20 feet deep and the trees, such as peaches etc., which we saw there thrived well. The grain fields such as corn, which we saw there, were fair, but not as good as in other parts. A peculiar matter with regard to corn in that country is that rust is quite unknown. The only infectious disease, which we found to be known in the whole of the Argentine Republic is foot and mouth disease, the last case of which however happened more than a year ago.

During all our travels, lasting 4 months we only twice noticed scab. There is no Scab Act, and although there are many farms that have dips, and where sheep are dipped, it is generally considered that if scab breaks out this disease can be stamped out by hand. Shortly before I arrived at Toay a farm of 2500 hectares was sold for 16,000 pesos, i.e. 3125 morgen for £1397 or at about 9/- per morgen. This farm was fenced in with some buildings upon it, and on the railway with the return journey to Buenos Ayres the land became continually better until we came to those level moors, where the cattle appear to be continuous and where for miles one travels along lands of corn, mealies, etc., At Buenos

Ayres I again met the other farmers and thence we again went by ship to the Southern region Chubut where the Boers are going to settle. One can also travel there over land, but this takes much longer and is much more difficult than by sea. It would take about 4 days travelling continuously but the ships touch at various places to take up and discharge goods. After a prosperous and pleasant journey along the coast, so that we always kept the land in sight, we arrived at Comodoro Rivadavia where we landed and where we were received by \* Baumann a Free Stater, who was then already a year in the Argentine Republic. We then went to his farm, where he has a very comfortable house consisting of 6 rooms, a passage and verandah. This house is of zinc (iron) lined with wood, and cost about £300, put up there by the carpenter of the merchant. We remained some days with Baumann, to view the regions around there, before we departed in a westerly direction to the frontier of the country, where the great mountains are some of them covered with snow all the year. This region is called the Chubut Province. The part in which Baumann lives and where we remained some days travelling around with Baumann to inspect it, consists of sandy hills, covered with bush and grass, broken land, as we call it here. The bushes are mostly a kind of thorn bush of from 3 to 6 feet high, which is eagerly eaten by all kinds of cattle, especially sheep.

Various kinds of grasses grow between the bushes, one in particular with which I am acquainted, called "nuskus" or "turksnagel" found in the Districts of Malmesbury and Piquetberg. This grass I have seen in large quantities along those hills, much more than I have ever seen in the Malmesbury and Piquetberg districts. Between those hills there are black moorish valleys, thickly overgrown with good grasses. In those valleys fresh running water with strong fountains is found, which come out along the sides of those hills. On the 6th January we left with a wagon and mules, having decided to go as far as possible with it, and proceed <sup>further</sup> on horseback to the border of the republic where the great mountains of the country are. During the first two days we passed through regions which are the same as that at Baumann's. Then we came to a plateau called the Pampa, which is much like the veld on the Drakensberg in the District of Barkly East, which is very suitable for cattle. We travelled for one day on this Pampa and then we went down into the valleys, in regions which are however not as good as that on the other side of the Pampa whence we came.

The veld appears to be drier here with less grass, more sandy and brackish. After travelling a day in those regions the land became better and we came to a very beautiful strong river called the Senguer, which is large enough to be navigable by small ships. The banks of this river are very even and are of <sup>a</sup> black moorish soil thickly overgrown with grasses as in the valleys at Baumanns. Here we found some people who had cattle, horses, oxen and sheep and these were particularly fat and in good condition

better

better than I have ever seen them in South Africa. We then travelled up along the river and on the 12th January the mules would not trot any longer. We then hired 14 horses from a certain Mr. Kelly, an Irishman whose father had to leave Ireland for political reasons; taking him (Kelly) as our guide. After riding for some days through regions similar to the Pampas, with black valleys between them, which had running water, we came to a river called the Mayo, a tributary of the Senguer. We then followed up the course of this river to its source where there is the watershed between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. These regions near the mountains we found to be very good. Here are fields of wild corn, wild barley and other sweet grasses, which the horses are mad after. In the valleys along the river the ground is black, moorish and very fertile, but the "blind flies" are a nuisance. These parts are certainly the most fruitful which we passed through and the grasses the best in those parts which are still uninhabited, but I am afraid that for some months of the year it is very cold. Water is plentiful here.

On the 15th of January we at last again turned homewards. That day we had rain and shot 23 wild duck on a large lake called Lagoona Blanca.

On the return journey we took another route through regions which are more or less the same until we again came to the wagon. Upon enquiring about the wild cattle, Kelly pointed out a certain hill called Sierra Quatrado and said further that if we wanted to make a detour of about 8 hours to the other side of that hill he would point out to us wild cattle estimated to number about 6000. But as we were afraid to miss a certain ship by which we were

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to return to Buenos Ayres, we could not go thither. These are ordinary cattle which have become wild and later on we saw the dung etc of another herd near Baumann's. Those parts are certainly most suitable for cattle.

On the 16th January I got a statement from Kelly of his sheep farming, which I repeat verbatim, as given by him and noted in my diary. I must first mention that there are many people like Kelly who possess no land, but who farm on Government land without paying any rent. He got those sheep from San Martin, a place about 20 hours riding from his farm.

Kelly began in May 1900 with

540 ewes	(purchased)
480 "	on half profits
210 "	ditto

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Total 1230 ewes.

When they got home he had 1210. After two years the person who lent 480 got 990 head and the other one who lent him 210 got 480. Last May he sold 1000 head and now he still has 3100. He got 120 lambs from 100 ewes, and about 40 of the ewe lambs of the previous year produced.

When I again came to the wagon one of the sheep of his flock was slaughtered. I weighed it and it amounted to 49 $\frac{3}{4}$  lbs. This was a young sheep which had not yet shed a single tooth, of a fine merino stock. I can say nothing about sowing in this particular region as nobody has as yet ploughed or sown but in the same province about 100 miles to the north the people have beautiful crops for the corn from that place took the first prize at the Chicago Exhibition.

The conditions under which farmers get land in these parts

parts are:- a person over 20 years of age gets a farm of 3125<sup>s d</sup> morgen, 600 of which are gratis and the remainder at 1/4 per morgen, payable in cash with 6% discount or in 5 years time at an interest of 6% per annum. Sheep can be obtained at from 4 to 6 shillings and cattle from £2 to £4 sterling. Any one therefore who can land there with £300 sterling is an independent man, with the prospects of obtaining his own land; thus to be his own master and not as a labourer or servant to work for others.

The expenses to get there are not great, since upon ~~arrival~~ arrival at Buenos Ayres transport is gratis. The Government of the country is a free republic, which as far as I can find out, is on all main points the same as that of the Free State and the Transvaal was, under a President who is elected by the burghers of the whole country. After having gained their liberty the people made two conditions in their land laws. The one is : They acknowledge no rank by birth, such as kings, emperors, lords, etc., and the other is full liberty of worship. Most of the people of the country are of Spanish descent who are much like the French or old Huguenots, who came into this country, but there are many people of other nations, especially Germans. During all my wanderings in that country I never saw any Indians and as far as I heard there is nothing to be feared from them. The most important game is the Guanaes, a sort of large buck, which when slaughtered weighs between two and three hundred pounds. They are buck which do not go in large herds and the largest number which I saw together was somewhat over a hundred. But they are found scattered over the whole country, 20 in one valley and 10 in another etc.

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Then there are also many ostriches, much smaller than those in South Africa, and the feathers are not of much value. But the most abundant of ~~the~~ all are wild duck, geese and swans. Even in those parts which are long inhabited they do not appear to have diminished, There are also three varieties of partridges in the country, and further on towards the mountains various kinds of stag.

After having well considered everything upon my return here, I have come to the conclusion that the chances for farming are much better in that country than here and I have therefore decided to emigrate thither.

Hoping that this report as taken from my diary will be of value to some,

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(sd) C.J.N.Visser

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