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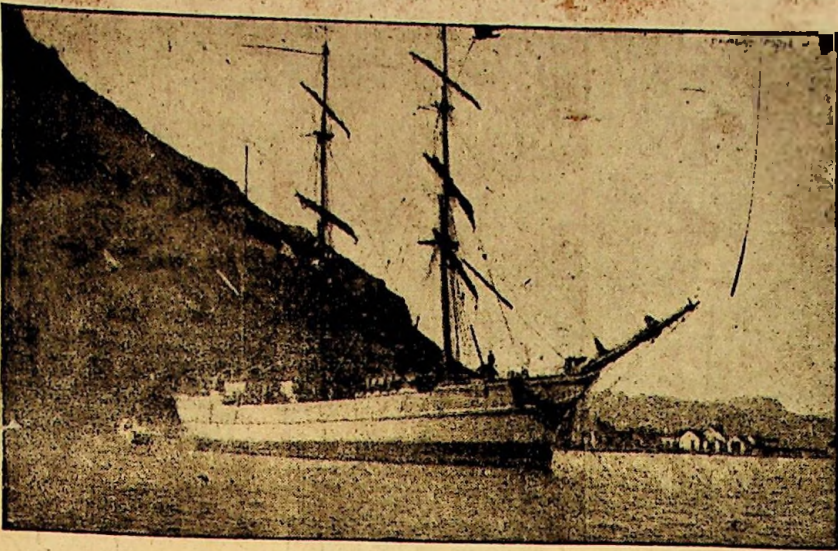
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The Tijuca in South Georgia.

SEVENTY-SIX, AND GOING STRONG

A Windjammer With a Record

QUITE a number of people must have noticed and been intrigued by the three tall masts of the compact little barque-rigged windjammer that has been moored in the North Basin for some weeks. Among the tugs and tankers and big grey ships of ten times her tonnage she looks surprisingly light-hearted and toy-like. She might have sailed out of one of Spurling's famous seascares, or out of a bottle.

Yet she holds her own. At seventy-six she is certainly one of the oldest sea-going ships in the world, but she carries her years like a lady. The big steamers can teach her nothing; she is still competing with them on their own terms, for she is an ocean-going liner, carrying meat, glassware, drugs, and a variety of perishable goods from this port to Cape Town in twenty-five days. Not only that, but she is still in the passenger trade, and twelve first-class passengers are due to sail on her next trip.

Most of her story has been lost in the passing of time. She was built in France in 1868 at the order of Napoleon III, as a training-ship for the French navy. The Emperor himself must have trodden her decks on countless full-dress inspections, but there is no record of it. She must have poked her stump bowsprit into most of the world's oceans, but there is no record of that either.

LINKS WITH THE PAST

Yet one almost legendary trace of her aristocratic past still lingers after many changes, and it is a connection with royalty. Not French royalty, oddly enough, but British. The swinging brass lamp in her captain's cabin came

from a vessel in which an English Queen once travelled. That much is vouched for by many; the rest is guesswork. The style of the lamp leads one to think of Queen Victoria, who never travelled on any ship save her own yacht.

It's pleasant to think that part of the furnishing of the Victoria and Albert is still going to sea in sail, and the lamp itself is a most impressive thing, well worthy of a queen.

Another curiosity is the compass suspended from the ceiling over the skipper's bunk, so that he can watch the ship's behaviour while lying on his back. Like the lamp in the study and another smaller one in the chief officer's cabin, it is a beautiful thing, fitted to swing against the roll and pitch of the ship; the bearings have been worn down almost a millimetre by seventy-six years of rolling and pitching.

After years of service with the French navy, the Tijuca vanished into obscurity, to reappear in December, 1907, when she was bought by the Cia. Argentina de Pesca. The purchase took place in London, being witnessed by the Argentine consulate there, and at that time she bore the name she carries to-day; she may always have born it. It is a curious name, traceable to a small village near Rio de Janeiro. The story goes that it was given her by a certain Norwegian captain in remembrance of a tragic love affair that took place there. In 1938 there were two other ships of the same name, steamers both, and comparatively modern; but the fact that one of them was a Norwegian may be taken as adding a faint touch of probability to the romance.

Her Argentine owners provided the Tijuca with a 300 H.P. Diesel engine which added five useful knots to her speed and delivered her from the bugbears of sailing ships — head-winds and

calms. She does not appear to have been actually used as a whaler, but as a supply ship bringing provisions and relief crews to the South Georgia whaling station. This work was her real test. For thirty-four years she braved the tremendous gales and crashing seas of those southern latitudes notorious in all chronicles of the sea, and never lost a spar. "Sails, yes," said the big, quiet second engineer who has known her for eleven years, "Nearly every voyage we used to lose a sail, blown clean out of the boll-ropes. But we were never dismasted, and never sprang a bad leak."

A FATAL ACCIDENT

Looking up at her slender pine topgallant masts, a little curved with the weight of many winds, the main-truck ninety-three feet above the deck, it seems a wonderful record, and one feels it a pity that the men who constructed her are not here to be congratulated for having built so well. Minor adventures she must have had in plenty, though changes of personnel have made them difficult to discover. The only recorded one was no fault of hers. Some years ago she was rammed in fog by a French passenger vessel in the Plate estuary. She was in tow at the time, outward bound with relief crews for the whaling ships above South. The collision broke her main yard and uprooted her bowsprit, tearing up the planking of the fore-castle head. The plating of her bow was badly torn and buckled, fortunately above the water-line, and a man was killed by a broken ventilator cowling. She was at sea again after twenty days, drumming south into 'he roaring forties as before.

She was not much in the public eye during those thirty-four years. South Georgia knew her well and she is mentioned in a Norwegian novel about that place (again Norway!) but in B.A. she passed unnoticed and unsung, slipping in and out of the Riachuelo at long intervals, a grimy, weather-beaten, sturdy little ship. The Sarmiento took all the limelight, and few people knew that there was another square-rigger under the Argentine flag.

REDISCOVERED

Then came the war. Shortage, first of fuel, then of ships. The end of 1941 saw the end of Japanese trading between B.A. and Cape Town. In desperation, merchants looked about them and discovered the Tijuca, still seaworthy after years of battering by seas that only the finest ships in the world can stand. She was economical to run, a fast sailer; above all, a lucky ship. In 1942 the S.A. "Lord" of this city purchased her from the Cia. de Pesca and gave her a thorough overhaul and refit. They installed a refrigerating chamber with capacity for fifteen tons of meat. They gave her an up-to-date radio transmitting and receiving set, putting her in telephonic communication with the shore from mid-Atlantic. They built passenger accommodation and provided an enormous ice-chest for the saloon. To-day she is re-living glories that had seemed past; spick and span with fresh paint and bright brass work she makes fast passages across the Atlantic and is the delight of all eyes as she sails into Table Bay.

A THING OF BEAUTY

And so there she is, a living working relic of the last century that has somehow survived into this age of aeroplanes and looks like something from Conrad or Henty or John Masefield. The nineteenth century that perpetrated some distasteful structures on land, built beautiful things to go in the water. And the Tijuca is very beautiful, with the leasurely, drifting beauty of yesterday that is sometimes more satisfying than the streamlined beauty of to-day. And, after their own fashion, her crew are conscious of their ship's uniqueness and proud of it. They are a cheery crowd; many of the hands are Barmenlo men; the young captain and his officers are well-read, cultured people, a far cry from the tyrants of the bad old

days, and together in the cozy little cabin they form a pleasant brotherhood. The chief officer's ambition is to build a big scale model of his ship. All are eager to talk about her.

On Sunday afternoons the strollers gather on the docks, starting curiously at the complicated wonder of rigging and spars. "What is all that for?" they ask each other, and someone answers, "Ha de ser uno de esos vapores veleros..."



Tijuca's foremast photographed from the bowsprit.

Friday, THE STANDARD, June 16, 1944.

AN OLD TIMER IN ARGENTINA

Reminiscences of the Early Nineteen-Hundreds

MANY of the British settlers in Argentina half a century ago are now but memories; but there are still numbers of old families which have been settled in this country and in the Falklands for years.

One "old timer," who left these shores years ago for the Canary Islands, and afterwards for England, has been stirred into reminiscence by reading A. F. Tschiffely's "This Way Southward," and, in the course of a long letter to the author (whom he has never met) he recalls the names of many of the families well-known locally years ago.

Extracts from the letter follow:

I have just finished reading your book "This way Southward" and it has revived many memories and interested me a lot.

My father and his brother with two Yorkshiremen of the name of Stickney, freighted a sailing vessel and went to South America about 1871 on a quest for somewhere to settle.

After very considerable wanderings the state of South American Republics at that time,—one of continual turmoil,—decided them to settle in the Falkland Islands, the attraction being the Union Jack. There they took-up land, our place being 'Fox Bay' on the West Falkland.

If you have ever met any Falkland Islanders, on your many travels you may have heard our name, or those of Wood, Waldron, (also of Punta Delgada on the mainland) Felton, Williams, Stickney, Cobb, Goodhart, Buckworth and Blake,—all of whom were amongst the early settlers in the Falkland Islands.

My father had a place in Tierra del Fuego also, bought in the early days and which he sold somewhere about 1896, but I do not remember its name or exact position on the map.

We left the Falklands in 1888, and I returned to South America late in 1900,—to Buenos Aires on the Old 'Highland Mary' twenty-two days out of Liverpool, arriving at Monte Video to see the flag at half-mast for Queen Victoria.

I went with the object of helping an Uncle of mine to 'poblar' a block of four four-league Lots which his Father-in-law old Mr. Felton, also of the Falklands, had taken-up off the map from the Argentine Government. These Lots were situated across the Rio Colorado beyond Juan de Garay which was then the 'point of the rails' on the Bahia Blanca and N. W. Railway.

That Uncle of mine was unfortunately a confirmed drunkard, and after a fortnight in B.A. where he gave a lot of trouble, we proceeded to Juan de Garay where Jose Pena kept the Bolliche. We crossed the Colorado and with a 'portuge' cart and one saddle horse proceeded to the four Lots each of which had a well in its centre. We were to look round for a month or so from tent before bringing-up other materials. The well alongside which we camped was eighty metres deep and the water, after dead animals had been removed was just what Mr. Eno would have loved.

The half-breed Indian 'peón' we took with us returned to Juan Garay with the small cart when we made camp and we were alone. After a day or two, during which a man called Wood joined us and then left again, my Uncle developed symptoms of D.T. having brought nothing but one bottle of brandy in the way of alcohol, intending to cure himself of his complaint.

That bottle went at once, of course, and the sudden check was fatal.

For two days and two nights he was raving, attacking me with anything he could find, and continually wandering away from the camp into the scrub. My only means of keeping him in sight of the tent was to get him to chase me back to the well, and there was considerable danger of our both getting lost in the scrub and cut-off from the only water I knew about.

After I had thrown everything dangerous down the well I felt more comfortable but could get no rest.

At the end of the second day during which my Uncle made several runs across the mouth of the eighty metre well,—which was covered only with a few scantlings and roofing-sheets,—I found him dead under a bush, what I should have done had he fallen into the well I have often wondered, I could hardly have been comfortable in after life had I left him down there, perhaps alive and crippled, and had I gone down the rope I imagine it would have been almost impossible to get back again alone or with him.

What distance we were actually from the Rio Colorado and Paha, Bolliche I do not remember, beyond that it took me that evening and part of the next morning after lying in my tracks at night to reach the river, my only guide being the faint 'huellas' made by the cart some days before on the very hard ground.

From Juan de Garay I had to go to the Pueblo of Rio Colorado where the Comisario existed, and with the help of a German who spoke a few words of English I was able to report the death. He

sent a man back with me, and I took a 'peón.'

Arriving at the spot where I had left the body two or three days past, covered by a couple of roofing-sheets, that Scotlan: Yard official lent from his horse, said 'esta bien' and rode away again.

Then I buried the body in ground as hard as iron, and erected a small wooden Cross. I left tent, stores and anything else there was and made for the 'point of the rails' again.

From there I travelled with the Napolitanos down to Bahia Blanca, I had only eleven Argentine dollars by way of cash, my Uncle having been my banker.

At Bahia Blanca I went to the British Consul, then Charles Cummings, and that good fellow lent me a hundred dollars, my idea being to get to B.A. and there await H.M.S. Flora then working what was known as the South American Station, and thus get a lift to the Falklands to some relations of mine still there.

Whilst an ordeal such as mine might not have made much impression upon me in later years; I think it to have been a very raw introduction to camp life for a boy straight from home, with no knowledge whatever of the language. My people were seven thousand miles away and I unwilling to cable for help.

I have always found that it is the re-action from events which do one most harm, and I had been in a sort of daze since the real trouble began, but began to feel really down and out when I got on the train for B.A.

There was only one man whose name I knew in the Argentine. — Thomas Wyrley Birch, ex-Manager of my Grandmother's place, — Weddel Island in the Falklands. He had seen me as a baby and I knew nothing of his appearance beyond that he wore a long red beard.

Sitting in the train after leaving Bahia Blanca, we stopped at a camp Station (Bajo Hondo) and two men got in and took seats opposite to me in the food car. One mentioned the other's name and looking up and seeing a red beard I asked if he was my Father's friend. He was, and the person with him was Jim Pettigrew the celebrated rough-rider. You know the size of the Argentine, and I have always felt that somebody was looking my way when that meeting happened at a moment when re-actions were having the maximum effect on my young mind.

The result was that Wyrley Birch took me under his wing and back to his 'estancia' Laguna de las Manantiales, near Bahia Blanca, where in six months I became his Mayordomo, and 12 months later was left in charge of his place whilst the family went to England on a visit.

He sent me, after four years, to a place he and his Brother-in-law (Richard Williams of B.A.) bought near to General Acha in the Pam. pa Central (Ojo del Agua Macachin) where I lived for a year or more alone getting things ready for the family to move in.

I was altogether six years in the Argentine, a happy time, after the initial experience, which I shall never regret.

Then to England on a holiday, meaning to see my 'tropical' ponies again in a few months. There were two 'Chanchito' and

'Lobo', and a mongrel hound called 'Carpincho' of which I was very fond like your 'Mancha' and 'Gato'. Few humans could give them points!

I was offered a very good opening in the Canary Islands, and wishing to get married and not go so far away from my Parents again, I most regretfully turned my back on the Pampas.

The life there must be very different now with so many 'chacras' and tame animals, too valuable to play with.

The world has treated me none too badly and I have had in many ways good luck beyond my deserts, but looking back, the thing that stands-out, always is the red beard on the other side of that little square table in the food car between Bahia Blanca and B.A. in March 1901!

A better and a finer man than old Wyrley Birch, with his two soft-nosed-bullet revolvers stuck in the front of his 'tirador' never rode the Pampas. God Bless him. R. I. P.]

You may possibly have come across him on your travels.

I met Walker (either Faon Grande or Faon Chico) whilst I was with Birch, and later, in Madridra, I heard an old chap speaking Spanish like an Argentine and it turned out to be Chance of Sauce Grande fame back in the dangerous days.

He afterwards came to Tenerife, where I saw him often. He died there some eight years or more ago.

Other names you may remember are:

The Geddes brothers of Bahia Blanca.

John and Willie Hampson. Fairhurst, (Henry).

George Knapp.

The McCorquodales of the Sauce Grande one went to the Welsh.

The neivins of the Sauce Grande Colony.

Glyn Williams (Mrs. Wyrley Birch's brother of Colina P.B.A.)

The Greens of Bahia Blanca (the manager of the B. N. W. Ry.)

Morris, who was horse Manager at Curumulan.

Hugh Wright, outside Bahia Blanca.

You would have been interested to have met old John Wyrley Birch, my friend's elder brother, who could have given you a lot of information about the really early days. He appeared to me to be about seventy years old when I lived with him in 1901, hale and hearty and still hung about with a fagon and revolver.

He went to the Banda Oriental where quite a young man which would mean about 1850.55.

I hope you will forgive me if I have bored you and excuse me for writing to you at all, but reading your books I felt I should like to meet you if only in ink.

I have lived ever since I left England as a boy in Spanish speaking countries, and have always found it easy to understand, appreciate and co-operate with the thoughts and the customs of the folk I have lived amongst. Brit. ishers; even after many years amongst foreigners; often demonstrate a mentality which appeals me, and which must make life very dull for them.

One realises, fully when reading your books that you are brilliant amongst the few exceptions which prove the rule.