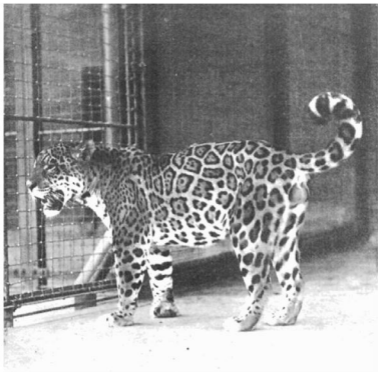


"Broke his neck with one bite of his powerful jaws."
—See "The Trail of the Jaguar."

Drawn by J. M. Gleason.



Tiger is much noisier than any other of the cat family.

Photo by F. R. Saxon. Copyright, 1924.

THE TRAIL OF THE JAGUAR *

By CASPAR WHITNEY

WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR AND OTHERS

HOW I chanced upon a guide for my first jaguar hunt in South America is a story of providential mediation.

Unable—even at Santa Fé by the mouth of the Rio Salado, which runs west and north along that vast wilderness the Gran

* This is the first of other papers to follow as a result of Mr. Whitney's recent trip through South America. Nearly all the author's photographs were taken in dark, cloudy weather or in heavy rain. Those taken in the dense jungle under these conditions, which were the prevailing ones, it is impossible to reproduce.

Chaco—to secure any specific, not to say dependable, information concerning the beast or its definite whereabouts, I ventured up the Parana River, prospecting for a district, and some one who knew it, likely to give most results in the time at my disposal. In a general sense, I was making my way towards Corrientes, particularly that western part of it which, with only the river intervening, touches the little known Gran Chaco, even now almost solely occupied by Indians.

Not so far from the junction of the Parana and the Paraguay Rivers is a

famous lagoon said to be all but impenetrable and filled with many animals and all kinds of tropical reptiles. Just above the town of Corrientes, the Parana bends abruptly away to the east to make the southerly boundary of Paraguay, and then north again as its easterly boundary before it sweeps far into southwestern Brazil, and runs a course second only to the Amazon. South of the east-flowing Parana lies the famous pest hole; and I heard of its reptilian and pestilential horrors almost every day as I ascended the river. If you will turn to your map of the Argentine Republic, you will get a clearer idea of the part of the world that harbors this fever-breeding swamp. I was never able to induce a native for love or money to undertake to pilot me thither—but I located it—and one day I intend to penetrate its mysteries, for here and in the Gran Chaco run many trails of the jaguar.

Thus I progressed up the river toward the jungle, knowing not a soul within five hundred miles, getting all the data I could find and trusting entirely to my rather well developed faculty of making the most of whatever finally offered.

It is a marvelous waterway, this mud-colored Parana, with its broad, changeable body, dividing over and over into parallel streams, anon to gather again into one common river, only to repeat the process of division. Just above Corrientes, where the Paraguay, starting many miles north in Brazil, joins it, the banks for stretches are two and three miles apart; and where the Uruguay adds its volume the three become the Rio de la Plata, with banks so widely separated that you can not see either from midstream. At places, as for example, just above the town of Parana, the great waterway divides itself into three other great rivers; and where these branch streams unite before rejoining the parent, a river quite a mile in width runs for some distance before losing its identity in the mother stream.

Always one is coming upon islands, sometimes submerged almost to their tree tops, again showing high against the lower bank of one side—for one bank of the river is invariably low; and most of the time it is the west bank. In the lower and middle courses, boundless pampas stretch away from the west bank to the foot of the Andes, but when the Gran Chaco is

reached, that bank becomes a tropical forest. It is a rough-traveling, fickle river, and a pilot must know his business to pass safely among its shifting shoals and changing channels. Few pilots have I ever encountered in my travels, indeed, who know their business better than those on the Parana. Nothing afforded me more interest, not even studying the passengers, than watching them at the wheel, always alert, always modifying the steamer's course, steaming ahead by day and night, stopped only by fog. And some heavy fogs settle along this river—fogs and rough weather, too, as I had occasion to know later. They are always on the watch, as they need to be, and depend upon their keenness of vision in reading aright the signs of the course which varies constantly.

It was with such a pilot that I made friends. Standing on the top deck with my camera in action, the strong wind had left me bareheaded in the noon-day sun, while I photographed a queer passing canoe and made no effort to recover the hat as it swept down the deck and over the stern rail into the water. It is illustrative of the natives' philosophic attitude toward life that with its owner obviously occupied no one of all the other many passengers on deck made an effort to stay his departing head gear. My indifference seemed to arouse interest in Lucas—for as I turned from taking the snap shot and wound in another film I caught his black eyes, eloquent with speech; but all the tongue uttered was *se va*—it has gone. The humor of the situation appealed to both of us and we were at once on easy terms.

He was a pilot, he told me, on the steamers which run from Buenos Aires, in Argentine, to Asuncion, in Paraguay, but had been laid off a week or so by the fever, and at this time was going over to Parana to rejoin his boat. He was about thirty, with hair hanging below his ears, a small black mustache and a large, square-crowned, black-cloth sombrero, which was securely fastened to his head by a string passing beneath the chin and tied in a bow-knot under his left ear, with a somewhat Don Caesar effect. His trousers were gathered in and fastened at the ankles, after the Zouave fashion, though they were not quite so full in the leg. He wore an ordinary European sack coat, a waist sash of worsted frequently seen on the up-country

natives, a collarless shirt, and around his neck a very much soiled white handkerchief. On his feet were a kind of heelless leather slippers, unadorned. His father was Italian and his mother a native Argentine of Spanish parents, he said, and it is notable that the greater number of pilots on these river steamers are of Italian parentage, as are also a large proportion of Argentine's boatmen and long shoremen. Truth to tell, the Italian is becoming to South American, and particularly to Argentina, what the Chinaman is to Malaya and Siam—viz., the industrial backbone; for the native here as in parts of the Far East is not a dependable laborer.

There is not much color in the costume of the native Argentine, but Lucas made the most of what there is. Utter absence of color, indeed, is one of the first and most disappointing impressions of the traveler in South America. One must go deep into the interior, whether it be Brazil, Argentine, Chile or Peru, to find color, and even so there is little that seems distinctive to the man who knows the American Indian or the wonderful Far East. Interior Brazil holds most of what there is of colorful human interest in South America; on the other hand, town-life Brazil is least interesting of all South American life. From a human interest view-point there is more color in the cities of Italy or Spain or France (Paris excepted) than may be seen in the towns of South America. Except for the poncho—a blanket with a head hole, worn over the shoulders—and the "Panama" hat, which is made in northern Peru and Ecuador and is rarely even on sale on the Isthmus except in cheap grades—there is practically nothing made in the country; other comparatively few things of home manufacture are patterned after the less attractive European models. Lucas, for example, showed not nearly the color or picturesqueness of the river man of Eastern Canada or of our own extreme Northwest.

There was, I must say, a little more color among the steamer passengers, especially those of the third, class who, with bananas, melons, pumpkins, peppers, onions, potatoes, chickens, ducks and sheep, occupied the stern deck of the boat. Like all Southern people, though abashed

before strangers, they are instinct with life and gaiety among their intimates; and the solemn little children with their great wondering eyes became radiant imps under the influence of parental romping.

Unvarying politeness and universal love for children are traits of these people which warm my heart to them. I never tire watching a Spanish woman at play with her children; such a flow of tenderful diminutives, such rapturous vivacity; there is no sight more pleasing in all of South America.

They were in truth a mixed lot, these passengers of the river steamer, with a confused array of tin box trunks, bundles and bird cages. Half the passengers, it seemed, carried bird cages, and almost every other cage held a complaining parrot. The men sauntered along, with poncho thrown bull-fighter fashion over one shoulder, leading the elder children; the women carried a majority of the bundles, and revealed a tendency to violent colors, yellow silk waists, for example, being worn as indifferently with a brown as with a black skirt, or a pink waist to a blue skirt, or some other combination as teeth-jarring. The South American woman of the people is not an example of harmony in her gowning; but the most discordant note, at least to me, is the hat. From Brazil down the coast and across the Andes, through Chile and into Peru, the better class of women have discarded the mantua* and adopted the hat of to-day (or of last season); nor is the change to their physical advantage. In Peru the mantua for the lower and the mantilla for the upper class women is prescribed by custom for church wear, and in Chile and Peru the mantua is common on the streets among all but the comparatively few of the best class. In Brazil and Argentine, however, the mantua is very little seen—and the ill-suited European concoction of feathers, ribbons and conceit prevails. It is remarkable what a transformation ensues when the average Spanish-American woman replaces her mantua with a European hat.

*The mantua is a solid-color shawl, almost invariably black, sometimes blue for gala occasions, which covers the head and body to the waist. The mantilla is of lace, and covers only the head and the upper shoulders. For church and street wear it is black; as an evening wrap it is white, and worn by all South American women.



Mocoivito Indians of the Gran Chaco.

It is like putting a bonnet on Eve; not that these women of the South are so perfect—but the hat appears to destroy the natural grace and dignity of a naturally graceful and attractive figure. It is nearly as dreadful a presentment as the Japanese women in European clothes.

Frankly, I preferred the deck passengers to those occupying the cabins, for whereas the one fitted into their environment, the other lacked the manners and habits which belong to occupants of first-class quarters. And that leads to another of the impressions made upon the traveler into South America, particularly into Brazil. Always there is the pretense to first class, and, except for a select and highly educated few, rarely its realization; money without knowledge to employ it to advantage; houses with marble and statue-studded entrance, and no bath beyond; liveried lackeys, and toothpicks served as a final course. It is as though a simple-minded, simple-living pastoral people had recently attained to wealth and set up town houses. But the European stock, originally low, is gradually clearing, especially in the Argentine, and strengthening in the developing country of its adoption. Meanwhile there is not the vulgar display or the boorish manners common to that class which predominates in the New York restaurant.

However the costume of Lucas may have disappointed my color-seeking sense, the man himself was completely interesting. He was very eager to learn something of me, whence I came, and what had brought me into his country. He said I was the first American with whom he had ever talked, although he had seen several; and when I told him I wanted to make my way north into Corrientes to a famous lagoon where were jaguar, he grew much excited and talked so rapidly I was obliged to ask him to repeat over and again, slowly, so I might understand. He had heard of the lagoon, and, in common with all those I met, held it in horror; but he said he had a friend living not many miles above Parana who had not only seen the lagoon, but had killed *tigre*—as they call the jaguar—in the Gran Chaco. So here at last was the very man I sought.

Did Lucas think his friend could be persuaded to go with me? Oh, yes, he was sure he would, and with many em-

phatic "*si señors*" (yes, sir), promised to look him up, and thought he could find him at once on our landing at Parana, because Pedro was a riverman, who usually was to be found about the dock when not at work on the boats.

It must not be supposed that all this information came to me so easily or so quickly as I am here writing it. My Spanish was none too fluent and the three hours from Santa Fé to Parana none too long for me to gather information from Lucas. Even had not simple sentence, laboriously repeated and aided by many gestures, been necessary to my imperfect understanding. I know that in some way I should have prolonged the confab with Lucas, for his happy laugh and complete childlike interest in my plans gave frank pleasure. To arouse in another such unselfish interest in one's own schemes is a novel experience to the New Yorker. Had Lucas not been obliged to join his boat, he would have gone with me himself; he said so—and I know he meant it.

I was elated with the thought of securing a guide who had been into the Gran Chaco, for this great wilderness is known to but few men and has practically no roads save the waterways which cut through it from northwest to southeast. Although of the Argentine Republic, it is substantially in the hands of independent Indians of one racial stock but several tribal distinctions and dialects. Of smallish stature, they are also of rather a low order intellectually and some I saw of the Mocoquito tribe, that find their homes along the jungles on the Rio Salado, suggested those nomads that trail over Sonora in northwestern Mexico, particularly where it touches the California Gulf. The Gran Chaco people are of a lower order, however; not so intelligent, and in worshipful directions comparatively deficient in imagination. They have no arts other than the manufacture of crude earthen pots, of bows and arrows and lances, which they make of hard wood; their arrows I must add are very skillfully turned, with a shaft of willow, a head of hard wood or sometimes of notched bone. Their house is a roundish habitation, too low to stand upright in, and in size varying according to the extent of the family, but in general being about six to seven feet in diameter. It is built of willows stuck in the ground, drawn



Pedro's dug-out was rather artistically fashioned at bow and stern.

together at the top and covered with straw or hay or leaves to such a depth that the roof becomes water-proof, as it must needs be in their rainy country. Toldos they are called and are not unlike a type of summer house made by some of our American Apaches. There are usually two low entrances to the toldo and the cooking is done outside. As is customary with wilderness people, the making of the crude earthen cooking utensils, the gathering of wood, building of the toldos, and the gathering of roots which they boil and eat is all done by the women. Of ornaments they have but few, sometimes skins and sometimes birds' feathers, particularly those of the emu,* when they can get them, which are worn on the forehead, at the waist, ankles and wrist. Slight attention is given to clothes; once they made a kind of loin covering from cocoanut and other fibre—when they wore any covering; now they

*It is common to speak of the "ostrich" in this country, but there is no true ostrich in South America; it is the emu, and has always been.

pick up what comes their way, and are particularly fond of anything red.

There are places in the Chaco where these aborigines resent the intrusion of the white man, have even opposed exploration and killed the adventurers, but as a people they are a poor lot, cowardly and scattering in force. Yet, it is well to be armed and to keep your eyes open, if you venture into their country, for their habit is to ambush the march or sneak up when you are sleeping. Several explorers have lost their lives in the Gran Chaco, but from all I could discover, bad management was quite as responsible as Indian truculence. The Argentine Government maintains a post at the frontier and the condition seems to be one of ever recurring reprisal on the part of both soldiers and Indians. The Indian policy is a mighty poor one—too closely patterned after that Spain pursued in the Philippines.

Pedro was not on the dock when we arrived at Parana, and Lucas, even more concerned than I, sought to comfort me

by the assurance that he would certainly find him; so as Lucas set forth to explore the river front, I went up to the little hotel in the town atop the high bank. Although not particularly interesting, as indeed few towns are in Argentine, yet Parana is one of the most pleasingly situated in the Republic. It is on the east bank of the Parana River, one hundred and twenty feet above the water, about two miles back from the landing, and with its 25,000 inhabitants is the chief center of a very rich surrounding country. It has the cobblestone streets common to all South American cities, save Buenos Aires, to drive over which plunges one into grief and speedy dissolution. They must pave the streets, otherwise cart wheels would disappear from view and usefulness, but why they are so partial to such a particularly aggressive shape of stone no one could ever tell me. To me Parana is a confused recollection of imposing cathedral, ever changing bells, and teeth loosening streets.

It was not quite daylight next morning when, with Pedro in tow, Lucas joined me at the hotel. Pedro was absolutely the opposite type of Lucas. He was a small, dried-up Spaniard, simple and conventional in dress. He wore ordinary trousers, a felt hat, a pair of canvas shoes and a little short white canvas coat buttoned up the front. More truthfully, the coat had been while at one period in its existence; a period that had passed long before my introduction to him. Nevertheless, I could see he took great pride in this garment and kept it always closed to its limit of buttons, not more than three of these being missing, which was rather notable, as I found upon fuller acquaintance with the natives. It looked as though it had been a soldier's jacket, and Pedro furthered the impression by strips of the same material sewn across the shoulder like the straps of a commissioned officer. However unprepossessing his dress, Pedro's face was attractive. It was a wrinkled, sallow old face, but the wrinkles around the eyes told of good nature, and the look in the eye itself, though not brilliant, was steady and inviting.

While we had the invariable coffee and cigarettes, Lucas held forth long and earnestly with Pedro, and though he

talked so rapidly I could not follow, yet a word here and there told me he was impressing Pedro with the need of doing his best for me, laying special emphasis on the fact that I was making a journey of ten thousand miles to see this little bit of country. And all the time Pedro nodded and raised his hands in acquiescence and interjected *como no* (certainly, surely) so frequently that it seemed to me to bear the full burden of his share in the conversation. Then we all got into a three-horse cart and drove bumpingly down to the river, where to my genuine regret Lucas bade me good-bye. We had known each other only a few hours, yet I parted from no one in South America with more regret than from this same pilot who, out of pure unselfish wish to help a stranger, had put me on my way and revealed the heart of a gentleman. I lost his name and address in subsequent rains and swamps. If this ever falls under his eye I hope he will send it me.

Pedro was not very talkative and when he did interrupt his habitual silence I could not understand him so readily as I had Lucas, for half the blood in his veins came from a Chaco mother, and their trick of talking in their throats adds to the difficulties of a foreigner's Spanish. So our attempts at conversation were few and widely separated; not that he was at all surly; on the contrary he was very good natured and willing, and, as I found before I got through the trip, considerable of a philosopher; a quality in which I strove to emulate him, for there was need of it in the almost constant down-pour of rain we encountered day by day on our little journey after jaguar.

In a dug-out of rather artistically fashioned bow and stern, we set forth on our way up the Parana, Pedro handling the stern and I the bow paddle. The river was stirring with the beginning of a wind storm, known locally as a pampero, and what with the waves and the strong current to buck against, we had our work cut out to make fair headway, hugging the east bank. I had no clear idea of precisely where we were going. Lucas had given me some vague information, probably all he had, and in a general way I understood Pedro's house, quite a little distance up the river, to be our first ob-



The open portico where the charcoal-burning stove keeps the matt tea kettle going.

jective, from which we were to make up the Feliciano River toward a section Pedro "knew" offered a fair prospect of jaguar. The need of continuously hard blade work gave little opportunity to observe the scenery as we went along; and in truth there was not much to look at, nor could we have seen it very clearly even had there been, for the rain driving into our facts and the wind-blown spray from the tops of the choppy waves, left us eyes swimming. From my post in the bow with head bent to the storm I saw

nothing beyond the reach of my paddle. And whether we were on the main stream or a branch of it I cannot say, for none but a pilot may know just where he is on this much divided river.

We, of course, clung almost within touching distance of the bank, to ease our going as much as possible, and twice we narrowly escaped collision with other canoes running down stream at a lively pace before the storm that was beating us in the face; three times we stopped at the thatched-roofed house of Pedro's friends,

to wipe our dripping eyes and drink a up of yerba maté, the Paraguayan tea which is at once their consolation and refreshment. Always I found the natives polite and hospitable.

Finally, toward the close of a day, we drew up to a settlement of half a dozen houses set against the river bank so their roofs rose about level with the bank top, and here, Pedro announced, was his *casa* (house). It was a quaint, picturesque habitation built of adobe and stuck into the river bank so it gave the appearance of being part of *terra firma*, suggesting a vestibule to caverns and underground passages beyond: a fancy rather helped by an unroofed addition which joined one side. But the house really trespassed on the bank no farther than to permit of a very small and dark chicken coop. Pedro's chickens numbering three a large coop was unneeded. If, however, Pedro was short on chickens, he was long on dogs, having five of various mongrel degrees and size, all of which, together with a wife and four children, occupied the one room and a half of Pedro's castle; in repose, his wife looked as if the ménage got on her nerves, but in conversation she far outshone Pedro. The difference in the faces of these Spanish-Americans in repose and in animation is the difference between darkness and sunlight.

Outside and just at the entrance or the house was an open portico effect made by a framework of poles and a covering of rushes and small brush, where the family received its guests, and the charcoal-burning stove kept the maté tea kettle going. Here, on the night of our arrival, Pedro's friends gathered to drink maté, no doubt also to satisfy their curiosity concerning the stranger, and there was no more color among them or among those of other settlements subsequently visited, than among the passengers on the steamer. In fact, outside of the Chaco Argentines are of the one type everywhere, perhaps here and there an individual bit of color, but as a rule, all are cut off the same piece and as unpicturesque—as Anglo-Saxons.

The maté cup is to the Spanish-American what the peace pipe is to our American Indian. The cup itself may range from plain to elaborate, even to silver, and

the bambilla may be a silver tube or a small piece of hollow bamboo or even a straw—Pedro boasted a silver one but its significance is unvarying. It makes for amiability and gossip and storytelling. There is often the little preliminary ceremony of starting the host's cup at one side of the gathering and passing it around like a loving cup, each guest taking his turn at the unwiped bambilla. Not fewer than a dozen could have been seated under and around the little portico on this night when Pedro started the maté brew, and I happened to be on the extreme opposite end from that where the cup set forth on its convivial cruise. To have deliberately wiped the bambilla when it came to me would have been to insult my host, so I clumsily dropped it on the ground by way of an excuse for cleaning it.

Jaguar and jaguar hunting formed the main theme of the stories told that night, and disclosed the very wholesome fear these natives have of the *tigre*, though they do not hold this cat in such superstitious dread, or envelop it with mystery or supernatural power as the Far Eastern natives do that other greater cat, the real tiger. Yet the voice was always lowered that night in Pedro's house when reciting a thrilling tale of jaguar ferocity, and when Pedro himself told of a *tigre* he had seen, not twenty miles from where we sat, spring upon a female tapir, crushing her neck in one bite of its powerful jaws, and then strike down with a single blow of its powerful forepaw and feast upon the young calf while the mother gasped out her life—the silence that followed was impressive. No one present save Pedro had ever hunted *tigre*, much less seen a live one, so my guide, warmed by the buzz of admiration which greeted and the hush which succeeded his stories, told harrowing yarns of men walking and mounted who had been overcome by jaguars springing upon them from overhanging tree limbs. Now the truth of the matter is, as I took pains to learn, that while these native stories are exaggerated, as native stories always are, the jaguar is formidable quarry. There are well authenticated reports of his pouncing upon the solitary traveler, and of his killing one or more of a native hunting party that had cornered and wounded him. He is not nearly so numerous as he was, or

rather is seen less frequently than formerly—not that he has been killed off, but the river traffic has driven him back from the waterways into the jungles and into the swamps and smaller river courses where few men venture.

The trails of the jaguar are many, but they nearly all lead to a river, for water appears to be more needful to the *tigre* than to any other of the cat family. And this is not that he actually drinks more,

to shore, for the *tigre* is a strong, bold swimmer, and minds no river of South America, not the widest, if he wishes to reach the opposite bank. He is a patient, unerring fisherman, watching for long periods from some vantage point, which may be either a fallen tree trunk extending into the stream, or at the bank's edge, until a victim appears—when with a lightening blow he hurls the fish out onto the bank, or clutches it as it swims past. While the



The Plaza and Pretentious Cathedral of Paraná.

so far as I can learn, but rather because along the waterways he finds an easy and abundant food in a river hog, in the small deer that come down to drink, and in the fish that swim plentifully in all these streams. In the Rio de la Plata, just off Buenos Aires, is an island where at one time a number of jaguar lived and thrived practically on the fish they caught, for there was nothing else on the island, and none ever heard of their visiting the mainland, because of its settlement and not on account of the distance

swampy jungle and the watercourses are his habitat, yet the jaguar will make incursions upon dry ground if cattle, or horses, or dogs, or poultry offer, and river food happens to be scarce, or for the time being more difficult to secure. I heard several trustworthy accounts of cattle and colts killed by the jaguar, though his ravages are not so frequent as once they were, owing to his farther inland habitat. His method of killing animals of this size is to literally stalk them up wind, that no scent may reach the victim, and then to

spring on their back, fastening teeth and claws in the neck; with smaller animals the jaguar springs for the neck at once, and appears to prefer the hindquarters to the stomach, which is left for the vultures that are omnipresent in the open country. *Tigre* is a much noisier animal than any other of the feline family, particularly at night, and roams the jungle disdainful of lesser beasts in his manifest superiority. And he is without doubt absolute king of the South American forest; there is literally none to dispute his domain, none even worthy to do him homage, for the puma, which is fairly plentiful, has as little the courage of its convictions in South as in North America.

Although by day as wary as a leopard, despite his noise at night, the jaguar is commonly said to attack unprovoked, and I am inclined to believe it truer of him, certainly than of the leopard, possibly also than of the tiger, for the good reason, if for none other, that as he has hardly become sufficiently acquainted with man to know his death-dealing weapons and to therefore fear and make way for him. Of course the puma, cougar, panther, mountain lion, as it is variously called, has no place in this comparison, for it attacks only smaller animals, deer, sheep, goats, dogs, and now-a-days almost never man, except perhaps in the case of a painfully wounded and cornered female. It is said the puma has been known to attack a sleeping man—but I know of no authentic case.

In the interior of Brazil, where not many people have ventured, the jaguar is reported to most frequently lurk in the low, overhanging branches of trees, near the rivers, and from these to pounce upon its prey. In the Argentine Chaco, where *tigre* is said to have more than once taken toll, the Indians are deadly afraid of him, for their native arrows and hardwood spears, which most often are all they have, are not very suitable weapons with which to meet an enemy at once so swift and so powerful. Along the western edges of the Chaco some of the estancias (ranches) keep dogs and hunt jaguar with some success; under such conditions *tigre* takes to trees like the cougar.

Up the Parana beyond a small chain of hills called Cuchilla Montiel, that run northeast and southwest across northern

Entre Rios into Corrientes, we turned into the Rio Feliciano, which, rising in Corrientes, flows parallel with the Cuchilla, and is fed en route by several smaller streams that have their source in the hills. Feliciano has the characteristics of all South American rivers of the smaller class, which differ but slightly from the Parana, except that the water is clearer, and inland the better defined banks are covered with denser tropical growth. We paddled for some time through a rather open flat country, rearing scattered trees, rank grass shoulder high, and willows. Gradually we worked away from the level country and into forest and smallish hills. All through the open were birds aplenty, especially hawks. One bird there was with a song somewhat like the meadow lark; it was brown, about the size of a robin, with a long tail and a white streak on its back, and its liquid notes made pleasing music in the early morning hours before other living things were astir. Another smaller bird of dark body and yellow wings uttered no note, but zig-zagged constantly across our horizon. There were others, too, a number of them, and, like all the birds in central Argentine, none was brilliant of plumage but noteworthy because so frequently having hooded or tufted heads, just as so many of the plants have stickers at the points of their leaves. The smaller birds are mostly songsters and quite tame. I saw several varieties of blackbird; one or two cardinals, some flamingoes and occasional members of the crane family. There was one bird always in evidence, which Pedro called the "teru-tero," a noisy, perky imp, about the size of a pigeon, which, so long as we were in the comparative open, followed, scolding us in untuneful, harsh voice, as though to resent our intrusion. It was tame to the point of audacity; one stood on the bank within half a dozen feet as we glided past, and again as we rested for a meal, another perched on the canoe stern and slanged us with uninterrupted vehemence. When we reached the jungle edge we escaped the "teru-tero," but suffered martyrdom at the throat of another smaller bird, which, in rasping tones, shrieked at us unabatingly. If they are in league with *tigre*, as is said, he could not have two scouts more alert and distracting. Within the jungle occasionally I saw the

toucan with its ridiculously large, orange-colored beak, twice the size of its bluish-black, pigeon-shaped and white-breasted body. It is an awkward, comical looking bird, that lives solitary and shuns observation.

In the night, along the river, great fireflies such as I had never seen even in Siam—land of insect plenty—hovered over us, bearing lights that appeared to be constant, and in some individual cases to be double.

which Pedro proceeded to cut off and subsequently to cook and eat with great relish. I did not share his feast, much preferring the native stew of dried beef and rice, called *puchero*, which with fruit and coffee constituted our entire menu. The *puchero*, by the way, may be rice and dried beef, and very tough, or it may be beef and rice and potatoes and turnips and carrots and various other green things that go to make a very palatable stew. It



It was a picturesque habitation built of adobe and stuck into the river bank.

Pedro told me that the women of northern Argentine and Paraguay wear these brilliant night lamps, at fêtes, in their hair.

Two or three times Pedro tried, though unsuccessfully, to kill a crocodile with a long, iron-pointed spear he carried, and once his attempt nearly resulted in upsetting the canoe. Again he secured a hideous looking creature for which he gave me an unfamiliar name, but which to me looked like an iguana. It had a red and green speckled skin and was about two and one half feet long with a short, thick tail,

may also be all this with fish replacing the beef, and remain toothsome.

In the drier, upper sections toward the Cuchilla, after we left our dug-out, I saw the famous *algarrobo*, the native's all-useful tree, from which he extracts drink and covering; and, soaring over these stretches, too, or alighting with pendant, springy legs, were numerous of those ugly bird things, the turkey buzzard, which Argentine and Brazil tolerate, Peru protects as a common scavenger and Chile has banished.



"Then we all got into a three-horse cart and drove bumpingly down to the river."

If ever you make a hunt into the swampy interior of South America, take my advice and wear the comparatively hotter top boots rather than leggings, because woodticks are innumerable and infernal, and attack the ankle, which they reach easily between shoe and legging. Then there is also the jigger—another pestiferous little insect that burrows into you head foremost, depositing its head to inflame your skin and harass your peace of mind while, like John Brown, its body goes marching along to grow another fester-breeding head, for the especial torment of the next traveler. Pedro apparently was undisturbed by the ticks, but I found them a source of greatest annoyance, particularly when walking through the jungle.

We had seen several small deer, river hogs, and many times a swimming animal whose head suggested otter, but which Pedro declared to be a fish cat, to quote literally from the Spanish name he gave it. None of these I shot at, because they did

not interest me and we wanted no meat. Once a little deer, about the size of a fawn, and of a lightish brown color, with what looked like spiked horns, stood gazing at us long enough for me to snap shot it with my camera, but this, like all the other photographs I took in the almost continuous rain and in the darkness of the jungle, came to nothing in development. I find that in these latter day hunts I much prefer to photograph or to study strange animal life, than to kill. So I never shoot except the particular quarry I am after, or other strange animals for the purpose of closer acquaintance. On this occasion I indeed had eyes for nothing but jaguar, and you may be sure that with Pedro's harrowing stories fresh in my mind, I passed under no tree in the jungle without first narrowly scrutinizing the overhanging limbs. The real jungle here differs very little, it at all, from tropical jungle the world over. There is the same primeval forest, the dense growth of smaller, younger trees, the rank, thorn-covered underbrush,

all interlaced and bound together with creeping things of every length and thickness. Below all is the swamplike soil, and around you the drink, noisome, warm smell of decaying vegetation. The section we hunted seemed made to order for jaguar. The river with its plentiful food to the east, dense jungle and higher hills on the west, and beyond the more open country where the deer roamed. Far into the jungle we heard no bird note or any other sound by day, but at night it seemed as though the trees, the mud and the air surrounding us were alive with creaking, rasping things. And however far we penetrated, we never got beyond the woodtick zone, or that of the mosquitos, which became numerous to distraction.

Pedro ceased to be a guide once we got into the jungle and became a much bullied and never obeyed master of hounds instead. At times he would put me on edge with a sudden, low, drawn-out *biss-r-s-s-s*, and then only my patient, alert hunter's soul knows how many anxious minutes I would spend scanning with painful closeness every tree in the vicinity. Then on without a word. Again a sharp, short *hist* would stop me in my tracks with visions of jaguar directly overhead. And again I would move on unrewarded. Pedro was a well-meaning, but a somewhat distracting element, and pleased me most when he was out of sight, as he was for more than half the time, concealed by the high, rank growth we worked our way

through. Always I studied the trees carefully for signs of jaguar, and several times found ample evidence of his visits to the locality, in deep, oblique scars, where he had reached high and dug his claws into the bark, as every member of the cat family will do, to smooth ragged claw edges—and not to sharpen them as I have read. One tree I saw was deeply scarred with slanting lines a foot in length, where *tigre* had been at work.

But scars were all that rewarded our search for jaguar on that trip.

We hunted diligently and widely, yet to find our quarry without dogs was a chance in one hundred; and we were as good as being without dogs, for those we brought from Pedro's house, to which his well-disposed neighbors had contributed, were absolutely useless, as I had imagined they would be. While we were on the river they spent their time and energy chasing the *teru-teru*; and when we entered the jungle, woodticks fully occupied their time and energy.

For the woodtick dearly loves dog even better than he does man.

Coming out, after I had given up hope of jaguar, I killed an ant bear, an ugly looking creature, with a bushy back and a queer, jumpy trot; and a tapir; neither of which was interesting or furnished sport, but I killed them for the purpose of examination and dissection at leisure.



The thatched-roofed houses of Pedro's friends.