

In the Argentine

John Creaghe

March 1890

Commerce here is in a delightful state of confusion. Gold went up the day before yesterday to \$274, and to-day has gone down to \$255. Everything is, of course, frightfully dear, and business is paralysed. I believe we are on the eve of very hard times.

It is a great pity to see so many poor emigrants still coming to this country, though I see by the papers to-day that there is a serious falling-off of the numbers in January and February as compared with the same months of last year. The last act of the wretched Irish and English immigration has been played out. The settlers of the *Naposta* Colony sent a deputation to Buenos Aires a fortnight ago to wait on the English Immigration Committee, and asked that something should be done for them. You will see the whole matter in a paragraph from the *Southern Cross* of February 14th, which I enclose :

"We regret to hear of very sorrowful accounts from the colony of Naposta. One account says that the owners of chacras will not average a profit of forty paper dollars each after paying the claims of the company. It is the opinion of an intelligent man who has seen the place that the crops of the most industrious Irish colonists will not pay for the interest charged on the land, and the gentleman, who is a great friend of the colony and is most impartial in his estimate, assures us that the Irish colonists have done far better than their English neighbours. Another independent witness thinks that each owner of a chacra will not have an average of \$30, or less than £3 sterling, after paying the lion's share of the produce to the company. And we must remember that the Viticola Company was not legally bound to supply provisions to the colony for more than one year, which is now soon to expire. The question is, then, what will become of these unfortunate people? After being infested with vermin in the 'Hotel,' after lying down for several days in the muck of an abandoned stable in the Paseo de Julio, after seeing their little ones die of cold and pestilence by their sides, after passing, in fact, through a 'via crucis' of slander, insult, and injury, they now find themselves, we fear, in the same position as they were in the day they landed from the "Dresden." Mr. Bulkley O'Meara, the Dublin information agent, is at present in this city. As he painted this country in such glowing colours to the emigrants, perhaps he will now come to the rescue of those who confided in his words, and interest himself in their behalf;"

This will show what false hopes are held out to poor people coming here. From this time I believe the chances of doing anything here will be much less than ever, for the prices of Indian corn and wheat have gone down so much in Europe, that there will soon be perfect stagnation

in the export of these articles; and it is on exportation they depend, as the consumption of the country is small compared with production.

There is but little doing here among us, but we are preparing to celebrate the anniversary of the Paris Commune on the 18th.

Four of our comrades who were *suspected* of having had something to do with the publication of a manifesto to the workers in Buenos Aires, in September last, have since then been lying in jail in this free country! When they will get out we have not the slightest idea, and this though the man who did it very properly declares he was the sole author of it. Bail was refused for every man who was known to be an Anarchist. Well, the day of reckoning is coming.

Our comrade J. Creaghe, now in Buenos Aires, sends us the following vivid account of the recent Political Revolution in the Argentine. After recounting the attempts to found an Anarchist paper in Italian, French, and Spanish, he says:

Comrades, As I write the city of Buenos Ayres is en fête. The whole place is covered with flags, and crackers and rockets are blazing away in all directions. The reason is that we have just had a very pretty political revolution carried out, which I shall now tell you about. The party in power for the last four years had steadily neglected everything but the most barefaced filling of their own pockets, even the bourgeoisie could not stand it, particularly as a commercial crisis came to make things unsupportable, and so the party in opposition gained over a large part of the army (about half), and on Saturday morning last the troops took possession of the artillery barracks and arsenal, which is situated in one of the squares in the centre of the city. They were there joined by large numbers of the citizens, who were immediately armed, as there was abundance of arms and ammunition in the arsenal. They entrenched themselves in the square, and armed citizens stationed themselves on the roofs of the houses all round. The government then with the troops at their disposal took post on the edge of the town, and three thousand police of the city armed with rifles in anticipation of the movement joined them. There was some desultory fighting during the day, and you will be sorry to hear that policemen were shot down in all parts of the city as they went to join their comrades.

On Sunday, we were aroused at six in the morning by the most furious fusillade of small arms, mitrailleuses, and Krupp guns, which continued without the least intermission for two hours. The police (who are old soldiers by the way) had with the troops of the line made a desperate attack on the position of the revolutionists, but were repulsed after two hours hard fighting. The police suffered awfully. During all that day there was much fighting in different parts of the city, and both parties continued to strengthen themselves. In the evening an armistice was agreed to until ten the next morning. Next day the whole fleet declared for the revolution, or was taken possession of, and began to bombard the position of the government, and the government house and the private residence of President Juarez. A shell fell in a house about 600 yards from this, and killed a woman and child and wounded many others. Several other cases of this kind occurred.

On Monday evening there was another furious attack made by the forces of the government, which, after twenty minutes hard fighting was again repulsed. Everybody was delighted, for the whole city sympathised with the movement. When, on Tuesday - things having been quiet in the morning and forenoon - in the evening, we were all surprised by the news that all was over, and that the revolutionary leaders had submitted to the government on the condition that no one

was to be punished. They said the reason was that they had not enough ammunition to continue the struggle. No one believed this, and the young men in great part refused to give up their arms, but disbanded and rushed about firing and shouting; some even committed suicide, saying they were sold.

However, the leaders of the revolution knew what they were doing. They had gone far enough, and did not wish to go farther. Many of them were within the government party itself, and after all was quieted down the ministers resigned. The president found it useless to try to form a cabinet, no one would come to him; the clamour for his resignation became too loud to be unheard. Another outbreak was expected on the part of the army, and so the members of the Congress at last, who had up to this time said "Amen!" to all the president's paternosters, sent him a written demand to resign, which he did, and the vice-president, Pelligrini (who by the way is nephew to the late John Bright) became president. He is very much liked by all parties, and he has already formed an administration which gives confidence. Juarez resigned the day before yesterday, and since then there have been continual rejoicings,

We had a very lively time I can tell you while the affair lasted. Bullets were flying about in all directions, and the number of persons killed and wounded, who found themselves in the streets from mere curiosity, was very great indeed. One of our comrades got a grape-shot through his arm and into the flesh of his ribs, where it lodged; I am still attending him and several others. I had a narrow squeak myself one day, as a ballet passed close to my face and struck the wall near me. It nearly happened to me as to one poor citizen who was standing on the balcony at one of the windows of his house, when a bullet carried away both his eyes and his nose

We Anarchists were in great hopes that the fighting would last for about fifteen days, and if it had the city would certainly have been sacked. Some thirty of us met and consulted what might be done in order to get funds for the Revolution (our Revolution), but the next day all was over. With fraternal greetings to all comrades,

J. Creaghe

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