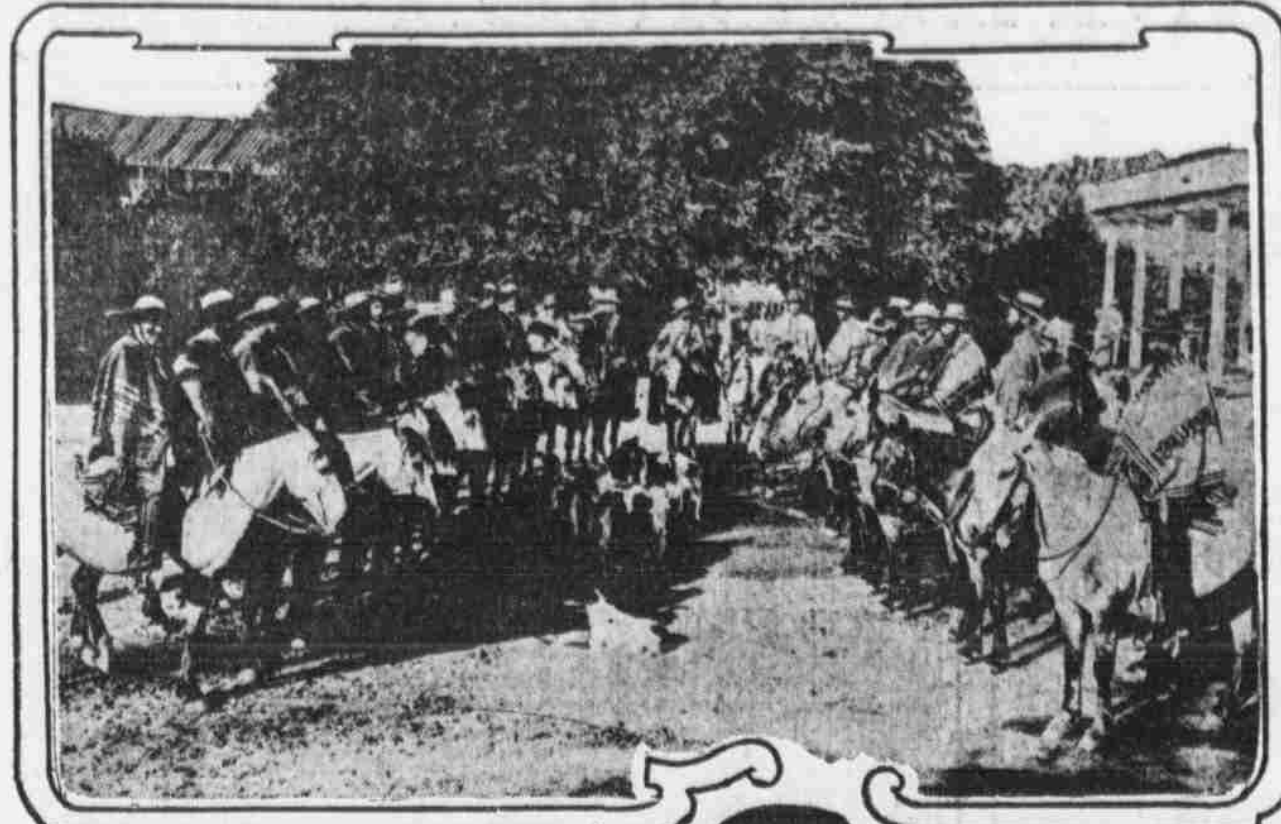


How the Big Farms and Ranches of Chile Are Managed



Cowboys of a big hacienda

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CONCEPCION, Chile—For the last week I have been traveling here and there through the central valley of Chile. This extends from Santiago to Valdivia, more than 500 miles south. It contains the largest and best estates in the republic, although there is an extensive wheat-growing region below it in which great forests are now being cut down and the clearings turned into farms.

The central valley of Chile is one of the garden spots of the globe. It will grow anything if it can only have water. As one of the hacendados said to me: "All you have to do is to spit on the ground and drop in a seed and, presto, there is a tree." There is no part quite so fertile as that, but trees do grow here three times as fast as in North America. I have seen groves of eucalyptus that are 100 feet high and still only ten or fifteen years old. I have already described my visit to Santa Ines, the fields of which are walled with poplars as high as a church steeple. There are thousands of trees on that estate as high as any in the eastern part of our country and they have all been planted in the last twenty-five years. It is the same with all kinds of vegetation in the irrigated sections peach trees bear at one and two years and grains and grasses, including alfalfa, are wonderfully luxuriant. This is so notwithstanding some of the land has been under cultivation for many generations. The lands about Santiago have been tilled for 200 years and today among them are numbered some of the fine farms of the world.

Large Ranches Irrigated. But before I describe the big haciendas let me tell you a little more about the region in which they are seated. The central valley is a wide strip of lowland ranging in width from fifteen to 100 miles, and about 700 miles long. It begins above Santiago and winds its way south through about one-fourth of Chile. On the east of it are the snowy walls of the Andes, with here and there the mighty cone of a dead volcano rising above the other peaks, and on the west are the lower mountains and hills of the coast range, their tops almost a desert, but their foothills covered with green. The average width of the valley, all told, is about thirty miles, and its area is somewhere between those of West Virginia and Maryland. This country is settled throughout. It has many large towns along the state railroad, which runs through it from one end to the other, and the most of the land is divided up into large estates.

In the north these estates are all under irrigation and it is only in the far south that the rainfall is sufficient to dispense with the artificial watering of the crops. Much of the country is slightly rolling. It is cut by many creeks and little rivers which are fed by the Andean snows. Some of these streams carry down a great deal of silt, making fat the lands over which they go. Others, such as the Bio-Bio, are as clear as crystal from one year's end to the other.

Crops in Sight Everywhere. Riding southward through this country, the scenery is far different from that of the richest parts of the union. There are crops in sight all the way, but the fields are divided by rows of tall poplars or eucalyptus or with walls of mud and stone rather than fences. It is only along the railroad that there is any barbed wire. The chief buildings to be seen are the great rambling structures, the homes of the hacendados and the mean mud-walled thatched-roofed huts of the laborers. There are no barns standing out on the fields, and no elevators at the stations for storing the grain. There are plenty of cattle and horses, but very few stables or outbuildings. The weather is no milder than the stock grazes out of doors all the year round, and this is so all the way from Santiago to the Strait of Magellan. Therefore there are no haystacks or strawstacks. Such grass and alfalfa as are cut are put up in bales and shipped to the cities or north to the nitrate desert, where they bring higher prices. The climate of the central valley is about the same as that of lower California. I have to tell you that there is heavy rain, and in the upper part of it nearly everything has to be irrigated. At present there are something like 2,500,000 acres now reached by artificial canals, and I am told that it is possible to put water upon as much more. The most of the non-irrigated lands are in the south. I shall write more fully of them in the future.

Use of Teams. Oxen everywhere take the place of horses and mules. They are yoked to clumsy carts by wooden bars tied to their horns and are driven with long goads with steel spikes in the ends. Nevertheless, the farming is well done, and on many estates it is equal to that of the United States.

Nearly everywhere the business is on a grand scale. In many parts of the valley 200 acres is little more than a garden patch, and the irrigated farms of 1,000 and even 10,000 acres are common. There is one farm of 29,000 acres, and several which have 15,000 and more. There are some very large vineyards. The estate of Lo Urmonta contains 2,000 acres, and of these 200 are now bearing



A rich hacendado

grapes. It has cellars with a capacity of 500,000 gallons of wine, and it bottles and ships vast quantities every year. The Errazuriz vineyard, at the foot of the Andes, puts up 6,000 bottles of wine a day in addition to that which it stores away in casks. It ships more than 100,000 bottles of wine every month. There is another vineyard that ships 400,000 gallons a year.

Ranches Up-to-Date. One of the richest families of Chile is that of Augustin Edwards, who is now minister from here to the court of St. James. He has one hacienda about twenty-five miles north of Valparaiso that supplies a part of that city with milk. He has 800 milch cows and he breeds fine dairy stock. He is also noted as a breeder of horses not only for racing, but for heavy draft. He has in his stables 76 Arabian mares, 30 Percherons and 110 Yorkshires. He has 10 Shorthorn bulls, some of which were brought from England. Another big dairy hacienda, which also supplies Valparaiso, is that of Don Tomas Eastman. On that estate there are several thousand cattle, including 1,000 milch cows. On the Denoso dairy farm there are still more. The latter hacienda has the biggest silo in the world and one of the queerest. It is nothing more than a great ditch 30 feet long, 30 feet wide and 12 feet in depth. This is filled with red clover which has been trilled to pieces by driving horses over it and then laying it between layers of straw. The Denoso farm runs its machinery by an electric plant operated by falls two miles away. The hacienda has electric lights and the cows are milked under the rays of incandescent burners.

The nursery at Santa Ines is the largest in Chile. It has an electric plant run by the falls of a branch of the Mapocho river. This is now furnishing a 120-horsepower, which is used in the factories and other establishments connected with the property. Everything excepting the farming and cultivating is done by electricity, and this includes the thrashing of all kinds of grain, the sawing of lumber, the lighting the owner's home and the moving of the machines of a large manufacturing plant. On that estate there are twelve miles of railroads, and there is one peach orchard in bearing that contains 45,000 trees, and the receipts must equal, I should say, the salary of our president. Nevertheless it was twelve years before Santa Ines began to pay, and during that time it cost Don Salvador Izquierdo S., who owns it, an outlay of \$300,000.

Another Valuable Property. During my last visit to Chile I visited the estate of Maucul, which belongs to the Courtine, the descendants of a woman who was long said to be the richest widow of the world. The estate cost more than \$500,000 when it was bought by Don Cousino. It is now valued at over \$1,000,000. It consists of about 5,000 acres of irrigated land, and it has a large number of fine blooded horses and 200 cattle bred from the best Durham stock. Its vineyards have hundreds of thousands of vines, and they produce millions of bottles of wine every year. The water rents there are about as much as the salary of a United States senator, and the irrigation ditches are marked out by long lines of poplars. The park of Maucul is one of the finest in Chile.

Another large estate is that of Aquila, belonging to Don Santiago de Toro, which contains 11,000 acres. It is not far from Santiago, and it took me about two hours on the train to go there. At the time of my visit the hacienda had over 2,000 cattle and 300 horses, the most of which were used for breeding alone, and for the family and guests. All of the farm work was done by oxen. Of the cattle 300 were dairy cows, which brought

in about \$5,000 worth of milk and \$5,000 worth of butter a year.

The Gulla hacienda has many long, low one-story buildings running round patios and gardens. These form the home of the owner. They have roofs of red tile and their floors are of brick. They have wide porches and their windows look out on the gardens. They are situated in a grove of trees which are at least 100 feet high, and among these are wonderful palms. When I visited it the house contained about two score of guests, in addition to the thirty children and grandchildren of the family of its owner. Each of these children had its own pony.

Live Like Millionaires. Others of the haciendas have beautiful buildings of modern construction, with great parks, with miles of shady drives, and all of the other surroundings of a millionaire's home in the states. Many of them are using modern machinery, and some are new experimenting with fertilizers and intensive cultivation. Everywhere I go I see American plows, and there are three or four importing houses in Chile who have their traveling salesmen going over the country drumming each hacienda as to the introduction of American harvesters, binders and windmills.

One of the interesting features of farming in Chile has to do with the labor. This is made up almost altogether of a class known as *inquilinos*, or the class of which travelers sometimes speak as the *rotos*. This is wrong. The word *roto* is a contemptuous word, meaning torn or ragged, or, as it might be called, raganuffin. The proper term is *inquilino* or farmer. He is a respectable person and he may or may not be ragged. These people are the descendants of the Indians and the immigrants from the northern provinces of Spain. They are the laboring class of the country, and they correspond to the peons of Peru, although they are far above them in character and efficiency. They are excellent workmen, and they can learn almost anything that requires handiness and craft. They are very proud and will not tolerate abuse or insult. You might kick a Peruvian peon and he would sink humbly. The Bolivian Indian is afraid that his master is angry if he is not punished now and then, but the *inquilino* would be likely to resent such treatment and leave. Indeed, I doubt if it would be at all safe for his master to lay his hands on him. On the haciendas where I have been there seems to me a good spirit existing between the *hacendado* and the laborers. The latter are deferential and the owners sustain a sort of patriarchal relation toward them. They are interested in treating them well, for if they do not the *inquilino* will leave, and it is upon his labor that the man must depend for the work upon the estate.

Like Old Feudal Times. The conditions of employment are somewhat like that of the old feudal times. The *hacendado* owns the land, and he lets each of the workmen have a small tract to cultivate and also pasture for his stock if he has any. This tract may consist of two, three, four, five or ten acres, and it may be only enough for a house and garden. In return for the use of the land the *inquilino* agrees to give one man's work to the owner when he requires it. This means that he pays a rent for the house and grounds of about \$2.50 a week, and at the same time has a house for his family to live in. In some cases small wages are paid, but as a rule the man is expected to furnish on hand for his labor. If his family does work, they, of course, receive an additional payment. Many of the *inquilinos* are in debt to their employers, but the laws here are

not like those of Peru and Bolivia, which make the peons almost debt slaves. The huts of the peons are of the rudest description. They are seldom more than fifteen feet square. They have walls of sticks covered with mud and the roofs are of thatch or rude tile. The huts are seldom lighted except from the front, and some have no light but from the door. The ground forms the floor, and, in many cases, the bed of the family. Boxes usually take the place of chairs, and if there is a bedstead it consists of a ledge of sticks built up from the ground. The bedstead may be separated from the other part of the room by a curtain.

I would say, however, that some of the farmers are paying attention to the better housing of their workmen. On the Santa Ines estate they are building tenant houses of concrete and on some others of the haciendas they are putting up what are called model houses.

Workers Are Contented. I am told that the *inquilinos* are contented with their lot. They seldom

strike, and seem satisfied if they can get enough to eat and wear and plenty to drink. One of the great evils of the country is alcoholism. Nearly every one of the lower classes is addicted to it, and this is so in both city and country. A census of saloons of Santiago was recently taken and it was found to have 6,000 places where liquor was sold, while Valparaiso was reported to have more cases of drunkenness than English cities of ten times its size.

It is this custom of drinking added to insanitary conditions of living that is responsible for the great mortality of Chile. The death rate is enormous, and that among children is so high that I fear to quote the figures which have been given. Dead babies are called *little angels* and are supposed to go straight to Heaven, but no one supposes that this has anything to do with the deaths. It is said that 25 per cent of the children of Santiago die before they are five years of age, but I do not believe this to be true.

There is one institution in Chile now

that promises to bring about a change in the conditions of the *inquilinos*. This is the army, and the law provides that every man in the country shall spend at least one year of his life in the service. This year is at about nineteen or twenty. All of the boys are drafted, and no matter whether they are of the working class or not they have to spend this one year as a soldier. This brings the young *inquilinos* away from the farms. It teaches them what it is to have board floors to walk on and good beds to sleep in. They get a taste for the better food of the army and do not like to go back to their beans and toasted wheat that until then have formed a large part of their diet. As a result, after leaving the army many go out to seek work elsewhere. You find them as laborers about the ports, as the employees on street car lines and other railway construction and doing all sorts of common labor in the cities. Moreover, they are natural mechanics and they soon learn the various trades. It is somewhat owing to these

changes that a modern labor element is developing in Chile. There have recently been several strikes on the state railways; the hands upon the wharves have their unions and are, I am told, growing very independent. These men in the nitrate ports struck the other day because they were not allowed to use grappling hooks to handle the heavy logs. They had seen such hooks used for dragging about cotton bales, and they found it easier to move the nitrate the same way. The hooks make holes in the bags and for this reason the exporters of the nitrate object.

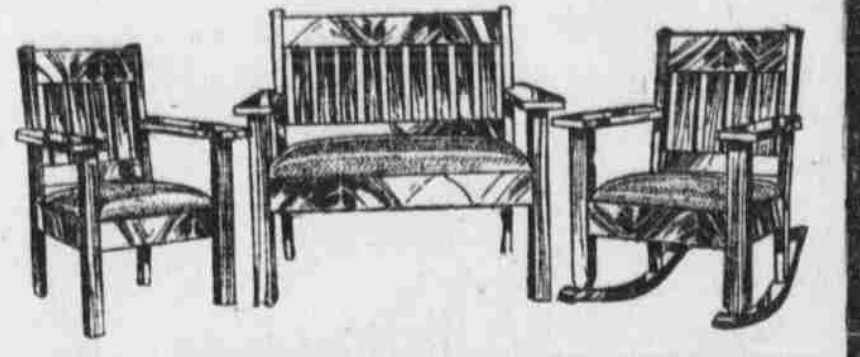
A similar unrest among the laboring element is going on all along the west coast of South America. Peru has been sending agitators to Chile, and Chile has sent labor delegations to discuss such matters in the cities of Peru. Moreover, some of the politicians of the several republics are catering to the laboring element, and among the latter is the former president of Peru.

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