

THE SOCIAL EVOLUTION OF THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC¹

By THE HON. ERNESTO QUESADA,

Attorney-General of the Argentine Republic; Professor in the Universities
of Buenos Ayres and La Plata.

To condense into a few pages several centuries of the history of a nation like the Argentine Republic, to give some idea of the nature of the forces that have determined the development of this country from the end of the sixteenth century, the period of its discovery, to this the second decade of the twentieth, when it is celebrating the first centennial of its independence, is a task at once delicate and arduous. For, aside from these natural difficulties, it will be necessary to avoid all details, to shun statistics, and even to lay aside historical evidence, in order to crystallize into seemingly dogmatic statements, the complicated social evolution of a people in process of transformation, a people still in a formative period. It is a venture bordering upon the impossible.

A century after the commencement of the conquest of the American continent and after the scattering over the land of the invading race, at once warlike and religious, an expedition which was purely Andalusian discovered the River Plate in the southern extremity of the continent. Instead of penetrating to the south, the expedition fixed its gaze northward, searching for a route by which to renew relations with the rich district of the old empire of the Incas. This was in obedience to that thirst after wealth which characterized the taking possession of America. Two centuries later, these remote provinces had been converted into the very important viceroyship of the River Plate. In one direction it extended from the tropical viceroyship of Peru and the torrid lands of Portuguese Brazil, to Cape Horn, lashed by the raging Antarctic seas, and in the other direction it stretched from the chain of the Andes, which runs like a solid wall the length of one of its flanks, to the Atlantic Ocean,

¹The Academy wishes to express its appreciation to Layton D. Register, Esq., of the Law Department of the University of Pennsylvania, and to Mr. Enrique Gil, of the National University of La Plata, of the Argentine Republic, for the translation of this article.