

IS IT ARGENTINE, ARGENTINEAN OR ARGENTINIAN?

In Spanish, the official name of the country is *La República Argentina*. The republic is the noun, Argentina is its adjective. Now, how can one say this in English? It may be best to consider opinions of British people who lived with both languages:

August 27, 1937

THE REVIEW OF THE RIVER PLATE

Page 9

* * *

Having paid our tribute to Mr. Weddell's admirable lecture, we venture, with the utmost respect, to protest against his occasional use of the term *Argentinians* in the English version. In the first place, we maintain that it is really not a word at all, (though Webster authorises *Argentinean* as an alternative noun). What is the matter with the logical and natural *Argentine*, which is the perfectly correct translation of *Argentino* or *Argentina*—not of a suppositious *Argentiniano*? And in the second place, even if it be proved to be a word, it does not deserve to be one. *Argentinean* seems to us almost as objectionable, grammatically, as the expression *the Argentine*, applied to Argentina. We consider that *Argentine* is invariably an adjective, except when used to denote a national of this Republic. Notwithstanding that some of our River Plate House magnates persist, in their annual speech-makings, in referring to this country as *the Argentine*, we refuse to admit that there is any analogy between the term and such accepted and acceptable geographical expressions as *the Riviera*, *the Levant*, *the Engadine*, *the Lido*, *the Rialto*, *the Potteries*, *the Tropics*, or even *the Doldrums*. The obsolete designation of *the Brazils* had a better claim to validity than the meaningless *the Argentine*.

* * *

September 10, 1937

have prompted us to hold back. His Excellency wrote as follows:—

Embassy of the
United States of America
Buenos Aires, August 31, 1937.

My dear Mr. Editor,—

Since my arrival in Buenos Aires I have been a close and interested reader of your REVIEW. In your issue of August 27 you speak in kind and graceful terms of my recent remarks before the "Ateneo" of the Club Universitario of Buenos Aires, and for this I am very grateful.

In your concluding paragraph you "protest against his (my) occasional use of the term *Argentiniens* in the English version" of my paper. You then say that you "maintain that it is really not a word at all."

As you remark, Webster authorizes Argentinean as an alternative noun. However, in what to you will doubtless seem a higher authority,—the Oxford English Dictionary,—occurs the following: "2. The *Argentine*, *Argentina* . . . Hence *Argentinian* a. belonging to the *Argentine*: also sb. = a native of the *Argentine* (and as an example),—She was speaking alone to the *Argentinian*."

However, I incline to agree with you at least to the extent that "Argentinian" is not a pretty word and that *Argentine* is preferable.

With my renewed thanks for your gratifying remarks and for finding space in your columns for the English text of my speech, believe me,

Yours very sincerely,

(Signed) ALEXANDER W. WEDDELL.

* * *

page 9

The Ambassador's comparison of dictionaries was with Noah Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language. It is believed that the first instance of *Argentinian* or the like will be found in American publications.

The persistence 'of some River Plate House magnates, in their annual speech-makings, to refer to this country as *the Argentine*,' lamented by the *Review*, may be traced back to a speech by Frank Parish, who said 'Argentina, as it is now called' at the general meeting of shareholders of the Buenos Ayres Great Southern Railway held in London on 28 March 1889. One may take that date as approximately the one when the usage of *Argentina* began but *the Argentine* was retained by London's River Plate Circle.