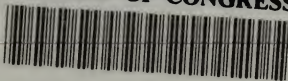


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POPULAR CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS

OF THE

ARGENTINE PROVINCES

BY

PAUL GROUSSAC,

Librarian of the "BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL" at Buenos Ayres:  
Commissioner of the Argentine Republic.

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## POPULAR CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS

OF THE

## ARGENTINE PROVINCES.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I have heard so much of your indulgence toward foreigners who try to speak your language, so concise and strong, that I had the curiosity to take my chances. Coming from me, the attempt is very bold; but among the numerous things that I hope to learn with you, timidity, I believe, is not in the programme. After all the venture is not very dangerous for anybody, not even for me, who do not put any *amour-propre* into it, and a hard time is soon over.

Yet a recent experiment should give me some uneasiness. I was visiting, some time ago, a mining district in the far West, with one of your

fellow-countrymen, who proposed to accompany me. This charming colonel, for he was a colonel! as cultured as he was amiable, explained everything to me with an inexhaustible compliance. During a stay in Europe he had even learned french; but it was some time ago, before the Crimean war, I believe. As he spoke English very rapidly, I did not catch very well some refractory sentences; but when he had translated them into my language, oh! then, it was very different: I could not understand at all! It was, without doubt, the fault of my untrained ear; and I am almost sure you understand me at least as well as if I spoke French. I will try to be clear, if not correct; your kindness will do the rest.

In spite of lack of auxiliary memoranda, I accepted at once the invitation tendered me, some days ago, to speak on a familiar subject which was suggested to me, and which really seems to meet a want of your interesting programme. It concerns the rustic and adventurous life, the customs and beliefs of our Argentine *Gaúcho*.

For the learned public who listen to me, this name is not new, no more so than the ethnic variety which it designates. Outside of the travelers' narrations, I believe Walter Scott to be the first who threw it into wide literary circulation; but he used to write *Guachó*, which now means an entirely different thing. The great Carlyle, in his admirable *Essay* on Francia, the dictator of Paraguay, where he indulges somewhat in humor at the

expense of our South American "heroes," has guessed at the true physiognomy of the Gaucho, careless and stoical, although often lacking "soap," as he says; and has painted him, as he knew how to paint, with the sharp intuition of the seer, and that fierce brush and exuberant color which our Michelet never surpassed.

The subject is vast and diffuse, especially for us who live in the midst of it, and know almost too well its multiplied aspects and varieties. It concerns a group which is nearly a whole people; and just for the reason that it is wide and indefinite, so to speak, like the immense theatre which this nomad traverses without ever occupying: I must only touch lightly upon it, without even trying to go into its depths, leaving to your own knowledge of analogical evolutions the care of filling blanks between significant features. Moreover, besides the necessary limits of this lecture, the character of this distinguished audience, of languages and origin so varied, would forbid long developments as well as details of too local a nature, expressed in a dialect which, even for Spaniards or inhabitants of the other Hispano-American countries, requires frequent commentaries.

As an old "pedagogue," I have a weakness for teaching through the eye. I should have liked to show you the scenery before the actors. You will have a very rough idea of it, if you compare the River Plate territory with the United States of a half century ago, when limited at the west, from north

to south, by the chain of high Rocky Mountains. At the mouth of a river very much larger than your Mississippi, and which is the Rio de la Plata, Buenos Ayres softly spreads out with a population twice that of New Orleans, in incommensurable green plains, which could easily hold Texas, Kansas and Missouri, together with Louisiana. That is the Savannah or the Pampa, which, descending from the cross chains of the Andes, stretches out southerly to the desert of Patagonia. This was, and still is, the territory of the Pampa gaucho, that gaucho who has so often been described, and who is known the best. At the northeast, on the river Paraná, and in a geographical situation, reminding one of that of Illinois, another ethnical group, almost entirely indigenous, occupies Corrientes; and is but a branch of the Guaranís who peopled the bordering Paraguay. At the northwest, finally, in a country which would about correspond to Nebraska and Dakota, another group dwells in the ancient Tucuman of Spanish annals, the name of which is still kept by a very rich little province, but whose language and primitive traditions, scarcely touched by European civilization, have been preserved only in the forests of Santiago. However, I ask you not to attach any too precise value to these vague geographical analogies, which I venture for the sole purpose of giving provisional information.

About these three ethnical varieties, which are mingling more and more by modern life and nationality, one can say that the nearly pure native type of

Corrientes and of the Missions, which still speaks guaraní, and which has hardly changed since the colonial era, has been sufficiently explained in the Jesuitic accounts of the last century. His gaucho character, he acquired by friction and infiltration. The two really different types, properly speaking, are the gaucho of Buenos Ayres or of the adjacent provinces, and the one of the forests of Tucuman, the true type of which is at Santiago. The latter, above all, besides having been much less described than the former, offers a very remarkable ethnological problem, a case of linguistic engrafting, for an analogy of which one would in vain look in Spanish America, and which, philologically, recalls the phenomenon of latin Roumania, for centuries enclosed like a foreign body, a parasitic concretion in the bosom of the Slavic world. As to the inhabitants of the neighboring valleys of Chile, one ought, I think, in an ethnical description, to connect together the two adjoining mountain sides, as much on account of supposed relationship between them, as of an incessant contact which has assimilated them.

The primitive shape of a dwelling house of the pampa, or of the *campo* of Buenos Ayres, is well known; moreover, you have a faithful reproduction of it in your *ranches* of the West. The word "ranch" itself is quite Spanish, but in the Californian meaning in which you use it, it must rather come from Mexico. In Peru, a rancho is a villa; in our country it is the gaucho's cottage. Your ranch (cattle

farm) of the far West is our *estancia*, or, rather, the *puesto*, which is, so to say, a branch of it. Before railroads made distances shorter, multiplying at the same time the centers of population and the parcelling out of the territory, the immense sea of pasture grounds, covered with cattle, in appearance undivided and boundless, stretched out in a radius of twenty or thirty leagues around the Capital. Beyond, it was the desert and the Indian tents or *tolderias*. At the centre of these rural estates of several square leagues, vaguely limited and never closed, a cattle farm, with its covered gallery, its roof, with a double declivity or with a terrace, stretched out its whitewashed walls. An enormous *ombu* or a cluster of peach trees lent some cheerfulness to the rural homestead. At some distance from the master's house, some *ranchos* of shepherds or of cow-keepers, with their straw roofs overlooked the sheep's enclosures.

The big cattle, beeves and horses, grazed at liberty. Herds belonging to different neighbors mingled without any prejudice to anybody. On days of meeting or of *rodeo*, the young cattle were marked at the sides of their mothers with a hot iron. It was the great festival of the year; they placed in an enclosure those which were to be sold, each one recognizing and separating his property in a patriarchal way, as in the Biblical age. All those who were moving about, *peones* or servants, friends or passers-by, who had hastened to the feast of the *lazo* and of the meat roasted on charcoal,

each one on his horse well saddled with the flaring colored *recado*, the striped *poncho* high on the shoulder, the tongue as sharp as the knife in his belt : every one was a gaucho of the plain, which means simply any countryman fitted for the riding and breeding labors.

I have been speaking in the past tense because I thought of the former province of Buenos Ayres which, until the last fifteen or twenty years, was confined in a half circle of about forty leagues in radius around the large city, extending to the Indian borders. The tribes are to-day driven back and scattered in the desert, where they gradually die out ; and the gauchos have taken their place, giving way in their turn to the European immigration, or transmuting themselves by contact and blood mixture. Rural property, increasing tenfold in value, was finally divided into parcels. Scientific breeding of the superior kinds of cattle, and the careful cultivation of the soil, surveyed and fenced in, created true pastoral and agricultural industry. Stables take the place of the old *corral*. From the next railroad station, the enriched landlord drives to his *estancia*. The old farm house has become a fine country dwelling, sometimes a castle with gardens and park. There are large farms at one hundred leagues from Buenos Ayres, formerly in the power of the Indians, where now English teams cross the plains, and where you go to dinner in a dress coat. The European breeders have thus thrust away the gaucho towards the old style farms,

in the desert. It is there he is yet to be found, but weakened and impoverished by the contact with civilization, whenever he did not blend with the urban people.

Moreover, this last evolution is made without effort; many sons of the gauchos have been educated in the college and live in the city. The gradual change was so much easier because our institutions and democratic ways, entirely similar to yours, were applied to a popular element which does not differ essentially from the superior class. Add to this the invincible influence of the European element, which made the Argentine Republic the largest country for immigration, after the United States. In the other Hispano-American regions, all immigration has been absorbed by the numerous native population who occupy the ground, and sometimes, as in Mexico and Peru, have reached a very high state of civilization: which fact is the first obstacle to radical improvement and modern progress. The Argentine Republic, except in a few provinces, of which I shall speak presently, found a clear field or swept back to the desert those tribes who crossed the plains. Except in the first generations, by union, transient or durable, with a few converted Indian women, the Argentine people have mixed but little with the natives, who became immediately the enemy and fled to the pampa and the forests. The gaucho himself, tall and elegant, of Arabic type and often fine-looking, has in his veins but little Indian blood, diminished



each generation by added European elements. The first cross-breeding with an immigrant girl completes the purifying. Auburn and blonde hair is now common in the ancient pampa. In aspect and tendencies, the rural Argentine assimilates himself to the son of the Italian or Spaniard; and in some years, the gaucho of the plains will be no more than a legend and a memory.

Studies and sketches of the gaucho were not wanting, as long as he was to be seen, so to speak, at the doors of the city. Illustrated newspapers, and even some popular dramas, spread everywhere his picturesque silhouette and his free, easy costume, half Incasic, half Bedouin. The soft hat crushed on the long, black hair; the silk tie around the neck falling over the opening of the motley *poncho*, which is a simplification of the Arabian *burnous*; the *chiripá* floating like the full trousers of a zouave, fastened at the waist by a wide leathern *tirador*, scaly with silver piastres, and passing through it, the long knife, good for any purpose; finally the broad embroidered drawers, falling on the spurred boots of colt's leather. This pampean gaucho, very Oriental in aspect and manners, explains the tendency, the persistency of some modern writers to look to the Arabian vocabulary, for the etymology of the odd name, which is neither Spanish nor derived from the French in spite of its radical and consonance. But this obsolete process is inadmissible. This century did not establish comparative philology to return to the old etymological blunders, anterior to Grimm's law.

When there is only one solitary word of a foreign derivation and of unknown origin which appears in a language, there is no possibility of applying the philological laws; but then, the historical method alone must be our guide. The case never happens, and could not happen, of an Arabian word making its appearance in America without having been first seasoned on the Spanish soil. Now, the word "gaucho" has never been written nor known in Spain, but as imported from America. We would have to look nowhere but here, if it were worth the labor. As to myself, I believe that the innocent *lapsus* of Walter Scott contains the solution, and that the author of *Ivanhoe*, like the rooster of the fable, found a pearl in looking for a grain. *Guacho* is a Quichua word (the ancient Peruvian tongue) which is still in use in our dialects; it means *orphan, abandoned, wandering*, with a scornful sense. It is applied especially to animals bred away from their mother. The syllabic alteration called, I think, by grammarians *metathesis*, is very frequent in Spanish. Hence, "guacho" transformed into "gaucho" by the most logical process, which in diphthongs is the accentuated precedence of the strongest vowel. I beg your pardon for these trifles which smack of the school.

At all events the epithet suits him. He is really a "wandering" and a "lost child" of the social group, this legendary and nomad gaucho whose adventures begin at his birth and only end at his death. Born somewhere in a ranch of the

Argentine plain, early taken away from the trunk, growing on horseback, learning from childhood to fight and suffer: his first and indelible impressions are a general feeling of abandonment and of self-reliance. He grows facing impassible nature, with this notion always present, although never expressed, that he must count only on himself. The immense Pampa without trees or outlined ways, for him more barren than the sea of old Homer, unfolds itself to his eyes, mysterious, awful, indefinite. It is there that he must live, grieve, fight, love and die. He is surrounded by the desert like a lonely fisherman by the ocean. To overcome distance, to get his food, he has his horse and his *lazo*. To find his way on this invariably circular horizon, better than by the moving sun and the inconstant stars, he has the shades of the herbs, certain bushes or *pajonales*, which he saw once and never will forget; at night, fifty leagues away from his refuge, after ten years of absence, he will find his way by the peculiar smell or taste of the pasture he is crossing; so did the tyrant Rosas. A lost mark in that vastness, which is the universe for him, he has sharpened his senses like necessary weapons; he has trained his hearing and smelling like that of a deer, and his sight as keen as that of a hawk; he possesses withal the wolf's insensibility and its resistance to hunger; and a power for enduring pain and wounds which belongs to the lower organisms. In a like-tempest tumult, he perceives if the herd runs away before

the storm or before an attack of Indians. In an invisible galloping, he counts the horses, and knows whether they are mounted, and whether their riders are soldiers, Indians or comrades. A bird's cry, the running of an ostrich, the erected ears of his horse are valuable signs. In the soft sand or the trampled grass, his fixed Mohican eye follows the track of an animal: he distinguishes the footprint of a lost horse among tracks of a numerous troop; he recognizes amongst a hundred, half a league away, the running colt that he marked with fire the preceding year. He knows each animal of a herd as we do persons; and of the horse he chooses for himself, he knows the good and bad, his qualities and "moral" defects, just as we know the mental characteristics, the psychology of a friend.

His life is adventurous and hard; not at all sad;—thanks to his innate and stoical fatalism. From his youth, he has hardened his muscles and disciplined his stomach. He grew near his *rancho*, amongst the feet of the horses and the horns of bulls, quick and strong, on horseback like a centaur, practicing in his first plays with the *bolos*, the *lazo* and knife-fighting, which will very soon be his means of living or of self-defense. Later on he works on a farm, changes very often to wander right and left, going to the *hierras* and county fairs, always led by the incurable desire of adventure and a longing for the desert. Careless and prodigal, the money he has slips through his fingers; he hurries to the next *pulperia*, which is a rancho larger

than the others, both the *venta* and the bazaar of the Pampa, recognized from afar by the flag which floats upon the thatched roof, and especially by the row of horses hitched to the poles. There they drink "caña" and gin, play at cards and *taba*, dance the *gato* or the *cielito* to the gushing sounds of the guitar. The rustic *trouvere* or *payador* improvises his slow melopoeia in the easy metre of the old, Spanish *Romancero*. They gather around him, men and women seated on their heels, smoking cigarettes, listening to the rhymed songs, the *relaciones*, in a minor mode, heroic or sentimental, almost ever sad, where they tell of remote wars, expeditions on the desert, distresses and treacherous loves: and the young *chinas* with black tresses raise their large, dark eyes, covered with heavy eye-lids, to the chosen one. For, there is no bare desert without a spring and blossoms; and, at the age of twenty, it is the same passion, the same impulse of young blood which makes the heart beat; the same dream which fills the brain of the patrician or of the peasant. And sometimes, also, love and jealousy helping, two rival *payadores* have a tournament of poetry: the guitar cross-wise upon their knees, they by turns improvise amidst a deep silence. The contest begins well and generally ends badly. Ironical allusions, sarcasm and defiance creep under the cantilena. He who is worsted at this game of rhymes, seeks revenge at a less innocent one.—Through dialectic forms and under images borrowed from rustic life,

which it would be impossible for me to translate here, the eternal bragging of personal bravery finds its way, just as with the heroes of Homer:

Alguien que la echa de guapo,  
Y en lo fiero queda atrás,  
Es poncho de poco trapo,  
Purito fleco no más.

And the adversary replies in the same style :

Naides con la vaina sola  
Al buen gaucho ha de correr ;  
Lazito de tanta armada  
Nunca ha voltiao la res. \*

In this strain, the poetical joust can not be prolonged ; knives break forth from the sheathes, and one of the troubadours falls on the spot. Amidst the screams of the women and the stillness of the men who pick up the wounded one, his adversary unties his horse without being molested, throws himself into the saddle, and rides away slowly. . . Now, he must go far into the familiar pampa to avoid the gendarmerie, the *partida*, who, moreover, will not pursue him for a long time. He will wander from rancho to rancho, telling his *desgracia* (misfortune) with more pride than contrition, finding everywhere protection and a hearty welcome, for he did not strike traitorously, against a disarmed enemy. And the gaucho becomes an

\* (1) The disadvantage of these textual citations is that they become very insipid when translated, and then the translation still needs an explanation. Leaving out the incorrectness of the gaucho style, the sense of the cited verses is about as follows :

"He who plays the braggard, and at the time of danger remains behind—he is a poncho of very poor stuff—all fringe and nothing more. "Nobody can put me to flight—in showing me but the sheath of his knife;—the lazo which has so large a swing—never upsets the animal."

*outlaw* or bandit, finally immigrating for some time to the Indians or to the neighboring provinces. It occurs he is caught and sent to the frontier in the regiment of discipline. That does not alter his life much, and he is a good cavalry soldier, especially if the war breaks out. It was with those soldiers that the War of Independence was made, that general San Martin crossed the Andes and threw to the sea the Spanish soldiers who had resisted Napoleon; it was with these hardy, enduring gauchos trained for the war, that the liberals pursued Rosas, and that the Argentine Republic turned out from his den in Paraguay the gross and vulgar dictator who crushed this people, historically predestined to be the prey of all tyrannies.

Such, in short, is the picturesque, and in spite of everything, the interesting and sympathetic physiognomy of this son of the Pampas. Notwithstanding his vices and his "peccadilloes," you always like him in the end, because he is open, loyal, hospitable, very gentle and very *naïf* under his rough appearance; one does not shun him, and in long travelling, around the nightly fire in the desert, one likes to have him talk, and willingly tarries awhile with him. Such, you see, is the case with me; and consequently, I have but a few minutes for describing to you the other variety which was to be the principal object of my lecture.

The Argentine Nation is, as you all know, a federal republic of fourteen autonomous states, and

nine large territories governed directly by the central power. Theoretically, the political organization is like that of the United States. Everywhere, the ordinary language, official as well as popular, is the Spanish tongue. One state only is an exception; it is the province of Santiago, which has been taken from the ancient Tucuman. Naturally, Spanish is now spoken in the cities, but the whole country speaks the quichua, the language of the Incas from Peru. Formerly, it was the usual tongue even in the superior class, who, however, understand and speak it still. Around Santiago, in the remnant of the colonial Tucuman, up to the territory bordering on High Peru, there is no vestige of that foreign tongue; it has never been spoken there. I have published a study elsewhere, in an official work printed in Spanish, of that linguistic phenomenon, and I here sum up the result.

A long time ago, this territory of forest and bushes, situated between the rivers Salado and Dulce, was inhabited by a large Indian tribe, called Juri by some and Lule by others, which I explained to be the same word pronounced in the Indian and in the Spanish way. It was an industrious and gentle people, qualities still to be found among its present representatives. At the end of the fourteenth century, when the power of the Incas was at its height and Cuzco was the capital of an immense empire, there occurred a very peculiar historical adventure. It is reported in the classic *Comentarios Reales* of Garcilaso, of which you have only an incomplete copy in your Public Library.



Those brave Lules of Tucuman woke up at the noise of the Peruvian glory and, without taking advice from their neighbors north or south, they sent an embassy—on foot, naturally—to the Inca Huiracocha, who reigned at that time. It was four hundred leagues of bare desert and snowy mountains, where in some places everything is wanting, even air fit to breathe. I crossed them on horseback, and I can assure you that even to-day it is a hard journey. For those poor ambassadors, accustomed to the tropical mildness of their native soil, it must have been terrible.

Admitted before the Inca, in the midst of his court dazzling with gold and precious stuffs, the messengers laid down at the foot of the throne their humble presents of the far-away land. In exchange for their sacrificed liberty, they asked for civilization: and, to me, this spontaneous homage, this instinctive impulse of an obscure tribe towards the light, is one of the most touching things of South American history. They were listened to and served according to their wishes. Without trying to conquer the immense intermediate territory, the Inca sent to the Tucuman, which name had just been revealed to him, a prince of his family, with a numerous escort of officers, of *curacas*, intrusted to initiate the tribe into the good and the bad of civilization.

They assimilated rapidly the knowledge and industries of their pacific masters, especially the language; and so thoroughly, that the old disappeared

entirely and that the Spanish tongue, after three centuries of political domination, has not been able to eradicate the "cuzco", as they call it, the sweet singing idiom they had learned with love. This is why, in the most European republic of South America, there is a whole province that speaks the language of the Peruvians, used before the first trip of Columbus. Yet,—and it is a general law confirmed in philology—a people who believes it has adopted the whole of a foreign tongue, has only taken the vocabulary of it. The grafting does not reach the grammatical essence, which remains as before. The "Santiagueños," as they are called now, grafted the Quichua dictionary onto the Lule grammar; and it is the only difference between their dialect and the language of the Incas. By the way, the deepest varieties of the neo-Latine languages have no other origin. The invasions or superpositions of races attack the lexicon of the natives, which is a social fact; almost never the private structure and the marrow of the speech, which is the thought itself, that is to say, an anthropological and cerebral element.

Nothing isolates more than difference of language; of this fact I myself am making a sad proof to-day, I, who do not speak your tongue fluently. The Argentine Quichuas, the gauchos from Santiago, "embalm" themselves, so to speak, in their traditions, manners and superstitions. Independence came after the Colonial era of the missions and servitude; the constitutional life after anarchy:

nothing could attack that erratic block; and, thanks to the old preserved tongue, it is there, better than anywhere else, that the thick growth of beliefs and legends among the primitive tribes can be studied.

Their preferred dwelling place is always that large zone of forests, between the two rivers already spoken of. There, the rustic life is very easy. The warm and dry climate allows living out of doors for most of the year. Besides large herds of cattle of the estancia, the sheep and the goats prosper wonderfully. Each family established near a farm has its *rancho* made of posts and earth, and its flocks. The master allows each one of his herdsmen to enclose a piece of ground for his personal use. It is there that each gaucho sells his grain, vegetables and watermelons, which are delicious. Those living on the banks of the river find plentiful and palatable fish; they catch generally with a reed lance, especially on the Salado. To all, the big woods offer different resources and supplies. First, the carob-trees, the *algarrobos* (*Prosopis*) which everywhere cover the ground. Their savory and saccharine pod gives a food much sought for; when fermented it produces a liquor, for me much more preferable to the *pulque* of the Mexicans. The fruit ripens in the beginning of the summer. When the large cicadae called *coyuyos*, hidden in the foliage, fill the forest with their metallic grating, "*Ya canta el coyuyo!*" is the general cry. The ranchos are deserted; men and women go to the shady solitude, full of perfumes

and murmur. They live merrily upon what they pick up in their ponchos, tied by the four corners, as well as on the game : hares, rabbits, tatous are quite plentiful ; they have also wild honey, which they find in the ground or in the heart of the big quebrachos ; the chañar and mistol fruits and the Indian figs of the cactus. When night falls, they meet in groups and mix in a glade ; through the balmy air comes the perfume of the verveins, the wild lily, and, prevailing over all, the honeyed and strong fragrance of the *sombra-de-toro*. They sing softly, to the sound of the guitar, very old, gloomy tunes, elegiac *yaravis*, some of them brought from Cuzco four centuries ago. And whilst the young people stroll in the darkness, old and children form a ring and together embroider, about an incident of the present or precedent day, some mysterious story which will bloom like a magic plant. They keep enough of those stories with a real kernel to fill a *Flos Sanctorum*. I collect several each year, during the time I pass there on a family estate. I may say that I have spent there, in the peace of soul and joy of country life, amongst this population who saw all my family born and grown up, the sweetest and most restful hours of my life.

If I had time, I would tell you some of their legends, some of their superstitions and symbolic beliefs. They have some on all the beings of the woods, on all incidents of their free life, on all the period from their birth to their death. Their religious creeds have bloomed with smiling or sad sym-

bols, as in resemblance to their far-off evangelization by that gentle apostle San Francisco Solano, another Francis of Assis, as candid and more rustic than the founder. They have, in a remote village, a miraculous picture brought down especially from heaven, and made of quebracho-wood ; they bring to it wild honey, watermelons, sucking kids, and the vicar sputters out a response to their dead, or distributes to them in exchange a blessed ribbon, as a receipt. As all primitive people, they cover with flowers and songs their dead children ; but, moreover, they take as a benefit the general deliverance from life ; and even over the body of relatives, with the harrowing complaints of the weepers, during the funeral eve are heard the festive sounds of musical instruments. And this careless contempt for the being, in those ignorant people, meets the pessimistic conception, which seems to be at present the last word of our philosophy.

On all animals of the forest they build beliefs ; some terrible ones on the tiger and puma ; some facetious on the *atoj*, the fox, called by them " Don Juan," by raillery ; some melancholy, on others. For instance, there is a moving story about a certain owl who cries out during the whole night in the foliage, calling to his brother. This one is very affecting, and reminds one of the Metamorphosis of Ovidius. It was a girl who has been turned into a night-bird for having refused some honey to her brother, who was returning from the *monte* starving ; since that time she throws into the darkness her piteous Indian cry ; *turay*, my brother !

To the hunter, the meeting of certain animals is a bad omen; and very often, the *peon* who used to accompany me, advised me to return home. With the fox there is still some hope, if he crossed the path from left to right; but if it is the boa, who has left on the ground his long and smooth mark, it is useless to go farther ahead, and the rustic fixes on his saddle his superfluous *boleadoras*.

They have witches, who are also physicians and know the herbs; especially the woman-witches, who are in turn beneficent or fatal. They cure a knife-blow or set a bone, for the same price that they procure love or cast a spell on an enemy. This habit of magical charm, as you know, has crossed the ages; and it is very interesting to find in a cabin of Santiago the waxen image transfixed with the bloody pins, used by the Roman Canidia and Catherine de Medici. Naturally, man and woman-witches go to their nocturnal meetings, which they call "Salamanca".—It is still a significant point, this creed everywhere spread, which united science and witchery, as with us in the Middle Ages. The old Spaniards formerly called a bonesetter an "algebrist." For them a scholar was first a man who spoke latin: and you will find the "*ladino*", as a guide and artful interpreter as far as the tribes of Chaco. Our "salamanca" is, without doubt, a superstitious echo of the old Spanish University. The meeting or sabbatic vigil is held in the depth of the wood, in a cave, whose entrance is a narrow opening, which you would take

for the den of the inoffensive *vizcachas*. You would be wrong to enter it on your knees; it is there that the "Bad", at midnight, presides over the black mass, surrounded by fantastic animals who are witches, in a display of *macabre* luxury which makes one shiver, by dint of being alluring.

Religion is the root of superstition; the popular poetry is its flower. All those *gauchos* of Santiago have the poetical sentiment, although the expression is poor and defaced. They are especially musicians, crazy for melody, with a surprising musical memory and hearing ear. If the Argentine Republic reaches to have some inspired artists, I believe that they will come out from Santiago, that they have already come, as did Alcorta, whose grandson is the young Williams.—I have no time to recite numerous specimens of this singing poetry; besides, the best *yaravis* are in the Quichua language, hard to translate. I have put some short pieces into Spanish verses, for those who can understand this language, keeping the meter, which is essential. It is never the martial note which dominates, as with the gaucho of the pampa, but sadness, regrets and love—what the Bolivians, fond of *mandolinate*, would call "sentiment," which is truly a world of romance. Thus, this stanza from a deceived or discarded lover:

" Su labio no se pintó  
 Con clavel, coral ni grana,  
 Sino con sangre que mana  
 Del corazon que partió! " 1

\* (1) It is not the color of the coral, of the pink, or of the cochineal which reddens thy lips; but that of the blood whispering from the heart thou hast wounded.

Or, still this fine beginning of a madrigal, which is a whole litany of love and ends on this sigh of despair: But all that, why didst thou tell it to me?  
*Ima pachta niaranki?*

Còmo es, paloma mia,  
 Paloma blanca,  
 Que, para un pecho solo,  
 Tienes dos alas?—  
 —Es que el amor cobijo  
 Que me entregaras;  
 Y dos alas preciso  
 Para dos almas.<sup>1</sup>

This is the usual note and rhyme; but sometimes it rises; a fine picture, a deep philosophical reflection bursts out from the depths of human heart, the same everywhere. I have heard on those rustic lips a reminiscent sound from a famous ten line stanza of the great Calderon, the Shakespeare of Spain: *Cuentan de un sabio que un día.* At last, the well known *feriuntque summos fulgura montes*, of Horatius, presented itself to the minstrel of the desert with this agrestic and local form: (Take courage, it is my last quotation.)

Por ser mas chico, el pobre  
 Es mas seguro:  
 Hiere el rayo al quebracho  
 Y nunca al suncho.<sup>2</sup>

(1) Oh my dove, my white dove—how is it that thou hast two wings for only one heart? 'Tis because my bosom shelters the love which thou gavest me, and I need two wings for the two souls I have."

(2) The poor lives in security because he is small; the lightning strikes the high quebracho, never the humble bush.



Ladies and Gentlemen:—I close this too long lecture, where, however, I have only outlined the subject and set the landmark to be followed in a more serious study. As incomplete and hasty as my lecture has been, I see you have felt the value and real interest of the material, through the faults and weakness of my exposition. This lecture, I believe, is the longest you have heard in this Congress, and I fear I have exhausted your kindness. To excuse this monopolizing of your valuable time, this real indiscretion, I did not count on the seduction of form, and less on the attraction of my foreign accent. I have too much forgotten this sentence of Emerson, your most profound mind, which he expressed in his habitual lapidary style: *The man is only half himself, the other half is his expression.*

For that, allow me to tell you sincerely that I am more grateful for your meritorious attention than for your indulgent cheers. And since you have excused for this time my bad elocution, I promise you that I shall speak better at your next World's Columbian Fair!

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