From the SOCIETY.—Proceedings of the Philosophical Society of Glasgow, 1879–80.
—— Journal of the Society of Arts, Nos. 1473, 1474.
—— Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, No. 106.
—— List of Members of the American Philosophical Society, March 15, 1880.
—— Proceedings of the Royal Society, No. 208.
From the GERMAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY.—Correspondenz Blatt, February, 1881.
From the EDITOR.—Matériaux pour l'histoire de l'homme, December, 1880; January, 1881.
—— "Nature," Nos. 589, 590.
—— Revue Scientifique, Nos. 17, 18.

The Assistant-Secretary read a paper by Dr. W. J. Hoffman entitled, "Remarks on Arrow Poisons prepared by some tribes of North American Indians." A discussion ensued in which Mr. G. M. Atkinson, Dr. Huggard, Mr. A. L. Lewis, and the Chairman took part.

The following paper was then read by the Assistant-Secretary:—

The GAUCHOS *of* SAN JORGE, CENTRAL URUGUAY.

By DAVID CHRISTISON, M.D., Edinburgh.

BEFORE proceeding to describe the Gauchos, it may not be out of place to notice that the word is frequently mispelled in English works, the *u* being placed before instead of after the *a*; and partly for this reason the pronunciation also, which as regards the *au* and *ch* should be exactly as in the English word *pouch*, is often incorrect in this country.

The derivation of the word, like that of the French *gauche*, which it so closely resembles, is obscure. Its similarity in sound and depreciatory meaning to the Scottish *gowk* has been remarked.

In Spain it does not appear to be applied to mankind in any sense. In the dictionaries to which I have had access it only occurs as an architectural term, signifying "crooked, not level;" and even in South America its application as a designation for the inhabitants of the Uruguayan and Argentine campos is probably of no long standing, as Azara, writing in 1801, makes no use of it, although he gives a full description of the people now universally known as Gauchos. Invented in all probability by the more civilised townspeople as a term of contempt for their semi-barbarous fellow countrymen of the campos, it is accepted

by the latter with good humour, and they even apply it in a complimentary rather than a depreciatory sense to those among themselves who are more wild and daring than the rest.

It is not, however, a national term. Ask a Uruguayan Gaucho what countryman he is, and he replies, "An Orientál," a native, that is to say, of the Banda Orientál, or Republica Orientál del Uruguay. Neither does it necessarily imply any distinction of race, although the great majority of Gauchos are of mixed Spanish and Indian blood. Thus at San Jorge, in Central Uruguay, where I chiefly encountered the Gauchos, there were negroes, Brazilians, pure Spaniards, and even men of Northern European descent among them.

Perhaps to be a Gaucho implies mainly a certain mode of life, the free life of the campos, with its education in horsemanship, the management of half-wild cattle, and the use of lazo and bolas. But as these accomplishments are rarely acquired in any perfection without a training in them from childhood, almost all Gauchos, whatever their descent may be, are as a matter of fact natives of the campos.

It was only recently that Central Uruguay was peopled by the Gauchos. We are told by Azara that in his day the Charrua Indians, after a heroic contest with the Spaniards for two centuries and a half, still preserved their independence in the northern half of Uruguay, beyond the Rio Negro: and that a large extent of country to the south of the same river, exposed to their savage raids, was almost, if not entirely, uninhabited. I could not ascertain the date of their final subjugation, but in 1867 some old people in San Jorge professed to remember its occurrence. They asserted that the adult Indians of both sexes were ruthlessly slaughtered, some of the children alone being spared and distributed among the Spanish settlers. Doubtless, however, some adults escaped the massacre, and a Monte Videan journal recorded the death of a chief, believed to be the last of the Charruas, in 1865, at Tacuarembó, where he had resided for many years, wearing the simple costume, or no costume, of his ancestors, and conforming to civilisation no further than by drinking copiously of spirituous liquors. Down to 1828, when the late Mr. Fair acquired the property of San Jorge, the population must have been very scanty; at that time it included only a few families scattered over a district larger than the county of Midlothian, but in 1867 it had increased to 540 souls.

It would be vain to seek for Charrua blood in the present race of Gauchos at San Jorge. The majority, indeed, show strong evidence of Indian blood, and some might even pass for being pure Indians, but it is known that to people the country

after the destruction of the Charruas, Gauchos from distant provinces and Indians from the remains of the old "Missiones," probably Guaranys, were introduced, Moreover, any minute inquiry into the descent of individuals is rendered nugatory by the dissolute habits of the people, for among the Gauchos it is indeed a wise child that knows its own father. But that Charrua blood still exists in the land can hardly be doubted, as the Spaniards in their frequent Indian wars generally spared and appropriated the women and children who fell into their hands. And no Uruguayan need be ashamed to own descent from Charruas. Even the Spaniard Azara could not withold his admiration for the bravery and warlike skill of these Indians; their regular features and their splendid frames, handsomer, more robust and taller, he maintains, than those of his own countrymen. Cruelty and bad faith they probably learned from, rather than taught, the Spaniards, and their treatment of captive women and children was humane: they did not regard them as slaves but incorporated them with the tribe, and it is remarkable how often the Spanish authors record the unwillingness of their countrywomen both here and elsewhere in South America, when rescued from the Indians, to return to their own people.

It would be a vain task to unravel the confusion of races, even in so small a population of Gauchos as that of San Jorge. Suffice it to say that every variety of colour may be seen among them, from the purest white with light eyebrows and flaxen hair to the blackest negro and reddest Indian. This much only I would add, that although the purest Indians, probably of Guarany origin derived from the Missiones, were far from handsome, having flat noses much expanded at the end, with thin dilated alæ, high cheek bones, and bloodshot eyes seeming to peer through narrow slits, nevertheless a certain infusion of Indian blood, presumably derived from the handsomer Charruas, and showing in the reddish skin, lank black hair and scanty beard, seemed to improve rather than deteriorate the Spanish race, at least among the men. Such individuals had often remarkably regular finely cut features, with noses more of the Greek than the Roman type, and excelled in looks the men of the towns, in whom Indian blood is rarely appreciable, and whose features tend to heaviness.

With all their diversity of origin there is a certain general resemblance among the Gauchos due to their mode of life, which marks them off as a strongly characterised variety of humanity. Although revealed mainly in moral qualities, it may be observed in some physical aspects also. Thus their figure is erect, with the shoulders well thrown back, and there is often a

marked hollow in the loins—characteristics due no doubt to their firm seat on horseback and frequent swinging of the lazo and bolas. The voice also is as a rule deep and husky, and the laugh harsh and guttural among the men, while the women are very apt to speak in a shrill falsetto. Their keenness of vision is most remarkable. A Gaucho descries an animal in the distance long before it is visible to a European, and can tell whether it is a horse or an ox, and even describe its colour, when the European merely sees a shapeless, colourless speck. Azara, treating of the good eyesight of the Gauchos and their power of distinguishing animals, remarks: "I have only to say to one of these men, 'There are 200 horses of mine; take care of them,' he looks attentively at them for a little, and though they should be half a league off he knows them all."[1] According to the same writer the Charrua Indians had similar remarkable powers, from which they derived an immense advantage in their campaigns against the Spaniards, as they could freely watch the movements of the latter without requiring to conceal themselves. Aided perhaps by this power there is another characteristic of the Gauchos,—that of finding their way unerringly over the monotonous campos, which to a stranger seem so devoid of landmarks. They cannot explain the methods which they follow, and their peculiar skill in this respect, developed in the so-called "vaqueanos" more highly than in others, is not easily accounted for. Probably it depends on constant observation from childhood of minute features in the landscape, becoming at last an unconscious habit, aided, perhaps, by watching the heavenly bodies and the wind. But it must be admitted that it is often difficult to offer any rational explanation of this faculty. Thus in riding up a long slope of half a league or more, when all distant landmarks are hidden, a "vaqueano," conversing all the time and apparently paying no attention to the route, nevertheless keeps a perfectly straight course, while even an experienced European, although he gives his whole mind to preserving his direction, is sure to find himself far out of his reckoning on arriving at the top of the slope.

In general the Gauchos are fine, well-developed men with capacious chests and muscular limbs. As they almost live on horseback, rarely walking a hundred yards at a stretch, it might be expected that the lower limbs would be deficient in muscle; but as much of their work with cattle and horses has to be done on foot, and as they are partial to dancing, this tendency is counteracted. Their weight is probably quite equal to that of Europeans. Twenty of them between the ages of 25 and 40, not selected in

[1] I cannot help thinking that Azara, usually so trustworthy, has given way to exaggeration in this instance.

any way, were weighed by me at the Estancia del Cerro, and averaged 151 lbs., deducting clothing, the heaviest being 190 lbs. and the lightest 107 lbs. The latter was exceptionally light, as the next above him weighed 132 lbs. Taking in eight others about 20 years of age, the average was only reduced to 148 lbs. It is possible, however, that the weight may vary in men from different localities, as two parties of strangers passing in charge of cattle seemed to be composed of smaller men than those at San Jorge.

The occupations of the Gauchos are not numerous, and most of them prefer an irregular unsettled life. Unwillingly do they take to anything in which horsemanship does not play a part, and a half civilised Gaucho has even been seen trying to build a hay stack by riding up an incline of hay towing behind him a bundle tied together by his lazo! The purest Gaucho is he who says with some pride "Mi casa es mi caballo y recado," "my house is my horse and saddle." He wanders about taking odd jobs now and then to keep himself in funds, and turning up at all race meetings and balls, gambling away his money as fast as he makes it. The cattle puesteros, on the other hand, may, be considered the aristocracy of Gaucheria. They have a house, lead comparatively settled lives, and have some responsibility. Intermediate between these classes are the ordinary peons, who assist in the management of cattle, or are hired by the troperos to drive the herds to the saladeros at the shipping ports, or by the carreteros to act as picadors in the wagon trains. Often they have no home, and if married the family lives with some more fortunate friend. Shepherding is rather despised, as not requiring their peculiar accomplishments; nevertheless it is much sought after at times, as giving some protection from being pressed for the army, peons and unsettled men being the first to be taken. Even the wildest spirits among them cannot resist the temptation of high wages at the shearing season. All, however, both men and women, shear very roughly, and the sheds resound with the shouts for the "medico," or tar boy, to smear the wounds of the unlucky animals that come under their hands. Some of the peons get accustomed to labour on foot about the estancias, cutting wood, building sheds, putting up corrals, &c., but if they stick to such employment, or, if rising higher in the scale, they become landowners, their title to be called Gauchos is dubious.

The only kind of manufacture among them is the cutting and plaiting of raw hide into the various articles of horse gear required in their occupation. Some of these are very neatly finished and ornamented with silver, besides being usually of great toughness and strength.

Agriculture and horticulture may be said to be quite

unknown to them in their primitive state. This want of cultivation contributes to give their ranchos, whether built by themselves of sticks and mud, or constructed of brick by their employers, a singularly unhome-like aspect. Nakedly they stand on the top of the low ridges, beside the invariable corral, with perchance an "enramada" or small shed for tied-up horses, formed of a few uprights roofed with branches. The rancho is often half in ruins, as under the influences of the weather the mud soon cracks and falls away, although rendered more adhesive by a mixture with manure, accomplished in characteristic fashion by cruelly riding a despised mare or worthless horse round and round in the sticky material till the ingredients are thoroughly intermingled. But in that mild climate a solidly constructed house is hardly required for a great part of the year, and it is easy to patch it up with mud or hides when the winds or frosts of winter are unusually severe.

The education of the Gaucho begins very early. He has taken his first lessons in riding before he is well able to walk, and while still tottering about the doors swings the miniature lazo and bolas round his head *secundum artem.* It is amusing to see a little fellow of three or four, stark naked, his face beaming with excitement, and with lazo revolving round his head, in keen pursuit of a hen, while the cock, taller than himself, looks on with an indignant chuck! chuck! As he gets older the boy tries his 'prentice hand on dogs, who sometimes show their superior intelligence by throwing themselves flat on the ground so as to baffle his efforts. He then ascends to colts and calves, and at last the glorious day arrives when from horseback he can arrest the most savage bull in its mad career, or on foot lazo the swiftest horse, as it gallops from the corral, by whatever leg he chooses. Meanwhile he has learned to kill, cut up, and cook sheep and cattle, to make horse gear from raw hide, and his education is completed.

The diet of the Gaucho is one of the simplest in the world. Not long ago it consisted as regards solids almost entirely of beef, although it might occasionally be varied with the flesh of armadillos, iguanas, ostriches, or other wild animals, or ostrich eggs. The use of milk was entirely unknown, and at the present time, even at English estancias, a stranger may often be tempted to exclaim, as he surveys the numerous herds on the campos, "cattle, cattle everywhere, yet not one drop of milk." The only vegetable substance universally taken is Paraguay tea, imported from Brazil, and known as "yerba" "the herb *par excellence,*" but when infused called "maté," from the small gourd out of which the infusion is sucked through a tube. Notwithstanding this rigid simplicity of diet, scurvy appears never to have occurred

among the Gauchos, protected no doubt by their active open air life in a healthy climate. In recent times their food, except in remote districts, has been somewhat more varied by the spread of "pulperias,"[1] country stores, which have introduced various kinds of luxuries for the benefit of the European residents, and which are occasionally patronised by the Gauchos. But they have little taste for such things, and the only vegetable I have known them take in any quantity is the water melon, which was hawked about San Jorge in large wagons for a few weeks in summer. On the whole it remains true that their diet is in general purely animal. Their drink, however, is varied now by the almost universal "caña," a coarse spirit, which, although rarely taken to great excess, has nevertheless proved to be an evil gift, as it is the habit of the Gauchos, when collected at pulperias, to treat each other to small drams of it, and the excitement thus produced too often ends in fatal quarrels.

The cookery of the Gauchos is as unvaried as their diet, being confined entirely to roasting, which they accomplish very quickly by slanting thin pieces of meat upon spits of wood or iron, stuck into the ground at one end over a brisk fire. When the "asado" is ready, knives are drawn and lumps of beef, cut from the mass, are grasped in the left hand at one end while a proper mouthful is seized with the teeth at the other; the morsel is then skilfully severed by a cut with the knife from below, experience having taught that an upward cut is less likely to amputate the nose than a downward one to damage the chin. Although there is not much room for luxury in such a simple system, the Gauchos have their tit bits, some of which seem strange enough to the European. Generally speaking the meat of their half wild cattle is hard, dry, and deficient in fatty constituents. Nevertheless, their favourite delicacy "carne con cuero," or meat roasted in a complete envelope of hide, was too rich for my taste. Although often so tough that after a few vain efforts at mastication it is necessary to bolt the morsels of campo beef, there is no difficulty in digesting it, and English estancieros soon come to prefer it to the tender rich meat of their own country. The spread of sheep farming has led to the substitution of mutton for beef in many districts, but the Gauchos take to it unwillingly, declaring that it is inferior in nourishing qualities. In their primitive state, and often in a more civilised condition, they eat but once a day, towards sunset, when their work or journey is over, but they at no time object to a "maté," as they justly place great reliance on the

[1] So called from "pulque," an intoxicating drink made in Mexico from the *Agave Americana*, although in the Southern Spanish Republics this "pulque" is quite unknown.

reviving and supporting effects of their favourite "yerba." When assembled together at meals there is usually much joking and laughter, and afterwards they pick their teeth with knives or "facons" (falchions) and as the latter are about two feet long, one expects every moment that from the enormous leverage their teeth will be sent flying out of their jaws.

The Gauchos of Central Uruguay speak Spanish with tolerable grammatical accuracy, but usually in harsh, rough accents; and they entirely ruin the beauty of the language by invariably changing the liquid sound of the *y* and *ll* into that of the French *j*, and by the elision of certain consonants, such words as *recado, pescado,* being pronounced very like *recow, pescow.* With the exception of the names of some places, such as the Rivers Yi and Tacuarembo; trees and plants, such as Ombu, Tala, Ñapindai, Mio-mio; and animals, such as Ñandu, Tatu;—the Indian language seems to have entirely disappeared. Many Indian names of plants and animals, given by Azara at the beginning of the century, are now entirely unknown to the Gauchos of San Jorge.

The Spanish custom of rejoicing rather than mourning at the death of young children is kept up by the Gauchos, but as their children are invariably much spoiled, their claim to go straight to heaven as "Angelitos" or "Angelitas" seems questionable to an outsider.

In remote situations the dead are exposed in coffins on the lonely campos until nothing remains but the bones, which are then stored in boxes, often for years, till the friends take it into their heads to remove them for burial to the nearest Campo Santo. These cemeteries are usually kept in a shocking state, the graves being shallow, and the bodies often actually half exposed.

The amusements of the Gauchos are horse racing, music, dancing, and gambling. The first has been so often described that I shall pass it over. Their only musical instrument is the guitar, on which a fellow may be seen tinkling a few bars, repeated without variation for hours together, surrounded by a dreamy audience sucking the indispensable "maté." Now and then with overstrained voice and in nasal tones, but in good time and tune, he may burst into song, often improvised; and however humourous or sarcastic the words may be, as evidenced by the laughter which greets a happy hit, the airs are invariably of a melancholy cast, often resembling chants, any number of words being huddled into a line to suit the convenience of the improvisatore. A singular effect is produced by long pauses, not only between the verses but in the middle of the lines, during which nothing is heard but the tinkle of the guitar, additional point being thus given to the sarcasm which at last

concludes the line. Generally the last note is much prolonged and unlike the rest of the song sounds to a European ear much out of tune. Probably these are the "Chansons de Peru" of Azara, called "Tristes" in his day, but not now known by that name, at least at San Jorge. One or two dismal unmusical chants I was inclined to believe might be of Indian origin, but we have the authority of Azara for the extraordinary fact that both music and dancing were entirely unknown to the Indians of the South American plains. Much of the singing is of course in praise of the señoritas, and I have seen a lover, seated on the ground at his mistress' door, tinkling and improvising for a good hour before her hard heart was sufficiently softened to admit him. The women do not sing in public, but may be heard crooning to themselves indoors.

The dancing of the Gauchos consists mainly in a very slow waltz or polka to a tune of two or three bars, repeated *ad infinitum* on the guitar. Ancient dances of a more stately kind were in vogue until lately, but are now considered unfashionable and are rapidly going out of use. It was my good fortune to see one of them at a "balle" at the Estancia del Cerro, a description of which may not be out of place, as it will afford at the same time a glimpse of Gaucho manners and character. On entering the large dimly lighted shed, our party was received by a serjeant of police, who politely conducted us between a double row of women, seated demurely upon wool bags, to the centre of the room. Here a slender, fair haired, gaily dressed dandy started up and in the prettiest manner insisted on my taking his seat. He was the most distinguished man in the room, for being unrivalled in the use of the knife, he had been the most successful homicide in the country side, throughout which he was universally known as "El Pescado" or "El Pescado dorado," from his great quickness and agility. Presently a dark, well featured, smiling man, with a strong dash of Indian blood, and a jaunty sailor-like manner, offered refreshment, in the shape of a gulp of caña from the bottle mouth, and I thought it prudent to go through the motion of taking some, to avoid the risk of offending the illustrious murderer Diego Maragatta, surnamed "El Gaucho del Carpenteria," the Gaucho *par excellence* of the district. Turning to a man standing near, I ask who the pretty girl opposite may be, and he knitting his brows replies fiercely "That's my daughter: if I meet her in the camp I'll cut her throat!" It appeared that against his wishes she had mated with a very ill-looking youth with much Indian blood, who had fled from a distant part of the country after committing a murder.[1] I

[1] He afterwards killed his father-in-law in single combat with the knife.

begin to think that we are in strange company, but everything goes on with so much quietness and decorum that it is impossible to feel any uneasiness. The "bastonero" or usher of the white rod now marshals the couples who are to perform in the national dance, called by a name sounding like "Pericón." To this official is entrusted the choice of dancers and even of partners, and he was so ungallant as to conduct the women to the men, a relic, perhaps, of Moorish or Indian want of courtesy to the fair sex, which may possibly be traced also in the tendency of the women on public occasions to huddle together apart from the men, and in the comparative gravity and reserve of their manners, while the men are laughing and joking in their presence. But there is no frivolity now; in fact, a "balle" seems to be rather a serious affair. The men receive their partners in silence and places are taken as if for a quadrille. The negro musician, who has already improvised some lines in honour of the English visitors, chants in nasal tones a few verses in praise of a bachelor's life and then the dance begins. It consists mainly of a slow smoothly-gliding waltz, with frequent simultaneous short pauses, but every now and then the partners set to each other, the men keeping time by snapping the fingers, and the whole perform a figure, after which waltzing is resumed with a change of partners. The figures also are changed by word of command, and occasionally one of the dancers breaks in with an extempore verse of song. All dance with ease and grace, gliding rather than dancing round, while the slow time gives scope for those gentle movements of body and limb which constitute the principal charm of dancing, now only seen among us as exaggerated or caricatured on the stage. A frequently repeated simultaneous stamping with the feet, heard above the feeble tinkle of the guitar, emphasising certain passages in the dance, but never carried to excess, produced a certain warlike effect, heightened by the mediæval costume of the men, and altogether the mind was impressed by a certain grace, mystery, and dignity which it would be vain to look for in the rapid whirling and stiff angular attitudes which pass for dancing in the fashionable ball room. It was easy to see, however, that only the older men and women were perfect in these interesting movements and that their beautiful national dances are disappearing at the first contact with civilisation.

The games of the Gauchos are all of a gambling nature. A favourite one consists in throwing the "Taba," one of the small bones of the horse, the thrower winning or losing according to the side which turns uppermost. Two men, standing a few yards apart, throw it alternately, while the bystanders bet upon the event. For hours daily and for weeks together the Gauchos will

play at this simple game. They have also several games with cards, and I have seen a couple of men squatted on the ground from sunrise to sunset playing at "monte," closely watching each other, with knives drawn ready to hand in case of cheating. They will even play for days and nights without ever stirring from the place, and with such keenness that I have seen a man loose at a sitting in rapid succession six weeks pay gained by hard sheep-shearing, his whip, saddle, bridle, poncho, hat, boots, chiripa, and horse, finally riding off in his shirt on a borrowed steed, with another ruined gambler in a similar plight holding on behind him. But all this implies little suffering in a country where absolute want is unknown, and hospitality is universal. With help from friends and a few weeks labour the gambler is soon as gaily dressed and well mounted as ever.

Passing on naturally to a consideration of the other prominent faults of the Gaucho, his dissolute habits, already adverted to, and an almost total want of religious or reverential feeling, deserve special mention. These may be in a great measure accounted for by the imperfect supervision of their spiritual interests, the priests being few in number and too often deserving the bitter hatred or contempt which is commonly expressed for them by even the better class of people. The chief results of their rare visitations are the baptism of children and the persuasion of a certain number of parents to accept the sanction of mother Church to their union; but most prefer to be free from the marriage tie. As an example of their irreverence I may mention that when a violent thunderstorm burst upon a party of about fifty men and women engaged in shearing at the Estancia del Cerro, every peal was saluted by a burst of cheering or derisive laughter. To counterbalance this defect it is some set off that the Gaucho is tolerably free from superstition. As we have already remarked, he cannot be altogether absolved from the vice of intoxication, although it is rarely carried beyond the stage of excitement.

But all these faults sink into insignificance when compared with the inhumanity and love of bloodshed which in many Gauchos become a second nature. The circumstances of their lives naturally lead to this result. Accustomed from infancy to see animals killed by the invariable method of throat cutting, trained from an early age in the art themselves, and in the harsh though spirit-stirring modes of taming and managing horses and cattle by the lazo and bolas, can it be wondered at if they are perfectly callous to the sight of blood and suffering, or come, as too often happens, to have a positive enjoyment in it? Even the horse, his constant and indispensable companion, fails to draw from the Gaucho the slightest

symptom of affection or sympathy, while the dog is treated at best with a kind of brutal indifference.

No stranger who has witnessed the frantic efforts of an animal, singled out for slaughter from the herd, to escape from the lazos by which it is dragged along at an unwilling gallop, and has heard its hoarse moans and final agonising cry, can readily forget the painful impression produced on his mind; yet the Gauchos, as they force the poor creature along, laugh and mock at its sufferings, utter coarse jokes as they hamstring it, and grin from ear to ear when the fatal stroke is given. I have even seen a mere boy gallop up with a sheep on the saddle behind him, cast it off, and jumping down cut its throat almost as it rebounded from the ground, his face beaming with savage delight. Indifference to human life is but a further step in the path of cruelty, and at last the final stage, the "gusto de matar," or love of manslaughter for its own sake, is too often reached. And such is the depraved state of feeling on this subject among the people that this taste neither diminishes the natural cheerfulness of the murderer, nor in the slightest degree hinders his reception into Gaucho society. Thus a short thickset fellow at work in a corral with many others, whom he kept in constant laughter with his jokes, has been pointed out to me as a man who had cut many throats; and I have seen another, on quite intimate terms with his neighbours, who during the wars used to beg as a favour that he might execute prisoners.

This unhappy homicidal tendency is perhaps even in a greater degree promoted by the frequent revolutions which are the curse of the Spanish Republics. The Gauchos suffer more than the townspeople from these senseless disturbances. Far removed from the restraints of law and order, teeming with wild reckless elements, it is among them that the selfish adventurers who pass for politicians in Uruguay find ready materials to form the nucleus of an army. Once started, such a force gains strength by compelling every Gaucho it can lay hands on to join under penalty of death. Government "partidos" follow the same plan, and thus the poor Gaucho to save his throat must join one party or the other without having any idea what they are fighting about. It is often a mere matter of chance whether he becomes a "Blanco" or a "Colorado," but once identified with either party he is involved in quarrels and blood feuds which cause the death of many a poor fellow even in times of peace. Indeed, murder unconnected with political or private feuds, and for the mere sake of plunder, was comparatively rare in 1867, and was said to have been still rarer in earlier times; but I am informed that within the last twelve years it has become sadly common on both sides of the Rio de la Plata. Even in the matter of duelling the

Gauchos seem to have gradually become more savage. Thus D'Orbigny, writing about 50 years ago, asserts that the Gauchos had grown more fierce than when under the rule of Spain, yet he says that their fights were rarely fatal, the great object being to mark the face; but now the throat and abdomen are aimed at, and the wounds inflicted are generally mortal. The knives used are always ready to hand, stuck in the belt at their back. They are of two kinds, one about the size and shape of a small carving knife, the other, called a "facon," is in fact a short cross-hilted sword about the length of the deadly ancient Roman weapon. Duels do not take place by appointment, but on the spur of the moment, from a sudden quarrel, or to avenge an ancient grudge: no bystander attempts to interfere, and there is no effort to ensure fair play. Each must do his best with the weapon he has at the time.

No statistics exist of the mortality from homicide in Uruguay, but some idea of its extent may be formed from the following facts. During the ten months I spent at San Jorge nine homicides occurred in the neighbourhood among a population certainly not exceeding a thousand souls: and I doubt if it was an exceptionally bad district, as visitors from other quarters assured me that their condition was no better. Again, of sixteen young men whom I knew at that time no less than six have since perished by the knife, and a seventh is believed to have had the same fate. Lastly, a friend long resident in the district informs me that in his belief nearly one-half of the young Gauchos he has known have died a violent death.

Scarcely any attempt is made by the authorities to check this fearful waste of life. Regulations with that view are indeed sometimes passed—such as one forbidding the wearing of facons—and no nations excel the Spanish Republics in the drawing up of high sounding regulations; but they are like new toys to a spoilt child, and after being played with for a time are utterly neglected. The general state of feeling on the subject of capital punishment, too, is a great obstacle to the administration of justice. Murders and homicides by the thousand yearly cause little or no emotion, but the bare idea of execution after formal trial is insupportable to the strangely inconsequent Spanish mind. A murderer feels himself nowhere so safe as in prison. After a few weeks or months, during which the first feelings of revenge have been dying away among his enemies, he finds the prison door open through the influence of some "gefe politico," eager to secure the friendship and support of daring unscrupulous characters like him, and he walks out, probably amidst the general sympathy of the public. Not content however with the practical non-existence of capital punishment, the

Chamber of Deputies must needs abolish it in 1867, amidst joyful acclamations and really beautiful humanitarian speeches. But alas! within a week a revolution had broken out and the successful Colorados were complacently cutting the throats of their vanquished rivals the Blancos in the streets of Monte Video, or shooting them by the score at the Cabildo, still quite happy no doubt in the thought that they had abolished capital punishment, to the admiration and envy of the civilised world! The only real check upon violent crimes in the campos is effected by certain commandantes of police, who knowing that their prisoners if once lodged in jail are safe from punishment, quietly cut their throats *en route*, alleging that they were trying to escape.

Hitherto we have regarded the Gauchos mainly from the worst point of view, but it would be a great mistake to suppose that they have no redeeming qualities. In general they may claim to be brave, hardy, temperate, free from meanness, hospitable, and faithful to engagements; and they have a certain good humour, native intelligence and wit, which make them no bad companions in the field to even cultivated Englishmen. Nay, as D'Orbigny, who knew them so well, asserts, they are even capable of cherishing lofty ideas. The very worst of them do not sink to the depth of degradation which is so hopeless and distressing in our criminal classes. It is rare that something of the dignity of manhood is not retained, some point of honour beyond which they will not go. Of this I have known many well authenticated examples. Thus, one of the wildest characters in the country undertook to keep up communication between San Jorge and Monte Video, when a ten years war had completely disorganised society, and continued to ride to and fro regularly, at the risk of his life, with large sums in gold on his person, without betraying his trust, or even asking for higher pay than in time of peace. Another sulky repulsive-looking fellow of very bad character showed a dog-like fidelity to Mr. Watson, then in charge of the Estancia del Cerro, who had treated him kindly, and could be implicitly trusted to do whatever he undertook for him. Poor Bartolo! his fate illustrates Gaucho character so well that I may be pardoned for describing it here. One of his enemies, a brother of Rosano, the police commandante of the district, taking advantage of being promoted to a lieutenancy in the force, determined to apprehend Bartolo at a rancho where he was living. A woman descrying the approach of the party, urged Bartolo to mount a horse which stood ready saddled and ride for his life; but, saying he would never turn his back on a Rosano, and drawing his knife, he rushed out to meet his foe. Rosano immediately ran him through the body

with a spear, and standing over the dying man, gloried over him saying, "The last time you saw me I was nobody, now as you see I am a great man," and so forth. His followers indignantly cried out "Let the man die in peace," and shamed him into silence; but to complete his triumph Rosano insisted on spreading his recado on the ground where Bartolo fell, and slept peacefully all night beside the dead body.

I had ample opportunity of studying the Gauchos for about a month at the Estancia del Cerro, where about fifty of them, men and women, were employed as shearers, and was surprised to find them so light-hearted and good natured. A continual fire of jokes resounded through the sheds, and a good deal of unmerciful teasing went on, but I rarely saw any sign of ill-temper. Towards evening, indeed, it seemed sometimes as if they were in open mutiny, as they shouted and yelled "Hasta mañana!" "No trabaja mas!" or "Caña, la caña, viva la caña!" but a very small dram of spirits changed their cry into "Viva el patron," and they resumed work with redoubled energy. They were evidently easily managed by kind sensible usage, and were no grumblers or sticklers for the minutiæ of their rights. Even the bad characters were on their honour, and our old friends El Pescado and Diego Maragatta might be seen seated side by side at dinner, perfectly civil to each other, although they were deadly foes, and the previous year El Pescado, riding suddenly up to a group of gamblers, had sprung from his horse, drawn his facon, and singling out Diego, aimed a furious stroke at his throat, before he could be seized and disarmed by some of the police who were fortunately present.

But now the general harmony was only broken twice. First, when two mere boys quarrelled, and at once ran to the corral to fight it out with knives, followed by the whole company, not one of whom showed the slightest wish to interfere, and doubtless bloodshed would have ensued but for the vigorous remonstrances of Mr. Watson. Secondly, when a foolish lad, pressed to pay a debt by El Pescado, got into a passion, and suddenly attacked the great warrior, deceived perhaps by his appearance and manner—for "the Fish" was not at all formidable-looking, being short of stature and slender, with fair complexion and hair, and a very light moustache, while his gait was slow and lounging, and his habit of leaning his small head with its hooked nose and retiring chin alternately from one side to the other gave him a certain air of affectation and effeminacy. Now, however, forced to defend himself, his whole manner changed into one of keen watchfulness, as in fighting attitude, and looking along the blade of his knife held close to his cheek, he warned the lad to keep off. As the latter, however, still

advanced, and made a cut at his thigh, the Fish lunged forward with surprising quickness, and struck his puny foe a resounding whack on the cheek with the flat of the blade, which nearly knocked him over, and brought him to his senses. The boy sat down scowling and sulking till an old woman persuaded him to avert the Fish's wrath by paying his debt, but the great man with a disdainful gesture flung the coins far away into the camp.

Diego Maragatta kept entirely free from scrapes; yet he was altogether a worse man than El Pescado, who was a bit of a wag, and although a great fighter had not much evil in him. But Maragatta, in spite of a smooth brow, smiling face, and the uniform of a police serjeant, could not hide that he was by nature and never could be anything else than a brigand. Of course both of these men subsequently came to violent ends. El Pescado, excited by Caña, forced a man to fight with him about some trifle, and was killed: while Maragatta, degraded and dismissed from the police force, was slain by a serjeant after a long and desperate single combat within sight of San Jorge house.

The "policia," to which I have often referred, is a very fluctuating body in composition. Recruited from the wildest characters in the country, it is no uncommon thing for even well known murderers to become serjeants, only of course to be speedily outlawed for some fresh breach of the law. Such a force is often used as an instrument of political oppression, or to carry out schemes of private revenge by the commandantes, who are generally men of indifferent character and little education, like the one in the San Jorge command, of whom it is related that, after painfully signing his name, he was in the habit of counting the letters to see if they were all there, and on one occasion having slowly with the aid of his finger reckoned "Uno, dos, tres," &c., he exclaimed "Carramba! falta uno" ("*One is missing*"), adding with a bewildered look, "Cual sera?" ("*Which will it be?*") The adventures of the police are often ludicrous enough, as when Commandante Rosano spent some days riding about the country with a dozen men in search of a stolen article of horse gear, and found it at last concealed under the saddle of the serjeant of his party. The offender was immediately staked out, a cruel punishment imitated from the mode of drying hides, the legs and arms being tied at full stretch to stakes, so that the body cannot touch the ground. Some "Ewan of Brigglands," however, is generally at hand to cut the bonds of the "Rob Roys" of Uruguay, and in the morning the serjeant was not to be found.

So much has been written about the horse gear and horseman-

ship of the Gauchos, their use of the lazo and bolas, and their mode of taming wild horses and cattle, that I shall say nothing on these subjects. Their connection with the dog, however, is less known, and deserves a few remarks. Nearly every solitary "puesto" has a few dogs lounging about the door ready to give the alarm if a stranger approaches, and at the larger estancias packs of a dozen or more may be seen. They are of some little service in driving cattle, but are mainly tolerated as watch dogs and scavengers. Their condition is little superior to that of the Eastern street pariahs. Picking up their food for themselves amidst the garbage of corrals and slaughtering places, they lack the civilising influence of being fed by a master's hand, and although they show a certain obedience to their nominal masters, it is without any sign of affection,—the natural result of the cruelty or utter indifference with which they are treated. To strangers they are fierce, even dangerous. Every variety of size, shape, and colour is found among them, but the majority are heavy, massive, powerful animals. Rival packs meeting in the camp fight desperately, and I have seen the wounded stragglers with torn ears and bleeding throats returning from such a combat, leaving others of their number dead upon the field.

Dogs ("capones") are still occasionally trained by the Gauchos of Central Uruguay, in the way described by Mr. Darwin, to take daily charge of their flocks, without aid from man.

Dogs run wild are nearly exterminated. They were described as being tall, lanky, and ugly, with erect pointed ears, and a bristly strip on the neck; their bark was peculiar, but they were not given to barking.

It has often been a matter for surprise that Englishmen should be able to live safely among such a turbulent race as the Gauchos; but there is method in their homicidal mania, and the English estanciero, placed in a higher sphere, and independent of their political or private feuds, runs little risk in ordinary times. Moreover, here as elsewhere, the innate capacity of the British for managing semi-barbarous races by a combination of fair dealing, firmness, and kindness is conspicuously manifested; and it is only when protracted revolutionary struggles have completely disorganised society that their position becomes insecure. On his part the Englishman often acquires a certain liking for the Gaucho, which grows rather than diminishes with time, and not unfrequently prefers him as a peon to the natives of more civilised countries, not excluding his own. Sometimes he finds himself drawing comparisons between the free open air life of the Gaucho, together with the touch of dignity in his thoughts, manners, and bearing, and the squalid roughness of

great masses among our own countrymen, which, it may be, rudely awaken him from old delusions of national pride.

But however this may be, the Gaucho type cannot be a permanent one, and in the Banda Oriental is even now being rapidly modified. The more strict definition and greater subdivision of property, the increase of sheep farming, the change in the management of cattle to the tame system, the rapid extension of wire fencing, and the introduction of agriculture, conspire to cramp his movements, and to do away with the necessity for his peculiar accomplishments.

It is even to be feared that he himself will pass away, and that the race which ultimately possesses the campos will show but slight traces of his blood, or that of the aboriginal Indian race which he represents. Besides the enormous mortality from murder and homicide, many perish under the hands of the old women and quacks who, in the almost total want of doctors, have a clear field for carrying out their rough and violent modes of treatment. Powerful purgatives and emetics derived from native herbs are their great stand-by, and are indiscriminately administered with results that Sangrado might have envied. Among other rude remedies a favourite one for rheumatic fever is to carry the patient to a neighbouring stream, even on a winter morning, and immerse him for a quarter of an hour in the ice-cold water. I have known a fine young man die on the bank after this treatment before he could be carried home. But nothing shakes the faith of the people, and with a provoking perversion of logic they generally declined my advice on the ground that I might, no doubt, understand the diseases and remedies of my own country, but could not possibly know anything about theirs. More recently, however, they have amply appreciated the services of English doctors who have settled among them.

This great mortality arising from so many causes would certainly be checked under a better government, and advancing civilisation might be expected to do its part in softening the ferocity of the Uruguayan Gaucho; but even under much more favourable circumstances time would be required ere the wild horseman of the campos could be broken in to settled habits. And it is doubtful if this time will be allowed him. Already other more industrious races are thrusting him aside, and even the better class of native estancieros give way before this pressure. The Brazilians in particular, advancing from the north, threaten to accomplish a peaceful conquest of the whole country by purchase. It is believed that they have for some time been in possession of half the land to the north of the Rio Negro, and they have recently begun to purchase extensive tracts on the south side of that river. Bringing with them their

negroes and other dependants, they have no need of the Gaucho, who thus tends to disappear entirely from the scene: a result which, if it becomes general, will be regretted by not a few Englishmen, who from long intimacy with the Gaucho have learned that much of the evil in him is due to the neglect and crimes of his Government, and to wonder that so much good should be left, considering the unfavourable social and moral conditions under which he lives.

MARCH 8TH, 1881.

F. W. RUDLER, Esq., *Vice-President, in the Chair.*

The Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

The following list of presents was read, and the thanks of the meeting voted to the respective donors :—

FOR THE LIBRARY.

From the AUTHOR.—The Cause of Colour among Races. By W. Sharpe, M.D.

From the ROYAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, COPENHAGEN.—Oversigt over det kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskabs, 1880, No. 2.

From the ACADEMY.—Bulletin de l'Academie Impériale de St. Pétersbourg. Tom. XXVII, Nos. 1 and 7.

From the SOCIETY.—Journal of the Society of Arts, Nos. 1475, 1476.

—— Boletim da Sociedade de Geographia de Lisboa. 2nd Serie, Nos. 1, 2.

—— Journal of the Royal Geological Society of Ireland, Vol. V, Part 3.

—— Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, March, 1881.

—— Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales, 1879.

—— Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, Vol. VIII, p. 4.

—— Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, July and August, 1880.

—— Proceedings of the Royal Society, No. 209.

From the EDITOR.—Journal of Mental Science, January, 1881.

—— "Nature," Nos. 591, 592.

—— Revue Internationale des Sciences, 1881, No. 2.

—— Revue Scientifique. Tom. XXVII. Nos. 9, 10.

—— Matériaux pour l'histoire de l'homme. Tom. XII, No. 2.

—— Education, No. 2.
