

Quiroga's early years: "His public career was not preceded by the practice of theft; he never committed robbery even in his most pressing necessities. He was not only fond of fighting, but would pay for an opportunity, or for a chance to insult the most renowned champion in any company. He had a great aversion to respectable men. He never drank. He was very reserved from his youth, and desired to inspire others with awe as well as with fear, for which purpose he gave his confidants to understand that he had the gift of prophecy, in short a soothsayer. He treated all connected with him as slaves. He never went to confession, prayed, or heard mass; I saw him once at mass after he became a general. He said of himself that he believed in nothing." The frankness with which these words are written prove their truth. . . .

Facundo is a type of primitive barbarism. He recognized no form of subjection. His rage was that of a wild beast. The locks of his crisp black hair, which fell in meshes over his brow and eyes, resembled the snakes of Medusa's head. Anger made his voice hoarse, and turned his glances into dragons. In a fit of passion he kicked out the brains of a man with whom he had quarreled at play. He tore off both the ears of a woman he had lived with, and had promised to marry, upon her asking him for thirty dollars for the celebration of the wedding; and laid open his son Juan's head with an axe, because he could not make him hold his tongue. He violently beat a beautiful young lady at Tucumán, whom he failed either to seduce or to subdue, and exhibited in all his actions a low and brutal yet not a stupid nature, or one wholly without lofty aims. Incapable of commanding noble admiration, he delighted in exciting fear; and this pleasure was exclusive and dominant with him to the arranging [of] all his actions so as to produce terror in those around him, whether it was society in general, the victim on his way to execution, or his own wife and children. Wanting ability to manage the machinery of civil government, he substituted terror for patriotism and self sacrifice. Destitute of learning, he surrounded himself with mysteries, and pretended to a foreknowledge of events which gave him prestige and reputation among the commonalty, supporting his claims by an air of impenetrability, by natural sagacity, an uncommon power of observation, and the advantage he derived from vulgar credulity.

The repertory of anecdotes relating to Quiroga, and with which the popular memory is replete, is inexhaustible; his sayings, his expedients, bear the stamp of an originality which gives them a certain Eastern aspect, a certain tint of Solomonic wisdom in the conception of the vulgar. Indeed, how does Solomon's advice for discovering the true mother of the disputed child differ from Facundo's method of detecting a thief in the following instances:

An article had been stolen from a band, and all endeavors to discover the thief had proved fruitless. Quiroga drew up the troop and gave orders for the cutting of as many small wands of equal length as there were soldiers; then, having had these wands distributed one to each man, he said in a confident voice, "The man whose wand will be longer than the others tomorrow

morning is the thief." Next day the troop was again paraded, and Quiroga proceeded to inspect the wands. There was one whose wand was, not longer but shorter than the others. "Wretch!" cried Facundo, in a voice which overpowered the man with dismay, "it is thou!" And so it was; the culprit's confusion was proof of the fact. The expedient was a simple one; the credulous gaucho, fearing that his wand would really grow, had cut off a piece of it. But to avail one's self of such means, a man must be superior in intellect to those about him, and must at least have some knowledge of human nature.

Some portions of a soldier's accoutrements having been stolen and all inquiries having failed to detect the thief, Quiroga had the troops paraded and marched past him as he stood with crossed arms and a fixed, piercing, and terrible gaze. He had previously said, "I know the man," with an air of assurance not to be questioned. The review began, many men had passed, and Quiroga still remained motionless, like the statue of Jupiter Tonans or the God of the Last Judgment. All at once he descended upon one man, and said in a curt and dry voice, "Where is the saddle?" "Yonder, sir," replied the other, pointing to a thicket. "Ho! four fusileers!" cried Quiroga. What revelation was this? that of terror and guilt made to a man of sagacity.

On another occasion, when a gaucho was answering to charges of theft which had been brought against him, Facundo interrupted him with the words, "This rogue has begun to lie. Ho, there! a hundred lashes!" When the criminal had been taken away, Quiroga said to someone present, "Look you, my master, when a gaucho moves his foot while talking, it is a sign he is telling lies." The lashes extorted from the gaucho the confession that he had stolen a yoke of oxen.

At another time he was in need of a man of resolution and boldness to whom he could entrust a dangerous mission. When a man was brought to him for this purpose, Quiroga was writing; he raised his head after the man's presence had been repeatedly announced, looked at him and returned to his writing with the remark, "Pooh! that is a wretched creature. I want a brave man and a venturesome one!" It turned out to be true that the fellow was actually good for nothing.

Hundreds of such stories of Facundo's life, which show the man of superior ability, served effectually to give him a mysterious fame among the vulgar, who even attribute superior powers to him.

6. MEXICO CITY UNDER SANTA ANNA

Most descriptions of caudillo rule stress the brutality and instability of the period. In this 1841 letter, the Scottish-born wife of the Spanish ambassador, Frances Calderón de la Barca, provides an unexpected glimpse into the rich cultural and institutional life of Mexico City under Santa Anna. The practice of upper-class women touring and

even sponsoring charitable institutions was an old one that transcended the political feuding and periodic *pronunciamientos* (revolts) that occupied their male counterparts. Toward the end of the excerpt, the letter refers to Santa Anna's wooden leg. Lost in battle against foreign invaders, the leg was a symbol, at least to the caudillo's loyal followers, of his sacrifice for the nation.

A great *función* was given in the opera in honor of his excellency [Santa Anna]. The theatre was most brilliantly illuminated with wax lights. Two principal boxes were thrown into one for the president and his suite, and lined with crimson and gold, with draperies of the same. The staircase leading to the second tier where this box was, was lighted by and lined all the way up with rows of footmen in crimson and gold livery. A crowd of gentlemen stood waiting in the lobby for the arrival of the hero of the fête. He came at last in regal state, carriages and outriders at full gallop; himself, staff and suite, in splendid uniform. As he entered, Señor Roca presented him with a libretto of the opera, bound in red and gold. We met the great man *en face*, and he stopped, and gave us a cordial recognition. Two years have made little change in him in appearance. He retains the same interesting, resigned, and rather melancholy expression; the same quiet voice, and grave but agreeable manner; and surrounded by pompous officers, he alone looked quiet, gentlemanly, and high bred. The theatre was crowded to suffocation; boxes, pit, and galleries. There was no applause as he entered. One solitary voice in the pit said "Viva Santa Anna!" but it seemed checked by a slight movement of disapprobation, scarcely amounting to a murmur.

The generals, in their scarlet and gold uniforms, sat like peacocks surrounding Santa Anna, who looked modest and retiring, and as if quite unaccustomed to the public gaze! The boxes were very brilliant—all the diamonds taken out for the occasion. His Excellency is by no means indifferent to beauty—*tout au contraire*; yet I dare say his thoughts were this night of things more warlike and less fair.

Let all this end as it may, let them give everything whatever name is most popular, the government is now a military dictatorship. Señor _____ calls this revolution "the apotheosis of egotism transformed into virtue"; and it must be confessed, that in most of the actors, it has been a mere calculation of personal interests.

The following day we visited . . . the *Hospital de Jesus* . . .

The establishment, as an hospital, is much finer, and the building infinitely handsomer than the other. The director, a physician, led us first into his own apartments, as the patients were dining, and afterwards showed us

Francis Calderón de la Barca, "Letter the Forty-Seventh," in *Life in Mexico, During a Residence of Two Years in That Country* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1843).

through the whole establishment. The first large hall, into which we were shown, is almost entirely occupied by soldiers, who had been wounded during the *pronunciamiento*. One had lost an arm, another a leg, and they looked sad and haggard enough, though they seemed perfectly well attended to, and, I dare say, did anything but *bless* the revolutions that brought them to that state, and with which they had nothing to do; for your Mexican soldier will lie down on his mat at night, a loyal man, and will waken in the morning and find himself a *pronunciado*. Each one had a separate room, or at least a compartment divided by curtains from the next; and in each was a bed, a chair, and a small table; this on one side of the long hall. The other was occupied by excellent hot and cold baths. We then visited the women's apartment, which is on a similar plan. Amongst the patients is an unfortunate child of eight years old, who in the *pronunciamiento* had been accidentally struck by a bullet, which entered her left temple and came out below the right eye, leaving her alive. The ball was extracted, and a portion of the brain came out at the wound. She is left blind, or nearly so, having but a faint glimmering of light. They say she will probably live, which seems impossible. She looks like a galvanized corpse—yet must have been a good-looking child. Notwithstanding the nature of her wound, her reason has not gone, and she sat upright in her little bed, with her head bandaged, and her fixed and sightless eyes, she answered meekly and readily to all the questions we put to her. Poor little thing! she was shocking to look at; one of the many innocent beings whose lives are to be rendered sad and joyless by this revolution. The doctor seemed very kind to her.

We went in the evening to visit the *Cuna*, which is not a fine building, but a large, healthy, house. At the door, where there are a porter and his wife, the babies are now given in. Formerly they were put in at the *reja*, at the window of the porter's lodge; but this had to be given up, in consequence of the tricks played by boys or idle persons, who put in dogs, cats, or dead animals. As we were going upstairs, we heard an old woman singing a cheerful ditty in an awfully cracked voice, and as we got a full view of her before she could see us, we saw a clean, old body sitting, sewing and singing, while a baby rolling on the floor in a state of perfect ecstasy, was keeping up a sort of crowing duet with her. She seemed delighted to see these ladies, who belong to the *Junta*, and led us to a large hall where a score of nurses and babies were performing a symphony of singing, hushing, crying, lullabying, and other nursery music. All along the room were little green painted beds, and both nurses and babies looked clean and healthy. The _____s knew every baby and nurse and directress by name. Some of the babies were remarkably pretty, and when he had admired them sufficiently, we were taken into the next hall, occupied by little girls of two, three, and four years old. They were all seated on little mats at the foot of their small green beds; a regiment of the finest and healthiest children possible; a directress in the room sewing. At our entrance, they all

jumped up simultaneously, and surrounded us with the noisiest expressions of delight. One told me in a confidential whisper, that "Manuelita had thumped her own head, and had a pain in it"; but I could not see that Manuelita seemed to be suffering any acute agonies, for she made more noise than any of them. One little girl sidled up to me, and said in a most insinuating voice, "Me llevas tu?" "Will you take me away with you?" [F]or even at this early age they begin to have a glimmering idea that those whom the ladies choose from amongst them are particularly favored. We stayed some time with them, and admired their healthy, happy and well-fed appearance; and then proceeded to the apartment of the boys; all little things of the same age, sitting ranging in a row like senators in congress, and, strange to say, much quieter and graver than the female babies; but this must have been from shyness, for before we came away, we saw them romping in great style. The directresses seem good respectable women, and kind to the children, who, as I mentioned before, are almost all taken away and brought up by rich people, before they have time to know that there is anything peculiar or unfortunate in their situation. After this adoption, they are completely on a level with the other children of the family—an equal portion is left them, and although their condition is never made a secret of, they frequently marry as well as their adopted brothers and sisters.

Those who are opposed to this institution, are so on the plea that it encourages and facilitates vice. That the number of children in the hospital is a proof that much vice and much poverty do exist, there is no doubt; that by enabling the vicious to conceal their guilt, or by relieving the poor from their burden, it encourages either vice or idleness, is scarcely probable. But even were it so, the certain benefits are so immense, when laid in the balance with the possible evils, that they cannot be put in competition. The poor mother who leaves her child at the *Cuna*, would she not abandon it to a worse fate, if this institution did not exist? If she does so to conceal her disgrace is it not seen that a woman will stop at no cruelty, to obtain this end? as exposure of her infant, even murder? and that, strong as maternal love is, the dread of the world's scorn has conquered it? If poverty be the cause, surely the misery must be great indeed, which induces the poorest beggar or the most destitute of the Indian women (whose love for their children amounts to a passion) to part with her child; and though it is suspected that the mother who has left her infant at the *Cuna*, has occasionally got herself hired as a nurse, that she may have the pleasure of bringing it up, it seems to me that no great evil can arise, even from that.

These orphans are thus rescued from the contamination of vice, from poverty, perhaps from the depths of depravity; perhaps their very lives are saved, and great sin prevented. Hundreds of innocent children are thus placed under the care of the first and best ladies in the country, and brought up to be worthy members of society.

Another day we devoted to visiting a different and more painful scene—the *Acordada*, or public jail; a great solid building, spacious, and well ventilated. For this also there is *Junta*, or society of ladies of the first families, who devote themselves to teaching the female malefactors. It is painful and almost startling to see the first ladies in Mexico familiarly conversing with and embracing women who have been guilty of the most atrocious crimes; especially of murdering their husbands; which is the chief crime of the female prisoners. There are no bad faces amongst them; and probably not one who has committed a premeditated crime. A moment of jealousy during intoxication, violent passions without any curb, suddenly aroused and as suddenly extinguished, have led to these frightful results. We were first shown into a large and tolerably clean apartment, where were the female prisoners who are kept apart as being of a more *decent family*, than the rest. Some were lying on the floor, others working—some were well dressed, others dirty and slovenly. Few looked sad; most appeared careless and happy, and *none* seemed ashamed. Amongst them were some of the handsomest faces I have seen in Mexico. One good-looking common woman, with a most joyous and benevolent countenance, and lame, came up to salute the ladies. I inquired what she had done. "Murdered her husband, and buried him under the brick floor!" Shade of Lavater! It is some comfort to hear that their husbands were generally such brutes, they deserved little better! Amongst others confined here is the wife, or rather the widow, of a governor of Mexico, who made away with her husband. We did not see her, and they say she generally keeps out of the way when strangers come. One very pretty and coquettish little woman, with a most intellectual face, and very superior-looking, being in a fact a relation of Count ____'s, is in jail on suspicion of having poisoned her lover. A beautiful young creature, extremely like Mrs. _____, of Boston, was among the prisoners. I did not hear what her crime was. We were attended by a woman who has the title of *Presidenta*, and who, after some years of good conduct, has not the charge of her fellow-prisoners—but she also murdered her husband! We went upstairs, accompanied by various of the distinguished criminals, to the room looking down upon the chapel, in which room the ladies give them instruction in reading, and in the Christian doctrine. With the time which they devote to these charitable offices, together with their numerous devotional exercises, and the care which their houses and families require, it cannot be said that the life of a Mexican señora is an idle one; nor, in such cases, can it be considered a useless one.

We then descended to the lower regions, where, in a great, damp, vaulted gallery, hundreds of unfortunate women of the lowest class, were occupied in *travaux forces* [forced labor]—not indeed of a very hard description. These were employed in baking tortillas for the prisoners. Dirty, ragged, and miserable-looking creatures there were in the dismal vaults, which looked like purgatory, and smelt like—Heaven knows what! But, as I have frequently had

occasion to observe in Mexico, the sense of smell is a doubtful blessing. Another large hall near this, which the prisoners were employed in cleaning and sweeping, has at least fresh air, opening on one side into a court, where poor little children, the saddest sight there, were running about—the children of the prisoners.

Leaving the side of the building devoted to the women, we passed on to another gallery, looking down upon several hundreds of male prisoners, unfortunately collected together without any reference to the nature of their crime; the midnight murderer with the purloiner of a pocket-handkerchief; the branded felon with the man guilty of some political offence, the debtor with the false coiner; so that many a young and thoughtless individual whom a trifling fault, the result of ignorance or of unformed principles, has brought hither, must leave this place wholly contaminated and hardened by bad example and vicious conversation. Here there were indeed some ferocious, hardened-looking ruffians—but there were many mild, good-humored faces; and I could see neither sadness nor a trace of shame on any countenance; indeed they all seemed much amused by seeing so many ladies. Some were stretched full-length on the ground, doing nothing; other were making rolls for hats, of different colored beads, such as they wear here, of little baskets for sale; whilst others were walking about alone, or conversing in groups. This is the first prison I ever visited, therefore I can compare it with no other; but the system must be wrong which makes no distinction between different degrees of crime. These men are the same *forçats* [forced laborers] whom we daily see in chains, watering the Alameda or Paséo, or mending the streets. Several hundreds of prisoners escaped from the Acordada in the time of the *pronunciamiento*—probably the worst amongst them—yet *half the city* appears to be here now. We were shown the rows of cells for criminals whom it is necessary to keep in solitary confinement, on account of disorderly behavior—also the apartments of the directors.

In passing downstairs, we came upon a group of dirty-looking soldiers, busily engaged in playing at cards. The *alcalde*, who was showing us through the jail, dispersed them all in a great rage, which I suspected was partly assumed for our edification. We then went into the chapel, which we had seen from above, and which is handsome, and well kept. In the sacristy is a horrid and appropriate image of the bad thief. We were also shown a small room off the chapel, with a confessional, where the criminal condemned to die spends three days preceding his execution with a padre chosen for that purpose. What horrid confessions what lamentations and despair that small dark chamber must have witnessed! There is nothing in it but an altar, a crucifix, and a bench. I think the custom is a very humane one.

We felt glad to leave this palace of crimes, and to return to the fresh air.

The following day we went to visit *San Hipólito*, the insane hospital for men, accompanied by the director, a fine old gentleman, who has been a

great deal abroad, and who looks like a French marquis of the *ancien régime*. I was astonished, on entering, at the sweet and solitary beauty of the large stone courts, with orange trees and pomegranates now in full blossom, and the large fountains of beautifully clear water. There must be something soothing in such a scene to the senses of these most unfortunate of God's creatures. They were sauntering about, quiet and for the most part sad; some stretched out under the trees, and others gazing on the fountain; all apparently very much under the control of the administrator, who was formerly a monk, this *San Hipólito* being a dissolved convent of that order. The system of giving occupation to the insane is not yet introduced here.

On entering, we saw rather a distinguished-looking, tall and well-dressed gentleman, whom we concluded to be a stranger who had come to see the establishment, like ourselves. We were therefore somewhat startled when he advanced towards us with long strides, and in an authoritative voice shouted out, "Do you know who I am? I am the Deliverer of Guatemala." The administrator told us he had just been taken up, was a Frenchman, and in a state of furious excitement. He continued making a tremendous noise, and other madmen seemed quite ashamed of him. One unhappy-looking creature, with a pale, melancholy face, and his arms stretched out above his head, was embracing a pillar, and when asked what he was doing, replied that he was "making sugar."

We were led into the dining-hall, a long airy apartment, provided with benches and tables, and from thence into a most splendid kitchen, high vaulted, and receiving air from above, a kitchen that might have graced the castle of some feudal baron, and looked as if it would most surely last as long as men shall eat and cooks endure. Monks at *San Hipólito*! how many a smoking dinner, what viands steaming and savory must have issued from this noblest of kitchens to your refectory next door.

The food for the present inmates, which two women were preparing, consisted of meat and vegetables, soup and sweet things; excellent meat, and well-dressed *frijoles*. A poor little boy, imbecile, deaf and dumb, was seated there cross-legged, in a sort of wooden box; a pretty child, with a fine color, but who has been in this state from his infancy. The women seemed very kind to him, and he a placid, contented expression on his face; but took no notice of us when we spoke to him. Strange and unsolvable problem, what ideas pass through the brain of that child!

When we returned to the dining-hall, the inmates of the asylum, to the number of ninety or a hundred, were all sitting at dinner, ranged quietly on the benches, eating with wooden spoons out of wooden bowls. The poor hero of Guatemala was seated at the lower end of the table, tolerably tranquil. He started up on seeing us, and was beginning some furious explanations, but was prevented by his neighbor, who turned round with an air of great superiority, saying, "He's mad!" at which the other smiled with an air of

great contempt, and looking at us said, "He calls me mad!" The man of the pillar was eyeing his soup, with his arms as before, extended above his head. The director desired him to eat his soup, upon which he slowly and reluctantly brought down one arm, and ate a few spoonfuls. "How much sugar have you made to-day?" asked the director. "Fifty thousand kingdoms!" said the man. . . .

The director then led us to the gallery above, where are more cells, and the terrible "*Cuarto Negro*," the Black Chamber; a dark, round cell, about twelve feet in circumference, with merely a slit in the wall for the admission of air. The floor is thickly covered with straw, and the walls are entirely covered with soft stuffed cushions. Here the most furious madman is confined on his arrival, and whether he throws himself on the floor, or dashes his head against the wall, he can do himself no injury. In a few days, the silence and the darkness soothe his fury, he grows calmer, and will eat the food that is thrust through the aperture in the wall. From this he is removed to a common cell, with more light and air; but until he has become tranquil, he is not admitted into the court amongst the others.

From this horrible, though I suppose necessary den of suffering, we went to the apartments of the administrator, which have a fine view of the city and the volcanoes, and saw a virgin, beautifully carved in wood, and dressed in white satin robes, embroidered with small diamonds. On the ground was a little dog, dying, having just fallen off from the *azotea*, an accident which happens to dogs here not infrequently. We then went up to the *azotea*, which looks into the garden of San Fernando and of our last house, and also into the barracks of the soldiers, who, as _____ observed, are more dangerous madmen than those who are confined. Some rolled up in their dirty yellow cloaks, and others standing in their shirt-sleeves, and many without either; they were as dirty-looking a set of military heroes as one would wish to see. When we came downstairs again, and had gone through the court, and were passing the last cell, each of which is only lighted by an aperture in the thick stone wall, a pair of great black eyes glaring through, upon a level with mine, startled me infinitely. The eyes, however, glared upon vacancy. The face was thin and sallow, the beard long and matted, and the cheeks sunken. What long years of suffering appeared to have passed over that furrowed brow! I wish I had not seen it. . . .

Having stopped in the carriage on the way home, at a shoemaker's, we saw *Santa Anna's leg* lying on the counter, and observed it with due respect, as the prop of a hero. With this leg, which is fitted with a very handsome boot, he reviews his troops next Sunday, putting his *best foot foremost*; for generally he merely wears an unadorned wooden leg. The shoemaker, a Spaniard, whom I can recommend to all customers as the most impertinent individual I ever encountered, was arguing, in a blustering manner, with a gentleman who had brought a message from the general, desiring some al-

teration in the boot: and wound up by muttering, as the messenger left the shop, "He shall either wear it as it is, or review the troops next Sunday without his leg!"

7. DOM PEDRO II: A POLITICAL PORTRAIT

Historians and biographers of Dom Pedro II (1825–1891) have written sufficiently concerning his amiable, democratic traits, his patronage of arts and letters, and his scholarly tastes and accomplishments. But Dom Pedro's best claim to fame is the skill with which he guided the Brazilian ship of state for almost half a century. Joaquim Nabuco (1849–1910), famous Brazilian abolitionist, diplomat, and historian, paid tribute to the emperor's political wisdom in his monumental biography of his own statesman-father, first published in 1897.

The commanding figure of the Second Empire was that of the Emperor himself. To be sure, he did not govern directly and by himself; he respected the Constitution and the forms of the parliamentary system. But since he determined the fate of every party and every statesman, making or unmaking ministries at will, the sum of power was effectively his. Cabinets had short and precarious lives, holding office only as long as it pleased the Emperor. Under these conditions there was but one way to govern, and that was in agreement with him. To oppose his plans, his policies, was to invite dismissal. One or another minister might be ready to quit the government and the office on whose duties he had just entered, but cabinets clung to life, and the party imposed obedience to the royal will from love of offices, of patronage. So the ministers passively assented to the role that the Emperor assigned to them. The senate, the council of state, lived by his favor and grace. No leader wished to be "incompatible." He alone represented tradition and continuity in government. Since cabinets were short-lived and he was permanent, only he could formulate policies that required time to mature. He alone could wait, temporize, continue, postpone, sowing in order to reap in due season. Whenever he needed to display his own unquestioned authority he shunted the most important statesmen away from the throne. . . . Having these examples before them, younger men learned that without the Emperor's confidence and approval they were nothing. . . .

On one point he had strong feelings and was very sensitive. He must not be suspected of having favorites. . . . No one but he knew what the next day

Joaquim Nabuco, *Um estadista do imperio: Nabuco de Araujo, sua vida, suas opinões, sua epoca*, 2 vols. (São Paulo, 1936), 2:374–385. Excerpt translated by Benjamin Keen.