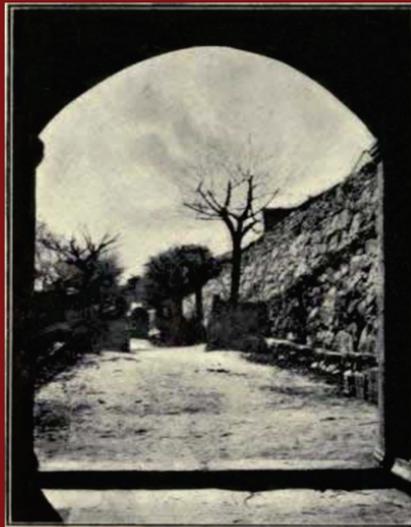


The Complete Crockett

The Galloway Raiders

digital edition

European/World fiction



THE ADVENTURER
IN SPAIN

S.R.CROCKETT

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

First published in book form by Isbister & Co, 1903.

This Galloway Raiders digital edition published in 2021 is part of a decade long project (2012-2022) to bring the works of Samuel Rutherford Crockett (1859-1914) together in one place. The Complete Crockett comprises 66 published works, re-edited and re-formatted by volunteer labour to the highest standard.

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www.gallowayraiders.co.uk

www.srcrockett.weebly.com

INTRODUCTION

Published in book form in 1903, *The Adventurer in Spain* was originally conceived of as *Twelve Spanish Adventures* and the British Serial rights were sold to Isbister & Co on an agreement of 2nd July 1902, ditto British and Colonial book rights.

Crockett first pitched it to his agent in 1901 in a letter written from Auchencairn in September 1901 around the time of the publication of *The Firebrand* (his novel set in Spain). He had spent a fair amount of time in Spain since 1898 and would spend further time there in preparation for the work.

His letter to A.P.Watt lays out the plan:

My ideas as to the Spanish book are briefly these – ‘Twelve True Adventures in Spain of about 10,000 words each, personal adventures told in the First person, and the types, characters etc illustrated from my own photographs which may either be reproduced or given to the draughtsman to make a picture from.

He then goes into more detail:

Here are some of the adventures I mean to tell:

1. *The Smugglers of San Gregorio*

Containing an account of a strange family of smugglers at the Eastern Pyrennean frontier, with whom I abode nearly three months and with whom I made four double trips into France and back into Spain, breaking the revenue laws of both kingdoms in the interests of literature.

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2. *A Week in a Carlist Camp*

With the story of their running from the gendarmes after the manner of De Wet – and a most curious and unexpected (and therefore true) denouement – eminently Iberian.

3. *A Spanish Love Story*

That of my guide Vigno. An idyll in the style of ‘Nuria’ iiiwhich I sent to Max (P??) with the illustrations of characters from photographs.

4. *Three nights with a hermit of the Twentieth Century. ‘A curious dweller among the rocks, a survivor of the stone age (if the stone age includes fleas) I put up with him at the upper end of the valley of the Ariege. I have some lovely illustrations for this.*

5. *The Charcoal burners*

6. *A fortnight with them – mostly ex- brigands and not so very much ex either.*

7. *The Resin Gatherer*

I found a dwarf in one of the forests of N. Catalonia who had cut his foot and I looked after him for ten days doing his work for him and going his rounds– quite an inhuman life. Of course I will make a story of these experiences, inventing nothing and extenuating nothing, but only (because I want to go back there) altering names and places to avoid giving offence. These and a few others will crop up. I would like to deliver MSS an instalment at a time of 10,000 words. I find that is best for it gives time for new ideas to occur. I could deliver the first one in time for next January but would prefer later a little. I write a little

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leaf as to the idea of the book which of course would be accurate and picturesque enough. But each would be a story also, united like George Borrow's by the personality of the writer – yet eminently self-contained and suitable for any respectable magazine. If you have a copy of 'Maria Perrone Murderer and Saint' in the box as I think you have you can shew that story as a sample of manner and matter. That was a personal adventure of mine and I worked it into the Italian General's story as Maria Perrone.

Now I think you have the whole matter clearly before you, and if you can make the deal well and good. If not we will just wait and write the series, and I doubt not you will sell easily enough that. It is a new thing and of course editors want 'The Usual Output' of an author when they have to pay a price for it.

Yes, I mean to do a story in the 'Joan' manner, for the Windsor but with Spanish colouring – full and [with] Moors and Christians, captives and maids of honour – all the old romance that never has and never will grow old.

He asks Watt to send his reply by post as follows:

*Address after Friday 13th (Sept 1901) c/o
R.H.Crockett Esq 30 King Street,
Castle Douglas. N.B After Tuesday 17th sent to
Milroy as usual.*

The idea clearly took hold. On paper headed from Selkirk Arms, Kirkcudbright (but not dated, most

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likely sometime between 13th and 17th – perhaps he and his cousin Robert went to eat there and he wrote the notes then) he wrote as follows to Watt:

Additional notes on the Twelve Spanish Adventures:

To be a book without the stock subjects. No bull shall gore, no steed be disembowelled. Gipsies shall not dance for Cookist gold at Granada. There will be no complaints about the punctuality of design of the Alhambra or of Cathedral architecture. Ventas and peasant huts instead and purple wine instead of purple patches and hackneyed quotations. The last weariful Moor shall not sigh for ‘the hand of the Castanet’ but there will be vintages burnt black in the fields, salt workers scaled like fishes on Catalonian marshes, rice-fields and rook-scareres, fishes of tunny and white-bait on the Valentian coast.

Pictures of the whole dollop, photographs like those in ‘A Romancers Local Colour’ of which I will send you a copy. Marks of the Brown and of the Black Lily women gathering scented herbs at twilight meadows among the Sierras, young Carlists playing at Revolution, groups of smugglers and campfires and charcoal burner’s huts – these are a few of the characters in the dramas of action.

Dust and summer heat. White hillset villages, far seen cities, icy winds blowing from the Guadalahara upon winter Gregoria – Spain in pictures and words tawny, magnificent, untroubled by the world’s progress. Peasants, fishers, herdsman, sheep masters, wine growers, the May harvest of the wheat,

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the toilers called home by the sudden storm, the life and death of the poor in the glaring sunshine – mosquitos and flamingos and all the swift loves and hates of a southern clime.

The perils of revenue officers at lonely mountain stations, or stretched on perilous ledges - all I knew had seen his stature five times taken by Carlist partisans and five times retaken by national troops, and aided by the French gendarmes. In brief 'The Adventurer in Spain.' NOT personally (con)ducted.

SRC

Beyond Crockett's own words on the book there is much to say. The material book from 1903 looks similar to the usual green binding used for his fiction, though more embellished. It contains around 150 illustrations, many of them photographs taken by Crockett on his travels. He includes an explanatory note on the photographs (and equipment). To do full justice to the images the paper is coated rather than plain laid or woven. This gives it a glossy feel. It is impossible (for me) to replicate this in digital format at this time, and so this edition focuses on the text alone.

This is not an historical adventure romance, but a contemporary story. Crockett's own description shows that he's attempting to do something 'different'. He was travelling in Catalonia at a time of unrest – there's reference to the recent Cuban wars (1895-1898) and the shadow of the third Carlist War (1872-1876) was still evident.

The various chapters give us great insight into the Spain of the day, as well as into the nature and

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character of the author. The picture built by the text alone is well worth the read and the pictures and descriptions both tempt and encourage a desire to discover the places Crockett travelled, though his own declaration of ‘mixing those babies up’ , assure that any such attempt in reality would be another Adventure in Spain for anyone who takes up the challenge! It will not be my Adventure – but maybe yours?

Cally Phillips

2021

THE ADVENTURER IN SPAIN

DEDICATION

To Juili Guardia

In recognition of the unwearied friendship which made
this book possible.

This digital version of the book does not contain the illustrations, however they are an interesting (integral?) part of the whole so Crockett's note about them is included. There are some 150 illustrations which you can find by visiting the Galloway Raiders/Crockett archive website where the most up to date links to slideshows and collections of images can be found. In time it is hoped to pull together an illustrated digital version but in the interim, the text is separated and the hope is that the reader will feel sufficiently inspired to go in search of the images!

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A NOTE ON THE PHOTOGRAPHS

All the pictures in 'The Adventurer' were taken on the spot and at the moment, often under very disadvantageous circumstances of lighting and environment. None of the figures were posed, and the few who knew they were being taken sufficiently advertise the fact by their self-consciousness.

By no means the finest photographs, technically, have been chosen. But solely those which illustrate the text. Whatever other merit they may lack, the little pictures reproduced here show Spain of to-day, especially in its wilder parts, with some variety and fullness. My hope is that these process blocks may also reflect in some measure the delight and happiness the author has had in sojourning so long among the most kindly and charming people in Europe.

Finally I consider it a debt which I am bound in honour to pay, that I should put it on record that all the photographs were taken with a half-plate camera, specially designed and manufactured for my purpose by Messrs. Newman & Guardia, of 92 Shaftesbury Avenue, London. Battered on many a mule-back, dumped into casual streams, roughly mended with wire and string, twice apprehended and incarcerated for high treason by officers of the law, explored in my absence by hands unskilful, maltreated in every possible way, this instrument remains at the close of seven years a war-worn veteran indeed, but not a whit the worse for any practical purpose. And as, most deservedly, it has my confidence, so also has it my affection. Two thousand five hundred miles have I carried it, with mind own hand or upon mine own back, through the burden and heat of a Spanish sun. Ill day and good day it has gathered memories for me, and I were the worst of ingrates did I not acknowledge it.

S.R.C

THE ADVENTURER IN SPAIN

CHAPTER ONE

THE ADVENTURE OF THE WAY THITHER

Landmarks and boundaries were ever kittle cattle. Even Lawgiver Moses found it so. And since then they have been eternally causing trouble all the world over. The ancient proverb anent the blessedness of having little national history might read equally well - 'Blessed is the country with few land frontiers.' For very surely do our neighbours with the latest, most rectified, and most scientific frontiers envy us our silver strip of salt water, concerning which we have reason to say with Tennyson,

*God bless the narrow seas -
I would they were a whole Atlantic broad!*

Now I wanted to get into Spain in my own way, and, lo! on the very route I had chosen the local authorities were in the heat of the annual 'frontier incident.'

Of course, had I entered by easterly Barcelona, or westward by 'Fried Sole Island' over the historic Bidassoa, there would have been no difficulty. Also - important consideration - nothing to write about. But for one thing, I was already deep in the most picturesque and most townless of French departments, the Ariège. I lacked the courage to turn back over interminable railways. To go forward was so much easier, and certainly the Over There beckoned most bewitchingly from just beyond the white summits of the Pyrenees.

What to me then were great cities and cathedrals, French hotels, and hired gipsy dancers? Ford and Borrow beckoned me to their Spain - the Spain that does not change - *tras los montes* - over the hills and far away, where are mules and mantillas, sierras and smugglers,

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crisp sounding Catalan, boorish Andorran, stern Aragonese breaking into flame at the lilt of the jota, and, chiefest wonder of all, the Basque tongue - strange, mysterious, older than the world.

I had wandered, driven by the weary ache of persistent insomnia, the length and breadth of this Sleepy Hollow of the South. At Foix, 'chief place' of the Ariège, I had lounged away many days in its grass-grown square - red-breeched military everywhere about me, marching out before five in the mornings to the tuck of drum, and filing in again past the railway station before seven, with the free, clever marching step characteristic of the French soldier everywhere, from the North Bound of Dunkirk even to this same Foix in the Ariège.

For a week without once winking (as now it seems to me) I had sat twiddling coffee spoons at little feckless tin tables, painted (oh, how vainly!) to represent the marble of Carrara. The little city's crown of towers became permanently imprinted on my retina. As I read, I saw them dark or bright upon the page. Morning, noon, and night they were ever with me - iron-grey against the crimson-splashed dawn - thin and aerial in the white haze of noon, and again in the rich twilights of the South, becoming a veritable City of the Violet Crown, mediæval version, duodecimo size.

At midnight and in the still hours when no cock crew, I had, alas! too many opportunities of observing them trenching the Milky Way with triple coronal of velvety black.

In the daylight I spent many hours up there, a visitor of some distinction, permitted to roam where he would, and to return at his desire out of the feudal ages. This privilege was not accorded because of the suavity of my address or any attractiveness attaching to my person, but solely because the old lady kept tame rabbits, which were for sale. I bought one (price 3f 50c. - tough!) and received into the bargain the freedom of the castle of Gaston de Foix.

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The remaining rabbits mumbled contentedly on the very window sill from which the count chaffed his enemy of Toulouse when he threatened to cut through the rock pedestal on which the fortress stands, and bring the whole insecure rookery about its owner's ears. Sometimes I took a notebook with me, that I might imagine the scene; but instead of 'By my halidom'-ing and 'By'rldy'-ing, I was the better pleased to poke stale lettuce through the bars to Madame Thomas' rabbits, and watch, for hours at a time, their twitchy, hitchy, munchy gratitude.

Then, leaving Foix by an easy route, I made my way slowly Spainward, getting ever deeper and deeper into the mountains. At one little town I watched half naked Titans founding iron in the most primitive fashion, and understood for the first time how the short swords were forged which the soldiers of Marius drove to the hilt in Ambro-Teuton breasts upon Mont St. Victoire. At lazy Ussat I drank the waters, because (and I found the reason good) there was nothing else to do, and nobody but myself to do it. At Ax-les-Thermes I bathed in more than Roman splendour (bring your own towel!), and the landlady of the Hôtel de Paris told me that as it was not the season she could offer me few luxuries except - the pleasure of her conversation. But, she added, 'I must set one thing against another.'

I did - and ordered a carriage in the morning.

But before I went, she told me (among other things) of a wonderful priest, who dwelt at the last mountain village before one ascended into the upper air - Hospitalet, the name of it. He was learned. He was kind. He 'had the word.' But - he was not in favour with his ecclesiastical superiors, who for their own reasons had isolated him in this elevated corner of the vineyard. The Abbé could tell me all I wished to know. Did all Englishmen ask so many questions?

I rose very early the next morning, convinced that all the geese in the Ariège, except the one which had lain heavy as lead on my conscience during the night, were

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cackling under my window. I looked out, and in the slanting orange of the sunrise, lo! the entire corporation of the washerwomen of Ax settling their pounding-boards in the steam of the hot springs. Then I understood the faint cloudy blue colour which had troubled me in my bath the evening before, also a certain odour of washing day in the air, and a definite after desire to hang myself out on a line to dry. No wonder there are strong alkalies in the waters of Ax, or that Reckitt hangs cloudily in suspension in your basin, and tinges the very towel with a faint cerulean hue between your face and hands.

Here is a cheap and certain road to fortune, for which there is no extra charge. Take a house next door to any laundry. Make an arrangement for a reversion of the suds, and advertise the Ax water-cure and its complementary baths. I warrant that no expert will be able to tell the difference.

But, to return, over these mountains and some few more, there lay Spain. On the route was to be found the wise curé of Hospitalet, and my carriage was at the door. I bade my landlady adieu. Her bill, at least, was for full season's prices. I waved my hand to the gay washerwomen, whom my camera never could resist, and without regret got me over the lip of the simmering washtub of Ax-les-Thermes as fast as three brass-bound horses would carry me - a matter of at least three miles an hour.

Now I had been in Egypt in the first days of railways, when the famous arrangement about the 'classes' was new - first class, ride except when told to get out and walk - second class, push behind at the hills - third class, push all the way! It was much the same thing to go by carriage over the Pass of Puymorens, where the road winds exactly like an apple-paring thrown over the shoulder of the engineer. By cutting across the loops you can always have half an hour to sit down on a stone and wait for your carriage. Then half a mile further on there is another isthmus to cross, and time for another cigarette.

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But by the way I chanced on the most picturesque of mills and the most affable of millers. At first he was about to set his dog on me, judging somewhat hastily by appearances. For indeed I had not had time to remodel my clothes since sliding down Quillan mountain in haste to capture my camera. However, just as the miller was looking out of his mill window to summon the intelligent animal, the good man observed my carriage and three horses crawling up the slope a mile or so below.

'Ah,' he cried, altering his intention, 'lie down, you brute - come in and see my mill. It is much admired!'

Now this shows the use of a carriage with three horses. For otherwise that miller's dog would certainly have been harassing my rear. And he was not a nice dog. He was particular as to his acquaintance, and always insisted upon an introduction.

Well might the miller of Deyrolles say that his mill was much admired. It was a perfect Chenonceaux of a mill. Water spouted from it, as it seemed, from chimney to foundation, the clear mountain water arching and glancing in the sun, making miniature cascades everywhere.

'Most convenient,' said the miller, 'when one wants to take a little mouthful of absinthe. Apropos - '

And the miller proceeded to show himself very apropos indeed.

All I could do in return was to take a picture of his mill, and offer him a lift up the hill as far as Hospitalet. Whereupon very willingly he turned off the water-power, and an entirely new Niagara flashed forth from a side lade.

'I myself will take you up and introduce you to Monsieur the curé,' he cried; 'all the travellers go to his house. He is a very learned man, and besides a lover of good company!'

'Is he your priest?' I asked, thinking there might be some purpose of private auricular confession, for it was nearing Easter.

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'No,' said the miller; 'ours is a plain man, the son of a farmer over at La Tarasque. But I think he suits us all the better for that. We are a simple folk.'

When the carriage arrived our coachman also went in to view the mill while I held the horses. He came out wiping his mouth and smelling - apropos.

'You see I have never before ridden behind three horses,' explained the miller, getting in beside me, 'that is why I am coming. That - and the pleasure of your company.'

Then he sat a long time meditating as we crawled up a hill.

'After all it is much the same as riding behind one horse,' he said, at length, 'only slower!'

But the miller of Deyrolles was a philosopher as well as a wit. He would not get out to walk up the hills. He would cross no isthmuses.

'Walk!' he said; 'no, excellent driver Jean, no! I can walk any day. I will have to walk tomorrow when I go down to Deyrolles. So whip up your horses, my friend, and at least let us enter Hospitalet with some *éclat*.'

This we did, with an *éclat* which must have brought at least ten people to their windows. Hospitalet is the striking off place of the bridle track for Andorra, and in all respects resembles a village among the Alps of Savoy. But the country inn at which we drew up was clean and hopeful-looking, and on account of his knowledge of the local cookery the miller took on himself the ordering of the lunch.

There was a fall of water near, singing its own praises in the sunshine, and making a picturesque splashing down the mountain side. I made straight for it, camera in hand. Even as I went I was aware of a giant of a man coming towards me with long strides. He was bareheaded, and with the tail of my eye I could see something white in his hand. I thought this must be some petty lord of the soil come to take me to task for trespass upon his meadows. But all the same I meant to have the

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picture first.

However, the man stood quietly behind me till I had finished. I could hear his breathing stop as I made my exposure - a jewel of a man!

Then all suddenly a book was thrust before me and a finger pointed out a place.

'Will you be good enough to translate that sentence into French?' said a voice. 'I have only a grammar to help me with the English language!'

I turned in the very act of changing a plate. Small wonder that I was astonished. A tall priest stood before me, bareheaded, unshaven, his rusty soutane half unbuttoned, but with the unmistakable air of a man of thought and reading.

'Thank you,' he said when I had, badly enough, accomplished my task. 'I came across as soon as I saw you.'

'How did you know?' I asked him, smiling.

'That you were an Englishman?' he laughed, chuckling to himself as if there could possibly be any doubt about the matter.

'I saw you - I saw the waterfall, and I saw the black box! 'Voilà my affair!' I cried, and I brought out my three weeks' puzzle to have it solved!'

'But I am not English,' I persisted. 'I am of Scotland!'

'It is the same thing!' said the priest, dogmatically.

'A large number of your kings did not think it at all the same thing!' I retorted. Whereupon I expounded 'the Auld Alliance.'

'Ah,' he said, 'Monsieur is a historian. Come instantly to my Presbytery. Apropos - I have some good wine!'

But I told him of the miller of Deyrolles, and of the lunch even now awaiting us. I invited him to join.

'For the pleasure of your company!' he said, bowing courteously; 'but that I may do you honour, permit me to change my soutane.'

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Ah, why has not the Auld Alliance rubbed off some of these little graciousnesses of speech upon us rough tykes of the North?

We were a refreshfully democratic party as we sat us down - coachman Jean in his blue blouse, M. the abbé in his Sunday soutane, the miller of Deyrolles, and myself. We had a lamb dressed whole, the size of a good English hare, but deliciously cooked - salad, bread, and wine that smelled of the goat-skin, looked like Burgundy, and tasted as no wine of France does in these degenerate days.

‘Viva España!’ I said, as I drank and winked at the curé.

‘Ah,’ he said, sipping slowly, ‘it is indeed a sad sin to defraud the revenue. I often speak against it from the altar. Smuggling is a very mother of iniquities. But what would you? This is doubtless good wine. And that - (he added, nodding sententiously) - covers a multitude of sins. Besides,’ he added, ‘there is no proof. I have seen Monsieur the Receiver himself drinking it. He only shrugged his shoulders as he drank! But as to where it came from, I think that he also had no illusions!’

In a few minutes we were deep in the effects of the French revolution upon the nations of Europe, and then I had a new view of my coachman Jean. Hitherto he had proved himself merely dreamy, stolid, and not a little morose.

But at the curé’s first sentence he looked up sharply. His eyes brightened. His head was thrown back. His nostrils dilated. Not otherwise does the war-horse scent the battle from afar. Jean was a controversialist - a born Jacobin. Progress was his watchword. In effect, as he said, America was his ideal. Ah, what a country! What enterprise! See here! He lifted a can of preserved salmon from the table. Could they produce such things in any priest-ridden country? And this - he lifted the mustard pot. Colman was the name imprinted thereon. Again America! The word New York was upon the tin -

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subordinate indeed to London, but still there. I pointed out the mistake. Colman was peculiarly and even hotly English in the mouth.

‘It was,’ Jean continued, waving me aside, ‘the same thing. You have no priests in England.’

‘We have certain who call themselves so!’ I remarked, carefully impartial,

‘In Scotland? I thought you were all Calvinists there?’ interjected the priest - his powerful voice, trained at the altar, forcing itself through Jean’s shrill treble like the ram of a battleship crushing the iron skin of a torpedo-boat.

Then, in a language not my own, I expounded history for the second time - searching for fitting words, and occasionally finding them. To my surprise both the abbé and the Jacobin found themselves in unison for once.

‘Why does a man call himself a priest when he is not a priest?’ said Jean, thumping his fist on the table.

‘When the day comes that your Calvinist ministers are reconciled with the Holy Church,’ cried the abbé, ‘they will be admitted simply upon profession. But the others’ (how the thin nostrils blew out with scorn!) ‘they will have to do much penance for having called themselves priests without the true apostolic ordination. Ah, yes, penance long and sore must they do.’

The miller of Deyrolles listened to the three of us with infinite satisfaction. He nodded his head impartially when Jean or the priest made a hit - also when I found a good resounding word. He was specially enthusiastic when I got out my Bellows’ Dictionary and looked up ‘incongruity.’

‘Ah,’ he said, ‘what a valuable book! It tells you what to say. As for me I never know. But I can grind corn. You see there were no schools in the Cerdagne in my

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time. But my meal is good all the same, and I make all the money I need to live upon! Therefore am I not as happy as if I knew six languages and could speak like a Deputy?’

Oh, most wise miller!

Next morning by six of the clock all was as it had never been. Our brave miller was upon his way back to Deyrolles - the abbé (let us hope) already in church at matins, or at least reading his breviary upon the way thither. As for Jean he sat on the box of my carriage, but he had relapsed into sullenness. Or he had a headache. Something had disagreed with him. I thought at the time that he and the miller were saying ‘apropos!’ a little too often yestreen, especially as it wore towards the shank of the night. But as the green liquid was dripping through the sugar into their glasses at my expense, it was not my place to say them nay. Consequently this morning Jean held sombre views of life. He would not rise even to a sneer at the ‘Social Contract.’ A Jesuit might have played with him. Almost he was a reactionary. At least, reaction of a sort was strong within him.

All the same we jogged on over Puymorens into the Cerdagne, that green valley which smiles between the mountain ranges, half Spanish and half French. Yonder at last was Puycerda, the ‘Height of the Cerdagne,’ with the red and yellow ensign floating above its gateway. The good priest of Hospitalet had whispered to us that there was trouble on the border. No one was allowed to pass on any pretext. There had, it appeared, been mutual smuggling on an international scale. The French customs people were irritated with those of Spain, and the Spaniards crossed bayonets when any were delivered into their hands coming out of France.

But I was no smuggler. I had my papers of identification - my passport properly visaed in London at the Spanish Embassy. I had nothing of contraband except, possibly, some insect powder - nothing really suspicious save half a dozen cakes of soap.

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Still I thought that it might be as well to turn aside before venturing the plain way into Spain, the way which lies over the bridge of Bourg Madame. If there was any friction it would be in that place. I would therefore take the by-path through Llivia.

But what is this Llivia of the Welsh-appearing name? Llivia is an anachronism - a little splash of red and yellow Spanish wax left on the fringe of the tricolour. For once the Spaniard had the best of it in his dealings with his formidable neighbour to the North. It happened some two hundred years ago, when the frontiers were being delimited and the treaties made. The Cerdagne was to be divided, partly by an imaginary line and partly by the streamlet which flashes through the beech copses beneath the citadel of Puycerda. Thirty villages north of this line were to belong to France - and so at this present writing, twenty-nine of them do. But one, Llivia by name, chanced to be a 'township,' not a village, and so to this day it forms an 'enclave,' or piece of Spain shut in by French territory on every side. A neutral road, called the Chemin International, runs from Llivia to the little bridge which gives access to Spain. There is another Douane there - a post of carabineers on the Spanish side, and generally a man fishing on the French. The fisherman is the real danger.

So driver Jean turned aside towards Llivia, and after we were well down the jolting by-road, a man came running full tilt over a field towards us, calling upon us to stop. We laughed, waved hands, and pushed on lightly. Afterwards, however, we had occasion to regret our precipitancy. However, we were safe in Spain, as we thought, none having hindered or made us afraid - except the man whom the three brass-bound horses, making their first spurt of the day, had left running wildly after us over the field.

Llivia is by all and large the dirtiest village I have ever seen. Cattle pass in droves along the street, or stand meditatively digestive in front of doors. I have never seen

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them sitting sipping absinthe at the cafés; but there is every sign, and - the testimony of all the five senses, that such is their habit.

Yet there is a decent enough posada, lifted upon a terrace above the main street (or gutter). Within it, a pretty young wife, a lyrical baby, and a talkative military grandfather, who is ready to smoke your tobacco and abuse the people of Llivia - literally, till all was blue.

The young wife prepared a meal while I exercised my fascinations upon the baby. Then, the small score settled, the horses were put in again and we went hopefully forward. Above all things I was anxious to lay my head in Spain that night.

But, alas! much was there to do before that should happen. As we neared the bridge at the end of the Chemin International, half a score of gendarmes appeared out of the bushes, and as many carabineers moved gravely into position upon the Spanish side.

I was out in a moment and showing my papers. But it soon appeared that, all unwitting, I had sinned the unpardonable sin. I had passed into Spain and out of France by a road which was not a legal right-of-way, a village road, a mere farm track - and so, in the most perfect innocence, I had become an outlaw. Neither country would have me at any price. I had been in Spain - that is, in Llivia - therefore I could not return into France. Messieurs the gendarmes would see to that. I had never passed the customs examinations, therefore I could not be admitted into Spain. The ranked carabineers fixed bayonets to prevent me.

I stood and argued - showed all my well-ordered papers for the twentieth time. It was in vain. I could go back to Llivia and wait there while the case was submitted to the two governments concerned. Or I could remain where I was, on the neutral ground of the Chemin International, apparently till I struck root and sprouted. Jean the Radical had nothing to suggest. He wanted only to be well quit of me and jog back again to Ax. Indeed, to

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tell the truth, he basely deserted me in the day of my adversity.

'M. the curé of Hospitalet told monsieur,' he declared, 'I told monsieur. But monsieur was obstinate - entêté - pig-headed. But what would you - by example, is he not an Englishman?'

And yet he had heard me explain my nationality only the night before with a wealth of historical detail!

It was at the black blank moment of my despair, when the officer of gendarmes was on the point of sending me back to Llivia under a guard, apparently till the government had time to make out my warrant for New Caledonia, that, quick as the god from the machine, appeared my saviour. We had been arguing upon the bank of the stream which courses gaily through poplar clumps, beech coppices, and pollard willows. I heard a shout, and springing up the bank through the young spring greenery I beheld a man, rather short than tall, rather slender than sturdy, but with the broad shoulders and lean flanks of endurance, with, in addition, a face that broke every rule of regularity yet was so overflowing with good humour and ready responsive wit, that the effect was irresistibly attractive. A small carefully waxed moustache and hair crisp and curling distinguished the new comer. He was dressed in dark grey coat and trousers, and, for a touch of colour, wore a red sash round his waist, drawn low over the hips.

Never was a man so thoroughly abreast of the situation. He shouted questions in Catalan to the amazed Spaniards on their bank. He rebuked the sergeant of gendarmes in his native tongue for keeping a gentleman waiting on the highway. He entered into a give-and-take of repartee with Jean the socialist, in which that intermittent freethinker was conspicuously worsted. All the time he was employed in putting up his own fishing-rod. As soon as this was finished, he bade Jean get back on the box and opened the door of the carriage for me.

'Yes, we shall go back to Llivia,' he cried, 'and it will

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be the worse for somebody when Milor the Englishman has finished writing to his friend the Minister of the Interior.'

As he clicked the carriage handle he whispered over the door, 'I will make it all right. Do not fear. You shall lay your head in Spain when next you sleep.'

So back to Llvia we trundled, where I think our return was not wholly unexpected by the ancient military gentleman in the Posada de España. I saw something unpleasantly like a twinkle of mirth light up his eye as he borrowed a cigarette and lit a match on a conveniently stretched part of his trousers.

'And now,' said my new friend, as we found ourselves once more alone over the green-eyed Pernod on the balcony, 'I will introduce myself. I am called Julio Biño over yonder - a Navarrese. Yes, señor, but in the Ariège I am plain Jules Bineaud, and anywhere and everywhere I hate to see a stranger put upon in my own country. And every country on both sides of the Pyrenees is mine.'

'Are you then a Spaniard?' I asked.

Julio smiled, and shrugged his shoulders.

'Yes and no,' he said. 'I am neither French nor Spanish. Yet I am both. I am, as I tell you, of Navarre, and you know that that country lies on both sides of the mountains, like a saddle laid across the Pyrenees. I am the man who rides on that saddle.'

'But surely you must be a citizen of one country or of the other?'

'I am a citizen of both,' he made answer, smiling. 'I am on the reserve of both armies, yet all the time I have served with the colours is only six weeks. I can vote for the deputy who pleases me in the Ariège, and yet give a voice for good Señor Cristobal when it pleases him to go up to Madrid to escape his wife's tongue.'

'And what is your own business?' I asked next.

He looked at me a moment very straight in the eye, as if gauging the amount of confidence which might safely

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be placed in me. Then he spoke in a pleasant voice, even and quiet:

‘I am of all trades - that do not involve doing the same thing over day after day. I am the best gardener in the world - for a month. For a month I have been an incomparable corn-miller. I can build a house, but not two - graft a vineyard if it is not too big, chop down a tree, work a saw-mill, cook anything that ever was cooked, find something to cook where there is nothing, climb mountains, carry a pack on my shoulders, lead a score of pretty fellows to - ahem! - correct the inequalities of the revenue. There is no man native to these mountains, from Moncayo to the Cevennes, to whom I cannot pretend that I am his countryman, his paysan, born in the same commune, confirmed by the same parish priest.’

‘And what good does that do?’ I asked in my simplicity.

‘In effect, there are occasions,’ he replied, mysteriously shrugging his shoulder in the direction of my baggage, ‘I am not sure that this may not be one of them. When that old chatterer goes to bed (I regret that Biño referred to our soldier of Solferino and the Malakoff) I will talk to the young husband. He has had a little difficulty with the carabineers which keeps him somewhat retired in the daytime. But Biño can find him. Only for the present say nothing about our business to madame. She might possibly tell her father, and that were as good as giving it out from the altar.’

‘But what are we to do?’ I said. ‘I wish to proceed into Spain at once - on to El Seo, if possible. I have no desire to go five hundred miles about by train, to stay in cities, to eat with the crowd at tables d’hôte. Besides, I am not a gentleman of commerce!’

‘I know - I know!’ Even as I was speaking, the quick Southern eye took fire. Electricity seemed to snap from Biño’s finger-ends and crackle in his excited voice. ‘I knew it as soon as I set eyes on monsieur. ‘Here is one after my own heart,’ I said; ‘he has a small bag, all for use. He

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looks about and takes notes of the beautiful, the characteristic - aye, even while these long eared ones are braying at him. Behold his little gun, his vista glass, his chambre noire. He travels to see, to record, to write. There is his pen sticking out of his pocket. I will go with him - I, Julio Biño, the Navarrese. I will company with him for love, so long as he wants me. For I also have the mind of the wanderer, of him that must all the time be seeing new things, beautiful things!' So, Señor, here I am!

Still I was not a little puzzled, and my face showed it.

'Ah,' continued my new friend, anxiously, 'do not misunderstand. I am no beggar. I do not think of money. I have a house and vineyard yonder in the Ariège - another behind the mountains. But I will come with monsieur for love alone.'

'But,' I answered doubtfully, 'I cannot permit anything of the kind. If you accompany me I shall require you to take a wage for each day - each week!'

'That I understand also,' said Biño; 'but let us not speak of it now. Wait till you see whether or no I satisfy you, and then we can settle all these matters. I am not such a fool as to think that my services are worth nothing. But - I will leave it to monsieur to say how much.'

He moved his hand slightly and sipped his absinthe with a cock of the eye towards the door, which informed me that the 'military chatterer,' as he called our host, was immediately behind it. In this fashion I became acquainted with Biño, who through the years has remained protector and mentor, servant and friend - ever careful, faithful, ready-witted, daring, humorous, self-effacing, as ready to acknowledge a fault as to make a virtue of success, in all things typically meridional in temperament - a little boastful, more than a little vain, doing everything with an air, as if before a gallery and for the gaze of ladies' favours.

Now it becomes necessary from this point to warn

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the reader that (except in the case of the larger towns) I shall use names both for men and places other than the real. For these people, of whom I shall have to tell, are still alive and busy with their affairs - which very often are the affairs of certain Government officials as well. Now, though I owe the officials on both sides of the frontier not a few kindnesses, yet on the whole the balance falls the other way, and I have certainly no desire that any words of mine should bring difficulties upon men whose only fault is, that their interpretation of fiscal laws differs from that of the State functionaries - chiefly, moreover, in the personal matter of more or fewer pesetas in the official breeches' pockets.

But to this matter I shall have to return. For my acquaintance among smugglers is rather large, and on the whole they are as honest people as I have come in contact with in the Peninsula - or anywhere else.

It was about ten o'clock at night when Biño came into the little chamber in which I had been lying down on the bed fully dressed. He had with him a tall young man, in figure lithe as an eel, and of a countenance habitually grave. This was Little Stephen, so called to distinguish him from his father, who had once been Big Stephen, but could now have been tucked comfortably away under his son's arm.

Biño and Little Stephen turned my equipment over article by article, laying aside some for future transport, and stowing away the rest in a couple of brown Pyrenean 'rück-sacks,' much battered by the rains. I offered to share the burden, but was told rather succinctly that if I followed them that night without carrying more than my own weight, I should do very well. And in this I was not long in discovering a truth and justice simply incontrovertible.

Then with the lamp set on the floor outside the half-open door, so as to throw a faint light upward on the ceiling, we three sat and made a hasty meal. The girl-wife smiled as she set the dishes before us. She was only

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seventeen, but she had already two children of her own, and was evidently very much at home in all the detail of smuggling as practised on the frontier. Such a package, however, as a six-foot Englishman, with all his impedimenta, had never been 'handled' from that Llivian house.

Finally Biño asked her what she was smiling at, and she said, 'I was thinking of the Señor on the Col of Bellver!' Which showed that the young woman had either been 'out' along with her husband, or had a very pretty gift of second-sight. For, if anyone had been there to see, the Señor did indeed furnish a humorous enough sight upon the Col of Bellver in the small hours of the following morning.

I had expected (and dreaded) a rope ladder as a necessary adjunct for getting away from Llivia. But instead we turned peaceably out into the night, and the door closed behind us. Only we did not depart by the main street, but turned to the left under gloomy arches, past pens that smelt of sheep and yet more convincingly of goat, passing about the church through the lych-gate, and breaking our shins as we did so over the tombs of departed smugglers, who had perished on just such expeditions as ours.

Deep peace dwelt on Llivia - as deep upon the town as upon the churchyard, disturbed only by the scraping of my English boots upon the most intolerable, shaly, clinkery, unnecessarily melodious hillside it has ever been my evil fate to scramble over. Presently we came to a standstill at the edge of a little patch of cultivation - colza, as I judged by the faint mustardy glow underfoot.

'This will never do,' Biño whispered. 'Sit down, Señor!'

I had thought it strange that the feet of my companions made no sound, while I waked the echoes with the clattering of a cavalry division. But I could feel the Man of Many Countries busy with my foot-gear.

'Surely,' I thought, 'he is never going to take off my

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boots and let me walk barefooted over these razor edges.'

But in a moment he had pulled a pair of alpargatas (or canvas shoes with soles of woven cord) upon my feet, and I stood up with a curious feeling of walking in my sleep. Now I was as silent as the others. The alpargatas clung to the slipperiest rock and made no noise on the loosest shale. Biño stowed away my boots somewhere about his pack, and I fell in afresh between the tall young man and my companion. We kept along the ridges high in air. Far beneath I could hear the brawl of the frontier stream in which I had first seen Biño fishing.

At the bridge-end, where I had been stopped earlier in the day, we could see a flicker of light dancing uncertainly on a patch of grey-white road, and a little nearer the silhouette of a dark figure that marched steadily to and fro. The light from the guard-hut flashed on the sentry's sword-bayonet as he changed his musket from one shoulder to the other.

I could hear Biño chuckling behind me.

'They are on the look out for you,' he whispered, pointing with his hand; 'they will wait long! Ah, a long time! We are in France now,' he continued; 'that is the bell of Ur church striking midnight. Go forward quickly, Little Stephen!'

We descended a steep and slippery slope of grass, saw dimly the white houses of a village high on the green Alps to our left, and got our alpargatas sopping wet in certain little streams which we kept fording every minute. Indeed, the whole hillside was alive with the bicker of running water. It was merry to hear in the night. They say Ur is the ancient name for 'waters' - which, indeed, I can well believe, for this Ur is a place of a multitude of them.

Down, down we went, the lush meadow grasses swishing long and dewy about our feet. Little Stephen stepped over a bush and set foot upon a bullock, which 'routed' with surprise, and then made off with a clumsy rush in the direction of the little river. In a moment Biño's hand was on my shoulder and I could see that Little

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Stephen had instantly dropped on all fours. I imitated my companions. It was like playing at Covenanters-and-Persecutors among the Galloway moss-hags. I was glad to find I was not yet too old for the game.

'Civil guards!' he whispered. And from the depths of a willow, on whose rough hollow trunk I lay prone as Alexander Peden on Corriedow, I could see two motionless figures sitting their horses on the opposite bank. They conferred together, presumably as to what had caused the bullock to break its rest with such cumbrous haste.

'If this were not France they would fire across on the chance of making us run,' murmured Biño; 'as it is, they will go down and stir up the French picket to come after us.'

It fell out so. The two civil guards (I became acquainted with them later, not in the way of business) turned their horses and rode slowly down the glen in the direction of the French posts.

Little Stephen put his hand back and touched me softly.

'Now,' he said, 'hold your watch in your mouth - everything else that will spoil in your hat!'

And then, with a gait which I could not imitate, apparently running on all fours, he sped off down the steep side of the stream. In another moment I felt the water pushing cool about my legs. Biño took one hand, Little Stephen the other. The current was strong, for there had been a spate somewhere among the mountains away towards Porta. Mid-leg, waist-deep, breast-deep, the chill crept up, till I thought the thing had gone quite far enough. Then all at once I became aware of Little Stephen above me, dripping water on my head from a ledge. A pull, a push, and the two of us were beside him. The men gave their leathern bags a shake, felt for the tie knot of their alpargatas that they might not stumble over it, and then all three of us set stout faces to the stey brae. It was indeed steep though happily short, and presently we were out again on the plain lands of the Spanish Cerdagne.

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I cannot fit words to my remembrance of the speed at which we crossed this half-English belt of country. Ditches, hedges, stone walls, clumps of trees, we halted not a moment for any of these. When a house appeared we gave its clamorous dogs a wide berth - otherwise we kept straight for the opposite range of high mountains. There was a chillish wind blowing, clear and tingling. Nevertheless the pace kept us warm. So fanning was the wind that by the time we had reached the pines on the foothills and smelt the rare odour of the juniper berries I was quite dry.

Then came some rough, ugly work on slippery ground like a railway embankment which the navvies are still piling, or, more exactly, like the moraine of a 'shrinking' glacier. My alpargatas got filled with stones, small like shot, and for the moment I missed my boots very much. But at the top of this talus we came on the first belt of pines, some of them with little more than their tops showing above the unstable surface. They had been snowed, or rather sanded, under.

Here Little Stephen threw himself down with an 'Ouff!' of intense satisfaction.

'Premier étage! One storey up!' said Biño, casting down his bag and scooping a comfortable lair for himself in the sand with a convenient outlier of his body.

I had been under the impression that we were already at the top, but I made no remark. My desire for a more interesting entrance into the land of smugglers than by the cars of the Peninsular Express was assuredly not to be disappointed.

Here we rested a quarter of an hour and ate some bread and olives, washing the meagre fare down with a draught of wine smelling of resin and the tan of the goatskin - which, however, warmed the way it went with a vigour begotten of having been previously well-laced with aguardiente.

'Drink,' said Little Stephen; 'it will make you long-winded. It comes from Cabrera's country, even from

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Vinaroz near to Tortosa.'

And apparently he was right. For whereas hitherto I had gone with difficulty, now I trod on air. I acquired the clearsighted elation of a man who has got his 'eye in' at golf. We mounted through the pines, up and up, keeping mostly on the crests of the ravines so as to escape the falling stones, which began to go whisking past our heads in a most suggestive manner. Then all abruptly the pines ceased, and above us, flecked and streaked with unmelted snow, hung a wonderfully serrated and bastioned range of peaks. So imminent they were that I thought they must surely fall on our heads.

'Second storey - and only the mansarde above!' said Biño, cheerily propping himself against a wall of rock, which afforded some shelter from the steady chill push of a wind that seemed to hit us as if we were naked, so freely did it pass through our garments.

How the rest of the night went by I hardly know. The black frowning ridge above somehow melted mysteriously away as we approached. We slid into a gorge which cut windingly through it. The bottom and sides of this trench were sleeked with fallen snow, coarse as rock-salt and crunching loudly under the feet. Then again down we went, striking this way and that through an intimate tangle of ravines, gullies, cols, breakneck paths, and slippery scree, such as I would have supposed no single man to possess the secret of. But Little Stephen went forward readily and easily in the dark, like a man ascending his own staircase to bed, while from behind Biño assisted him with occasional comment and advice.

It was in the small hours of the morning, bandied between my companions, that I first heard a name which was to become exceedingly familiar. I will call the place they spoke of 'San Severino,' for though that was not the appellative of the real patron saint of the dwelling, it contains the same number of letters.

'At what time shall we reach San Severino?' inquired Biño.

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'For me,' said Little Stephen, 'I shall come with you only to the goat-herd's hut at the foot of Bellpuig. I must be back at Llvia by daybreak, or at least, over the fords of Ur. But once upon Bellpuig you can find the way for yourselves!'

'Easily enough,' said Biño readily. And the two ran over local directions and indications - how the way went 'past this stone, then by the white rock to the left of the crest, down the left bank of the arroyo - and be sure to whistle three times and receive an answer before advancing. You remember what happened to Grammunt's Francisco?'

I did not ask what happened to Grammunt's Francis - probably a couple of rifle bullets did the whistling which Francis had omitted. The frontiersmen of the Pyrenees do not allow any second deal in cases of mistake. If the aim is good, the loser pays for his mistake.

It was a delicate task to remunerate Little Stephen when he bade us 'good-bye,' with an assurance that the rest of my baggage would follow me in a day or two.

'If you love strange things you will not be in a hurry to leave San Severino, Señor,' he said, putting my hand aside - 'no, no money. But if when you return to your own country, you will send me some English service cartridges for my little gun here (he produced an officer's revolver of good London make), that will repay me tenfold for a trip which has been a pleasure in itself.'

He slipped the bag from his shoulders, and Biño did it carefully about me so that its weight would fall in the right spot.

'Now I will go fast,' he said. 'God go with you, gentlemen both!'

And go fast he did - so fast that he was out of sight in a moment. Biño watched him, whistling low to himself. Then he nodded his head and said, 'Yes, he will go fast. There is no one in all the hills, from Canigou to the Atlantic, who can go so quickly as Little Stephen. Pity he cannot lead a party! His head is not so strong as his legs.'

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But for a guide, and to do as he is bid - ah! I would rather have Little Stephen with me than any dozen - always excepting certain of those good gospellers whom we shall meet at San Severino down there.'

'And pray what is San Severino, and whom shall we meet there?'

'San Severino is an old monastery,' he answered, 'only nowadays they are somewhat strange monks who dwell within the abbey walls. It was a Carlist headquarters during the war, and indeed, to tell the truth, it is little else yet. The government gendarmes and Guardias Civiles give it a wide berth, or else approach it humbly. Nevertheless there are few folk so honest as Manuel Sebastian and his family, or whom I would rather have on my side when it comes to the quick pull on the trigger of fate.'

We stood up, and the rüch-sack felt unexpectedly light. But I did not know how heavy it would weigh ere I entered the gate of San Severino with the morning light.

The convent, when at last we glimpsed it, stood immediately under the crest of a great wave of mountain ridge, which curled over it as if about to fall momentarily, yet three hundred years had gone by without bringing to the ground so much as one pinnacle of the stubborn limestone. Grey, battered, bleak, the very tiles of the roof bleached hay-colour by the winter storms, the towers of the monastery stood up on its flat plateau, stern and square as if cut from the native rock. I was strangely mistaken if a shrouded bottle-shaped mass in the corner done up in tarpaulin, did not represent a cannon. Every detail of the architecture was perfectly clear, for we stood not three hundred yards from the twenty-foot wall which surrounded the farm-monastery on all sides.

Biño whistled thrice, without, however, exposing himself. Then, after a pause of listening, three times again. This time there came an answer back - two whistles and then two.

'That is for us to show ourselves,' he said.

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We came out and stood clear on the ridge, outlined against the sky.

'That is to give them time to examine us through the glass - they have a very powerful one,' he murmured. 'I myself brought it from Toulouse! Ah, they will not be long - they know Biño. There, I thought so!'

The gate was opened, and three or four tall men came forth, shutting the fastenings carefully behind them.

'Now,' said Biño, with increasing excitement, 'we will go down and shake the hands of the bravest men in all Spain - aye, or France either. And I that speak to you am a Frenchman born, though a mongrel by adoption.'

We went down a well-beaten path, and as we drew near Biño whispered that it would perhaps be better if he went on ahead and explained my presence. The Sebastians were naturally somewhat careful about those whom they admitted to their intimacy.

'But do not fear, my word will be sufficient. That, and the fact that you have had a difficulty with the officials, will ensure your welcome.'

So on a table of rock I sat down and thought what a little way into Spain does the hand of the law reach. Biño conferred apart with the guardians of San Severino, and then after a pause he and they came towards me.

'Señor,' said Biño, saluting me first and then bowing to the four men, 'permit me to introduce to you the four evangelists of San Severino - Don Matthew, Don Mark, Don Luke, and Don John.'

The four men uncovered and bowed profoundly, as indeed I did myself. Then the eldest of them took me by the hand, and said, 'Señor, I bid you welcome to San Severino in the name of our father, who awaits you within.'

We were silent as we went towards the gate - I, because languages come slowly back to me, and only after the ear has been attuned for a while to their use.

Even Biño, moreover, seemed a little impressed. The

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grey boundary wall rising bare and high out of the savage wilderness of rock and juniper, without an ear of corn or sign of cultivation anywhere, was curiously impressive. All the interior buildings were hidden behind it, and we seemed to be prisoners advancing under escort into some fortress prison of monkish tyranny.

The four Sebastian evangelists stood back for us to pass in. We entered, not by the great gateway, which I never saw unbarred all the time of my sojourn in San Severino, but by a little port of grey unpainted wood, studded with great bolts of iron. As soon as we were within the enclosure bars were shot as in a prison, and I looked about me in astonishment.

On all sides extended ranges of buildings - the closeness of the windows one to the other, and the unmistakable 'barracks' look revealing the monastic purpose for which they had been intended. Through a gate into a second enclosure we caught a glimpse of a stable yard and many cattle pulling fodder out of openwork racks. Meanwhile the door at the top of the main staircase was opened, and there waiting to welcome us, stood one of the noblest figures I have seen - an old man tall and spare, but erect and of a military carriage. White hair fell gracefully upon his shoulders, curling a little outwards at the ends. He wore snowy unstarched linen at the neck and sleeves - the ancient Aragonese costume - black velvet knee-breeches, white sash, and an open shell jacket with many small gold bullets for buttons.

'Señor,' said Biño, with a wave of his hand in introduction, 'you are in the presence of Don Manuel Sebastian!'

The old man took me by the hand and said, 'I bid you welcome! All that is in my house is yours!'

We walked down a long stone-flagged passage with ranges of doors opening to one side and glassless loopholes at regular intervals all along the outer wall. Then, quite unexpectedly, my host drew aside a heavy

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string curtain and ushered me into an apartment which to my eyes, accustomed to the small cottage rooms of the Ariège and the French border-lands, seemed nothing less than immense. The roof rose, lofty as that of a church. The rafters, where I could see them, were black with age. Doubtless it had been the kitchen of the monastery, and was now the general meeting-place of the family of San Severino.

Here and there peasant women in short Aragonese kirtles were busy about an immense fireplace. But the many tiny fires were of charcoal, and the cooking on the primitive casserole plan, so that the room was no more than comfortably warm. Two girls, dressed simply in black, and evidently belonging to the Sebastian family, vanished discreetly behind another curtain as we entered.

Everything was characterised by an antique simplicity eminently pastoral. Manuel Sebastian insisted that I should sit in his own great chair as the place of honour. As soon as he found that my foot gear was sopping with the snows he ordered one of his sons to bring a basin of water, and despatched a maid for dry hose and alpargatas.

Upon the return of his youngest son, the chief of the house-servants, an old woman, infinitely wrinkled, and yet with a curious antiquated kindness looking out of her eyes, knelt down before me, and to my exceeding discomfort began to remove my wet socks. All the time she kept saying something in dialect, but save from the smiles of those about I could not guess at her meaning.

Seeing my difficulty Don Manuel came over and explained, 'She is the foster-mother of all these;' he pointed to his sons, 'also of my daughters within there, and she says it is her right to wash the feet of men. She has suckled many, and all her own are dead!'

By this time a long table had been laid, and while Don Manuel held me in talk - of England, of Don Carlos, and of the future prospects of 'the cause,' with the tail of my eye I could see one of the daughters of the house

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enter and give some directions to the women. She was tall, clad in deep black, but her face had a strange drawn whiteness, and her eyes a lustrous sadness such as I have rarely beheld on any countenance. I watched what Biño would do upon her entrance. He was standing among the evangelist brothers, and it seemed to me that as their sister entered they stood more closely about him as if to prevent any greeting. I resolved therefore, for my own part, to wait events.

There was so much of Oriental and Biblical about the family that it might well be that they had a certain Arab convention with regard to the seclusion of their women.

So I sat and watched Don Manuel, wondering at the air of high simplicity which set his bold features so well, and which ever and anon kept haunting me with a resemblance, a resemblance annoying in proportion to the difficulty of fixing it. It was most puzzling when he spoke Castilian, slow, clear, and oratorical. When he dropped into rapid colloquial French the resemblance seemed to disappear. It was not till he threw back his head in order to shout an order in Catalan to a herdsman who looked in for a moment, that I had it.

Don Manuel was a Spanish Gladstone! There was the same spare frame, though altogether larger and more bony; the same imperious eye, black and piercing; the eagle's beak, which might have been cruel but was only determined. And in imperative speech or quick reproach both had the leonine back-throw of the head which fixed the resemblance. Afterwards I found other points of likeness. Don Manuel was a Gladstone who had been all his life a fighter with his hands, all his life a leader with his head; who had lived on Pyrenean mountain tops as unchallenged in authority as David in his hold in Engedi; who had never changed his opinions; who began and ended where Mr. Gladstone had only begun – 'the hope of the stern unbending Tories' from Guipuzcoa even to Cataluña.

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Presently, while we still talked, the younger of the two girls in black entered with a tray, which she set down at Don Manuel's right hand. Still no introduction was made. Our host simply poured out small glasses of some delicately scented liqueur, one of which he presented first to me as the greater stranger, and afterwards another to Biño.

It was home-confected cherry brandy, much finer than anything sold under that name in commerce, being distilled at the monastery and flavoured with wild aromatic plants from the sierras. The old woman, who had insisted on washing my feet, remembered the days before 1835 and the dispersal of the monks. She it was who had guarded the recipe and still superintended its annual decoction.

At eleven Don Manuel looked about him sharply, as a gilded eight-day clock, shaped like an hour-glass, chimed the hour. He nodded to a herdsman lounging on one of the locker benches which ran round the sides of the kitchen. The man rose, threw down the striped woollen plaid he had been wearing round his neck, laid his hands on a rope which dangled beside the wall, and instantly the clang of a great bell resounded from high above. Don Manuel smiled at my wonder, as the sound swelled and reverberated from the hill crests about.

'It is San Martin, the old convent bell,' he said. 'Often and often as a boy I have heard it call to matins and vespers in the old days - often after that to sterner business. But now we use it as a dinner-bell. We are degenerate folk and have fallen on poor heartless times, but we must do the best we can.'

Then in came a score of rough-clad men one after the other, each bowing with the instinctive grace of the Spaniard to the head of the house, to me the guest, and to the daughters of the family.

All took their places at table in silence. The upper end of the board was laid with a white cloth, coarse but spotlessly clean. The rest was bare wood, but scoured

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almost as white. The girls came and stood opposite us, in the places reserved for them at Don Manuel's right hand. The house-father held up his hand. All followed his example, and in a kind of chant the words rolled out: 'In the name of God the Father, of Christ His Son, of our blessed Lady Mary of the Immaculate Conception, and of our sovereign the Lord Carlos, King of Spain. Amen.'

It was at once a benediction and an oath, every morning renewed, of fidelity to the things which were for ever past.

In that sudden clamour of sound there was something Gothic, barbaric, primeval. Not otherwise shouted the warriors who raised Pelayo on their shields. With such a crying burst Cid Campeador and his warlords on the turbaned men. Old days when men were stormily sure of things and held them once for all, spoke to me in that cry, which indeed stirred the pulses like blown trumpets. Then in another moment all at the lower end of the table were seated. Only Manuel stood still, and at last with a graceful gesture made the delayed introductions.

'My daughter Isidra and the little maid, our house-babe, Carmen, whom among ourselves we call Chica!'

The younger laughed and called out, 'Chica, indeed - I would have you know I am not so very little, but that once on a time you were less!'

At which her evangelist brothers laughed, and the nearest pinched her cheek saying, 'Little and foolish - so it was ever with our babe!'

But the elder daughter, Isidra, moved no muscle, nor could I see that she bowed ever so slightly in reply to our salutations. At which, having proved the high-bred courtesy of the family, I wondered much.

The repast was plenteous, and saving some difference in the wine on my account, the same for gentle and simple - soup of lentils, trout with a sauce of white wine, a fragrant olla, delicious brown bread, and the rich red Spanish wine. A dish of olives stood ready to hand,

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fresh from the brine, and from one end of the table to the other the goatskin gurgled incessantly. There was in the wine which I drank a resinous twang, not unlike the flavour of Greek vintages, but with nothing unpleasant about it.

When the meal was over there was no stated dismissal, or anything like the ceremonious beginning. Each herdsman and labourer rose when he had finished, made his bow to Don Emmanuel at the table-head, and went about his affairs.

Doña Isidra never once raised her eyes. The lashes which lay on her pallid cheek were of an astonishing length and blackness. But she said no word, and hardly ate or drank. Babe Chica (the 'Little One'), on the other hand, chattered incessantly, continually breaking off into Basque or Catalan in order to achieve her phrases. For on that borderland of tongues every word is current coin, and half the inhabitants are not conscious which language they are talking.

But Don Manuel was quick to check his younger daughter, bidding her to speak either French or Castilian. At which she thrust out her lips in a little pout, saying, 'French I speak like a Spanish cow, and as for Castilian, that is the language of the black Alfonsists!'

'It is the duty of good children to speak that which is understood of the stranger within their father's gates!' said Don Manuel sententiously.

Whereat the girl pouted still more, and for a while was silent. She was about fifteen or sixteen, and had long been conscious of her position as spoilt child in a family of men.

With regard to her sister I could make no guess as to her age, but she was clearly much older than Carmen.

When the cigarettes were lighted I sauntered into the open air, anxious to see the outside surroundings of this curious home. Passing out by the herdsman's door, quite unexpectedly I found myself in a court of beaten earth, strewn with juniper branches and rough heath -

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straw being evidently too precious a commodity to be used as litter so high among the mountains.

I strolled on through a well-tended garden, with flowers and pot-herbs growing in alternate beds. Something white attracted my eye at the end of an avenue of dark yews. I stepped quietly along, conscious of a kind of solemnity in the shade of that gloomy vista. Presently I saw on either hand niches and inscriptions. By the wall and beneath the trees broken tombs and headless statues of recumbent abbots lay piled. I had stumbled upon the burial-place of the ancient abbey of San Severino.

I stood musing, dreaming of all that these once great men had seen and done in their day, and thinking how long it would be before our best modern reputations and high magnificences were cast down, shattered, and forgotten, even as they. There was eternity in the thought.

Then all at once there came to me the sense that I was not alone. I turned and saw Doña Isidra sitting on a low wall, her head bowed under her dark mantilla. She was weeping very bitterly - so lost in grief indeed that she neither saw nor heard.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE ADVENTURE OF DOÑA ISIDRA

As I saw it then, the little graveyard of the ancient abbey of San Severino lay flooded with sunlight, dreaming in the mellow afternoon languor. But just under the shadow of the cloister wall there was still one last blue swathe of coolness. For the high airs of the central chain visited it on their way across to the Canigou, and, in particular, stirred the yellow lily heads which were ranked thickly about one grave, with a faint continuous rustling. Beside it sat Doña Isidra.

My instinct was to withdraw softly, but the motion of the girl's hands stopped me. She stretched them out over the low grassy mound with a little pathetic movement, at once wistful and unconscious, which I had never seen except in the dying or those in the grasp of mortal weakness. I ought to have gone away; yet, somehow, I could not choose but look.

She murmured something in a caressing tone, of which I could only distinguish the words, 'Speak to me!' The girl was making an appeal to someone unseen - present, indeed, to her mind, and perhaps also to her eyesight, but to every one besides laid to rest under that green sod.

I turned, and was moving away on tiptoe. But even as I did so, Don Manuel appeared from the abbey chapel by some door which I had not noticed, and, going up to his daughter, he touched her with infinite gentleness on the shoulder. I think I have never seen so rapt a face as she raised to his. It was like that of an angel on a rood-screen, shining all over with fulfilled and heavenly desire.

'He has spoken - he has answered!' she said, nodding joyously to her father. And, what made the look of happiness on the girl's worn face more remarkable - the tears were still running freely down her thin cheeks.

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They fell upon her father's hand, and he let them bide there. I slipped quietly away; but as I went I could hear him coaxing the girl to return to her chamber out of the heat of the sun.

'Yes, I can go now,' she said, laughing a little; 'he has not forgotten Isidra!'

I was busily employed in examining some of the broken sculptures in the cloisters when they came out hand in hand. A devil with his head split from crown to ear grinned at them, or perhaps gleefully at my sudden preoccupation. His trumpet-shaped nose had once on a day been the spout of a gargoyle, and the monks (or the elements) had wasted much detail upon his expression.

I affected not to observe the pair, and, drawing out my note-book, made bold to sketch the complicated leer of the mutilated demon. But, as soon as she saw me, Doña Isidra left her father's hand, and running across the grass she touched my arm, saying, 'He also did that! You are his countryman. Perhaps you knew my Don Richard Vincent, you English stranger?'

'No, no, my daughter,' said Don Manuel, following her with the gentlest expostulation. 'It was all so long ago -'

'Long ago!' cried the girl, flashing out at him almost angrily. 'Why, he has just spoken to me! There - where the lilies are yellow!'

She pointed back to the entrance to the graveyard with one hand, grasping my arm meantime with the other. 'Come with me and you shall hear for yourself,' she said; 'come, Englishman! He will not speak before him' (pointing to her father) 'because he never liked my Don Richard. Ah - stand back from me - off, off! You are not my father! Had it not been for you, he - himself - might have been standing beside me in the dear warm flesh, instead of lying yonder - dead! Yes, dead! And cold!'

Then it was pitiful to see the stern old man trying to take her hand with soft murmurs of deprecation, like one who pleads with a sick child.

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'Come,' she said, without taking any notice of him, but still smiling at me and laying her thin fingers on my sleeve; 'come, I bid you. He will talk to you, I am sure. He speaks most in the morning, very early, when the mists are on the hills! And, when he is most pleased with me - when I am happy and content to go on waiting and waiting, then, ah then, he will speak to me at any hour of the day. But it is not often like that. For I fret - I weary - I am not good. And then he is silent. He will not speak. He is angry with his Isidra!'

I looked up at Don Manuel, and through the bitter pain on the old man's face I could see him signal to me. 'Yes,' the sign said, 'go with her - do not cross her.'

So I went with the woman whom God had stricken, I knew not why. Her father followed heavily after, his haggard face bent upon the ground. But she stopped him imperiously at the gate, setting her palm almost fiercely to his breast.

'No farther,' she said, 'stand back there. Once already have you sent him away. That is enough of ill to do for one day, surely - man that was my father!'

We walked across a space of turf, dazzlingly green in the sunshine. In the midst, the girl gave a little cry, and running, she flung herself down on the raised grass of the tomb. Her hands were clasped in an ecstasy.

'He is pleased with me today,' she said in a low even strained voice, like one who fears to wake a patient sick unto death; 'he called even before I came near. It is because he has something to say in his own tongue - something that I cannot understand - though, indeed, he began to teach me English. Yes' (she turned quick as some feline creature to me), 'I can spikk Engliss. I love you wita my heart, Deek, mine Deek!'

She laughed merrily and clapped her hands at her own success, and my astonishment. Then she spoke again in her own tongue.

'I have not forgotten - no, Isidra has not forgotten one word he ever said. But his own language! He loves

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that! Listen - I bid you!

And, pulling me down to my knees, she signed that I too must hearken, watching me all the time with the most pathetic anxiety in her face.

'Is it not so?' she repeated. 'He speaks - it is his own language. 'I love Isidra,' he says - so much I understand - what is the rest?'

And with the tail of my eye I could see Don Manuel signalling to me from the doorway which he dared not enter.

'You hear his voice?' she repeated anxiously, all her soul in her words. I nodded. Then an air of infinite relief came over her face. 'And they say it is fantasy - that no one can hear him but Isidra! Carmen sometimes, to please me, pretends she hears, but then when I ask her what he says, she cannot tell me. Perhaps because he speaks English when she comes near. But you hear - you understand! You are of his nation. What does 'Dick mine' say?'

'He says, 'I love Isidra!' I answered.

She nodded gaily. 'I know - I know - but the rest? Quick, tell me the rest.'

'I shall love Isidra for ever!' That is what he says,' I continued. And I do not think I lied.

She cast one searching, wistful glance up at my face, and then rising, clasped her hands as she had done upon entering.

'Yes, yes,' she murmured; 'that is what he always used to tell me at first! But afterwards he says other things. Listen, he is speaking again!'

But I heard only the rustle of the hill wind among the daffodils. I had no interpretation. The girl turned to me again. Twenty years seemed taken from her age. She looked over her shoulder to see if Don Manuel were within hearing distance, and then, pulling me down to listen, she began to speak in my ear, hastily and confidentially.

'You think it strange that he whispers, but that is because he wishes to be heard only by those he loves -

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those who trust him. They do not believe - these!

With a large backward gesture of contempt she took in the buildings of San Severino and all their inhabitants.

'Why should they?' she continued, laying her hand on her breast. 'They have living hearts beating here - not dead and dull ones like mine and his. Their god is their belly. They mind earthly things - and speak them out loud. But the dead speak in whispers - for if they spoke out loud, so that all could hear, the world would never sleep again. You sleep seldom, they tell me, and then not for long. I heard Biño tell my father so - I mean Don Manuel Sebastian. I never sleep at all! That is why I can hear 'Dick mine' so well.'

With another quick change of mood she sat down and pulled a piece of embroidery out of her pocket.

'Ivy leaves, you see,' she said; 'you can guess why. He used to bring me one every time he came, to wear in my hair. It is the English custom. You see they do not fade like flowers or change with the seasons. They wear like my love for you,' he said, and he spoke truth. So I have planted them beside his grave, and they do not change. The lilies alter, but not they. So when I need company I bring my work, and we sit and gossip like two friends - he under, and I above. That is sweet, is it not - when death itself does not alter love? Is it always so in your country?'

But I had no words to answer her with.

'They think I am mad,' she went on, smiling. 'He thinks so - Don Manuel - they all think so. This is because they are afraid of the dead. They are afraid to die. Thrice blessed Maria, if they but knew! Life, not Death, is the thing to be feared. To have to go on living when all the time you pray for death! Why should I be afraid of 'Dick mine' now, when I loved him so much alive - before - that - happened - which - happened?'

The last words were spoken slow and distinct, like the tolling of a passing bell.

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All the while I was in mortal fear lest she should ask me to tell her more of what I heard the rustling heads of the lilies say to me. But speedily she relieved my mind.

The deadly grief of her soul vanished as frost from a window pane when the fires are lighted within. There came a happy look into her eye. She nodded brightly up at me.

'Now you can leave us,' she said. 'I fear I have wasted overmuch of your time. Besides (here she smiled), we that are old lovers have many things - sweet things - to say between ourselves. You understand!'

She leaned towards the lilies clustering on the grave, and in a confidential, everyday tone, she added, 'He is going soon, Dick mine!'

In answer, the daffodil blooms rustled, perhaps not wholly in irony, because she at least understood them. They spoke to her. I turned and went my way. As I lifted my Basque cap I saw her drawing the black mantilla closer about her, like one who with loving solicitude has been bidden to wrap herself well from the wind's shrewdness. And I doubted not that she had once more heard and obeyed the Voice.

At the porch, retired into a little recess, Don Manuel was waiting for me. His fine, large-featured, forth-looking face appeared drawn and well-nigh desperate. The pain of his soul had marked it deep. Upon the instant I resolved what I must do. I must get out of San Severino as fast as I could. A stranger should not intermeddle with the grief of such a household. For there is no sorrow like that, when a beloved object turns without cause against its own. And here, for aught I knew, there might be cause enough.

To my surprise it was Don Manuel who began to speak of that which had taken place within the cemetery. His mood, his very manner, were altered from those of the dignified patriarch of the house. He spoke hastily -

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almost, as it were, in deprecation of any harsh judgment on my part.

'I thank you, sir,' he said, 'for your forbearance in thus humouring the delusion of my unhappy daughter. Heretic or not, what you do to help her will be reckoned to you for righteousness. Of that make no doubt. Since you have thus, by no fault of your own, or of mine, been brought into our sorrow, I judge it necessary that you should know the truth.'

'Don Manuel,' I said eagerly, 'I beg that you will not feel compelled to tell me anything whatever. I will immediately take my departure. I am a wanderer, and I can only hope that you will forgive my unintentional intrusion, and in the meantime accept a thousand thanks for your most gracious hospitalities.'

'Ill merited are your thanks as yet,' said the old man, 'but I beg that you will continue to accept the poor cheer which San Severino can offer in these degenerate days. It is but little that Manuel Sebastian can do for his guest now. But I tell you plainly, if Isidra, my daughter, is of the mind to give vent to her troubles by talking with you - by speaking of the man whose love has brought her thus low - it may be the happiest day that hath dawned - not only for her brethren in the hall, but for me, her father, who now pleads with you, being ashamed to ask so much from a stranger.'

Thus talking, we passed out of the gate of the monastery, our feet following a well-trodden path through a dell where the wild thyme scented every yard with its fragrance, mingling with the blown resin-tang of the pine needles on either side. In a little while the path began to mount steeply, then it turned sharply round a pinnacle of rock, and lo! beneath us lay stretched out a long pass, almost a defile, cleft through the heart of the mountains towards Andorra, the snow-capped summits of the Eastern Pyrenees, and the triple crest of the Canigou guarding it on either side.

Mechanically Don Manuel sat down; and then rising

hastily again he offered me the seat on the smooth slab of stone, which, as I perceived from scratchings upon it and the hard-trodden look of the earth all about, had long served as a look-out post. But I declined, and threw myself at length on the dense elastic carpet of aromatic juniper, benty fescue grass, and darnel, which lifted me up off the ground as on a mattress of woven wire.

Don Manuel drew out his book of Alcoy papers, and rolled himself a cigarette with the easy precision of an automaton. He was evidently thinking deeply all the while, and I took care not to interrupt him, but lay to all appearance absorbed in the magnificent prospect of half the snow summits in the Pyrenees stretched out before my eyes. With the lifetime habitude of a Spaniard, the old man inhaled his loosely rolled cigarette in half a dozen long whiffs, and then exhaled them slowly as he talked.

‘This was the beginning of our sorrow,’ he said, looking away into the distance through the haze of smoke which surrounded him. ‘In the last years of the war, when Carlos, our king, was once more betrayed by his own, this our Isidra, my daughter, was merry and young even as is Carmen, her sister, this day. But, to these old eyes at least, far more beautiful than Carmen (a good girl, mind you, and a golden) will ever claim to be. And many were they who thought so.

‘A busy place was San Severino in those days. Aye, a King sat where you sit today, in the chief guest’s place, nor would he permit me, his servant, to serve him. I must sit at meat with him in the master’s seat, and entertain him as a host. Yet princes of the blood of Bourbon and Condé stood behind his chair.

‘But our Isidra cared for none of these, neither for King nor princes. Scarcely would she wave her hand to them. For we of the north are not as the men of the south, who shut up their women-folk like brooding pullets. Only, be it said, the maid had four brothers and a father. There was no fear.

‘Nor was there - from without. But I had forgotten

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that a woman's heart is always taken from within. There dwells a traitor who unbars the door and lets in the foe - which thing not fathers nor many brethren standing about can prevent.

'And so it was with Isidra.

'For when the days were full, came an Englishman, one Richard Vincent, young, good to look upon, bold too, standing in fear of nothing. In those days of peace all the world that was young and gallant came to Spain for a sight of war, and some few also for the sake of striking a blow upon the weaker side. But of these were not many Englishmen. For ye are not of the Religion - you English. And (what we count the deadly sin!) you have shed the blood of your anointed Kings - even of that very Charles who, they say, came here a-courting to Spain.

'But somehow, from the first time I set an eye upon Richard Vincent, I mistrusted him. He had no care for our blessed Religion - nor, indeed, for any other. He never looked inside a church unless he had seen a pretty woman go in before him. And when he met a priest, he would take the other side of the way. Oh, yes, we who are fighting for the King and Holy Religion, know by these signs our true friends. But at the time I thought no more than that he was, like many another, enamoured of the clanking of spurs and the clash of battle - knowing too that he would think quite other of it after his first green wound.

'He was of excellent family, this Englishman, and came with recommendations from the highest quarters. He was ready with his tongue, too, and with his pen - had been in Spanish America and spoke our Castilian with the South American accent - but, as all now know, to the best purpose for himself.

The King himself took a fancy to the young man, and, as his custom was, made him on the spot one of his favourite councillors. Was there ever yet a Spanish prince who took counsel from his own, but always with the alien? Yet if the Bourbons had not the good old Spanish

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vices, the sins royal of kings, mayhap we would not have died for them so readily.

‘So it chanced that while Don Carlos abode at San Severino, and Don Jaime of Parma came daily from the camps, going to and fro, this Don Richard Vincent, the Englishman, used our house as his own, and (what none had ever done before) cast the glamour of love upon the young maid Isidra.’

As he said these words the old man crushed a spray of feathery juniper between his strong fingers till the parched spines were small like snuff. Then he scattered the dust to the winds.

‘Ah,’ he continued, stolidly and without heat, ‘wherefore did God not give me insight, that I might have ground him to powder - thus!’

Don Manuel thought a while, and I began to fear that he did not mean to tell me any more.

‘But to give the dog his due,’ he went on at last - hastily, like one who has won a victory over himself, ‘in love the Englishman was true - yes, steel true, and I blame not any woman for thinking so. Only toward men and to the salt he ate, was he false.

‘Briefly, it came to this. There was a leakage somewhere of the secrets of the King. His plans were being betrayed to his enemies. Did we make a march - lo! we were forestalled, and the troops fell into an ambush. We would have suffered more - only these Alfonsist fools had not the knowledge how to hide themselves, nor even the poor courage to fall on when they trapped us. Easily we slipped through the net meshes. But our friends were apprehended by the Frenchmen on the other side of the mountains. Our convoys of ammunition were captured in the passes. Our ablest smugglers were waylaid. Our guns fell into the hands of an enemy so crass, that we knew well he could never have found them out for himself. And all this befell not once, nor twice - no, nor a hundred times.

‘Till one day the King, and he who was far wiser

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than the King, even Don Jaime of Parma, the King's brother-in-law, came to me to take my counsel.

'It is among your own folk that the matter lies,' I said, 'among these incomers who are more to you than any score of faithful subjects. The traitor is one of them! Go find him for yourselves!'

'Then,' said Don Jaime, 'let us watch those who go out from us with despatches - to General Elio at Jaca, and to the army before Bilbao. For since no more than one in six of our messengers ever returns, and but one in three ever delivers his despatches, it is possible that some, mistaking the camp, may deliver them instead to the Alfonsist generals.'

'And that was a thing very well thought on by Don Jaime! Now it chanced that I was watching down by the fords of the Llobregat, in Francoli, a dangerous country, wherein are many enemies of the King. And I watched long and carefully, for the despatches to Tortosa were at that time very grave and in their folds held many men's lives.

'And one morning very early, lying out on the shoulder of the hill where it slopes down to Poblet, I marked one that had been a follower of our camp. He walked furtively, and ever as he went he twisted his neck to see behind him. So I knew the man, and summoned him to stop. But at the first sound of my voice he ran. For the fear of guilt was on him. Now I was lying prone, with my rifle sighted upon a rock a hundred yards ahead of him, which I knew he must needs pass. And so as he went by, the bullet overtook him and he fell.

'But the despatches which were found upon him were written in the handwriting of Richard Vincent, the Englishman, and in his language! There was the list of our forces, their dispositions, together with the plans which had been decided upon only the night before in the King's tent. And that which of itself would prove whether the Englishman was a traitor or no - an appointment had been made for that very night within the ruins of Poblet

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with an Alfonsist officer. Now with a Spaniard, such a writing in a man's own style and rubication, would have proved that man's innocence. For at such a time no man of sense would sign a letter to his own mother, save with a name agreed upon and that not his own - by no means his own. But with the English - one cannot tell what they will do. Now in this one thing I was unlucky. The messenger being dead, there was none from whom to demand explanation. For the bullet had passed between the man's shoulder blades, and after that had splashed upon the rock, as indeed I knew it would. For I had tried the distance twice that afternoon before - knowing that if any man came that way he must perforce brush his shoulder against that rock.

For in those days there was small time for questioning. If, being called upon, a man did not instantly throw himself face downward in the dust, a bullet went through him on the word. So it was with this camp follower - a worthless fellow he was too, a Murcian - Baza his name.

'And so that night we watched within the ruin which thirty years before the Reds had made of beautiful Poblet, my eldest son Matthew and I, Manuel Sebastian. You know Poblet - yes? Well, then we lay behind the great retablo, looking out through the broken porch into the court, where the roses blow all the summer long, and also along the dark arcades where the monks walked in their generations, clad in white, each with four quarterings proven upon his shield on the refectory wall.

But that was long past, and Matthew and I lay silent, with the lizards creeping cold and furtive over us, so still we were. Our rifle barrels and sword bayonets were well rubbed with grease and soot that they might not shine. For we were very near to the trysting-place, and in all the open spaces the moon shone like day.

Half an hour from midnight there entered an officer in the blouse of a labourer. From the direction of Montblanch he came, where the Alfonsist army lay. But

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we knew by the setting of his shoulders, the drilled look, who and what he was. And, besides, we could see his braided gold collar glint under his blue linen. Then after waiting an hour for him there came another, proud, without disguise, even as I had seen him at the assaulting of Pamplona. And when the moonlight shone on his face - lo! it was our Englishman, the favourite of the King Don Carlos, our sometime guest of San Severino.

‘And at the moment I heard Matthew stirring by my shoulder. I knew that he was about to shoot. Also that if he shot, he would slay. For, next to a matter of women, the betrayal of secrets makes men mad. So I whispered to him, ‘Hold, take the other, the Alfonsist! For he might escape on trial, being in uniform and not within our lines. But the Englishman shall die in any case. Therefore let us capture him alive. There are many secrets under his boina!’

‘So, having shot the Alfonsist dead almost at point-blank range, we sprang upon the Englishman, and, if we had not clubbed him in the first surprise with the butts of our rifles, the two of us together would scarce have been able to take him. For, indeed, he fought like the Four Sons of Aymon!

‘But at the end of five minutes we held him, thong-tied hand and foot, and at our mercy. Then I set myself to question him before we slew him. Nor did he deny. Only he asked for time to settle his affairs before he died. But concerning the certainty of his death he questioned not, well knowing.

‘Then we put it to him why he had come among us to betray us. And he smiled and said, ‘It was an order. It was necessary for someone to go. How could I command another to do that which I dared not do myself?’

‘After some while he asked a question which set me thinking.

‘And what, pray you, sirs,’ he said, ‘is your own practice? Don Carlos hath (or rather had, for I found out most of their names,) spies in the camp of the

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Nationalists. It is a necessity in all wars - the highest game to play, and - the greatest risks for the loser. Well, I have lost. Fear not but that I will pay my reckoning. Deliver me to Don Carlos, that I may die. But first, as ye have in you the hearts of men, let me go for a day, that I may do justly by the woman who loves me. Don Manuel, I am trusted to be wed tomorrow!

Then Matthew cried out with a laugh, 'A likely thing that we should let you go! You have deceived us too long. You shall die here and now. What security have we that we would ever set eyes again upon you?'

'Quoth this Don Richard, 'You have only my word and the honour of an Englishman!' And with that he turned to me and said, 'You, Don Manuel, know that I speak truth. If I say that I will be in this place the day after tomorrow at this time, you will find me here ready to pay the penalty. For myself I do not ask the reprieve, but for a woman. Even now I have a priest engaged to marry us, and it will lie on your two souls through eternity if, through you, I keep not my word to the woman who trusted me. Let it be your own case, Don Manuel. If this thing were to do - if you yourself were the man - would not you ask so much grace, that the sin of treachery might not blast your soul through all eternity?'

'Yes,' I answered, 'I would ask!'

"And having passed your word, would you not return - even if it were to death?"

"If I once passed my word I would return!"

"Then can you not believe it of another?" he cried: 'are you the only true man whose word is dearer to him than his life?'

'So as a man I trusted Don Richard, though I knew him for a traitor and a spy, and bade Matthew unloose him.

The Englishman rose, shook himself, and said, 'I thank you, Señor. Your confidence shall not be violated. I will be at your service by this hour the day after tomorrow, if there is any reliance to be placed in

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horseflesh. See to it that you have enough officers to constitute a court-martial, and a good file of marksmen to give me a soldier's send-off! It will not take you long. I have played for my life and lost it. But for the grace you have done me, I promise that you, Don Manuel, shall have cause to be thankful all your days!

'And so with a wave of his hand he was gone, looking, I admit it, very gallant in the moonlight - a man to take any woman's fancy.'

'So, leaving me alone at Poblet, Matthew started out for Monistrol, where there was a camp of our Carlistas, to bring back the officers for the court-martial. Also I wished to send in the despatches which we captured. For that we two should shoot the man, though a traitor, to my mind savoured over-much of murder.

Now Matthew, being young and knowing not the deep things that sway the hearts of men - even of evil men (and this man was far from being evil) - looked never to see him again. But being old, I knew better.

'So, Matthew having departed and Poblet growing very silent, save for the jackdaws among the pinnacles and the great cabra wasps booming about from crevice to crevice, I had much time to bethink me. I thought of the young Englishman and of the woman he had gone to marry. To wed and then to leave her! To return here to die a traitor's death! Surely it had been belter to die once and be done with it. Yet I could conceive of honour which bound him to keep his word - to stake all on the one final favour which we had permitted to him.

'Would he come back? Almost I hoped that he would not. The King's service? Well, that was a great matter, certainly - yet for once it seemed a thing less than this traitor's life.

'Why,' I said to myself, 'should I make of a woman a wife one day and a widow the next?'

'And had it been possible I would even then have

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recalled Matthew, but by this time he was far on his road to Monistrol. Invention had gone from me. I could think of nothing to save the man's life during those hours I spent in the silence of the ruins. None came near me all that day, and but for the dead Alfonsist officer in the vault by the chapel gateway (to the right hand as you enter) I might have believed it all a dream.

I thought of the Englishman standing side by side with his bride - the priest facing them. I thought of the girl (some man's daughter) looking up with trusting face. I thought of the parting - the farewell kiss - the first to the wife new-made - the last also!

"Some man's daughter" - I repeated the words over to myself - 'some mother's child.' Or perhaps like my own - motherless. Which led me to think of Isidra; and I gave thanks to Mary the Blessed Mother, that, circled by her brethren and abiding in the home, she would grow up free and heart-whole, careless of men, till the day when, with her father's blessing and her brothers' approval, she should wed the man given her for her mate.

'As the hours went on I grew more and more resolved that I would stop the Englishman, free him from his oath, and bid him go his way in peace. Why should his blood be on my hands? His treachery to the King was discovered. Well, then, he could do no more harm. And as for the example, what was that to a maid-wife mourning alone for a dead bridegroom?

'So in this access of weakness a sudden fear came upon me that Matthew would return sooner than had been agreed upon. I therefore stole down the avenue in the deepest shadow of it, past the broken statues of the martyrs and confessors, and so went skulking northward till I came to a little hill - the one that overlooks the Espuga, where, among the thorns and prickly pears, I ensconced me. Here I waited closely hidden, for, being of the mountains, I knew well how to conceal myself from

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mere men of the plains.

‘First there passed me two priests, a young and an old, walking sedately so long as any were in sight, but anon glancing over the shoulder and spying none, laughing aloud and clapping each other on the back, very jovial about something. One threw a book he had been reading into the air and caught it again. Which I judged not seemly in a priest.

Then came by a herdsman driving a bunch of cattle. Out of the archway underneath the aqueduct they came suddenly, as from the mouth of a cavern. From the little Espluga hill I could see very far, and even in the moonlight I thought that I should be able to distinguish Matthew and his Carlistas, as well as the Englishman riding alone to take his deserts according to his word.

‘And I, Manuel Sebastian, that am a true Carlist, and have bled for the cause in three wars, I prayed that he might not come. Aye, shame to me, I promised gifts to our Lady of Montserrat if she would aid him to escape the penalty of his treachery. For I said, ‘Surely if every one of us were dealt with according to his sins, who in all Spain would be left to fight either for true King or black pretender?’

I had tasted no meat for twenty hours, yet I felt no hunger. I was so set on saving this man’s life. Yea - though I myself should then be a traitor. For the thought of the woman late wedded lay heavy on my heart.

‘From noon to gloaming I swept the countryside with my eyes till they ached with the glare, and almost refused their work.

‘Once away beyond Espluga I heard a noise, a sound as of many guns going off in the distance, and the crying of men fighting and encouraging each the other. But I thought little enough of that, for Espluga is ever a turbulent town, and the folk of it take to their knives and muskets as naturally as priests pouch their altar dues.

‘So in the declining day - a ruddy orange haze settling slowly in a pool in the west, in the midst the sun

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egg-shaped and red as blood, halving, quartering, and then winking out - I lay among the prickly Moorish figs and waited. And with my long fast, together with the silence, I might easily have fallen asleep. But, being where I was, each time I drowsed and fell forward the cactus prickles waked me. Then I remembered that I was there with purpose to be untrue to the only anointed King and to the cause thrice-fought for. And for what? All that I might save an English traitor's life.

'But again I bethought me of the woman by this time a happy wife, and my heart melted within me. For the old and those who have suffered much are kinder to the young than the young are to each other.

'Long time I waited, till the orange lights grew grey and the twilight brought out the bats fluttering and swooping, while the nightjar cried harshly as it hawked here and there for the long-beaked porcelana moth-birds which come only in the gloaming.

'Yet the plain, as far as I could see it, lay deserted, pallid as an ash heap under the moon. Down there in Esplugas at my feet, the noise sank, and the lights of the supper fires flickered red at the open doors.

'The moon, rising high in the heavens, brightened from lead to polished silver, and all the plain of Francoli grew pearl-grey with mist. So in the pale chill of the light, filtered as through frosted glass, I lay restlessly chewing thistle fluffs and the sour-sweet cactus figs, the after-taste of which cloy the mouth even to spitting.

'But neither did Matthew's cavalcade arrive across the steep sierra from Monistrol, nor yet the single horseman appear out of the north to keep his word and receive his doom. Then came a strange sense of disappointment over me. I feared that the Englishman had not spoken the truth - that, as my son had said, he had been twice a traitor. I was in a strait betwixt two, and knew not what to think. I wanted him not to die, yet I wished he would come to prove his faith to his word.

'But the moon rose higher, growing at the same

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time smaller and clearer. And still the plain lay empty beneath me.

‘But at the hour after the midnight I saw the soldiers coming, and among them they carried one or two wounded. But I saw nothing of Matthew. So, fearing for my son, and being convinced that the Englishman would not return, I betook me quickly back to Poblet.

It was one Ezkerra, a Basque, who met me in the gate, very angry that the traitor had been let go free. ‘And see you,’ he cried, ‘that which your weakness hath done to you and to the cause. As we returned, passing by Martorelli, betwixt that and the Alfonsist camp at Montblanch, there fell on us an ambush, doubtless set by your traitor Englishman. And had it not been for one, a good Carlist and a brave soldier, who is now with us wounded, we had all been slain. He was travelling our way and helped us to beat off the brigands. But as it is, Matthew, your son, fell at the first fire, and if he be not dead, he remains a prisoner in the hands of the enemy.’

Then there came upon me deep anger and sorrow for what in my weakness I had brought on our house.

‘God do so to me and more,’ I cried, ‘if I spill not the blood of this double traitor - for the life of my son!’

Then this Colonel Ezkerra the Basque took me aside and said, ‘Fear not, we will have him yet. Even if he gain the camp of the Alfonsists, still - God is gracious - there are good men with sharp knives that will reach a spy there. The like has been done aforetime. For treachery is an ill trade. It prospers not for many days together.’

‘Also Ezkerra said, taking me by the arm, ‘They will not slay your son - even if he be taken. There are too many hostages of theirs in our hands. It is not as in the first war, when no quarter was given. The world has wagged someway since then! So, leave you Don Matthew in the hand of God, and come and look to the two wounded Garrigas of Puymorens, and to the brave man who succoured us. They have sore need of your skill.’

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'So I went in, and in the cloister arches they were laid a-row. The red morning was spueing up out of the east when I got the bullet out of the shoulder of Juan Garriga of Puymorens, a miller with the meal-dust yet in the crinkles of his broad countenance. He had fainted with the pain, but Ezkerra threw water upon him, as I lifted the now useless lantern and blew out the candle. I passed to the next straw couch. But he who lay beside him was past all aid of man. He was shot through the lungs, and had not long to live. The first level streak of sunshine that came through an eastern wicket fell upon his face.

It was the Englishman, Richard Vincent.

'And when he saw me he smiled and spoke haltingly - as those speak who, instead of air, breathe their own lifeblood.

'I am - a - little - late, Don Manuel,' he gasped, still, however, smiling; 'but the delay was none of my fault. There will be no court-martial. Certain brigand countrymen of yours have saved you much trouble. But a dozen bullets from a firing-party could not have done the business more sufficiently.'

'Then for a time I could not speak. For this marvel almost came between me and my reason.

'Then he said again, 'Once - you - granted me - a prayer. Do this also for me, Don Manuel. Carry me out so that I may not die within walls!'

'So we carried him out, the Basque colonel bearing up his feet and I his head. And when we laid him down he held out his hand and said these words: 'Farewell! God go with you, my father. Kiss my wife, Isidra - little Isidra, to whom I kept my promise!'

'And so, still smiling at my astonishment, the Englishman died - my son, the husband of my daughter. And 'fore God, when I saw him lying cold, traitor though he was, I had rather it had been Matthew, whose whistle you hear upon the hill yonder. For my daughter had wedded a strong man of his word, though a heretic thrice

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condemned. The Son of Mary of Sorrows give his soul ease from his sins! Such shall not dwell for ever remote from God's grace, whatever the priests may say!

Then light as a snowflake that settles on a dyke, ready to be blown further upon the least waft of air, Doña Isidra stole upon us.

'I heard, my father,' she said, looking upon him with love such as she had not shown before. 'It is as I thought - as I knew. One day you would do him justice - poor 'Dick mine.' There was none so true - none so faithful. That which he said he did, though he died for it. My father gives thanks for his son - loves him more than the sons born of his flesh! Ah, these are good words for Isidra to hear - late in the speaking, but good - good! Now I will love you once again, my father!'

And with the light of a new happiness in her eyes, she threw herself impulsively on Don Manuel's neck.

Again I judged that it might be well to leave them alone, but Doña Isidra would not let me go.

'You have brought me two things,' she said; 'my father's good words, and also that he should speak to me so long and so lovingly today - longer than ever before!'

'And now go, my father,' she continued after a pause. 'I will tell the Englishman the thing which befell me - as one cannot tell it even to a father. For he is of his people. He has heard 'Dick mine' speak in his own tongue - aye, and interpreted to me the very words he used to say!'

Without a murmur Don Manuel rose and went up the path, his face greatly lightened of its pain.

'Ah,' said Doña Isidra, smiling with the far-away, half-shy, half-covert look of those whom God hath touched, 'you recline on the rough hill-carpet just as he did - to a marvel. We of the country - we sit or we stand, but you Englishmen cast yourselves down caring nought at all for dignity and very little for snakes. All that is good

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to see once more - very good. But I must hasten. I have much to tell - things that others not of his race may not hear. May I speak French with you? Then the herdsmen will not understand, if one should chance to come this way.

'My brothers call Don Richard, my husband, a traitor. But men who are traitors deal not with women as he dealt with me. They hold not their plighted word at the cost of their lives. Also in what he did, Don Richard was within his duty. From the beginning he was of the army of General Prim - his father a friend of the Dictator's. They had met in England, and Don Richard came with the Count of Reus to Spain. After a time it became necessary to find out the strength and the intentions of the enemy. So he went. Who indeed but he could have ventured? The Carlistas would conceal nothing from an Englishman, so rich, ignorant, careless, debonair! Who was to know (what I knew) that his mother was of Spanish blood and his father an officer in De Lacy's English Legion? That was in the first war.

'Well, he came amongst us. He spoke to me as others spoke, but without flattery. And to begin with I answered him like the others, scornfully and lightly, even as Carmen my sister speaks today, who is but a child. So was I a child. But from the first I knew when his eyes were on mine - aye, even when I was not looking, I knew.

'And I - I watched for him as he rode out by the King. I loved to see them together - these two kings of mine. And once when Don Jaime of Parma spake apart with me, after the foolish manner of the Italians (I thought that he spake kindly, being but a child), Don Richard was very angry. And like an Englishman he would have stricken Don Jaime with his fist on the spot, which would have been death to smite the King's brother. Little Don Richard cared. And Don Jaime, though he was a prince, cried out that the Englishman was right, and asked my pardon courteously, for I knew not what. Scorn or slight I felt none - understood none - being (as I say)

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but a child.

'But after that Don Richard chid me sharply, saying that I was to bide by my father or my brethren.

'And when I cast it up to him how, in that case, he had no right to speak to me, he answered only, 'If I had my way, pretty Isidra, I would be more to you than father and many brethren!'

'So with these words he left me. And I pondered long upon them.

Thus it was, as I think, that I first began to think about Don Richard. And, as it were, in spite of myself, my heart began to go out to him - little by little, but surely. For he never made love to me with night singings and honeyed words as the manner of our country is - but ever in that English earnest, of which I at least proved the power. For, as he well knew, he walked each day with death as with a familiar friend, not knowing the hour when discovery might come upon him. Therefore he husbanded his time, and spoke straight words, such as women love.

Then one day as he went out to battle, he told me that he loved me - plainly he told me, and that he might never come back. Whereat I cried, and he comforted me. And in the comforting a new thing was born in my heart - this love of mine that shall never die.

Up under the pines it was I used to meet him; in a place where I had played as a child. The night was falling when he came to find me - ever with some excuse of despatches, some royal message for my father, both unfeigned (for indeed he had his own way in all things with our Carlos).

Then I would steal down, a mantilla over my head, slipping through the side door of which my father had given me the key, that I might pass to and fro between my chamber and my little rose garden.

'Ah, Señor, there are things that one cannot tell in words. But those who know, know. And those who know not, would never understand.

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‘And now though he is dead and only comes to me in whisperings, and though I cannot feel his arms about me any more, I am not all sorry. I have loved and been loved again. What more holds the life of any woman?’

She seemed to lose herself in reverie. I did not interrupt with any word of mine. I wished the current of her thought to run clear. When she spoke again it was in a lighter vein.

‘Ah, that first night he taught me English,’ she sighed the words. ‘It comes to me clear as out of a burning mist. Have I forgotten? Has Isidra Sebastian forgotten? Do girls in England forget such things? Well, a Basque maiden cannot forget. She hath never giggled in corners nor glanced sideways at boys from balconies as, they tell me, girls do in Madrid and the red Alfonsist towns. We keep our red for blushing, we maids of the Black! And when we love, it is once and for all - not a fresh love every week - bass and tenor time about at the window bars on serenade nights! Do lovers in England never sing serenades? I think not. For once, when foolish young Martin Puy (my brother Luke’s friend) came ‘tink-a-tanking’ at our window - it was my father’s, at any rate, not mine - Don Richard laughed and threatened to go forth and twist his neck! He and I were in the rose-garden under the pines, sitting very close each to other - and listening. Which thing, being heard thus, made of poor foolish Martin Puy a very mirthful jest!

‘Ah, you would not believe that ever I jested and was merry? Yet so it was, and Don Richard too - though, as I tell you, he walked with his life in one hand - had store of good words and bright sayings - aye, and a smile to go with every one! A strange traitor, verily! Yet they call him so to this day.

‘The English? Ah, I had heard it was hard to learn, yet I found it was not so. He was a good teacher, Dick mine - so good, indeed, that I asked him (being fretful) whether ever he had taught his English to any other girl in such fashion before. But at that he stopped my mouth.

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But I held him to the question, and made him answer ere I set him free.

‘Yes, thus it was. I do not forget. When I did my lesson well he rewarded me. And when I could not say the word rightly, he punished me. And strange - you will not understand - the reward and the punishment were one. So zat - ees - why - I - speaka - ze - Eenglish - with - a - good - accent!’

Again her tone changed. She spoke no longer to me.

‘Ah, Dick mine, that you should die, who were so good and so made to make others happy - me, at least! For in love, whatever she may pretend, ‘tis really only herself that a girl cares about. But, indeed, what I tell you is wicked of me. I know, yet I say it. I would rather have had him dead than share him with another. Are girls not like that in England? They are in our Spain. I, at least, am so.’

I intimated by a shake of the head that I did not understand these mysteries.

‘Ah,’ she cried, with a quick flash of youth upon her worn face, ‘that I do not believe. Remember, ‘Dick mine’ told me many things of England. It is a good land, since it gave him to me.’

‘But one day he told me that he must soon depart. The very thought struck me to the soul, as a knife strikes. I could not do without him now. So I pled with him to take me with him. But, because his work was dangerous, and must be done alone, that thing could not be.

‘Nevertheless,’ said he, ‘in two days I shall return, and we shall be married. Father Jerome, who came with me from Bayona, will do as much for my sake. I had occasion to lay him under an obligation.’

‘So at that I clapped my hands with content. I was so young, I thought all would then be well. And his going did not seem to be hard at all. For, come what would, I should have a part in him that none could take away

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from me. And all the time he was gone I said to myself, 'Isidra's husband,' instead of 'Dick mine' as before. Over and over I said it. It was sweet to say. And I spoiled many leaves of paper with scribbling 'Isidra Vincent' upon it, as he had told me was the English fashion of married folk. Yes, I wrote it once on the leaf of my Missal, and had to tear it out lest my father or my brethren should see. And I have thought since that perhaps all the evil which befell might have come from that. Yet perhaps not - we were born fated, he and I, that was all.

Two days he was gone. And then when on the third he came back, he was gay of mood and merry of heart. But now it seems, looking back, that there was a secret weariness on his face. Yet then I minded nothing at all, save that I waited for the hour. And Father Jerome brought two friends of his for witnesses, holy men, and to write things in a book, that all might be properly done. Also Father Jerome gave consent in name of my father, because of course he was absent. So all was done rightly, and I was his - he mine. Wonderful it was to think upon!

'But now I know that when God gives such happiness as He gave then to me. He gives it not for long - lest men and women should not be content with His Paradise, having tasted a sweeter here on earth. Yet it returns in dreams, and I pray to Mary the Mother that what the priest says may not be true - that in heaven there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage! But perhaps God will be a little kinder to those whose joy in each other was but as the clapping of hands together, a moment and no more.

'For the next day, lo! my husband must leave me, and I bide alone looking after him, down the long valley. He gave me his papers, all that concerned himself only. He told me also that there were some in England who would be kind to me for his sake, if ever I wanted kindness. And when I demurred to take the papers, saying that they were doubtless something precious, he bade me have no fear. They were all mine, he said, and

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not another's. For was I not all he had ever loved? - all he had in the world to love? A sweet thing that to keep always as a last message!

'And even when he was gone, there came no sadness over me, no fear, no warning! For all the time could I not feel his ring (it had been his mother's, he said) on its little golden chain about my neck? Often I ran up to my chamber to draw it out, and try it on my marriage finger - to make sure I was indeed a wife!

'And once in the heart of the night, very far away, I heard my husband's voice saying in his English, 'Good-night, little Isidra!' just as he used to do in the rose garden.

"Go with God, Dick mine!" I answered, before I thought, even as he had taught me to say.

'And I held out my arms to him in the darkness.'

'So, indeed he went with God. That was his goodnight. And the morning has not yet broken for Isidra. But break it will. He said so. And now I must go back to him. He has been long alone, and he wearies quickly for me. But - you have brought me good luck, for he is ready to talk today. Sometimes he is sad and silent, and then Isidra, too, sits sadly. And, Señor, do not be too sorry. There are many that are far sadder than I and 'Dick mine.' What is it that old Father Jerome says when he comes, putting his hand on my head? I do not know the Latin words, but it means 'In death not divided!' Now hear me speak the English. Do not I speak it well? Good-a-night! Good-a-bye! Go you also with God!'

CHAPTER THREE

THE MIDNIGHT FREE-TRADERS

To Biño I said nothing of my meeting with Doña Isidra and her father, Don Manuel. After all the matter was a personal one - a secret which circumstances had forced upon me, to be guarded all the more carefully that it was in no sense my own. But I had reckoned without the thousand eyes of a Spanish house, and I soon found that the tact with which I had followed Don Manuel's lead in humouring poor Doña Isidra's delusion was known and favourably commented upon by all at San Severino.

The evangelist brothers came up one by one, speaking frankly and kindly, shaking hands repeatedly, and leaving me with many expressions of goodwill. Even the wild-eyed herdsmen, slipping in from the hill, grew less suspicious, and after a cigar or two given and accepted, most of them found a few words of Castilian, or even of French, wherewith to counter my halting Catalan. We eked out the situation with that *lingua franca* of all Latin countries - abundant gesticulation. In a little while I had a vested right to a place among them under the great whitewashed hood of the fireplace, which I found much more comfortable than the chilly dignity of the chair in which, once on a time, a King had sat.

Here they smoked and told stories eternally, lowering their voices indeed when Don Manuel came in, or rising to bow with Iberian grace when Doña Carmen, or, more rarely, Doña Isidra passed through the house-place.

Outside the walls of San Severino the four Sebastian brothers were in command, subject indeed to their father's supreme authority. But within they were treated as the herdsmen and labourers - saving only their place at table, which was set within the limits covered by the white cloths. All four of them showed at first the

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aloofness of the true mountaineer - they had the slow speech which comes of much chewing the cud of thought, the quick grey eye, circled by its network of fine lines from being puckered in the sun-glare of the snows, or parched by the winds of the moistureless plateaus of Northern Spain.

Slowest and heaviest of all, moving quietly and speaking little, Don Matthew, the eldest, had nothing of the blithe alertness of my Biño's temperament, nor yet did he possess his father's high courtesy and knowledge of affairs, though of course he had the good manners which are the birthright of every Spaniard from Aran valley to the cliffs of El Tarik.

Yet since he came next to his father in the family councils, as well as because he was considerably older than the others, much deference was shown him. He would often come quietly up to me, if he saw me standing gazing out upon the mountains, or not reading my book.

'The Señor is dull,' he would say; 'he needs distraction. We must take him a trip across the mountains. That is our panacea for melancholy. Will the Señor try it?'

At first I did not understand him, and answered that having had so much trouble to get out of France, I was excellently well pleased to remain where I was, so long as my kind hosts were not tired of me.

Whereat he would protest that San Severino would not forgive itself if I so much as threatened to depart before having 'made the trip.'

'No man is a good Christian,' he would insist, 'who has not harried the partridge's nest beneath the stones.'

It was, of course, Biño who put me on the track of Don Matthew's meaning.

'He is offering you a great honour,' said Biño when I told him. 'Don Matthew is the head of all the freetraders in this part of the world - aye, and as far as Aran and Villefranche on the other side. He does not very often lead himself. He is getting too old to carry weight, but he

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arranges with Don John where the 'stuff' is to be put in hiding and at what dates it is to be 'lifted.'

'Then Don Matthew is, in fact, a smuggler?' I said, innocently surprised.

Biño's eyebrows lifted with a quaint amusement.

'What else?' he said. 'Every man on this side the frontier is a smuggler - by birth, by choice, by profession, and by pride. The carbineers, the very civil guards, are only old smugglers with Government coats on their backs. That is why they are dangerous, and why the game is such an interesting one. In old days the Government sent from Madrid, or from Barcelona, men in the official service to catch the smugglers. They are wiser now. They offer large rewards, and the market value of all the goods captured for every conviction -'

'And has this measure put down the practice?' I continued.

Biño smiled at the extreme crassness of my ignorance.

'No,' he said, reflectively, 'I do not know that there is any less free-trading across the frontier. But it is not done by fools nowadays. That became too dangerous. Moreover, there are no Frenchmen in it now - all are Spaniards. The Government has made it a good game and worth the playing.'

'Then you are no smuggler?' I retorted, though I knew otherwise. His eyes twinkled at this.

'Ah,' he said quietly, 'you see, I am no true Frenchman. I am not afraid to risk my skin just to feel the heart beat quicker. I can dance a jota and flirt a cloak in a bull's eyes, thrum the guitar, and lilt a serenade. Can any Frenchman alive do these things? Also I have a time or two crossed the saddle that is not made of leather!'

He pointed to the fair white barrier of the Pyrenees, hanging, with the exact line of the peaked saddle-housing of the Moors, afar up in the indigo sky. Then, laying his hand on my arm, he became confidential.

'Sir,' he said, unconsciously pinching my sleeve,

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'you may read a houseful of books, but till you have 'made the trip' - Over-There-and-Back-Again - you will never understand the hill-men, never have your hand on the pulse of the North. It is here and here only that the pot boils - that is, from Cataluña to Hendaye! Barcelona is as much English as Spanish, more French than either. And the workmen of the towns - bah! Manresa and Ripoll - the people there are not true Spaniards. No Spaniard works all day with his nose to a machine.'

'No,' I answered, very unjustly, in order to provoke him; 'he would rather die in the dust, wrapped in a brown rug - and scratch!'

Biño, however, was far too cosmopolitan to be offended.

'In Valencia, maybe, you are right,' he answered serenely; 'but you know little of our North if you think such things of us. Yonder are the mountains. Beyond is France. The old game is played every day - aye, though Don Carlos is as dead as the dogs that barked in Sodom and Gomorrah, in spite of all the clatter you hear about him at San Severino. Come and see what is yet left alive!'

Even thus did two good men like Biño and Don Matthew tempt me to break the revenue laws of their respective countries. And so, simply that they might not lose so much honest effort, I succumbed.

When I told Don Matthew that I accepted his invitation, he laughed.

'It was in my mind that you would,' he said, 'otherwise I should not have proposed it. Mark, come hither! Luke - John!'

And then the four talked the affair over, only Luke being inclined to shake his head. Mark was on the whole my favourite, being less reserved than Don Matthew, while Luke appeared somewhat suspicious and saturnine, and of John the youngest I had as yet seen little. He had a sweetheart across the mountains (so Biño told me), and combined business with pleasure. He it was who placed the stuff ready to be 'lifted,' and brought word when the

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way was clear. On the other hand, Mark of the bluff countenance had acquaintance with all revenue officers, was welcome at all customs' posts, and used his repute of bon garçon to arrange the White Coups, as they were called - that is, those which were permitted or winked at by the local authorities in return for a proportion of the profit previously agreed upon.

So while the brothers Sebastian talked together, listening to some proposal which my friend Mark was making to them, I naturally moved to a distance that I might not hear. But presently Matthew beckoned me.

'Mark here wishes to blood you on a White Coup,' he said, smiling, 'before you run the risks of the Black!'

'I do not understand the difference,' I said.

'It is mainly this. During the most part of a White Coup you can ride a mule. In a Black you must run all the way on your own legs. In a White Coup no one will meddle with you; but in a Black it is to be expected that some very clever men will try to catch you, and that some exceedingly good shots will fire rifle bullets at you!'

'The difference is certainly material,' I answered, 'but I wish to understand the traffic to the bottom. I vote for the Black!'

'Well and good,' said my friend Mark, laying his hand on my shoulder to curb my enthusiasm. 'All the fruits of the earth in their seasons! But we also wish to try you. Before we take the sword to the battle we test it in the assault-at-arms. We will try the White first - indeed, it has been already arranged. The Velez Pass is to be open tonight - is it not so, John?'

The youngest of the four nodded.

'Do not let the Señor think that even so, there is no danger,' he added. 'My brother has made treaty with one only of the revenue officers. It is true he is the chief on this side, and we go empty-handed into France. But though Brigadier Muros is a moderately honest man and means to keep his word, it is by no means certain that he can put a halter on all his subordinates. If any of these do

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not obey his instructions to leave the Velez alone tonight, or have time to inform a superior officer, we must fight. This time our cargo is too valuable to abandon.'

It goes without saying that the risk was accepted. Who, indeed, could refuse? Not certainly one who had been brought up in an atmosphere of smuggling - decent, reasonable, logical, conscientious defrauding of the revenue. Had I not heard Cameronian elders gravely argue in favour of the practice, as a means of protesting against the unscriptural exactions of an uncovenanted King? Did not a complete smuggler's outfit of pack-saddle and keg chains hang at the end of the corn-mow in the barn of the house in which I was born, while over the mantelpiece was placed the leathern quirt of a relative reputed in his day to have been deep in the traffic - the same with which he had been wont to stimulate his cavalcade from Portowarren over the Cloak Moss towards Glasgow, with a score of revenue men full tilt after him?

But the Solway free-trade, the good and the ill of it, was over and done with decades before ever I set foot on the planet - at least, in this present incarnation. Never had the ear of flesh at the Dark o' any Moon heard their bridle reins jingling clear along the craigs of Co'en.

True, I had lain all day among the heather, and pointed a gun with deadly intent at a 'real-for-true' gauger, who (I told myself) was beating the countryside in search of my 'cave.' But in truth my weapon was of wood, the gauger only a friend of my youngest uncle's, and the pair of them engaged in no more dangerous occupation than that of ferreting rabbits. Still, I was heir to the spirit of the game. None knew better than I how the thing ought to be gone about. And here in Spain I had a chance for once to be my own great-grandfather and find out how it felt to have smuggled with Captain Yawkins and lain out on the hillside with Silver Sand.

It was nine o'clock at night when Biño finished my toilet. I wore a knitted cap, soft and clinging, on my head (the use of which I found out when I got up within the

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shrewd bite of the mountain frosts), a blue blouse belted at the waist, gaiters of paño pardo for my legs, thick double socks, alpargata sandals, and a pair of fingerless mittens for my hands.

Don Manuel had kept out of the way all day. Indeed, as responsible householder it was part of his duty to do so. I found out afterwards that he had ridden down to spend the day and night with his friend the Bishop, at the little city of El Seo, many miles down the valley. He had even invited the Alcalde of the town to dine with him. It was the most complete of alibis.

An unwonted animation stirred within the sombre walls of the ancient monastery. The atmosphere of San Severino was electric with expectation. Doña Isidra was nowhere to be seen, and I did not go into the little graveyard of the dead monks where it was likely she would be found. But Doña Carmen was everywhere, fluttering with excitement, almost to the point of hand-clapping, as this 'comrade' and that other appeared from behind a rock, dropping silently and unobtrusively down upon San Severino, his knife at his thigh, his gun slung across his back, like kites that scent the battlefield from afar.

A faint but continuous clattering guided me to the stables, which were mostly hewn out of the limestone rock, as dry as bone and as clean as a garnished altar. Luke the Grim met me at the door. I knew he did not quite approve of me, this Luke - no Beloved Physician he!

'You are in good time, Señor! Enter and choose your beast,' he said.

And going in I found the whole range of stalls filled with beautiful mules, the finest I had ever seen in Spain. Each macho looked over its shoulder as I moved along, observed strangers in the gallery, and - slightly widened the space between its hind feet.

Whereupon, recognising the guile in the heart of Don Luke, I charged him with it. He laughed.

'Well,' he said, 'I do not deny that there are one or

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two that are apt to take a stranger at an advantage, and you do not ill to leave the matter to brother Matthew. But come, I will show you something that you may never have seen the like of.'

He preceded me to the end of the long corridor, and, pointing with his hand, said, 'Look up!'

I did so, and saw that the low-hewn roof of these monolithic stables had expanded to the height of a stately cathedral nave.

'The cavern is a natural one,' said Don Mark; 'it winds through the heart of the mountains. Listen - do you hear anything?'

I had become conscious of a low humming sound, which, as I approached a large trapdoor of wood banded with iron, changed to a rushing of water.

Luke raised the lid. A booming sound rose out of a black cavity, as regularly pierced as the bore of a well, which yawned beneath. I stepped hastily back as a puff of ice-cold wind blew upward in my face.

'In the good monks' time,' said Luke, still more grimly, 'the English heretic who set foot on that trap-door would have been by this time . . .'

And he pointed suggestively downwards.

'Also the trap opened more easily in those days,' he added; 'and here in the wall is the hole through which they pulled the bolt behind his infidel back.'

And there sure enough it was, a round hole worn smooth by the friction of a cord.

'We use it for keeping our stables clean in these times,' he continued, 'but the good fathers shot other rubbish here! In which, perhaps, they had the better judgment!'

He took a newspaper from his pocket, tied it tightly in the centre, leaving the ends in a loose brush, struck a match, and set fire to the bundle. Then leaning over he let it drop into the deep shaft of the well. As it descended I could see the grey sides, dry as bone, without a particle of vegetation, smooth and water-worn, not to be climbed by

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human foot. As the newspaper fell rapidly, flaming like a torch, it receded till it became no bigger than a star - till it was no bigger than a pin's head. Then it struck the water, black as ink, which flowed through the bowels of the mountain - the sound of which, booming up, came to our ears with a heart-quailing note of awe.

'That is the Abbey back-door,' he said. 'The monks called it the Mouth of Forgetfulness.'

I confess I was rather relieved when Luke shut down the trap. I did not again venture upon it, or test whether indeed it might not (just once more) open downwards instead of up. The bolt might not quite have forgotten its old tricks, and I had no idea of following the flaming newspaper down into Lethe Mouth with such expedition.

At last all was ready for the White Coup. Our provisions were all duly put away in leathern sausage-bags upon the necks of our mules. By Don Matthew's good offices I was allotted a broad-backed animal of approved temper, whose only fault was that she would not allow the least pull upon her bridle without making trouble. But, left with a free rein, she would follow her leader perfectly and willingly.

The bells which make every muleteer's train a far-heard rippling tintinnabulation were now carefully stripped from the graith, and deposited by each driver in his own private stall. Horsecloths doubled were substituted for saddles, and the keg girths, of strongly sewn canvas with leathern slings, were prepared to receive the small casks and boxes which were to be the object of our quest. Then, each man leading his beast, we filed out into the night. Up to this moment I had been a respectable British citizen, travelling in Spain under the immediate protection and passport of my Lord Salisbury, Minister for Foreign Affairs. The passport was still in my pocket, yet now I might sing with the best of my comrades, 'Yo! que soy contrabandista! Yo ho!'

For the first time in my life I was an outlaw. If I

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were caught in the act, my country would disclaim me. And at the thought my heart was filled with joy unspeakable - far beyond the delights of virtue.

It was a clear starry night, and in a little while we would have the moon. Our path lay down the long valley I had looked into from Don Manuel's watch-shelf. The hills mounted steeply on the right. Behind was the clear line of the snows. In the bottom of the valley, flashing silver-white, dividing, uniting, hiding and reappearing, playing hide-and-seek with the innumerable boulders and rocky islands, ran the infant river. As the moon rose we could see the path by which we were to go - the Velez Pass, left clear for tonight only, in virtue of the aforementioned friendly arrangement with the brigadier of the district.

At my first mounting upon Conchita of the Bells I felt a great sense of insecurity. For indeed the path at this place differed but little from the torrent bed fifty yards further down, save that it was a little dryer. But my companion, an old gipsy, whom I had last seen exercising his national profession of horse-clipping under the shadow of the great aqueduct at Segovia, reassured me.

'Comfortable as your Excellency's easy chair at home,' he said, 'is Conchita of the Bells - a pearl of a mule, Conchita - Don Manuel himself rides her.'

Which last I thought no great recommendation. For the old chief of San Severino was a very centaur in the saddle, whilst I, to put the matter mildly, was not. But it turned out even as my Segovian acquaintance predicted. Conchita of the Bells was a paragon, certainly - mouse-colour, steady, for a lady-mule good-tempered, actually understanding kindness, and even to some extent responding to it.

Up the pass we went, so far without very much concealment. The night was yet young. There was plenty of time - the moon in the right quarter. We kept in the shadow, mostly I think for the sake of discipline. Indeed, Don Matthew checked John and Mark several times for breaking out into the swinging catch of a Malagueña. But

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they (and he) knew that there was no real danger. The Guardias Civiles had been sent far off - they knew still better why. They were patrolling the Cerde or smoking under the arcades of El Seo, with Don Manuel talking to his friend the Bishop and keeping an eye upon them from the episcopal balcony.

The extension of the telegraph throughout Spain is of immense service to the free-traders. For instance, if Don Manuel wired to his son from the telegraph office at El Seo that he saw a chance to dispose of 'the dun cow' upon a certain date. The 'dun cow' was a code word for the Velez Pass. The 'white macho' would have meant another route on the side towards Andorra. Occasionally such despatches, if containing anything of exceptional secrecy, or leading words not provided for in the prearranged code, would be sent to Bourg Madame, Léz, Saint Bêat, or some other office on the French side, from which they were brought to San Severino by one or other of those swift and willing messengers with whom all the frontier villages are filled from one end of the Pyrenees to the other.

The 'Velez' Pass - you will not find it on the map, at least under that name - is by no means one of the highest passes. Neither is it one of the easiest. It is, in fact, a mule track, and the bridges across the torrents are made passable for that animal. Still, so far as I was concerned, I wished that Conchita of the Bells had been going alone over these knife-edges. As we approached the first bridge the moonlight struck on the white cliff, sheer as a cathedral wall. The rough logs sounded hollow under Conchita's pattering hoofs. There was not the vestige of a parapet on either side. The Aran roared sixty feet below of the colour of café-au-lait, chafing about the boulders in the stream. I felt that I was, after all, perhaps more suited to a sedentary life than to be a smuggler bold like my great-grandfather. At least, if the choice had been allowed, I would rather have done my smuggling on foot. One feels desperately ill-prepared to die, perched at

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midnight on mule-back, crossing a yard-wide bridge in the heart of the Pyrenees.

Once across, however, the path grew better. Yonder were the familiar telegraph poles, stalking away as fast as they could in the direction of France. Presently there came another crossing much more to my liking. This second bridge had stone foundations, a little ruinous it is true - but, what attached me to it especially, a strong and picturesque parapet, doubled along the top and cross-gartered with sturdy pine ties beneath. It was a bridge to please the eye of Mr. Joseph Pennell. I felt more than ever, as Conchita strode confidently across it, that I had always loved the picturesque.

By midnight we were far up on the mountain slopes. Presently, however, the path faded out, and a general sense of direction alone kept the cavalcade on its way. We serpented up the ravines, listening for the stones which whizzed down from high above, and passed the ear with a vicious 'scat' as if warning us off their domain.

Then we crossed talus after talus of snow, the half-rotten remains of the spring avalanches. In one place the whole of the path had been cut clean away, and it was necessary to make a long and difficult *détour* in order to get the mules round.

Some ten minutes before midnight we reached the top of the pass, a wide flattish valley with the mountains bellying upwards on either side like half-filled balloons, not at all like the jagged wave-crests we had seen from San Severino.

We had begun to descend; but we were not yet on French soil. The snow, which had never been heavy, thinned out and grew patchy. Pines, buried almost to their tips in shaly debris, grew on undauntedly, as if nothing had happened. Then came pines half uncovered, with branches weighted by the downward push of the detritus, pines desperately clutching at the rock crevices to avoid being pushed altogether over the precipices. So,

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hour after hour, on we went till, lo! on a sudden, far below, a French village lay clear in the moonlight. It was built in a true Pyreneean cirque, and from it certain terraces of cultivation struggled up, potato mostly, with patches of onion and beet. Sainte-Marthe-de-Léz was the strangest village I had ever seen - seen, that is, as we saw it, by moonlight and from high above. I wished that it had been possible to photograph it. But for that I had to wait another year; and then, in the broad glare, it looked nothing so very marvellous - a mere huddle of white and red houses on the side of a mountain. In one place and another, indeed, it seemed as if the foundations had given way and the houses slid together, like children's toys when the toybox is overturned. But let no one seek it out. It is mine by right of pre-emption. Trespassers will be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law!

Between two huge black bastions of rock we halted. John, the youngest of the San Severino brothers, went on ahead. It was now one o'clock in the morning. The air was of a razor edge, and I for one felt eager enough to be on the backward track into Spain. For the moment, smuggling seemed a foolish thing, or, if done at all, ought to be gone about comfortably, with registered trunks and a Napoleon in one's waistcoat pocket wherewith to grease the palm of the custom-house officer.

However, there was nothing better for it. We had to wait, patiently or not, according to temperament. Luke came along the line, speaking to none of us, for to men his mood was bitter. But, for all his surliness, he was a true lover of animals.

'They do not outwit one like an Englishman,' he was accustomed to say, 'they do not lie like a Frenchman, nor jabber like a woman of any country. Your horse is more silent than a Basque, your mule more obstinate than an Aragonese!' So now he passed along the line, patting and fondling every item of the cavalcade, with a word for each as he went by.

'Daughter, well done!' he would say to Conchita of

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the Bells, who nuzzled a moist nose in his breast. An Englishman would have grunted, 'Hut! you beast!' But this surly young Basque only laid an arm behind the beast's head as if she had been his sweetheart, and murmured coaxingly, 'Aye! here we are! It is as I told you. Is it not so? An hour or two more and you will again be in your stable, Beauty!'

Stamping with the feet being forbidden, the only sound (after Don Luke had betaken himself away out of sight) was the nervous shaking of the chains which each beast wore attached to its pack-saddle, telling of the plague of insects from which these animals suffer.

At last, from far up the valley, the moon being hidden behind the spreading cloud of night, there came a faint, tremulous pattering, the clink of iron, the scrape of a shod hoof slipping on a rock. The mules grew more and more uneasy, but made no noise. It was the cavalcade which we were there to meet. Don John had not made his arrangements in vain. We heard them long before they reached us, for the air was so thin and clear upon the heights that sounds carried far.

Then I understood how impossible is this kind of smuggling with mule-trains, unless the officials are bribed. The Guardias Civiles know the mountains and patrol them perfectly. Yet, so admirably arranged is the administration, that not they, but the local carbineers control the excise. The civil guards are for the prevention and punishment of crime. They have quite extirpated brigandage and, practically also, blackmail. But smuggling is another matter. In their hearts, the very gendarmes do not believe it to be wrong. It is meritorious, rather. Every dashing young blade must sow his wild oats on the passes. The police, even, are only officially on the official side. And I have heard of a carbineer, on holiday and home to see his parents, taking a trip in plain clothes, *tras los montes*, just to keep himself amused.

At any rate there was evidently going to be no interference this night. So at least we were assured. And,

indeed, the trans-shipment of the casks of 'Martel,' packages of French dress goods, cases of champagne, boxes of guns, ammunition, and other heavy articles, made enough noise to bring the carbineers upon us from the distance of several miles. All was remarkably free and easy. There was abundance of jesting, handshaking, the drinking of a draught or two, and, lo! the chains were being looped upon the full pack saddles. Conchita of the Bells was now dowered with a couple of cases of cheap assorted jewellery destined for the Fair of the Holy Virgin of the Pillar at Zaragoza. As the moon came out of the cloud Conchita looked over her shoulder to see if I were going to mount as well. But I thought of the smugglers' bridges, and assured her that I had been brought up to show kindness to all dumb animals.

Thus, with a full cargo, we started back towards the pass. At first I held Conchita's bridle and led her. Or, perhaps, it would be truer to say that Conchita pushed me. For at all the really perilous parts of the roads, where the cases on one side could be heard scraping against the wall of rock, and on the other observed overhanging an abyss swimming with pale blue vapour, a sharp tug at the bridle warned me that Conchita desired the privilege of preserving her own balance without unskilled assistance.

Indeed after the first mile I never interfered with her. For Conchita had a convincing display of dentistry when I went in front, and a playful readiness of hoof when I lagged behind, both worthy of the utmost respect. Don John asserted she could kill a bluebottle with her left at six feet from her tail, and certainly John should have known. But it is to be admitted that his brother evangelists were not synoptic with him on this occasion.

All the same, I liked to listen to his stories, when he dropped behind his mule and began to talk. The rhythmical movement of the cavalcade, the slipping of some of the beasts on the ice-worn stones prevented me from catching all that he said. He spoke in a low even voice, that he might not be called to order by Don

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Matthew. But I made out that he was offering to associate me with his brother Mark and himself in something infinitely more distinguished than 'free-trade by arrangement.'

Among his other accomplishments, Don John spoke French much better than any of his brothers.

'Small praise to him,' quoth his brother Mark, 'when he has had half a score of sweethearts 'twixt here and the Ariège to learn it from. I could have spoken French also, had I learned it as an old dog learns to be indoors at supper-time!'

As revealed to me, the achievement in prospect was infinitely more 'class' than that upon which I was being blooded.

'See,' said Don John, 'like this it shall happen. When we are almost clear of the Velez on the way back, you and I with Mark will cut across a col I know well, to a place I know better, where we can lie and rest a day or two. It is a place of friends. There we may watch for a chance to bring over a dozen packages, worth all these mule-loads of rubbish a dozen times over. And we will pay never a sou to fat old Muros, the brigadier of carbineers down at El Seo. He would ask too much, the old skinflint, the pájaro! Even for this night, I question whether there will be a matter of twenty francs left over for each man. But next time all shall be for ourselves. And what can any man do without money? I, who am the stoutest contrabandista on the mountains - even I cannot get married till I put down enough to buy a little piece of land. Yes, Señor, a powerful noble is my Lord Money. God is Almighty, truly - but on the day after He created the world He dubbed Money His viceroy!'

'Why, Don John,' I said, 'surely it cannot be that she whom you love is mercenary?'

I could see him shrug his shoulders in the moonlight.

'No,' he said, 'my girl would let me take her across my saddle any night, and live content with me in a cane

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brake. But she has a father who - well, is a Frenchman, and thinks that his 'little economies' will bring him to Paradise! And Josephine is a good girl, and would fret her heart out to disobey her parents. It is strange. Certes, I would disobey mine soon enough, if I did not know that Don Manuel would immediately take a gun and shoot me dead for it!

It was the earliest orange-and-smoky-crimson dawn of Northern Spain, when, after duly making our adieus to Don Matthew and Don Luke, who were left in charge of the cavalcade, the two remaining brothers Sebastian, with Biño and myself, struck away to the left, over a pine-covered col which led presently into the wildest country I had yet seen.

These long, gracefully contoured ridges of the Eastern Pyrenees have a way of breaking down suddenly - as it were, when no one is looking - into a dance of splintered peaks, towered bastions, poised rock-stones, vast cirques with precipitous sides, bare save for the clinging cistus and the wild rhododendron.

More than once I impressed it on the Sebastians that there was really no need for such hurry. Even Biño added his entreaties to mine. But I verily believe that Mark and John did not know that they were going over the terrible ground as fast as a fairly good walker could cover a piece of level road.

After a night of climbing and mule-riding it may be supposed that I was glad enough when we came to a halt on a craggy platform, with a couple of stern grey bastions towering immediately above us. Mark pointed downwards and said, 'There! That is the finest mas in all the Eastern Pyrenees - it is the farm of the great Don Cristobal Ribas!'

'That is where we are to wait?' I asked with some hope. It was a cosy modern-looking range of buildings. Not that I was particular. A shed full of hay - a bed of clover and mountain fodder, a mouthful of bread and cheese, with, if the gods were kind, a bota of wine - these

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were all I asked of Señor Don Cristobal Ribas, or any other Señor.

The Sebastian brothers burst out laughing at my ignorance. Even Biño smiled. 'It will be our most earnest endeavour,' said my friend Don Mark, 'to keep out of the path of Don Cristobal. It were good to eat, better still to sleep. Yet we must go about, and far about, that no shepherd on his hills, or fodder-lout looking up from his stock-yard, may get his eyes upon us.'

'Is he then, in the service of the Government?'

For the second time they laughed. And again Mark enlightened me,

'No,' he said, 'Don Cristobal is not with the Government. On the Pyrenees there is no one on the side of the Government - no, not its own officers. Learn this - that in all the North - Guipuzcoa, Navarra, Aragon, Cataluña - when people speak respectfully of the Spanish Government they have their tongues in their cheeks. Don Cristobal is no spy of Madrid, but he is worse. He is a rival in business, and if he got wind that the Sebastians were in his country to run a batch, it is ten to one that we should be relieved of the task of carrying home so much as a single package!'

'You mean that he would steal your property?'

The brothers shrugged their shoulders at my invincible English ignorance.

'Oh, no,' they answered, philosophically, 'the thing is a custom of Spain. We would have to fight for the goods, and the strongest, of course, would take them. For how could we carry any complaint to the authorities? Every stick has two ends, you see, so that is why we are so careful to hold tightly to ours, lest Don Cristobal should beat us with the other!'

So even as Don Mark had said, we were at great pains to pass unseen high above the well-cared-for buildings of Don Cristobal Ribas, member of the Cortes, smuggler and practical freebooter.

It seemed that the pass we were now to essay was

in a manner of speaking 'held in fee' by the owner of the great alqueria beneath us. And being a man who stood well with the Government, not an ex-Carlist like Don Manuel Sebastian, he had much more liberty. So in the pass which, as it were, opened out of his back garden, being the best and most secret east of the Maladetta, the interference of strangers was not invited. And it was whispered that by means of his tusos and peones, the modern parliamentarian levied toll upon all, much after the manner of the merry barons of old. Yet I have been privileged to see this same gentleman take his railway ticket at Jaca for Madrid. To be exact, it was a ticket of the second class. He also made speeches which were printed in all the newspapers of the region. I was even introduced to him and had the honour of dining at his table. I found him courteous, well informed, and with the manners of a prince. After dinner, toasts were called for. It was the time of the 'late unpleasantness' with regard to Cuba, so when I was called upon to give a toast I thought myself tolerably safe with 'Viva España!' There were half a dozen gentlemen present, all Spaniards, all proprietors of the neighbourhood. To my surprise and embarrassment they sat still, though I was on my feet, and at sad loss for words. The pause was decidedly an awkward one. I ran over in my mind how I could possibly have given offence. Then my host, toying with his wine-glass, said without looking at me, 'If the Señor will change his toast to 'Viva Cataluña!' we are with him to a man!' The which, without any disloyalty to the existing Government of Spain, I instantly and most thankfully did.

In the meantime, however, we left Don Cristobal's masarie far beneath us, descending down, down, down into a dusty sun-baked plain, surrounded on every side by hills and looking like a little bit of Africa dropped by mistake into a 'howe' of the Pyrenees. Cataluña and Eastern Aragon are full of such contrasts. They are so near the Mediterranean coast that ever and anon one comes on bits of them which are as Moorish as Murcia

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itself.

The mountains towards the north were low and barren, yet already in the improved dwellings of the people one could see that there was another spirit abroad. For though the valley was Spanish territory, the river which was to wet me several times during the trip sped on into France.

We were nearing our journey's end. In the midst of the sun-baked valley, dusty and dreary like a brickfield, there was one striking memorial of ancient times. The bold keep of a ruined castle, flanked by two towers of massive stones, stood up sharply out of the barren plain. Jackdaws circled and cawed about the turrets, and the building, as we first saw it, might have been deserted for five hundred years. But lo! when we came to the leonine front which it turned towards the mountain, we found that a huge plastron of red brick had been most incongruously attached to its northern side. In this a great door was pierced, proportionate indeed to the castle but utterly disproportionate to the internal accommodation, being twenty-five feet high and partly closed with a screen of rough wood, from which depended a string curtain. An ordinary whitewashed house was attached to the right of this House of the Cyclops. But the haze of morning so heightened the weird effect on these patched ruins, that they seemed to my eyes even more impressive than San Severino, standing out stark and bone-bare on the sun-baked plain.

Every seeker after new impressions will understand with what pleasure I heard Don Mark say that here for the present was the bourne of our travel.

As it happened, we had two days and a night to remain at Torre Toran, so that I had abundant opportunity of studying both the place and its inhabitants. In the small photograph the long battlemented wall to the rear, broken down in places, is not shown. We had to skirt this in order to reach the entrance of ceremony. As we did so an old woman came

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along, clothed in black from head to foot. A black hood shaped out of a shawl was over her head, almost concealing her face. She was driving before her a little flock of goats and she-asses, which, resignedly enough, proceeded to search for herbage where apparently even a royal warrant would not have produced a single blade of grass.

The old lady took not the least notice of us, sombrely keeping on her way, her eyes on the ground and her hands holding together the ends of the shawl with which she was hooded. Don John explained.

‘She is called the Mother-of-Renato. The gendarmes killed him in the pass!’

He spoke quite as if the matter were of ordinary occurrence. I was interested to know which pass.

‘The same through which you are to go tonight,’ he answered.

This interested me still more. I pressed for particulars.

‘Oh,’ said John lightly, ‘it was nothing unusual. It might arrive to any one. He was called upon to stop. And he did not stop. Voilà tout!’

Exactly - it might arrive to any one! Well, I at least knew some one who, if called upon to stop, would stop with extreme suddenness. I was not so young as when I ran in the college paper-chase. And besides, running away full tilt is, to say the least of it, unseemly.

As we approached the side entrance (the ‘Gate of the Sun-dial’) a second old woman, this time more gaily attired in blue head kerchief, red-and-green striped shawl with a crimson border, a faded lilac dress and a red apron, was conducting the last of another herd of goats through a narrow doorway into an inner courtyard.

‘We are in luck,’ said Don John, gleefully; ‘that is our hostess, Doña Ana. She is taking in her flock to be milked. We are in time for dinner.’

Now in the splendid speech of hungry Spain there is no word so wholly pleasant as *comida*, which signifies the

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solid and comfortable meal which can be taken at any hour. Breakfast is generally a delusion, and supper the heart is sick for, because it is always so long deferred. But comida is infallibly a 'square meal,' and though on this occasion it approached the unfashionable hour of three (as the long clean line upon the sun-dial shows), I was rejoiced that we had hit to a nicety the time of the dinner of the workers. Within, we found three or four hardy fellows reclining in the high airy coolness, some on sacks, some on couches of juniper and heath brought from the alp outside. The floor itself was of beaten clay, with that bloom upon it which is the sign-manual of Spain, where all things, even the sunsets, appear through a ruddy haze of dust.

All rose at our entrance. The two evangelist brothers shook hands familiarly, and with a few words, evidently cabalistic, introduced Biño and myself. The pot-au-feu was soon steaming on the table, brought in by the cook, a young and comely woman, who apparently blushed on the least provocation. She was, however, on eminently good terms with Don John. But there was evidently a mystery somewhere, for Biño and I were warned not to let out to any of those at Torre Toran that Don John had engaged himself 'for the good motive' to a sweetheart over in the Ariège.

The explanation seemed to be that in the not distant past our inconstant youth had had an affair with the pretty dame of the pots and pans.

'She is married now,' he says, somewhat shamefacedly, explaining the matter; 'but what would you? She is married herself, but just like a woman, she would not like to hear that I was going to marry myself also!'

He set up for knowing something about women, this same slender Don John. But whether he was right or not in this instance, certain it is that, when at last the comida smoked upon the table, to him were apportioned both wings of the chicken, a slight which, at least, one other

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person felt very much - for the discerning would as soon think of eating the beak as the leg of a full-sized Pyreneean pullet.

There was the usual difficulty in making out which was the husband of the young woman. The amo or 'good-man' of the house, was a grey-headed crisp-tempered old fellow, who sat a little behind the cowl of the fireplace. Then, when Doña Ana came in with the milk with which to make his special mess of rice and eggs, all of us had to rise and be introduced afresh to her as the ama, or wife of the proprietor of Torre Toran.

It was not for some time, and only by careful observation, that I made out the husband of our pretty cook to be a certain quiet, stoop-shouldered giant, who sat hour after hour looking into the fire without saying a word to any one, without glancing at his wife, or seeming to notice the numerous compliments that were showered upon her. His sole occupation was to throw scraps to a band of hungry cats which appeared from nowhere and everywhere, only to be shooed away by the cook, or dislodged from under settles by the rattle of Doña Ana's broom. I noticed, however, that the big man occasionally held out his hand in an absent-minded way to his wife for a handful of scraps wherewith to continue his feeding operations. Her hand invariably met his.

After dinner, and when some excellent wine had fortified the inner man, sharp-set after the shrewd air of the mountain tops, I was informed by Don Mark that it would be impossible to 'lift' the goods that night. The party which had agreed to cache them had found itself watched, and had had to return with them to headquarters near to Saint Bëat. Don John had gone off to make new arrangements. He would be back in the morning. Glad enough of the rest, I took my camera, and, after the manner of my kind, went forth to seek what I might devour.

I was not long in finding a witching marvel of an ancient doorway, evidently belonging to the chapel of the

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castle. Saints surrounded the broad arch. Devils grinned from the low tiles. The inlay work of grey and red porphyry was perfect as the day it had been completed. But a pair of the amo's trousers flapped from the handle of the great door, and as I waited the mother of the dead Renato passed slowly up the steps with a brace of cans of milk fresh from her turn at the dairy. So that, though it was certainly invisible to the human eye, the goats and the she-asses must have found fodder among the stony débris about Torre Toran.

That night I slept on a mattress in a corner, the sleep of the tired and the insect-immune. Let none go gipsying in Spain whom a flea will bite - not to speak of the yet slower and more deadly terror of the Creeping-Thing-that-walketh in Darkness! In the morning, very early, Biño came to my bedside with a cup of chocolate and a glass of water, which I took thankfully enough, with a lump of black or rather brown bread thereto. The curtain was already drawn aside from the great twenty-five foot door, and from where I lay I could see right out across the plain to the summits of the hills, all covered with fresh-fallen snow, the clouds still wreathing and hovering about them, or slowly mounting in long level banks as the sun struck upon them. The whole interior of Torre Toran was filled with the fresh scents of dawn.

I rose and went out. All was of a magic and mystic clearness. Little details of hill-side ten miles away came out as if within pistol shot, a broken pine, a fox earth - or at least so it seemed - perhaps, more likely, the mouth of some yawning cavern. The landscape from verge to verge was washed with dew - spring-cleaned, as it were, while the nearer rocks and cliffs had the delusive glitter of French polish.

A long lazy day was before us at Torre Toran. Don John had come back and was helping the pretty cook to get the breakfast. He had girt himself with a blue apron, and now peeled vegetables, washed salad, and cleaned knives - while the son of the house, the lady's husband,

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occasionally glanced at him with a slow smile of quizzical contempt. There was no harm in Don John - so much his smile said. And at any rate, his own Albecete knife was by his side - the repairer of mistakes, the 'regulator' of all things that go awry in Spain. But Don John also knew this as well as any one, and (be it said again) there was no harm in Don John.

There is little to tell of the day - which shows how pleasantly it must have gone. I sat out, mainly in the yard, and smoked with Biño and the husband of the pretty cook, Don Reinaldo, who drawled sleepy tales in easy French of a good accent. He had been at the lycée of St. Gaudens, I was astonished to hear. But he was more than content to come home again to Torre Toran. He was the only son of the house, and as he said, 'I might have been a small official in France, and sat all day writing in a book or licking on postage stamps. But how much better to be here with the hills all about, a wife who loves me, a brave old father as tough as saddle-leather, a good mother who would die for me, a few books, and every day a chance to use my gun!'

He showed me his armoury, of which he was justly proud. It contained a very fine new Winchester, bought for him by a friend, in Paris. It was kept like a piece of jewellery. He possessed besides a double-barrelled English sporting gun, and a Webley revolver of the heaviest navy pattern. I happened to have a few cartridges to suit this last at the bottom of my camera carrying-case, with which I made him exceedingly happy. In return he told me many tales, some romantic and a few full of a humour of the broader sort. And so we whiled the time past, till the fall of the twilight brought the band together. By this time I had taken a great liking for Don Reinaldo, this quiet man who had seen and done so many things, who loved both 'Don Quijote' and 'Gil Blas' in their original tongues, and who under a blouse of blue linen and a flat-brimmed cap, hid away such a world of refinement and good sense. As I was taking a picture of

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him seated on a log in the castle-yard, he advised me for that night to leave my camera at Torre Toran. His wife would take every care of it in our absence, he said.

It was between eight and nine when we started, not as formerly in one imposing cavalcade, but on foot and in little groups of two or three at most. Don Reinaldo and Biño kept close to me. Not a word was uttered. It was a gloomy starless night, the moon obscured, and so dark at first that I would have stumbled and fallen had not Don Reinaldo given me his hand.

'It will be easier presently,' he whispered; 'but, indeed, darkness is best till we are well off the plain, so that none may track us. When we get among the hills, the clouds will break and we will see well enough.'

The ridges stood out against the slaty grey of the sky. If you looked long at them, they became edged with a misty aureole, like that which outlines a saint's head in old pictures. Then we passed a tall post black against the sky.

'The frontier!' whispered Biño, with some relief. 'Now we are in France.'

As soon as we had reached the bottom of the bank we stopped in a sheltered place, and Don Reinaldo gave a short sharp whistle. It was the trysting-spot. Here all the men I had seen at the Torre were quickly assembled. Not a word was spoken. It was now Don John's business to lead, so I was placed behind with Don Reinaldo, while Biño, who also knew the country well, accompanied Don John as additional adviser.

Our pace was not particularly rapid - rather the steady going of men who know that they have a long and difficult task before them. It was still too dark to see clearly. Yet the mountaineers went inevitably on, each as if he had been ascending his own staircase to bed. Once we seemed to be passing through a deep and narrow defile, upon rocks which sounded hollow beneath the feet, while far below me I heard the splash of falling water.

From this gloom we emerged, suddenly, as from a

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prison cell. The moon struggled through fleecy clouds with a vague luminous radiance. My alpargatas touched grass, gratefully enough, and lo, before us lay the place of our quest, the Rochers de Léz - a wide uneven plain on which blocks of stone were scattered, of all sizes, from that of a man's hand to huge boulders ten and fifteen feet in diameter. What a place to play hide and seek in! That was my first thought. And there the packages lay ready for the Spaniards. French hands had placed them in hiding, but the risk itself must always be run by the men of Spain. Labour is cheap south of the Pyrenees - life also.

Don John went straight to a tall boulder, squared like an obelisk in a cemetery, which stood at the south-west corner of the plain. Then he threaded his way back, following some intricate key-plan which he had in his head.

'Toma!' he cried, suddenly pointing with his hand, 'there you are!'

The men foraged about among the huddle of stones upon which a thin covering of heath and juniper had been artistically replaced. Soon our 'affair' lay before us. Small square packages of thirty and forty pounds' weight each were neatly wrapped up in glazed waterproof cloth. Not a moment was now wasted. Don Reinaldo checked the number of burdens as each was drawn out of its hiding-place.

Then the men attached to the corners of each package a cross-harness of straps, like those which sustain the rüch-sack of the Alps - two broad bands passing bandolier-wise across the chest and under the arm-pits. Those who made it a point of honour to select the heaviest packages had, some of them, L-shaped carrying boards, but most mounted the package plainly on the back with no other attachment than the broad shoulder-leathers, crossed over the breast in grenadier fashion. To me was entrusted the smallest and lightest of all the packages - jewellery of price, I was told, destined for the best shops of Barcelona and Madrid. The larger

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packages held mostly Jura-made watches, smaller leather work, gold and silver cigar cases, and all that dainty nick-nackery which is so popular in Spain, and of which not one article in ten ever pays to the Government the very heavy and indeed prohibitory duty imposed upon it.

With this businesslike despatch it was not long before every back had its burden, and we were once more on the road for Spain. This 'run' was a very different affair from that of the cavalcade. No arrangement had been made, or indeed could be made, with the authorities for the passing of a cargo so valuable. And the carbineers, old smugglers to a man, would certainly be on the alert if they had the least suspicion of what was afoot.

For me, in spite of my light load, not more than a fifth of what the others were carrying, I found the pace quite fast enough.

But Don Reinaldo wished to get through the narrow gorge before the light came clearer. It was easy to see that the clouds were passing off the face of the moon, and that long before our goods were safe in hiding, the whole of the mountains would be as bright as day.

I could hear the heavy and even painful breathing of the men as they followed each other up the steep slopes. Every five minutes at the worst parts, less frequently elsewhere, the leader would give a sort of guttural 'Humph!' Then the exhausted men would lean their loads and themselves against the wall of rock. The moon looked out for a moment at one of these halts, and I saw the young man's face next to me. It was drawn and haggard. The sweat stood in great goutts on his brow, and I could see the labouring of his lungs as he panted with shut eyes and open mouth. Assuredly this smuggling is no child's play.

We passed the dreaded gully in safety, and all breathed more freely as the pass opened out. We kept high on one side, serpentine among the scattered rocks. The moon had again removed herself. There was a growling of thunder low down towards the plains of

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Aragon. The storm seemed to be coming in our direction.

'Some of us will sleep in wet jackets tonight, that is, if we sleep at all!' muttered Biño, who remained beside me. Though carrying his share like any of the others, the sturdy fellow kept offering to relieve me of mine at difficult parts of the road.

Suddenly Don Reinaldo, who had been leading, threw up his hands, and with a muttered 'Al abrigo! (To cover)' he effaced himself behind a boulder.

So indeed did we all. And not a moment too soon. For 'spat - spat - spatter' came half a dozen bullets against the rocks. Some of them buzzed along the hillside like great bees. They whistled overhead. They clicked and burrowed like rats in the short dense undergrowth, as the facets of the rocks turned them aside. But no one of our company was touched.

'They are over on the other side - lower down!' whispered Biño. 'Do not be afraid. It is only playing the game. They will do us no harm, but all the same it is a mercy the moon is covered. I wish that thunderstorm would make haste.'

'Are they Don Cristobal's men?' I inquired. For I thought it might be the deputy to the national Cortes who was objecting to our intrusion upon his vested rights of breaking the laws he had helped to make.

'No,' said Don John, who lay next on my right, 'nothing so serious as that - only the silly carbineers. Cristobal's men would have had the hill of us by this time, and in ten minutes we would have seen their knives glancing. But these fellows will just keep firing away bullets and wasting good Government powder. They will never dare to attack us. All the same it is very stupid - very tiresome. One does not want to be recognised. And it is much too near Don Cristobal's to think of playing cache-cache with our cargo!'

After the first surprise of the thought that these bullets were fired at us, it was astounding how soon we got used to the fusillade in the dark. The Spaniards

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passed jests after their kind, chiefly grumbling because Don Reinaldo would not permit cigarettes to be lighted, lest the heath and dried grasses of the hillside might be set on fire.

'In twenty minutes we must make a rush for it - bullets or no bullets!' said Don Reinaldo, 'else daylight will catch us with the stuff still on our backs!'

Very anxiously therefore we watched the clouds pass over the moon. But it darkened steadily, and it was not five minutes before the first drops of the thunderstorm fell, broad as Spanish dollars, plashing solidly in our faces. Then with a low sigh of relief, each man adjusted his package and stood erect.

'That will damp the wasps' powder for them!' said Don John. 'I wish old slow-coach Reinaldo there would let us just send one volley among them for luck!'

But the stoop-shouldered giant was far too steady a leader for any child's play of that sort. As the lightning began to quaver, flash on quick flash, we could see in the pale lilac glare away across on the other side of the valley, a file of black figures hastening in the direction of the carbineer post.

'Now, I wonder what they suppose themselves to have gained by all that?' growled Biño in my ear; 'something to put in their report, I suppose - 'Wonderful activity of the carbineers of the district of Aran! Daring attack upon armed partidas concealed among rocks! The contrabandistas dispersed!''

After this stirring episode, the rest of the journey to the old shed, where the packages were finally rubbed dry and hidden under heaps of fodder, was certainly monotonous. It was one long plodding misery of feeling oneself wet to the skin, of plunging on across loose banks of slaty débris through swamps muddy with the rains, of barking shins and stubbing toes against the stumps of stone pines half buried in the drift.

But the 'cache' once reached all was soon stowed

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away, and we filed out of the shed, dusting the 'bits' off our coats, to become once more law-abiding citizens of our respective countries.

'Now,' said Don Reinaldo, 'we must get down to El Seo and constitute ourselves, so to speak.'

In my innocence, I had expected that we would take the goods directly back to Torre Toran, or, perhaps, even as far as San Severino. But the best smugglers of Spain never 'fyle their ain nest.' They carry everything in the direction of some unfrequented railway-side station, whence some trusted member of the fraternity takes the whole down to the best markets in Barcelona or Madrid. The day is past when the contrabandista was a mere stupidly-daring tool in the hands of cleverer men. He knows and studies the markets. Though he carries his life in his hand, he never risks his skin unnecessarily. Generally, he will not fight for his goods against Government troops, though he will stand up fiercely enough against raiders of his own kind. He is wise, acute, long-suffering, and knows that it is better to abandon one cargo than to be marked and known for life by the spies of the Excise. At worst, he has to contend with spurts of energy on the parts of new brigadiers, who come to the frontier with quite un-Spanish ideas of honesty. But, even so, such commanderies as those of San Severino and Torre Toran are hardly ever seriously interfered with.

As we crossed the river for the last time, the early sunshine was flooding it mildly through fleecy clouds. Being already as wet as we could be, we plunged in recklessly up to our shoulders, splashing each other like boys let loose from school. Yet our clothes were almost dry by the time we had got to the summit of the rocks on the opposite bank. It was afternoon when the little city appeared, as we would say in Scotland 'in the lirk of the hill,' with the clear river washing its apostolic feet.

In twenty minutes we were at the gate of El Seo. An officer of carbineers regarded us a little curiously as we passed. I fancied he laid his finger against the side of his

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nose, but as to this I will not take oath in any court of justice.

'That Thing there,' growled Don John, ungratefully, 'is the old pig of a thousand pigs to whom my father had to pay a hundred duros for leaving the Valdez open the other night. Praise to the saints, he gets not so much as one 'little dog' (Perro chico: 'little dog' - a half-penny.) out of this night's work!'

I wondered which of the saints had our midnight labours under his care - holy Saint Nicholas, I should think, the patron saint of all marauding night-hawks.

As we passed through the sun-bright Plaza of El Seo, a boy leaning on a mule, apparently more than half asleep, cocked a cunning eye at us and said something in a low tone to Don Mark.

'All right,' he whispered, a moment after, 'our Matthew got through the Valdez safe with all the stuff. So that old scoundrel of a Brigadier earned his dollars after all!'

Several of our company went off to the quaint little cathedral, but Biño and I sought a quiet Posada, where I could get comfortably into bed with a blanket about me, while my entire wardrobe dried shamelessly on the balcony which gave upon the street. In this guise, with a cup of coffee by my side, I smoked the easeful cigarette, and, failing any fit priest of my faith, confessed the crimes of the past nights - to my diary.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CITY OF DREAM

Sometimes great and wise publishers and yet greater and wiser editors show their wisdom by asking me to write a book. Sometimes, also, to my sorrow, they add, 'Write me one like 'The Scarlet Shoe String' or 'The Rovers.' Then am I compelled to quarry in the book-bin for certain old volumes which, though bearing a name on the cover which I cannot disavow, seem to have been written by somebody dead and buried long ages ago.

But the wisest of all editors do not so. They know that, as one tree differeth from another in stature, so no book can, even with (on the author's part) the best will in the world, be a replica of any other. Now what these wise people ought to say to me at this stage of the negotiation is: 'Get away as quickly as you can to your City of Dream, and don't let us find your person blocking up our editorial staircase - till a great book, a true book, a book absolutely unprecedented, has been revealed to you. Thus we will assure to ourselves a long rest!'

And when, having exhibited to them the empty state of my pockets by the graphic method of turning them out side in, and so having moved them to advance me my railway fare, right gladly will I take me off, and - make a bee-line for this little city in which, after my double-barrelled smuggling trip, I now found myself.

I will call it El Seo, though that is by no means its name. For it contains a cathedral - so diminutive indeed that it might be added, say, to Cologne Minster, without anybody but the architect and the charwoman discovering the difference. It has also a Bishop, passing rich on the revenue of the average Scottish minister, who has never applied for an 'augmentation' - something, that is, on the underside of £200 a year - a Bishop who acts in the spirit of his Master, in that he was not ashamed to

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collogue openly with a certain out-at-elbows tramp and ex-smuggler who happened to be passing through his tiny episcopal city.

El Seo is my own name for it - this quaint City of Dream. But you may scan the rolls of the Arch-diocese of Tarragona without being able to locate this smallest and most unworldly of cities ecclesiastic. For, lest Messrs. Cook and Gaze should know of it, I have both photographically and in literary fashion 'mixed those babies up.' Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind as to his own particular City of Dream - but, if he is tempted to look for mine, I have taken good care that he shall not find it.

Never did I see so many books ahead of me as in those sunny days I spent at El Seo. I drifted about idly, irresponsibly, as near Nirvana as any son of Adam can expect to find himself this side the 'Mouth of Forgetfulness.' Morning found me among the faithful in the cathedral - aye, almost before the twilight. I had wrapped me in a huge Aragonese cloak, swinging it knowingly about my throat and mouth, for the ruby mist of sunrise in the City of Dream often issues in a most undreamlike calentura.

Then out towards the cathedral by brumous dusky streets, where sparse lights winked rufescent in cobblers' shops, and under arches men still carried lanterns - till, coming out suddenly into the open, lo! the great oleander flower of the dawn seemed to grow upon the cathedral tower as on a stalk. Behind that the long level lines of the ancient citadel glowed purple and cinnamon. I stood watching the momentarily increasing brightness till the bell in the minster turret clanged for matins. Then twenty steps through a little square brought me to the cathedral portal.

Dank smells of yesterday's incense, also some tang of the unwashed faithful of many generations, a rich gloom everywhere - Indian red dashed with yellow ochre, and through these, the clear sweet light of a few candles

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winking deep in the chapels. There was no general service. The great altar was dark, its unlighted candles mere white bars against the denser gloom behind. Only the eastern window had begun to blush with vague rich hintings of colour. The rest were yet sombre and very lonesome.

In little side chapels, here and there, women knelt, and priests were beginning to officiate in a heart-healing hush of peace. It was beautiful - perhaps the next thing to a Scottish communion, and my heart ached within me to believe even as these folk about me believed. What a simple un murmuring earnestness there seemed about these poor working folk, both men and women of them, kneeling at this service of the Breaking Day. And looking at these peasants it came to me afresh that it matters hardly at all WHAT a man believes. But altogether, solely and only, HOW he believes it!

And now, since I could not be the solitary being holding aloof from the act of worship, I knelt on the cold stones at the bar of the chapel nearest the high altar. Who, indeed, was I, that I should come out to make of these honest folks' worshipping, a travellers' spectacle? Let me rather seek to approach to some God of mine own or of my fathers. For is it not the root and foundation of our Scottish faith that chiefly in the temple which every man carries about with him, is the God Unknown to be worshipped and his word to be heard?

There was in my pocket a little copy of the beautiful Desclée et Lefebvre Roman breviary, in two volumes 12mo, printed in Belgium and bound in England. Curiously enough I had bought it in Tarragona from the cheerful shopwoman who sells holy books below the archiepiscopal palace. I had carried it ever since in my wanderings, a cosmopolitan vade mecum. And now I read in it, by the light of the solitary altar candle, while I waited for the officiating priest. Something like this it was that I read.

'God of strong virtues, from whom cometh forth all

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that is best, implant in our hearts the love of thy most excellent name - '

Glancing aside when I came to this passage I was conscious of a priest who knelt beside me, pale, white-haired, ascetic, in a caped soutane of a faded violet hue, buttoned down to his feet. A skull-cap of silk was on his head. For one troubled instant our eyes met. Then his regard fell upon my open breviary. With an effort he seemed to put away vain thoughts. His head bent forward on the altar rail, and the service began.

I thought it strange that none of the country folk should come to kneel before this chapel, but judged it to be because it was the plainest and the least decorated of all. The man in violet and I had it to ourselves.

What happened after that I do not know. It is the beauty of the Ancient Way in the lands where it still conserves something of living power, that there you may worship as you choose - sit or stand - kneel, or only abide silent. Whichever you choose to do, none will cast an eye in your direction, or nudge an elbow saying, 'What doeth that Philistine?'

In my own land and among mine own people if any one does not rise and sit down with the multitude, the office bearers promptly bring him a cordial, or suggest that if he were to go out and take the air, he would probably feel better. But in Spain I might have kneeled all day beneath the crucifix and none would even have looked a question. It was an affair between me and the Unseen. With the bitterness of another's heart it is not good to intermeddle.

But though I read no more in my breviary, nor opened my missal, I had thoughts in my heart somewhat to this purport. 'Good is it that a man should see all, and know all, and try all that is done among all peoples. For 'to know' excelleth 'not to know' as the light the dark. And to have walked the way of the mountaineer when he takes his life in his hand, to have eaten of his wilderness bread, is better than the peculiar treasure of kings. So when a

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man dies, he shall go his unkenne'd gate a burnished weapon, a well-worn tool, unruste'd - fit, if need be, for the Things that Remain.

'Yet withal if a man keep not the lowly heart, if he call not his sins to judgment, if, in the place of prayers and vows he is not vile in his own sight, then indeed he hath committed the unpardonable sin, and denied the Spirit that strove with him. For assuredly Self-conceit is the sin without forgiveness.'

So far had my mind reached out in that dusky place towards the things which are the foundation of all, when I heard the lesson from the Vulgate, not mumbled as usual but clearly read, and I was aware that all the people in the little cathedral had turned in our direction. The man in faded violet had moved within the bar and was kneeling on the steps of the altar with his face sunk in his hands. The officiating priest was reading these words: 'Do right to the widow, judge for the fatherless, give to the poor, defend the orphan, clothe the naked, heal the broken and weak, laugh not a lame man to scorn, defend the maimed, and let the blind man come into the sight of My clearness. Keep safe the old and young within thy walls. Wheresoever thou findest the dead take them and bury them, and (if thou doest these things) I will give thee the first place in my resurrection!'

'Amen!' said I, 'I am answered. If a man do not these things, better for him that he should have no part in any resurrection, but be even as the beasts that perish.'

So I went out, having heard what is 'true religion and undefiled' proclaimed in words older than those of James, apostle of the concision.

I asked the slim silk-capped macero at the door of the cathedral, on whose face I thought I saw the flicker of a smile, who was the priest in violet who had knelt at the uppermost altar.

'Who but his Eminence the Bishop?' he answered, a little grimly. 'It is not every day that the Bishop of El Seo has the honour of saying his prayers side by side with a -

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He paused: I knew that in his intolerant Spanish heart he meant to say 'heretic.' But the sight of the breviary in my hand altered his thought, or at least his spoken word.

' . . . With a foreigner!' he added, a little lamely.

It was not yet broad day. The clouds were scattering, but they had not scattered. There were glimpses of fresh snow on the mighty ridges of the Pyrenees behind.

As I passed along the little Alameda the cathedral of El Seo, striking in design though really one of the smallest in the world, stood out above the valley mists as if built of rose and flame. And I remembered that because of this even the Moors had spared it.

'City of the twelve palm trees,' sang my heart, as I looked at the glorious and flamboyant beauty springing up over against me:

The heathen envied thee;

But they were not able to do aught against thee!

And I lifted my eyes to the City of Dream, that hung like a purple cloud of sunrise against the sky, hardly seeming to be of this earth, and the rest of the ancient and divine song came into my mind:

Twelve trees laden with divers fruit

As many fountains flowing with milk and honey -

Seven mighty mountains whereon grow roses and lilies,

By these shall the Lord fill thy children with joy!

Then all at once I remembered that it was the Sabbath. For when alone in strange lands, and with saints' days taking up about one day in three, Sunday is only to be located as on Crusoe's island, by severe calculation with a notched stick.

I do not remember how I fed, or where, or on what, that first entranced day in the City of Dream. Sometimes I saw so many wonderful things before my waking vision that I feared I should never have time to write them all

down. There were children on the street. They played at skipping-rope like bairns of other flesh-and-blood lands; but their cries fell on my ears far away and musical as bells that ring in dreams. The town cows went out making low music, mysterious as those at Ravelston, of which 'the mourning ghost still keeps the shadowy kine.' Only I saw these of El Seo go out in the blaze of noon, and in the face of the world - that is, if there had been any world to see.

I passed out of the City of Dream by an ancient port - half-gate, half hole-in-the-wall. A labourer to whom life was clearly no dream, stood staring at my camera with his muck-rake in his hand. The City of Dream was a city of much labour and scant wages to him. But he crossed himself when the eye of the Zeiss lens winked in his direction. That at least he knew for a portent of evil.

Then along another Alameda, dappled of light and shadow, with bees humming overhead among the leaves and on the walk beneath a gardener who was indolently trying to light a damp heap of them. In vain, they would not blaze. Sleepily he searched for a match to try again. He had all day to do it in. They were doubtless dream leaves. The cows might eat them, they might burn, or they might only lie and rot. No man knew which. Indeed it was all the same. It was kismet. And, as I watched, out of the dim incense-scented gloom of a mediaeval Christianity I seemed to enter into the scarce-lit spaces of a yet older faith.

I gave the man a match. He was a Spaniard, yet he did not even thank me. He only struck it on his trousers and applied it to the leaves. They smoked a little, uncheerfully, and as they never lighted it could not be said that they went out. But the man was not discouraged. He went and sat down on a stone seat, and rolling a cigarette, asked for another match. He had done his best. All was as God willed. No, he did not go often to church. He did not see that it made much difference. He was a labourer in the pay of a rich proprietor. He got two duros

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(eight shillings) a week. He did his work or it did itself. As for his master, he never came near the place. He lived in Madrid. (Here my pessimist entered into details unnecessary to be set down as to the method in which the young man spent his portion of goods in a far country. It was the one mentioned in Scripture.) So long as one let him alone the steward cared little, even when he was sober, and not at all when he was drunk. Meantime - what would you? He swept well - none praised him. He left the leaves to cumber the paths. None blamed him. In the meanwhile there was tobacco, and on saints' days a bota of wine. His wife was dead - of course, because he had wanted her to live. Yes, he had loved her. As it happened to the wise man so it happened to the fool. He saw no difference. No, his conscience did not ask any more of him than that he should spend his wages as he made them. And at the last - well, that which befalleth a dog befalleth also a man. One grave was as comfortable as another.

The priests?' - Ah - bah - he had had service with a priest once. It was vain to talk to him of priests. He knew. They also sucked the apple when it was ripe, even as other men - and why not? You put a bota of Val-de-Peñas to a dead man's mouth, will he drink? Drink then while you can, be you priest or porter! That was my sweeper's thought of it. The Bishop? They said he was a good man. The Bishop had spoken to him as he walked along his master's walks, reading his priest's book. He often came there - a very respectable man and nowise proud. The thing might be as they said - but for him, since God had taken his wife, the only thing that he had ever asked of Him - well - he had done with God! If the priests spoke true, carai! - he would not be worse off than Father So-and-so and Brother That-Other. All the world knew what they were. He had not chick nor child, sister, mother, nor wife. For what else then should a man work but for himself? What profit was there in his life? Let me answer that.

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I had not Spanish enough to confute this new-old preacher. Nor if I had possessed all the words of the Velasquez, his lexicon, I am not sure that I could. Though I would have tried.

However, it was fated in my kismet book that I should have time to bethink me after the adventures of those nights on the mountains, when the joy of life bubbled all about me like a boiling pot, when human energy reached out to match itself with human restriction and enactment, chiefly for the pleasure of the risk.

I had begun my day with the bending Christian folk in the dim cathedral, the hum of prayer, the click of beads let fall by the faithful, in hopes that by their continual dropping they might wear the pavement of heaven. Then I had come on a gardener - of Adam's ancient trade and possibly also of the first man's most ancient faith. So now by the wayside I met yet another philosopher, with a scheme of his own - a philosopher with long ears, the longest I had ever seen manifest upon philosophic head.

He was a donkey who had broken his tether. He had found a good bank of grass, fenced about with succulent reed, enduring bedstraw, and spiced with the thistle of his ancestors. He had all at command. His sides were plump with the fulness of them. The clear water of a canal was on the other side of the way to drink from when he was athirst. Cudgel had thwacked his sides, and would do so again. But he had forgotten the past and had never learned to forecast the future, wherein he was the better philosopher. His mind to him a kingdom was - the realm of the present. It was shut in by twitch grass, barriered by ground ivy, and down the long vista which is futurity he would see only infinite thistle and infinite wild tease. Death - he had never even heard of that. He had, indeed, seen things that lay still - things that the futile Two-legged put into deep holes. But these were only asleep, and too wise to waken. Besides, the like would never happen to him. No such luck, indeed! He had to be

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roused up that his panniers might be placed astride his back, and sometimes his master would mount up behind - but why think of such things? Had he yet eaten all the thistles? No? What was that large Two-legged doing, standing before him with a black box under its arm? Was there corn in that box - anything to eat? No? What then did the Two-legged mean by taking up a philosopher's time? Onward then - thistles in front of him, thistles to right of him, thistles to left of him, thistles within him! Worlds and worlds of thistles without end! Amen!

And perhaps I had now happened upon the oldest religion of all - at any rate, that which is still the commonest.

But in so brave a world it was time to get back to life and - my own thistles. For are there not dream thistles also? City of Dream is only one particular thistle which seems to me sweeter than all the others.

I was soon on the banks of the river - a still sweetly-flowing river, most un-Spanish-looking, full from bank to bank with the melting of the fresh snow on the mountains, a little drumly certainly from the caving banks further up, but in the main quiet and large and purposeful. Only, happily, there was nothing for it to do in or about this City of Dream - no mills to turn, no paper to wash, no power to generate. A few women, constant at their scrubbing-boards, made with their tongues, sufficiently far off, a pleasant clatter of sound. Otherwise merely silence and the wash of water.

Crossing an ancient bridge I found myself upon a deserted river bank - long alleys of white poplars, here and there a rough wooden seat. There was a sparkle of light through the leaves, a sudden coolness, then a running wave of silver as the wind flashed their undersides into view. No old-world glooms, or death-in-life philosophies here, but wind and earth and water making merry as of old, after the fashion the Greeks knew for the Way of the Gods.

Two men seated under the shade looked inquiringly

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at my camera and at me, but I had had enough of my species for one day. They might be philosophers, or preachers in disguise, or only plain-song donkeys. At any rate, I gave them a wide berth, including them, however, in my picture to show that there were others as idle as I that day in the precincts of the City of Dream.

Then I sat down and dreamed undisguisedly in an open glade, looking across at the battlemented castle, seen over a foreground of river reeds and tall oleander tufts. From here El Seo seemed more dreamlike than ever, a 'rose-red city half as old as time,' passing mysterious in the sweet open silence of the forenoon - the river sheeted silver at its feet, and the sky of a full and perfect blue above. Actual larks were singing above the meadow-flats. I might have been in Scotland, save for the rosy towers of the cathedral, the cinnamon-coloured soil, and the untouched bloom of antiquity which was upon every work of man that I could see.

Ah, these strange contrasts of Spain! Who that hath seen remembers not the arid dusty city with its wondrous opaline hues - the parched brickyard about the gates - then a sudden plunge into a valley, the gleam of silver, the rustle of trees - you look about, and lo! you might be in England.

What makes the difference? Water - only water. The Spaniards have lost or thrown away most of their old Moorish legacy, but this they have kept. They understand the art of irrigation. That little three-foot wide canal, draining the river more remorselessly than the wisest sangrador ever let loose from Salamanca, made to grow the crops over yonder that are already ripe and harvested, though to English notions it is yet the springtime of the year. Even as I sit the breeze from the north strikes cool, and like a flash the rows of dusky willows turn silver-grey, and the larks are blown about the sky on a wandering wind-gust from the gorges behind - some back-swirl doubtless of the long unwearying mistral of Provence which is now breaking itself in vain against the

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barrier of the Pyrenees.

The breeze is grateful, so grateful that while it lasts I climb back again to the plateau on which stands the citadel, complete outwardly to the eye, but in reality a mere shell, with a few companies of artillerymen camping in one corner of its vast and ruinous buildings - sans ammunition, sans guns, sans everything except ill-kept uniforms and unlimited time in which to smoke cigarettes. How different these fellows are from the Guardias Civiles in their smart uniforms, as spick and span as though they put them on fresh and fresh every morning. But indeed it was an evil time for soldiering in Spain. Cuba was daily costing the lives of her best and bravest, ground between the millstones of an evil past and an effete present. I doubt not that these two score of poor lads were glad enough to be left to rough it in the quietest corner of the old castle of El Seo. Far from railways, with the War Office administration at Madrid in a state of senile collapse, I question if anybody even thought of them. They were certainly forgotten at El Seo. Nor did they in the least desire to be remembered. They blew no trumpets. They fired no sunset gun. The very sentry at the entrance betook himself within when he saw a visitor approaching. The door was shut, and had you been the commander-in-chief himself (especially if you had been the commander-in-chief) there would have been for you no admission.

Back into the town again! I had been afoot so early that it was still only shaking itself awake. My matutinal friends of the dusky cathedral were doubtless but workpeople and countrywomen come in to market. For naturally the City of Dream lies long abed. Even at ten o'clock they were only sweeping the cigar-ends out of last night's cafés. The boys who did it were rubbing their eyes. And small wonder, for three in the morning had not seen them in their beds. The arcades of the streets were still invincibly gloomy. The morning puddles had not yet dried in the gutters, and by more than one sense a

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stranger was informed that in the City of Dream all was not illusion.

But still the enchantment held, in spite of odours quasi-mediæval. One could not proceed a score of yards without coming on a wooden overhanging balcony, a reach of brilliantly coloured tiles, a Moorish courtyard, or a charming characteristic group seated by the wayside.

Generally the younger women, if such there were, put up their hands to their faces or fled (not to the willows) with shrieks of simulated laughter. For the younger generation of Spain, even in the City of Dream, knows very well what a camera is. Though, as I think, mine was the first of English make that had ever penetrated thither.

But it was otherwise with the elders. Sometimes an old woman would cross herself hastily, muttering the while, lest the black box should contain some imp of mischief. Mostly, however, they sat sternly sober, calm as mothers in Israel in the presence of unknown bewitchments. It would not do to tell them first that they were being photographed, still less to ask their permission, at least not before the shutter clicked. That must wait. But, once done, a courteous word, a lift of the hat, a smile, worked their way in the City of Dream as elsewhere throughout the world.

It was early afternoon before the sleepy streets awoke a little. Not that El Seo became even then any less a City of Dream. Indeed, I think its afternoon mood was perhaps the most dreamlike of all. The sun was still high, and had at last vanquished the morning haze. Every particle of mist had been chased away. Heat and light filled the narrow streets as water fills a jug. All was a feast of colour - the many coloured hangings, the striped awnings, the bright print dresses of the girls at the street corners, the red and white Tam-o'-shanters of the boys (mere imps of darkness, they!) made up a scene like some old untheatric fairyland - perhaps that which one imagined long ago couched in the corner of the garret

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over a first entrancing perusal of Sinbad the Sailor.

To my good henchman, Biño, El Seo was not in the least a City of Dream - unless, that is, the excellent fellow dreamed while he slept. He had been up betimes to make a cup of coffee, but when he brought it he had appeared so 'dozen' with interrupted slumber that I ordered him instanter back to bed. He was still asleep when I peeped in upon him at noon, but when I returned for some fresh 'Edward's' films he had vanished, and it need not be said (to those who know a Spanish posada) that no one in the house had the least idea where he had gone. Now I had never asked Biño any questions as to his family affairs. I knew, of course, that he had a family - a father, brothers, but he was naturally as well as racially reticent, and I had put no questions to him as to his immediate state, married or single. He had, however, given me the idea of a man who cared little about women. So far as I knew he twanged his guitar admirably, but exclusively in male society. He had been only distantly polite to Doña Carmen at San Severino, but that might proceed from a consciousness of difference of station. He had abused Don John for a young fool - a colt unhaltered, on account of his night-running adventures. But now, looking from the window of the comedor, while waiting one of the tardive meals of Spain, I saw Biño, bareheaded, in his blouse and sandals, carrying water for a tall peasant girl.

My Dream City had taken on reality for one person, at least. Without spying upon my friend I took occasion to sit on the side of the table, which, through a window, gave me a vista of the little fountain. Something, it appeared, had stopped the flow, whereupon handy Biño went off at once to a plumber's shop, and, borrowing a tool, restored the water to its channel. That was the French blood in him. A Spaniard would have waited (that is, the average Spaniard) till the municipality, being moved by resolution had acted in the matter - and meanwhile all the women would contentedly have gone a quarter of a mile further on and waited their turn at the

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next fountain. But Biño wasted no time. As he worked he talked, and I could see the girl smile responsively. It was an idyll - or at least the opening page of one.

Still more idyllic was it when, the pitchers being filled to the brim (indeed absent-mindedly to the overflowing), Biño took them up and strode off with them round the corner of the street, the girl walking quietly enough by his side and looking up in his face as they went. Such brazen resolution in the face of very day I had never seen in Spain. It also must have come from the Ariège, where on fête days you can still see the Gothic blood pink on the cheeks and blond in the hair of the peasant folk.

At this I laughed softly to myself, and looked up proverbial phrases out of Don Quijote and the dictionary wherewith to tease my companion upon his entrance, not knowing that in a little while I should have quite other matters on my mind. For at that moment Pablo, the generally invisible factotum of the posada, burst in upon me with a rush, as one who would say, 'Flee, my lord, the bailiffs are upon you!'

'There is an officer in waiting,' he cried, 'with an equipaje!'

I could not for the moment make out whether he meant 'equipage' or 'baggage.' In either case it was sufficiently alarming. For I had no luggage of any kind nearer than San Severino, and any officer 'with an equipage' must certainly have arrived at the Posada of the Sun for the purpose of conveying a certain ex-smuggler to prison!

But no! The equipage was of the true ancient Spanish sort. It was no prison van. A noble coche it proved to be, harnessed to a couple of mules by the collars. Steps of wrought-iron depended from the sides, while the dreaded 'officer' proved to be the very functionary whom I had seen and spoken with that morning at the cathedral door. Judging by its size the coach ought to have been drawn by six mules instead of

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two, but as I had never yet seen any road in the vicinity of El Seo practicable for wheels, I judged that the journey could not be a long one. But the visit of the one coach in the town to the humble Posada of the Sun was not without its effect on the neighbourhood. My stock of credit, previously low, went up on the moment. Heads protruded from every neighbouring window, and as I stood on the doorstep opening the large square envelope, my threadbare grey tweed suit, which had hardly gained me admission yesterday, still dripping after my recent passage of the river, must have seemed transfigured. The Amo of the Posada del Sol himself came bowing to the door. He had, it seemed, been entertaining angels unawares.

My letter was no less than an invitation from the Bishop for the English Señor to visit him! I stood in a quandary. I could not refuse a dignitary of the Church, and yet - I glanced down at my attire. Like Huckleberry Finn of affectionate memory, I felt that I was not 'dressed fittin'.' But at this moment Biño came in sight, having at the thunderous alarm of the equipaje made a hasty end of his water-carrying. To him, forgetting the witty sentences I had prepared for the occasion, I propounded my difficulty.

'Go,' he said, 'very likely it is the suit of clothes he wishes chiefly to see.'

This could not be called flattering, but it was certainly reassuring. Excusing myself to the macero in the cocked hat, I ran upstairs hastily and made what toilet I could. Luckily I had bought a clean collar in the town, so with hair in order and my coat buttoned, what linen I had secured with a safety pin, I presented at least the upper half of a fairly respectable appearance. But there was no help for the alpargatas. They had to act as dress shoes on this occasion, for the good reason that I possessed no others, nor were there any of my size in that town. A pair of pocket scissors, used freely to trim the fringes from the lower extremities of my trousers, gave a

final (and necessary) touch of elegance to my appearance. My checked tweed cap was certainly not respectable, for it had been used to lift hot pannikins off the fire, to hold frying-pans in the blaze, to clean pens, and to perform other menial offices. I therefore kept the man-of-office waiting while I darted into the nearest shop and procured a more respectable hat, in which, however, had I appeared in the Strand or Fleet Street, I should immediately have found myself arrested for the most dangerous of anarchists. But all's well that ends well! The severe correctness and dignity of the final result won a nod even from the official beadle and coachman of El Seo.

The Bishop, it seems, was not at his town residence, but at his country house, an old monastery in which, by grace of the Government, he had been permitted to furnish a few rooms in the plainest fashion. It was by the riverside, and a little winding path mounted behind it which led up to the ruined citadel of El Seo.

The honour of the Bishop's coach at my service was doubtless a great one, but certainly it would have been vastly more comfortable to have gone that distance upon my feet. For the pavements of El Seo were but ill adapted for vehicles, while the river road alternated between torrent bed and slough of despond. The bridge, however, was a fine one with two noble arches, and the walls of the old convent rose immediately beyond.

The coach drove into the courtyard and stopped. I got out and stood on the clean cold cloisters more ashamed of my appearance than ever. I was buttoned up to the neck, precisely like those shirtless gentlemen who solicit a temporary half-crown loan at street corners, and I presented the same mean and slinking appearance. I was glad, however, that my hair, at least, was uncompromisingly long. At least I was free from that suspicion. But I had no great while to wait. There, at a door which gave a glimpse of garden greenery beyond, stood the Bishop of El Seo. He was wrapped about in a great cloak, though the day was now warm, and in the

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sun even hot.

'I bid you welcome to La Delicia,' he said, in good English. And then, seeing my astonishment, he added smiling, 'I have resided in your country - long ago, in the time of the troubles.'

In another moment he had held out his hand to me, which, remembering what I had heard of the respect due to great ecclesiastics in Spain, I would have stooped to kiss. But he repeated, smiling, 'I have been in England - and I prefer your 'shake-hand!''

In a few minutes we were walking confidentially together in the old monastery garden, part of which the Bishop cultivated, working there sometimes with his own hands, though the greater part was still a tangle of weeds, roses, and clambering vines rising almost breast-high, right to the walls of the cloister.

The Bishop of El Seo as I now saw him was a man of seventy, but save when much wearied or troubled, his brightness of eye and the vivacity of his speech betokened a much younger man. Nevertheless the care with which he sat down on the benches, and the little stiff hitch with which he raised himself again, advertised the man well stricken in years.

It was not long before the Bishop of El Seo opened the campaign.

'You were in the cathedral this morning?' he said, gently leaning his hand on my arm as we walked.

I nodded without speech. I knew what was coming.

'You are of the Faith?' he went on, a little tremulously.

'Of the Faith, but not of the Church!' said I. The hand on my arm fluttered. The Bishop sighed a low gentle sigh. I think he had hoped against hope, knowing me of the English nation.

'But you had our Book?' he continued, gently querulous, almost reproachful. 'You kneeled at our service?'

'It is a good book,' I said, 'and it is good to kneel, if

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so be the heart kneel also. There is but one God!

He bowed his head. Under the heavy black cloak the fingers of his other hand were busy with his beads – or mayhap with his crucifix. Was he at prayer for the heretic, this gentle Bishop?’

‘One God,’ he said sweetly with a gentle childlike intonation, ‘yes, there is one God, but who knows the Way to Him? Is it not better to trust Holy Church?’

I was silent. I knew that he spoke much more to himself than to me. But he was in no wise offended, for he leaned more and more heavily on my arm. We were following a little path amid euphorbias and ilex oaks, a path which led upward to a point of rock pleasantly carpeted with juniper, close-set with little green balls, from which we looked down on one side upon the buildings of the old convent, and away to the left to the indented sky-line of El Seo, its Cathedral, citadel, and high-piled town.

The Bishop was breathless when we reached the little rustic seat. He smiled up at me as he sank down, pressing his hand to his side.

‘An old man,’ he said, ‘aye, an old man! I come not here often, only when I have a stranger. For this is our peculiar treasure - the delight of La Delicia!’

Then his thoughts reverted to the Breviary.

‘And you read our book? Strange - and yet withal you believe it not - still stranger!’

‘My father,’ I said, ‘I read it with reverence, not as a task but because it is a good book, loving and true - a book of books.’

‘Ah,’ he said, looking through the dwarf poplars to where the old bell of the monastery, which had so often called the faithful to prayers, now hung rusty and silent in its open tower, ‘when I was young, for a little time I thought, like you, to pick and choose. Now I am wiser. Once I possessed one of your English Bibles. I looked often therein. I read it, fearing greatly, and, truth to tell, I saw nothing wrong. But that was my ignorance, for our

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Holy Church condemned it - so - I parted with it.'

'Let me send you another - bound like the Breviary you saw this morning! You are a Bishop now and can decide for yourself!'

I could see the good simple prelate hang a moment on the apex of a temptation. Then he shook his head.

'I thank you,' he said; 'in a way you are right. No book would do harm to so old a man; but to conceal it would hurt my heart! Yet - your English leather binding is certainly very beautiful - soft as silk. We have none like it.'

His fingers worked as if caressing a book. I noted the action, and my heart made a resolve. If he would not have a Bible he should at least possess a binding. I knew that 'purring' movement of the fingers of the true book-lover. The Oxford-bound Breviary would never quit El Seo. So much was clear to me.

'You are of Scotland,' he continued; 'I thought (he hesitated, anxious not give offence) that the type of religion there was hard and cold.'

'My father,' I said, seeking how best to answer him, 'it is not hid from you that religion is not a thing of the nation but of the individual. As to that, are there not hearts warm and hearts cold - even in Spain?'

He shook his head gently and pensively. 'Ah, many, many are the cold hearts in Spain. Many, even in Holy Church, seek only things of earth!'

'So,' said I, 'is it in Scotland - so also throughout the world. Yet better is any religion than none. For even weak ones and foolish ones may walk with feet that stumble, yet with eyes that look upward.'

He caught my meaning, and nodding his head, interpreted it after his own fashion. "Tu es Petrus" he said. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona - sinner, liar, blasphemer - yet, because thou didst repent, on thee shall I build my church.' There is more hope for a great sinner than for the man just in his own sight.'

Again he crossed himself, resting with closed eyes

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for a moment. His gentle face, full of a generous refinement, was turned away from me. I felt that it was good to be in the presence of a man 'on terms with his God,' as the old Covenanters would have said. To give him time, I walked to the parapet and stood looking down on the ruined monastery of La Delicia. I could see the exact spot where the Bishop's attempt at cultivation had stopped. The rest of the pleasance was weedy, overgrown, broken-down. But at my feet there was a patch sweet and clean, of a simple usefulness, like the man himself - whose work was on the earth and whose hope in the heavens.

Good is it for a man to stand with his hat off in the presence of that which he knows to be better than himself, to salute with what of reverence is in him, unworldly aims, simple apostolic life. It was good to stand and see what true religion and undefiled can do - in every land and under all creeds. The Roman prelate reminded me of certain I had known in Scotland - poor contented ministers, continually zealous of good works. He made me think of Cameronian herds on Galloway hills, men who abhorred the very name of Rome, yet who, with the Bishop of El Seo, 'had a firm grip upon the fundamentals.' This man's Chief End was certainly to glorify God and to keep himself unspotted from the world - his sufficient work to visit the village priests throughout his remote little diocese, and to bless the children that were brought to him. What more happy life or more Christ-like than that of the Catholic Bishop of El Seo! I had met a good man who believed his creed, who acted out his preaching to the letter. *Laus Deo!* The salt of the earth hath not yet lost its savour, and not all men have ceased to hear the still small voice.

Presently the Bishop called me to him. He had returned to certain practical matters which had been troubling him.

'How is it,' he asked, 'that you can see and respect the things that are good amongst us, yet your country,

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men have spoken so much evil of the Church Catholic in Spain? Oh (he continued, seeing my surprise), I have read your books - as I say, when I was younger. Even now I remember the book of the adventures of 'Don Jorge!'

'Borrow,' said I, with a sudden flash of something like religious enthusiasm (of the literary sort), 'you have read Borrow?'

It had not struck me before that there were two points of view, equally tenable, as to 'The Bible in Spain.'

The Bishop nodded. I tried to reassure him. 'You must not mind what good old Borrow says,' I urged. 'There are few institutions in his own land of which he did not speak as hard things as ever he said of the Spanish Church Catholic. When Don Jorge had a stick in his hand, and saw a head before him, his rule was to hit it - and afterwards to inquire to whom it belonged.'

'Then,' continued the Bishop, 'there was one who wrote a book of many journeyings in our country - a good book, a true book, as to things that are seen - one Don Richard Ford. I have remembered his name exactly. And he spoke evil of our saints and our ceremonies, finding them all pagan and unchristian, even as the saturnalia of heathen Rome!'

I had to admit that this, to a certain extent, was true also. But I assured the Bishop that Mr. Ford had come to Spain so filled with classic lore and tradition, that he was ready to see what he looked for.

'If Mr. Ford had been a student of the Moslem literature instead of a classical scholar,' I went on, 'he would have seen, what is indeed much more apparent, traces of the Moors everywhere throughout Spain!'

The Bishop looked up quickly, a 'gleg' and quizzical light glinting in his dark eyes.

'Ah,' he said, 'and is that your theory? Will you, when you come to write a book on our poor land, find that everything with the true Iberian borrachera - everything that tastes of the right Spanish wine-skin, is but the leavings of the Moro, the scouring of the pots of El

Islam?’

Again I reassured him, and he became again gently pensive, which was his proper mood; but the doubtful humour of controversy did not wholly leave him for some time.

‘You will tell them of my carriage, doubtless?’ he questioned, ‘you will set that down to the desire for display of a Spanish Bishop. It is true, in the days before Mendizabal, my predecessors drove six snow-white mules in that same coach, whereas I am glad of two. And I would be yet gladder if I could make firewood of it altogether. But the good people of El Seo would not hold me for a true Bishop if I did. They would pull off my ring and throw my crozier behind the fire, if they saw me sally forth on festival days without my coach. So I have to keep it, but indeed and indeed it costs little. For Baltasar, the beadle of the cathedral, drives it, and there is enough good mule-feed in the garden of La Delicia for a full grandee’s team, instead of my poor two!’

I reassured him as to my intentions, and said that if ever I should write a book about Spain, I would deal most tenderly both with his episcopal carriage and with the Church in Spain - which indeed I think I have done, especially with the former.

We went down presently, and there on the plain deal table of the refectory, scoured speckless, but without covering of linen, was served a humble repast of wheaten bread and herbs and honey. In my favour a pottle of wine was added. I could see the versatile Baltasar watching surreptitiously from a distant doorway to make sure that we found all in order.

We sat and chatted pleasantly, now in English and now in French, eking out any misunderstanding with a Spanish or Latin word, but on the whole comprehending each other very well. The good man was greatly interested in my hand-camera, and especially so when I assured him that it was made by a friend of mine, a Spaniard of Valladolid, at present living in London. He was eager to

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see specimens of its art, and enthusiastic as to the uses which might be made of the strange contrivance, so easily carried and so clear in the results - as he remarked judiciously, 'far above painting.'

'For in painting with a brush,' he commented naively, 'I can never see the resemblance. But with the photograph it is different. Even Baltasar there could recognise a picture of his own cathedral. With pictures made by hand, not so - that is difficult even to an educated man.'

Luckily I had with me a few prints of Poblet, Ripoll, Montblanch, and other holy places of Spain. These interested him, but not nearly so much as a series of children romping knee-deep in flowers in Scottish meadows. I could see his eye brighten. The last of all showed a little maid munching a biscuit on a winter's day, muffled to the neck in fur, the snow flecking her boots and lying in the folds of her gaiters. This took his fancy amazingly.

He returned to it again and again, and when I was putting them up in their case I found him with that picture still in his hand. Whereupon I offered it to him, and, since you must always press anything on a Spaniard if you really wish him to accept it, I offered it twice and thrice. I could easily make another, I said. Half he was in the mind to accept. I saw the yielding on his face.

But he put it away finally with the gentlest possible negation of head and hand.

'No,' he said, 'I am an old man - and - my thoughts must be of the things that yet remain to be accomplished.'

He bade me good-bye on the outer step of the little door of La Delicia, bending and kissing me on either cheek.

'Let me look once more at your little Scottish girl,' he said, as if with an after-thought, 'she who smiles because her cake is sweet. Ah,' (he cried, taking the picture in his hands, with a caressing delicacy), 'may the

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Bread of Life be sweet also to her soul!’

He looked long at it. I cannot tell what old buried thoughts were fragrant in his own at that moment. I did not look carefully at his eyes. Of his own accord he put the picture back in the packet with a sigh. Then, turning, he gave me his final blessing.

There was no coach this time. I think the Bishop had forgotten, for I saw Baltasar running furiously in the direction of the stable. But I had no wish to be overtaken or to rumble through the streets after the two mules. So I turned me aside up the hill which rose steeply behind La Delicia, and scrambled back to the town by the goat’s path which led along the ancient fortifications, now crumbling and desolate. There were thoughts in my heart which I wanted to think out. For it is not every day that, all unexpectedly, in the hither and thither of the adventurer’s life, one meets an altogether gentle gentleman - the fine flower of true religion and undefiled.

At the hill-top I sat and looked long at the gardens of La Delicia. I could see the figure of the Bishop walking slowly up and down the one cleared path, his hands behind his back, his head bent. At times he stopped, and taking something out of his breast he held it to his lips.

Perhaps it was the crucifix. Perhaps not. At all events I wondered what the picture of a little child, one whom he had never seen, had to do with it.

This is a brief adventure, yet I can write no more tonight. I do not wish to mix the outer world with my memories of the truly holy and reverend father in God, Armandus, once Bishop of El Seo, in the archdiocese of Tarragona.

It was the Sabbath evening, and I felt that no strictest Calvinist could take up his testimony against me for misspending it. From the charitable I had learned charity. I had walked with one who ordered his conversation aright, and who, as a reward, had seen the salvation of God. A man, a sinner, had walked with the godly, underneath trees planted by rivers of waters. And

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lo! the sweetest and most heavenly thing we had seen together that day, was the smile upon the face of a little child.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE STRANGE THOUGHTS OF A BEGGAR MAN

After the romantic guilt of smuggling, easy was the descent to mere strolling and vagabondage. But then, in the Spains, no man is thought the less of for being, as we say in Scotland, a 'solicitor.' The expression 'you beggar' has almost its playful English sense. There is, in addition, that universal Spanish brotherhood in aristocracy which they express in the proverb, 'Call no man dog, lest one day the dog bite you!'

So, having during previous sojourns in the Pyreneean country, obtained some introduction to that highly respectable and respected class - the United Society of Beggars and Bettellers trafficking in the Spains - I was not in the least surprised to hear Biño, when I asked him as to his prospective bride and father-in-law, answer without constraint and without shame, 'He is a travelling merchant. No, neither mendicant nor yet suppliant - as the Señor might misunderstand. For Rodil possesses a waggon of his own - and his mule is an excellent one - of the true mouse-colour.'

'And you, Biño,' I said, to try him, 'who are a householder in two countries, can it be that you are taken with the daughter of a - travelling merchant?'

I repeated his word, and it was perhaps well that I did so, because Biño was a proud man and a stickler for the distinctions. He shrugged his shoulders.

'What would you?' he said, 'when a fish is caught, what matters whether the line be twisted of hemp or of silken cord?'

'And do you mean to marry the lady?' I hazarded.

'That depends,' said Biño; 'I have it in my mind that I will travel some time in their company. I will observe this girl. If she be sage - or at least sage enough for me, assuredly I will wed her. You are surprised?'

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'But of all this I have heard nothing!'

'Nor hath any other!' he cried, 'not even I myself. Indeed I am astonished that your honour should have been so well informed as to my liking for the maid.'

Without answering in words I showed him a rough, untuned print, and he cried out in wonder. It was that of himself and his ladylove leaving the little fountain opposite the Fonda in El Seo.

'I know many things,' he said; 'but this is enchantment. Even so did I carry her water-pots while she walked a little behind! I will go now and show it to Marinessia (I spell by ear), and also to her father, who is a wise man - fit to be governor of a province!'

It is worth noting here that Marinessia is the Basque corruption for Maria Ignacia, and a popular name. Now I shall have much to say of Marinessia, but of Rodil, her father, infinitely more. It was true, as I found, what Biño had said - his father-in-law's company was far to be preferred to that of the governor of any province.

For Rodil was no mere ganger of roads. He was in his way a capitalist, owning a waggon, blue-tilted, capacious, from which rolls of cloth could be extracted, with silks and cheap jewellery, all done up in mysterious waterproof packages - indeed all the paraphernalia of a regular smugglers' receiver upon his travels. In addition Rodil had a daughter, who, however, did not often travel with the outfit, that Marinessia for whose sake our Biño had become a water-carrier. Rodil had also a wife, Concepcion, and a son, Tobalito, more frequently referred to as Penique, or 'the Copper.' But in spite of all these possessions Rodil would very frequently leave the other members of his family to run the main establishment alone, while he went off by himself, his pockets filled to bursting with Geneva watches and crucifixes of unmarked silver and unguaranteed ebony to 'bettle' and barter it cross country towards a prearranged rendezvous.

It was on such occasions that I found his

acquaintance to be of the greatest advantage. Biño's description set my soul instantly in a flame. I coveted my neighbour's beggar. No one had ever made an intimate study of North Spanish vagrancy. Even the excellent 'Vagabond in Spain' vagabondised much further to the south and west, while the beggar of Ford, with his open sores, amputations, and long filthy beard, is out of date in the north today - except perhaps in the vicinity of the Shrine of our Lady of the Pillar in Zaragoza, or painfully climbing the mountain of Montserrat about the time of the great September pilgrimage. Indeed in the vicinity of such very holy places he has existed unchanged from the days of Martial. He was the Tartuffe of Domitian's temples, and he remains the pest and scourge of the shrines of Spain unto this day. To quote a very ancient record: 'No poverty or needy toil compels him to live thus. The sheep (his neighbour's) gives him a fleece. The field gives him corn. His horse approves thereof. What need of a house for him? It is only to be entered on rare occasions.' Or again: 'See in the porch of Domitian's new temple of wisdom - yes, yonder old man! 'Reverend,' say you? Why, so he is, if a wallet and a staff, hair like a door-mat, a beard of which the less said the better, a sad-coloured cloak descending to his heels, and a crowd that gives him alms to be rid of him, make a man holy! A Cynic, say you? I own it, but I am closer to the word than you - a dog, say I!'

But Biño's introduction of his prospective kinsman soon proved him to be of another stamp from such ancient props and parasites of church porches.

'Señor,' he said, 'this is my friend concerning whom I spake. Don Buenaventura Rodil y Alva is his name; but he will be well content if, after the first time, you call him Rodil!'

So in obedience to Biño's hint, I greeted the nobleman upon his travels with what courtesy I was master of. And such was his dignity of manner and the solidity of his character and conversation, that I never felt

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the least desire to treat him save with the utmost respect.

The man whom Biño brought forward was a roughly-attired, frieze-coated Spaniard of middle age, with the shrewd, melancholy, bearded visage of a herd upon the Galloway hills, and when he spoke, he had the same slow speech, as if before delivery each word had been weighed and not found wanting. It was a face to respect - a plain, sane, quietly humorous face to which I took from the first. I was blood-brother to the type. At home they call each other 'Tmmas' and 'Jone,' crying stormily athwart the mists of the mountain tops.

Like them too Rodil never did anything in a hurry. If he only filled his pipe, he did it with a gesture of one taking part in a religious ceremony. And this thoughtful air was genuine - the product of years of mountain winds and nights spent in the dens and caves of the earth.

I have seen something of the same look about an ancient seaman - a certain wise simplicity and childish innocence preserved through a world of experiences. Loose-limbed was Rodil, bowed in the shoulder, his rough 'Bill Sykes' cap tossed carelessly on his head. He looked habitually lazy, his appearance betraying nothing of the daring and ready resource which really characterised him through life.

By profession Rodil was a mender of umbrellas. That was his proper task when the police inquired or when the fit of manual activity came to him. But in the latter case he needed either Penique or Concepcion to assist him. The unlicensed peddling of smuggled goods he could manage alone. As for Marinessia, she had always been a thing apart, generally dwelling with her uncle in the town of El Seo. Her father's pet, she must not be subjected to the rough and tumble of the caravan or the huddle of the parador chamber in which Penique rejoiced. Marinessia's uncle, with whom she abode, was a bien man in comfortable circumstances, with a house within the city walls, as well as a little cane-built farmhouse of his own outside in the valley.

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It took me a day or two to acquire the confidence of my new friends. Biño's recommendation went some way. Still more, the report of our joint smuggling adventure (though, truth to tell, this was a little marred by my visit to the Bishop in his carriage), carried weight with Rodil and his household. Most of all the averted looks and steady espionage of the local authorities pleaded eloquently for me. It was felt that he could not be other than a man of virtue and probity upon whom the government frowned.

Day by day I spent a larger number of hours with the far-descended son of the Rodils and Alvas. When I was first introduced we had found him breakfasting in the brumous haze of the morning, with the tower of a little church immediately behind. Rodil had been cutting an inscription on a tombstone, for graveyard sculpture was also one of his assets in the battle of life. The family was at its early meal, and I had just manipulated my innocent-looking Newman and Guardia camera when the sharp eye of Penique (or 'the Copper') observed me. Indeed his hand has been caught in the very act of reaching out to warn his mother of our approach.

There was not much said at the time, except by Biño. I was on my probation, and Rodil was inclined to speak but little. He offered us very courteously a portion of their fare, and we as ceremoniously wished that it might be for their honours' own healths to eat it. But later in the day I encountered Rodil and his son Penique busy at their trade under the shelter of the town well-house. They sat under the eaves, Penique handing his father bits of wire and sprigs of steel as these were required. He wanted badly to be off playing at soldiers down under the fort with the other boys of El Seo, or raiding the Bishop's garden in its owner's absence. But the 'Copper' was a wise boy and desired no difficulties with his father. Health and happiness were best preserved by a strict, if sometimes irksome, filial piety.

Such combinations of well and wash-house as that

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under whose eaves I found them, are peculiar to the Eastern Pyrenean country on both sides of 'the snow saddle.' The women gossip there pleasantly enough with much clicking of slippery washing boards and slapping of dirty linen. Penique would dearly have loved to bandy words with them. For he had a good conceit of his tongue, and remembered occasions when his triumph had won applause and dragées (sweetmeats). But to sit still and hand his father spare umbrella ribs and bits of wire commended itself more to Penique's sober judgment than all the glory of successful word-combat.

As I came forward the principal lawyer, in company with the alcalde of El Seo, was passing through the square, in clothes which would not have appeared odd in the Strand. They had doubtless heard of my adventure with the Bishop, and if I did not promptly do something desperate, they were capable of asking me to accompany them to the Café or even of giving me the freedom of the city. So I passed them with a desperate calmness, lifted my hat to Rodil the umbrella-mender, and - sat down beside him. I had chosen my faction. The declaration was formal, and constituted authority did not again recognise me, save by sending the gendarmes in my absence, to go through every article I had in my room.

And Rodil! Well, he only tapped away at his umbrella; but I could see by the slant of one wary eye and the slow rare smile that percolated up about the corners of his mouth that his mind was quite awake to all the issues. He said nothing for perhaps five minutes, and then he sent Penique for some more copper wire. Penique, who did not now wish to absent himself, desiring, doubtless, to perfect his imitation of the stranger's blundering speech for the benefit of his comrades, produced another little roll of wire from his pockets. Rodil's brows instantly clouded, and his hand dropped in the direction of a switch which lay, as one might say, 'convenient.'

'Put it down and go!' he thundered.

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Penique obeyed instantly, with a humble and even prayerful expression; but I am convinced that he made a face behind our backs ere he disappeared.

'You have chosen the better part!' remarked Rodil, nodding approvingly. 'They are dull - dull - all these little officials! Yes, they and the priests - for me, I call them God's asses - and the devil's!'

'Which might be which?' I inquired, eager for a further taste of the beggar-man's quality.

'Oh, I would have you understand I am no scoffer,' said Rodil, with seriousness. 'The holy fathers are God's asses, and the lawyers the devil's! The wire? Thank you a thousand times, Señor. Where is that young son of perdition, Penique? Oh, I remember, I sent him away. He is too fond of listening to that which it does not concern the young to hear. Moreover, the pricked ears of youth are a halter on a grown man's tongue!'

All the while he was tapping away with a slender iron-shafted hammer, and picking tacks and pieces of wire out of his mouth, as quick as you could wink.

'I have heard,' he said, 'of your smuggling and carrying the case of jewellery. I got some of the very load from Don Mark this morning. He stood next me in church, in the dark behind the great altar, where the gendarmes never come, and where it is so safe to make exchanges! Religion is always blessed, and no one can say that I, Rodil y Alva, am a pagan. At first, it is true, I mistrusted you - in the matter of the visit to the Bishop. But now I see it was only that you might know things - to see deep into people, bishops and basketmakers, umbrella-menders and beggar-men. Ah, I know part - some things I have seen that are hidden even from you. But if it had been my fate to be rich, I would have travelled the world even as you!'

'But I am not rich,' I hastened to assure him, for there is no worse character to possess in an unsettled country. 'I was born in a land as poor as yours, and the craft of the writer is in all lands none of the best

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considered!

'Yes,' he assented, 'so I have heard. Yet once when I rented a little farm, I had to pay a whole duro for a letter that was written for me, threatening my neighbour, who had moved the fence of canes a yard in his favour, anent the time of the ploughing for the winter wheat!'

'Ah,' said I, eager to be poor among the poor, 'but the man who wrote that letter was a lawyer, I'll warrant him - and very likely alcalde as well, or perhaps even deputy!'

'Indeed he was - all the three,' said the umbrella-mender, nodding his head at my sagacity; 'I am glad you are not that species of writer who charges a whole duro for only a sheet and a half - and even then the words widely written and few on a page!'

There was a slight noise behind, the flutter of bare feet, an uncertain scuffling, a cough. Rodil and I turned our heads with the instinctive suspicion of the seasoned tramp. But it was only Penique. He hastened to forestall any movement towards the rod of correction with his hand raised palm outwards in deprecation.

'I have 'borrowed' some fine wire, both sizes,' he said, hurriedly, 'and taken back Señor Menaldo's umbrella, the green one that was ripped away from the ferule, and brought two parasols to mend from the great house on the hill. Now what more shall I do, my father?'

'Go and wash your face, Penique!' said Rodil, and went on with his tapping. Penique started, and the parasols dropped from under his arm.

'I would rather be beaten - and stay!' he muttered, beginning to whimper.

'Go,' said his father grimly, 'or I will bid thy mother to wash thee!'

'I will go,' said Penique, with fresh alacrity. 'I will borrow the soap without her knowing. For when she washes me she scrubs till my ears are like beetroot!'

'Go hastily,' said his father, 'or by all the saints and martyrs, not your ears only shall be as red as beetroot,

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but your body also from nape to heel. Off with you, little frog!’

Thus it was that Rodil and I began our friendship. After I began to know him better he proved full of the wisest of saws and the most modern of instances.

‘There is no converse between a man and a boy save with the shadow of a birch rod between them!’ he would say. ‘Now there is Penique. His mother spoils him, and yet he will not go near her if he can help it. But as for me, I keep young Don Rascal at the stick’s end, and, lo! I cannot be rid of him from morning to night!’

Then he gave me in short the philosophy of Beggarland.

‘It is as good a trade as another,’ he said, ‘and fully as honest. The Sangrador bleeds, and so do we. The lawyer cheats, but as for us, we say plainly what we want, and in time of need - take it. (Do not let Penique hear that!) The priest prays, and so at a pinch can I - yet for all that one sees, my prayers are just as efficacious as his. I have my waggon, my horse, my tools, my ten fingers. Those who call me mendicant do so at their peril, for I possess a knife ready in my sash. I have also a wife - good as wives go, failing only in obedience and the power to hold her tongue, the two common ills of the sex. I have a daughter, the like of whom has no man. She is no ways beautiful, I grant you. Yet I think not that it is altogether for her money that your friend, Biño the Frenchman, hangs a foot after her!’

‘Ah, I have seen! An old hound knows the tricks of the young dogs! He is a Frenchman, indeed, and all Frenchmen are - that which it is better not to express. But - Biño, I have known him many seasons - I have no fault to find with Biño. But when he comes seeking my daughter and her money - why, that is another tale!’

‘Her money?’ I said. ‘You must have done well with your umbrellas to be able to give her a dowry - one that would tempt a man well-to-do in the world like Biño.’

‘I give her money!’ - Rodil laughed. ‘I have not an

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ochaviño to give her. What her uncle may do I know not. He is an old sedate hunks, and sits close on his money bags. But Marinessia has no need of any man's bounty. She has received 'the palms.' She has also a medal and - what do you call it - a pension!

'From the government?' I inquired. 'I had not thought that you stood so well with the officials. You are the first man I have known in Spain who did not take his dues, or more than his dues, out of the governmental pouch - not as a suppliant but with the strong hand!'

'The government!' he cried, dropping his pincers in his haste to correct my mistake. 'Why, I do not mean the government of Madrid, but the government of France - which is a true government, and knows how to keep its promises. It happened thus. My girl, Marinessia, is very strong and loves horses. So that from Bayona to Banyuls all call her La Dompteuse.

'You have seen her, Señor? A plain face, but a head like a blessed Madonna painted up in a church, a man's shoulders, arms - sir, you should see her at the plough with a team of young horses - and an eye! Ah, Excellency, the life is in the eye! She has her father's eye. Watch! There is no man in El Seo can do this, but Rodil y Alva alone!'

A great hulking dog, of the sort which butchers keep (called on the other side of the mountains Danois), came with a sullen slouch across the little Plaza. He was walking in our direction, probably homeward bound after spending the night in urgent personal affairs. All at once the brute grew visibly uneasy under Rodil's steady glance, looked up, stopped dead, gave a short sharp growl more of protest than anger, let fall his stub tail, and turning, trotted off the way he had come. As I looked at Rodil, I was in time to catch the last spark of something that burned ruddy as a danger signal, dying out of the enlarged pupil of his eye.

'My daughter,' he went on, 'can do that and more. She can temper a young mule without the breaker's cruel

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bridle. The thing happened last year, that of which I tell you, in the time of the early falling snow. Perhaps you remember the storm. We were going north, my wife and Penique and I, Marinessia being with us. She wished to see France, and the frost having come early at her uncle's, there was no more work to be done on the farm. So we dwelt in the caravan, we four - or rather for warmth Penique slept in the boot underneath, along with the watch dog.

You have been by Puymorens across the Col de la Perche? What - many times? Well then, you remember the steep descent from Mont Louis as you go towards Villefranche? There is a bridge at the bottom, very narrow, and as God willed it, only half of it passable at the moment, the rest being under repair.

'Now in Mont Louis there are many soldiers, very many. It is the greatest of all the fortresses in the south. Ah, they would not let you take your pictures there with the photograph machine? That I can well believe! I also have experienced their foolish rigour. I was once in gaol at that place. But not this time - no, for when we went through it again they turned out the soldiers to salute us, and the band played.

'But that was my daughter's doing, who is a noble girl and too good for any man - though, as I grant you, plain of face. We were resting in a field by the roadside, and our old beast was turned out to graze. Little enough, God knows, was there for him to champ his teeth upon! And Marinessia, who hates to be idle, was helping a neighbouring farmer's wife to break the clods with a great stone roller and a team of oxen! Ah, Señor, what a wife she will make, that girl! Her man will have no need to work!

'Well, sudden as cannon shot, from above there came a great crying and a growing rumble. I ran to the roadside, but because there was a bend I could see nothing. Yet more and more men cried, as the rumble came nearer, and I hastened to the bridge-head thinking

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that mayhap there had been an ice-break high among the mountains, and that the floods were threatening the river-lands! Such things have been. I have seen them. Twice have I lost all by camping too near a hill water before the spring ice broke.

‘But as I stood and looked - I and many men, Italians and Sardes mostly, who were working at the bridge - lo, round the corner rocking and swaying came a carriage - a great man’s carriage, not a hired hack of the roads. The horses were galloping wild with fear, their necks stretched out, and in the carriage there were two ladies. The coachman had leaped off long before, where he found a soft place, for he knew of the bridge. He was a Frenchman and cared only for his own skin.

Then the Sardes cried out, ‘Scatter and let them pass!’ But I knew that never a passage was there over the bridge for horses mad as these were. They would strike the parapet, and then - I shuddered to think what would come then. I drew a little back. Yes, I who have the name of a brave man - I, Rodil y Alva - and who deserve it. But, Señor, if you had seen those mad horses, that bridge littered with great blocks of stone knee-high, and heard the river growl below, you also, Señor, might have done the same.

‘So I stood like one mazed, a dry prickling heat tingling behind my eye-balls, and the silence of waiting in my heart. As one waits breathless while the tall tree sways uncertainly to the fall, so I stood.

There was a copse at the last bend - a little, little clump of trees, all wind-driven away from the north by the fierce even thrust of the mistral - your honour knows it. It is just at the angle of the road before the bridge. And as I stood thus, I saw one spring out of the pine shadows. It was my daughter - yes, that same Marinessia whom you have seen, and where no man would venture, she leaped and clung. They dragged her, the mad creatures beating her from side to side as they tossed their heads, like a bladder on a jester’s staff. But presently she got her

footing and ran a little way with them, holding back with all her weight. They slackened, but already the bridge was near, and nearer still the scattered stone blocks the Sardes had left. Almost they were over. The side of the carriage carried away the wooden rail before the stone baluster begins.

‘God in his heaven!’ I cried, ‘they are gone!’

‘But suddenly my daughter Marinessia caught the reins in both hands, and with a gesture grand and simple and strong, wrenched the horses’ heads as it were across her chest. They stopped, trembling - and the breast of the leader scraped the parapet of the bridge! Señor, it was the wife and daughter of the commandant of Mont Louis who were in that carriage.

‘Great folk they were, for their father was a general, and in favour with the government. The which is a rare thing and brings much power. For in France not all the generals love the government. But by wondrous good chance this one had favour. So for his wife’s sake, and still more for his daughter’s, he obtained the ‘laurels’ for my girl. No, I do not well know what they are, but they are of great respect, and they were presented at Prades to my daughter Marinessia. The prefect put something on her head - palms or laurels - I know not which. I only know that Marinessia cried all night and part of the morning because she had to appear before these great folk. Indeed she only stopped when Penique told her that she was making her eyes red and ugly like half-baked earthenware saucers.

‘But at the ceremonial everything passed well. Even the soldiers presented arms to my Marinessia, yes, and every year there is a paper comes to the care of the cure of Puymorens, who is a friend of mine. Then when I take it, with Marinessia’s name written thereon to the bank in Prades, and wait a while behind wire, after much writing here and there and showing of papers, the money is paid - all in gold and each Napoleon worth many, many of the pesetas of hungry Spain.

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‘That is the tale, and Marinessia is a good girl, having that which is better than beauty. No, Señor, I do not mean the money - though it is true that money also is good. But if Biño, your friend, is an honest man, and he and my daughter of a liking, I shall not say them nay. But all must be regular and done by the priest of Puymorens, my friend. For we Alvas are no road-gangers, no hen-roost thieves, no heathen Gitanos; but good Christians and of an ancient family. Here, Penique, come and let me look at your face.’

The man of ancient family stopped in his monologue. His son had crept up noiselessly behind us, and without doubt had been listening unobserved to the concluding sentences of the father’s eulogy of his daughter.

‘It is somewhat cleaner, Penique,’ he said, after inspection; ‘now be off!’

The boy lingered uncertainly.

‘Marinessia has all the luck,’ he grumbled; ‘uncle thinks the world of her, and stones me out of the garden if I so much as look at one of his old fig trees! The government gives me no pension.’

‘My friend,’ said Rodil to his son, without stopping even for a moment his tick-tacking, ‘unless you mend your manners the government will give you free quarters, and something worse to do than holding wire for your father’s umbrella mending!’

‘I want to go ‘across the mountains’ with Biño!’ whimpered the boy; ‘he has promised that I shall, if you will permit!’

For there comes a time at which Basque and Aragonese boys take to the hills to prove their manhood. In France the age at which great crimes are committed is from eighteen to twenty-one. In Spain, the crude materialism which gives rise to the choice of murder as a career, does not exist. But instead, the young men go north to the Pyrenees or south to Ronda and Tarifa. In either case they become smugglers. The hard life weeds

them off rapidly, but those who return gradually settle down as traders, merchants, and distinguished citizens. Some, on the other hand, enter the government service and hunt their old comrades with zeal and discretion - and without too much ill-feeling on either side.

After Rodil had, as it were, perused me for some days, and assured himself that I was neither a government spy, nor trying to find out the secret of a gold mine - the two favourite explanations of my presence among the mountains - we took to each other amazingly.

'We will leave my wife with her brother,' he said; 'she is of little use at any rate, on such a journey, and she and Penique can at least 'eat off' him! He has never paid me the last quarter of his sister's dowry to this day. Or at least, not that part of it which we differed about - and if they cannot eat the amount at his house, I shall never see a penny of it. Besides, we shall see so much the more, being disembarassed of women, and' (said as an afterthought) 'it is more becoming that Marinessia should have her mother with her, if so be that your friend persists in making his court to her!'

Rodil broke off suddenly.

'Penique - Penique,' he cried, making a trumpet of his hand, 'go forthwith to your mother and tell her that she is to clear the caravan and take her things and yours to your Uncle Esteban!'

The boy appeared with suspicious alacrity from nowhere in particular, and upon hearing the order repeated, set up a howl of despair.

'I will not go to my Uncle's,' he cried. 'I want to go with you, father - to travel the land - to be a man!'

I was sorry for Penique, and said so because I foresaw that for some time I might be deprived of Biño's services. Also, because I much desired an excuse for sleeping outside Rodil's caravan, I pled for the boy. He watched with eager eyes, knowing full well that his fate hung in the balance. His father did not answer directly. It was not his way. But all the same Penique knew that

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every tap without a peremptory order was so much in his favour.

'I would work so hard,' he murmured as if talking to himself; 'none could find fodder for the mule like me - or acquire barley for his supper, or currycomb him with thoroughness, or wake in the night to see that he had not pulled up his head-stake!'

'Vaya, green croaking froglet,' growled his father - 'you wake! You would not awaken if all the thunderbolts of heaven were unloosed, and the solid hills fell crashing into the valleys.'

At this Penique precipitated himself along the square in somersaults and cartwheels of joy. He had achieved his permission. As for me, I also was content. I liked Rodil. I was overjoyed to study vagabondage from the life. But all the same - I was glad of an excuse to sleep elsewhere than in the airless caravan.

As a travelling companion Rodil was perfect. He never went too far. He never went too fast. He was amenable to hints as to stopping-places. Being one of the few Spaniards who habitually smoke a pipe, he was not eternally 'twizzling' cigarette papers night and day - a thing which ultimately grows irritating to one not to the manner born. He had the long silences of the northerner, and was content to sit and push the 'dottle' down with his thumb, till he had something to say worth saying.

As he opened out he gave me the biographies of the passers-by while we sat together under the pleasant tilt of his cart, with Penique running on ahead and stimulating Babieca with incentives literally of the stone age. We had left the pleasant City of Dream by its southern gate, and on a post overlooking the canal near the barracks sat a man fantastically robed in a striped mantle of brown and yellow.

'Can I take him?' I demanded of Rodil. For though he himself had no scruples as to being photographed, others might not be equally large-minded. However, it soon appeared that the object on the post had no

objections. Yet I well-nigh missed him, for in descending hastily from the front seat of the caravan I dropped my 'finder,' and had to chance the exposure. I succeeded, however, in getting my beggar on the very edge of the plate. 'It is well,' said Rodil, 'that is old Don Tomas of the Murders - no common man, Tomas! In his day he committed many. But that time is long past, and now he only tramps upon the roads from shrine to shrine!'

'But why,' I asked, 'has he not been tried and condemned? I thought all these things were of the past in Spain!'

'That is just it,' said Rodil with much philosophy. 'These things happened long ago - in a time of war, and besides the dead people were all his own kinsfolk. If you give him a Great Dog (a penny) he will tell you all about it. That is, indeed, how he makes his living, both here and in his wife's Ventorilla!'

As my experiences of life had not included hearing a Troppman of the family circle relate the story of his slayings for so small a consideration, I decided to invest in a pennyworth of the stock-in-trade of Don Tomas of the Murders.

The old man, his mouth all adroop, was basking in the sun, which warmed his limbs and doubtless sent a drowsy bliss inward to his heart. He blinked upon us as we came near, but equally without expectation and without fear. Rodil addressed him familiarly.

'Ah, father Tomas,' he said, 'we are fortunate indeed to find you. This great foreign nobleman has come from England to see and to hear you speak!'

The old man cackled out a clucking, toothless laugh. 'Ah, yes,' he muttered, 'they all come. They all listen to old Tomas. When he speaks every one is silent. Tomas is the most famous man in Aragon - aye, in all the Spains - that is, since they slew José Maria.'

He lifted up his hand and pointed to the long white line of the cavalry barracks whose windows seemed

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positively to blink in the fierce sunshine.

'Aye, aye,' he laughed in that horrible soft cloopy way (like boots pulled out of the mud), 'the lads over yonder have fought with the Yen-kees, and they are brave. But no one of them has ever put down so many men as old Tomas - and lived to tell the tale!'

And then the dreadful old man leaned forward suddenly and thrusting his staff in my face, he added in his unctuous shivering whisper, 'also they were all of my family!'

He had a series of little rings of brass let into his staff just below the handle.

'All my kinsfolk,' he chuckled again triumphantly, 'and all grown men. Never unfairly I slew one, and never behind backs! Any one will tell you so!'

At this point Rodil nudged my elbow and I gave the old villain certain small coins, which he slipped into a greasy rag-bag slung about his neck. As I did so I saw many crosses and medals, such as are given to pilgrims at holy places for the accomplishment of pilgrimages. Tomas was on the way to make an edifying end. But for the present his thoughts were far other, and not well beseeming in a visitant of shrines.

'That,' he said pointing to the first ring on his staff, 'is my brother Barbalu, the wise one, the medico. He was so strong and so wise that he had me cast out of the house. But I met him in the way - by the Sierra Moncayo it was - where the red rock is, shaped like a lion. And, ha! ha! Barbalu was wise, and Barbalu was a physician. But the physician could not cure himself, and he found that my little knife was the better Sangrador (blood-letter)'

The jest was manifestly an ancient one, from the extreme enjoyment of the old bandit as he mumbled it out. But Rodil hurried him on to other tales.

'The great cannot wait all day on your foolish gossip, Don Tomas,' said Rodil, 'what do the other rings betoken?'

'The next,' said Tomas, glimmering at it through his

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stubby dead-white eyelashes, 'was - let me see - yes, my brother-in-law, the husband of my sister, he was - a big strong man that would have taken everything for himself. He had the vineyard, but he died before he had gathered in the first vintage. Then comes my cousin Esteban, the miller, who went about with evil tales against me, and my youngest brother Julio, against whom I had no quarrel till he provoked me at the entering in of El Seo, when I came down one Easter Sunday to make my year's peace, with my money for the priest ready in the stitching of my Montera cap. I was walking á la birlonga, that is, at mine ease. But my father, the old man, having disinherited me, had set the youngling on. So Julio died - yes, at the gate of El Seo he died, and when his father heard of it, he took to his bed and died also. I have always been grieved for that! I had meant it to happen otherwise. That is why there is no ring in this place on the staff! I was not a son for any father to disinherit - that is, with safety!'

Don Tomas waggled his head sadly as he gazed at the gap.

'No,' he said, 'I am an honest man and no boaster, like some of those over yonder. I will take no credit for that which I have not done. My father died in his bed, and so there is only a ring of black on my staff - black, that is, in token of mourning!'

By this time I had had quite enough of Don Tomas of the Murders, and hastened away from the roll call of the remaining rings.

The old man rose and shouted after us. He had meant to detain us all day. 'Wait, wait - I have not told you of my wife's relations - not so much as one of them!'

Rodil and I went up the brae together, the dust boiling up hot and soft under our feet. It came up between my toes, through the alpargatas, with a feeling of comfort particularly soothing.

'How is it,' I asked of Rodil as we pushed on to join Penique, 'that such an old villain has not been garrotted long ago?'

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Rodil shrugged his shoulders at the impossibility of ever making the foreigner understand the customs of Spain.

'It is just because it happened so long ago,' he said, 'as I told you it was a time of war, and there were many killings. Besides, Don Tomas was always a good religious man, and gave to the church, never doing evil to any, except to those of his own house with whom he had a quarrel. To which be it added, that they were all an evil tribe - his two brothers and his cousin Esteban the miller, and, worse than all, his wife's relations. So the people said, 'The thing is very well done!' And they even pointed out others to Don Tomas of whom the earth had been the better rid. But because of his kind heart and forgetfulness, somehow they were let live, which in the end was the worse for the land. But the worst of all is Don Tomas's own son, who will one day undoubtedly slay the old man, being set on by his mother to revenge her kindred. Even the priest spoke against filial ingratitude from the pulpit and said, 'It is a warning!' And so truly it was. For if you kill out a nest of snakes and spare one - that one will one day bite you to the death!'

Then Rodil thought a little, and shook his head gravely at his own wisdom.

'No,' he said, 'when a man sets himself to clean his yard, it is better for him to sweep all the rubbish outside the gate!'

As we took the dusty road towards Moncayo, another man crossed us, so startlingly like Don Tomas of the Murders that I stood and gazed. The dress was a little different, the face was younger but far more evil.

'That is Tomas the younger!' whispered Rodil. 'Yes, take his picture - I am here. The serpent may hiss, but he dare not strike!'

So I took the picture and there it is - the picture of a man that had committed no bloodshed, yet whom a whole countryside recognises as worse than the father who in his day well-nigh exterminated two families. It was

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another warning not to judge hastily of the standard of morals among any people. For, as was afterwards made abundantly clear, of the two the shedder of blood was indeed incomparably the better man.

'But how,' I said to Rodil, 'does such a man as Don Tomas live? Surely people are afraid when they see him come about a house?'

'Nay,' said Rodil, 'he is no beggar, no mendicant, not even a merchant supplicant like me. Don Tomas has a ventorilla, a wine-shop, and supplies many respectable people at three-half-pence the skin. For me I would not care to abide there all night, but on account of other living things than Don Tomas - aye, or his son either!'

'Yet the younger is the eviller beast,' continued Rodil, 'he would have slain Penique - who I admit often needs the stick, but no more. So now Penique waits for him at the dark ends of calles and behind doors - ready to smite and run. I have beaten him for it. But after all, they are an evil breed, and Penique is old enough to look after himself, and if not - why, it is high time that he learned.'

'And what had Penique done that the man should try to kill him?' I asked of this most philosophical parent.

'Done?' cried Rodil, 'why, no great things. Only, as boys will when threatened - there had been some little calling of names, and as I tell you, the matter of the smiting. Ah, there he is at this moment! Penique, you young good-for-nothing, what do you there, and where is the waggon?'

For as we passed out of the last suburb, there was Penique, alert as a terrier at a rabbit-hole waiting at the end of a narrow calle for Don Tomas the younger, and the mule a little behind cheerfully improving the shining hour by eating clothes off a line.

But Rodil would have none of it, and he put the prohibition on high grounds.

'By-and-by, you shall do as you will, Tobalito,' he said soothingly to his offspring, 'strike and take! Have your quarrel out and God help the better man! But now

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there is the business, the caravan, and this stranger to remember!’

So to put Penique out of temptation he was sent on with the mule and caravan, by the long road which leads away across the parched plains, while Rodil and I took a short cut over the Sierra of Moncayo. There was plenty of time, and as we went Rodil discoursed yet more and further of his profession.

‘You saw that fellow beneath the portico all covered with stone-working in the plaza of the city, as we came by?’

‘The young man showing his stumps at the wrist? Yes, too often!’ said I, shuddering. For the loathsome objects belonging to a man well enough dressed otherwise, had fascinated my unwilling eyes all the week.

‘That,’ he said, ‘is Pedro of Villarasa - a most respectable man. The marquis at whose door he stands, was indebted to his father on an occasion, and so gave him that pitch to beg from. The son has done well there also. That young woman with the babe was his wife. They speak of making Pedro councillor for his Barrio.’

‘But his arms? Is he not horribly disfigured?’ I asked, though I began to understand.

‘His honour is not so simple as he amuses himself with pretending,’ said Rodil. ‘It is of course a mere matter of bandaging when young, and I will not deny that Pedro of Villarasa is clever - too clever for a Mendicant of the Pitch, with a stance outside a great man’s gate. But then he married one of the household servants - a girl of Valencia, at the Marquis’s request. And they do say - ah, yonder I declare is that raterillo, that thief-of-the-world, Pablo Puig, the Catalan, and with him his new blowen! See how he shoulders the empty bag, while she has all the heavy weight and the sticks for the fire to carry as well. Ah, the rascal of rascals! He came some while ago wanting my Marinessia, with lying tales dropping from his mouth as he talked. But I knew Pablo, the Catalan, yes, and all his people! Out of Francoli they are, and an evil

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lazy set! So I answered him, this right hand upon my knife, 'I will sell you a mule or a horse, or a donkey - that is, if you and I, my Pablo, can agree upon a price. But I will not give you my daughter Marinessia for nothing, that you may make her all three!' And at that he glared like a wolf, yet dared not strike, for I held him with the eye till he cringed like a beaten hound.'

It was noon when we came to Miranda. At the gate an old and respectable-looking man came out of a wooden hut, and after a glance at me he held out his hand for some coppers which Rodil gave him as a matter of course.

'Who is that?' I asked, 'and why do you and not I give him money? Surely he is no beggar?'

'Oh, he is the chief of the customs of Miranda,' said Rodil, 'and he must have from each of my profession who enters - mendicant, supplicant, or merchant traveller - five Great Dogs.'

'But why do you pay - it is not his right?'

Rodil shrugged his shoulders and pointed back to the man at the receipt of custom.

'We do not speak of rights in Spain,' he said; 'see yonder is old Critóbal, the Cordovan beggar, fumbling for his coppers. This is older than the law and stronger. It is custom. For if we did not give to the chief of the octroi, the headman of the police would find some excuse to put us in prison. Here in Miranda they are cousins by the mother's side, he and the man of the customhouse! Oh! it is excellently arranged. Even so my brother and I had settled to do in the town of Tudela. But he died, my dear brother, and the man who succeeded him had a brother of his own. In which case, lucky it was that I did not sell my caravan.'

'And were you once in the police?' I asked in wonderment. Rodil nodded and laughed.

'Aye,' he said, 'and even yet I enjoy some consideration because of that. For the good folk remember my past, and trust me because of it - while the evil think me still secretly in the service of the

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government, and so are afraid to meddle with me! Which thing serves equally.'

'And what made you leave the civil guards?' I asked.

'Why? Because I had a daughter whom I loved, even Marinessia! And when she married I did not wish that any one should be able to cast it up to her that - she was the daughter of a Miguelite, a policeman! Sir, I am a poor man but I have a pride of my own - at least, for my children!' And that night in the stony gorges of Moncayo, after the heath-plants had been gathered and the sacks laid straight upon them for a mattress in one of the many grottoes of the hillside, I wandered forth. And there under the arch of the stars, sparkling many-coloured in the falling dew (as through a pane which begins to be frosted) I thought of the strange prides and shames of men, and wondered how far above the earth one would need to be lifted, to see them all as one - aristocracy and mendicancy, honour and dishonour, the king among beggars and the beggar among kings.

For when you take them foot to foot upon the same earth, men are curiously equal in mental stature - that is, among the highest in rank, and the lowest. Money and brains drain down or leaven up into the middle class. The clever aristocrat consorts with his peers of brain rather than with his peers of blood. The clever workman rises to a villa and the superintendence of a Sunday School. As for the others, in all lands I have found them about equal - the beggar as good a talker as the lord, with an advantage on the side of experience, as full of ideas, as pithy and sparing of words, equally barbaric of heart - both however, aristocrat and proletariat, haters of the bourgeoisie rather than of one another.

May not the Armageddon of the future be when these two join hands against the all-aggrandising middle-class? That would indeed be the revenge of barbarism. It has drawn to itself all, this Middle Estate, brains, money, wit, executive - all except the power and desire to fight. One day, be sure, the later Goths will once more glut their

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ire. And then - through the world from continent to continent, what a crying of *ça ira!* The Paris Commune of 1871 proved that the proletariat cannot supply its own leaders. But your aristocratic is a born fighting leader, and the two united might prove irresistible. Who knows? It is, at least, a dream of the City of Dream. One day, however, it may be more.

And as I thought on all these things and looked up at the stars, I did not wonder at the stern conclusion of a certain indicter of wise sayings, 'He that sits in the heavens shall laugh!' Though I also hoped that, being critically examined, the original might be found to bear the sense of 'smile.' 'He that sits in the heavens shall smile' upon mankind - a smile of understanding, of all-comprehension, of pity infinite, without mockery and without resentment.

CHAPTER SIX

SOME WANDERINGS WITH ZAIDA IN HER GARDEN

Stand back a little from your life and mark the strange links and chance connectives, seemingly so unimportant at the time. How did you first know your sweetheart, your wife, your business partner? I knew a man who met his bride through being locked up all night on account of a piece of boyish mischief, but who had reason all his life to regret that he 'bonneted the bobby.' Another dived to the bottom of a river to bring up the almost inanimate body of his future wife - and has been sorry ever since that he did not let her stop.

Take the present instance. If I had not had the row with the frontier authorities I should not have known Biño. If I had not known Biño I should never have found my way to the Sebastians at San Severino - never broken the Customs laws of two ancient countries, never dreamed pleasant dreams in the city of El Seo, never looked down on Bishop Armandus walking in his Garden of the Delight.

Then more and further, if I had not known Biño, I should not have been acquainted with Rodil and his daughter Marinessia. And it was through my caravan journeys with the former that I found my Zaida of the Garden.

Of course, with such a name there is a love story attached - not, however, of the usual kind. When abroad two imperious desires sway me, one of which sets me photographing washerwomen, and the other impels me to make friends with little girls. Afterwards when these last grow up, looks and money and calculation may sway their hearts. But from four or five to the age of eight, I fear no foe, though I says it as shouldn't. Without boastfulness I have had my experiences. The way to the heart lies plain at the age of six, there or thereabouts. I come - I see - I

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conquer. That is - I and a box of chocolates. - 'I have had sweethearts, I have had companions.' - But oh, I wish they would not get into the so reprehensible habit of growing up! When they lengthen their skirts, make broad their phylacteries - and will not sit upon my knee - alas! all (or nearly all) is over between us.

But from four to eight it is otherwise. In that fair but chilly land, the country of the wild Scots, there is one who thinks of me when she piles her bricks and nurses her doll, munches her mid-meal biscuit (the stay of the always hungry), and shuts her eyes for her white night-gowned vespers. At least, if she forgets, she goes back and says her prayers all over again. Could there be greater proof of devotion?

But after all 'the story is the thing.' I had been surprised that after our adventures together I should have seen so little of the four Sebastian brothers; but when I had time to think about the matter at all, I had put the omission down to my own pre-occupation with my friend that holy father in God, Armandus, Bishop of El Seo, or that other equally interesting acquaintance, Rodil the tinker, the parent of Marinessia Alva.

As to this I did not say anything to Rodil while on our first trip, because I did not know how far he was in the secrets of the Sebastians, even though Don Mark had sold him some of my packet of jewellery for distribution. At all events the secret was not mine. So till I again saw Biño I was without information about the four evangelist brethren.

More strange than all it seemed that I should never have seen Don Manuel, their father, who had been represented to me as spending some time in the city of El Seo, watching the chief officers of the revenue, and comprehensively greasing their palms in order to keep down that official itch which gold alone can allay. At San Severino he had spoken to me more than once of his friend the Bishop. But at El Seo the Bishop had not spoken of him, even though he knew perfectly well in

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what manner I had been employed before entering his episcopal city. Of course he knew. Everyone knew. The cats on the tiles knew - the very dogs, turned comma-wise over their own shoulders in the eager pursuit of backbiters, knew. On the Plaza the Civil Guards looked at once professionally suspicious and personally respectful - because they knew. Yet of the master of San Severino, no least sign. It was strange. Don Manuel had certainly shown a liking for me. I was sure that if he had been still in the city he would not have failed to call upon me at my inn.

It was the third day of our final excursion, and Rodil had worked his way through most of the gold and silver combs, the Neuchatel silver watches, the elaborate pins, and gay enamel studs he had taken with him. His pockets were heavy instead with the dollars of Spain, and in the caravan he had a large bundle of articles taken in exchange - of which the most comforting on a cold night was a jar of fine home-made cherry brandy, with the cherries lying plump and black at the bottom, ready to be stirred up with a long-handled spoon.

On the high plateau we had passed the famous church of the Bat, so called because it seems to cling to the arid Aragonese soil like a bat with wings outspread. All the same it looked to me more like a brooding mother-hen who had gathered her chickens under her wings. Then quite suddenly, as oftentimes happens in Spain, we came to the edge of things. The table-land fell away in furrowed red-brown bluffs, scored into arroyos, speckled with vineyards and olive plantations, while beneath, lost in a drift of blue haze, a broad belt of turquoise against the copper sky, the valley of the Upper Ebro stretched sinuous and mystical.

The road wound down slowly and crookedly, and it was nearly dark before we reached the bottom of the cliff. Penique was on ahead with Babieca. The swinging tilt of the waggon now towered up in the gloom as if it would fall over and crush us - now, as the path sloped down, steep

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as the tiles of a house, I expected every moment to find myself sprawling among the crockery and the umbrella wire which, cunningly entangled, upheld part of the roof of the caravan.

To the right! Turn to the right!' cried Rodil suddenly. The caravan vanished among some high trees. All we could see of it was the fire which flew from Babieca's shod fore-feet as the waggon mounted a stiff incline. Then all was still. The wheels had struck something soft. It was so dark under the trees that Rodil had to take my hand. We crossed a brook, climbed the causewayed brae up which the mule had stumbled, and so found ourselves on a wide open space of green grass. A range of buildings occupied one side, but as I looked I could see that these had long been ruined. The gables and pinnacles stood out bold and splintered against the sky. The peculiar black barrenness of a burned building struck one, even in the silhouette which these presented. But far away across the open space behind the broken naiads of a fountain, a light showed mellow. At least we had not come to an empty house. Indeed, from Rodil's assured movements it was evident he knew well his whereabouts.

A voice hailed us, as the caravan wheels ground suddenly harsh on gravel. Rodil answered in a dialect to me unknown, or perhaps with some pre-arranged phrase or password. For presently a plain, clean-shaven man came towards us, a lantern swinging in his hand. He held it up on a level with his chest as he looked me over - as I thought at first - with no very favourable eye. But a little girl of seven or eight who had followed the light ran forward and caught my hand with an air of protection. She at least did not share the man's suspicion of my looks.

'You are hungry,' she said, clearly and prettily; 'you shall come in and have part of my supper. Cristina has it nearly ready.'

As well as I could I thanked her, and she instantly

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remarked my accent.

'You are from France,' she said; 'you come from far away. You are also very tired? I know what it is to be tired.'

Meanwhile Rodil was conversing in a low tone with the man with the lantern. I heard the words, 'The Count may come at any time - he does not like -'

But at any rate the colloquy ended in Penique disappearing with the waggon into a back courtyard, while the little girl who had taken me under her protection on such slight introduction convoyed me to the door from which we had first seen the light streaming. Before we entered, she pulled me by the sleeve to bend down so that she might whisper in my ear,

'I am Zaida,' she said; 'if old Andrés or Cristina are cross, do not mind them. They are only servant-folk. I am the mistress of this house, and tomorrow I shall show you my garden.'

'A strange little girl? yes, Señor - you may well say so. You are the first to whom she has gone like that in all the five years since she came here a babel'

The good man seated at the table of the little kitchen, hidden away in the corner of the vast ruined palace of the Counts of Miranda-Aran, looked first at me and then at the little dark-haired maid who had climbed upon my knee, with a sort of suspicion that these might be wizard tricks.

'She is wild as one of the hill goats up yonder where you have come from,' said this excellent Anthony of the gardens; 'but, you understand, she has always been with grown folk, and so is strange in her manners. Even now - she will not speak to you!'

Which for the moment was true, but I saw something in the maid's eyes which told me that she would speak to a purpose when the time came.

At this moment Rodil and Penique entered from tethering Babieca, so that she might browse on the green

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outside the castle, and a most evil thought came to me. Zaida was regarding me with great wide-open eyes, hearing as if she did not hear Andrés clattering his dominoes on the table and talking about her as freely as if she had been a hundred miles away.

‘Go and greet my friends also!’ I whispered. ‘They are my friends!’

I saw the pupils of her eyes dilate. Zaida drew a quick, sobbing breath, and with one long look to see whether I meant it, she walked straight across the stone-flagged kitchen, vast almost as a ball-room, to where Rodil had seated himself by the side of Señor Andrés, the overseer, and where Penique still stood by the fire, loutishly uncertain what to do with himself. Rodil was talking with our host at the moment, and the little girl stood, a pathetic, patient figure, by his knee, till she could attract his attention. She had not long to wait. Rodil searched for his tobacco-box, and as he moved in his seat he became aware of her. She held up her cheek to be kissed, while Andrés stared in redoubled amazement.

‘What has come to the girl tonight?’ he grumbled, clicking his dominoes together like prayer-beads, ‘she never did the like even to me!’

Rodil kissed the child on both cheeks, and Zaida fell back with a sigh.

There remained Penique, and Penique appeared at once frightened and sulky, as is the wont of boys on such occasions. The little girl looked at me for instructions. I smiled, and indicated Señor Andrés. The blood rose quick to her cheek. She was not fond of Señor Andrés. Could it be that he was unkind to her? Surely not. So I nodded again. She went quickly round the table without again looking at me, climbed upon the worn bench that ran round the wooden table, put her arms about the overseer’s neck, and, of her own initiative, kissed him on the cheek.

Andrés dropped half-a-dozen dominoes with a

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clatter.

'Devil skin me like St. Bartholomew!' he cried, 'but there is wizardry in this. Is it because these are strangers that you behave thus? You never did the like before.'

Zaida shook her head vehemently.

'Not because of the foreigners?' repeated Andrés the overseer; 'then why have you kissed me? Because you love me, eh?'

And he went to put his arm about her with a Spaniard's kindly tolerance of children's ways. But at this she quickly descended, and, standing a little proudly, with her chin in the air, she answered, 'Because he told me.'

'But,' said the overseer, smiling, 'you have never seen the Señor before. You have lived here in this place since ever you remember - why - why would you do for this stranger that which you would not do for Cristina or for me?'

But already at seven Zaida had learned her lesson. She did not reason. She only stated facts.

'Because he told me,' she repeated, calmly, as if that explained everything. Then, still unsmiling, she came and re-installed herself on my knee.

It was certainly flattering, but I was afraid that perhaps the guardians of the little girl might not approve of so sudden a friendship, a preference so marked - even at the age of seven. So I took some photographs from my pocket and explained to Andrés that I understood about little girls, having certain of my own in a far-away country, that I had even written books about them - facts that fell upon deaf ears so far as Zaida was concerned, whose eyes were already busy with the photographs. Following the example of the Bishop of El Seo, she also picked out the picture of the little befurred maid cake-eating in the snow; and, disdaining the others, devoted herself to a careful and particular examination and comparison.

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'Do you love this little girl better than you love me?' she demanded, imperiously.

'She is my own little girl, you see,' I temporised; 'I have known her ever since she was born - and - it was I who gave her that piece of sweet cake.'

As soon as she had fully comprehended my answer, Zaida quietly disengaged herself, slid off my knee without a word, and was departing towards the door. I caught hold of her hand and stopped her.

'How would you like if your own father - if the Señor Andrés - did not love you?' I asked.

Zaida straightened up her slim little figure and looked at me, the tears beginning to well up in her eyes.

'He is not my father,' she said; 'you know better than that. My father is dead!'

'Ah,' I said, 'come and tell me about it, and one day I will tell this little girl who is far away. She will be sorry!'

She looked a moment uncertainly, eyeing my knee wistfully. Then all at once she cast herself, sobbing, into my arms.

'Ah,' she said, 'I thought that you, at least, would have loved me best! I did think it - I did - !'

'Well,' I said, willing to comfort her if I could, 'I think I do love you best of any one I have seen in all Spain. It is a great country, and I have seen many people.'

'Ah,' she cried, still unappeased, 'but I wanted to be loved best of all the world!'

Seldom have I heard from a child the woman's cry so clear, so passionate, so yearning. Zaida - ah, little Zaida - I fear me there is trouble, great trouble coming up for you over the verge of the years. But then you have also your chance of the unkennd happiness - the bitter and the sweet in balance, one paying for the other in full tale.

At this point I sent Penique, who had been standing aloof, dismayed and partly contemptuous, to the caravan for a certain picture-book I chanced to have with me. When he brought it, I had some trouble in translating the title - 'Certain Travels with the Beloved One - the Querida

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of my Heart,' was what I made of it. But once open, the pictures soon told their own tale. Mr. Gordon Browne with his pencil spoke infinitely better Spanish than I with my tongue.

'So she rode with you on an iron waggon which goes fast, with wheels fine like a loop of thread,' was Zaida's explanation of my Sweetheart's tricycle. For there were none such at that date in all the valley of the Upper Ebro, and indeed no roads good enough to run them on, barring a few furlongs within the bounds of the park of Miranda-Aran.

Above all, one picture in the book fascinated her and one chapter. The print showed a little girl lying on her face with all her golden hair in the dust, crying bitterly. Zaida pointed to certain words at the head of the page.

'What mean these?' she demanded.

'Heart of Gold!' I answered, which went excellently in the sonorous Spanish.

'Ah,' said Zaida, 'tell me all about that. Why did the little girl cry?'

So I told her, translating as best I could the sorrowful tale, of how a certain Heart of Gold, tried too high, broke suddenly and pitifully in the dust on the King's highway. And Zaida taking the truth more from Mr. Browne's picture than from my poor stumbling ill-chosen words, wept for sympathy.

'Ah!' she sighed, as she drew the handkerchief out of my breast pocket with fearless comradeship, and dried her eyes, 'if my father had lived he would have loved me like that! But you, too, you will love me a little, though you cannot set me upon the saddle of the iron steed, nor call me your Heart of Gold?'

There was only one answer to that, and I made it. By-and-by, when she had grown a little composed, this eager-hearted little maid of Spain, she looked at Penique, who was asleep and snoring under the eaves of the great hooded chimney. His chin had fallen a little down, and

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his mouth was open.

'Fauch, a boy!' said Zaida, crinkling up her nose. 'I hate boys! I like grown men. I love you!'

'Why?' said I, speaking quietly, under cover of the clashing dominoes. For Andrés the overseer and Rodil were once more deep in that never-ending game. 'Why do you love me, Zaida? You have hardly seen me yet.'

Then seven sighed a sigh which might have done credit to twenty, so ripe with womanhood it was.

'Ah!' said the child, 'that I cannot tell. But when you came without the door, there in the dusk, I felt it here!'

'It is only because you see no strange faces,' I said, to try her. Whereat my youthful analyst of the affections shook her head.

'No,' she made emphatic answer, 'nor was it your face. The Count is handsomer, though he is so much, much older - and so are many of the herdsman. But it was - yes, it was - '

She paused.

'Well, what was it, Zaida?'

'I think it was because when you came, you looked at me first.'

'A good reason!' I cried, laughing aloud.

'You must not laugh,' said the child, 'it is true!'

And most likely true it was - little girls and washerwomen being my queridas in the south. For Spanish boys are imps, bold and persevering as house-flies, pert as jackdaws. Whereas, up to the age of self-consciousness, Spanish girls are among the most witching and winsome of God's creatures.

There was in the North (there still is, but, alas! she also has grown somewhat since then) a little Scottish maid of three to whom I was accustomed to recount my travels. In private life she had her time of laughter and her time for tears. So often, therefore, as I found her in one of these latter, I would say gravely to her, 'Little girls in Spain never cry!'

Which, by the way, is indeed the rule, Zaida being

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the first I had ever seen shed a tear - and with her it was rather a passionate nature throwing itself against the bars of circumstance than any proof of childish weakness.

At first our little maid of the North was duly impressed by this Spartan trait in the children of the unseen sun-lands. But the impression passed off, as impressions too often repeated, will, and one day when I had surprised her in a very luxury of woe over a broken toy, I said as usual, 'Little girls in Spain never cry.' This time, however, she stamped her foot and answered doggedly, 'Had 'nuff little girls in Spain!'

After these plain-song declarations of affection I had no more chance of intercourse with Zaida that night. For while she nestled to me trustingly and played with my watch-chain, a broad-faced dame appeared in the doorway opposite to the great fireplace.

'Quick, good-night. Embrace me; there is Doña Cristina,' she said, clasping my neck, 'and she is so particular, worse than Andrés!'

The little witch vanished through the doorway, turning to kiss her hand as she went from behind Cristina's back, with a grave earnestness which had nothing frolicsome about it. Life was already extremely serious to this mite of barely seven.

The men continued their game. Penique alternately whittled a stick and dozed over the fire, while in half-a-dozen pots and casseroles simmered the late-coming supper of Spain. I sat thinking of the little maid, so strangely hidden away in the corner of this great brick Castle in the most unfrequented part of Spain. In a pause of the game I asked a question. Rodil appeared not to be attending. The overseer looked good-humouredly over at me, but when he spoke it was not to answer my question.

'The little lady gives you great favour, Señor,' he said; 'only with the Count have I ever seen her so familiar, and him oftentimes she will not kiss!'

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‘What Count?’ I asked, though I knew he could only mean the owner of the estate.

‘Why, my master, who else?’ answered the overseer Andrés, ‘the Count of Miranda-Aran. Whenever he comes to see her he makes a great pet of the child, and will walk with her in the garden by the hour. She will surely take you there tomorrow. But it is a strange place, for the Count hath bidden anything that Zaida desires to be done as she wishes it. It is a pity so to spoil a child.’

‘Is she, then, his daughter?’ I asked. For in that case it seemed strange to leave a little maid all alone with servants. The overseer shrugged his shoulders.

‘I have a good place here,’ he said. ‘I am content to ask no questions. Doubtless Zaida is the daughter of some one, and truly noble of blood, as indeed any one may see. These are not the manners of Galicia!’

‘Does the Count come often?’ I asked as carelessly as I could. Andrés shrugged his shoulders again.

‘Yesterday, and again tomorrow,’ as the saying is,’ he answered, ‘or not for a year and a day! As to that I know nothing.’

As Andrés spoke I saw Rodil raise his head cautiously from the dominoes, which he was abstractedly playing, right hand against left. His brows drew together, and then he inclined his head slightly over his shoulder. The gesture is indescribable, but when seen cannot be mistaken. He meant that I had asked questions enough, and that he would tell me what I wished to know when we retired for the night.

As we went out together after supper, Rodil whispered, ‘They say the Count was much attainted in the Carlist rising, and that he is compelled to live far away from his estates.’

‘And the little girl?’ I asked, for it was in Zaida that I was interested. Rodil laughed to himself contentedly, and, as usual, quoted a proverb.

‘A man who falls down a well can see the stars at noonday, but he who does not see them hath the

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unbroken bones!’

The which, being interpreted, signified that our Rodil considered that knowledge might sometimes be paid for at too high a rate.

Now I had been long without books, and furthermore I felt in my bones that there was going to be a change in the weather. I was within a day’s march of a town where a good friend of mine, the agent of a French banking company, held certain wet-day books in store for me - to wit: ‘Chambers’ Cyclopædia of Literature,’ whose solid tomes on the crowded library shelves a man may pass with hasty recognition, but which, in a foreign land and with only the ruck of provincial news-sheets to be had, becomes a perfect Rand of unminted gold. There was Mr. H. E. Watts’s ‘Don Quixote,’ that finest of modern translations; an original ‘Ford,’ and old Don George’s ‘Bible in Spain’ - a very complete traveller’s library indeed, and my soul was hungry therefor. [The best guide for tourists in Spain is O’Shea’s. It is original, concise, accurate - and best of all, is evidently kept carefully up to date by someone who knows the cities and towns thoroughly. For ordinary Spanish travel no other books are needed than those mentioned.]

But on the other hand I wished to see Zaida in her garden, and win more of her sweet childish confidences.

To this desire of mine Rodil instantly agreed, with his quick Spanish intuition in all that concerns the young. Spain is a good land to be a child in. All Spaniards love children and are good to them, though not with the swaddling affection of the French.

Penique couched with Babiëca as usual, but Rodil and I slept in a chamber, which, though damaged by fire, still contained some remains of its ancient magnificence of decoration. The actual furniture, however, had long been lost, or, at any rate, had disappeared. So that we had, perforce, to lie on the floor upon straw mattresses, neither over-clean nor over-comfortable. Of the Count’s private rooms we were not allowed even a peep.

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I made my toilet next morning on the edge of the ancient fountain, in whose basin the water still gushed as clearly and abundantly as it had done in the year of grace 1541, when, according to the date on the chisel-shaped panel which Faunus bore on his breast, the water had been led thither by the Miranda-Aran of that day, a noble who, if he were lucky, might have held the hand of Columbus or even lived to chuckle over an early copy of Don Quijote.

Scarcely had I finished when Zaida ran out, and with the enthusiasm of the fresh morning time caught me about the knees.

'I have dreamed so much - oh! so hard all night,' she cried, 'of how I would show you my garden! And now you must see it at once.'

I told her I asked for nothing better. Was it not for this that I had remained another day at the Castle of Miranda-Aran?

'We are to breakfast together,' she said, 'after we have taken our walk. There is much to see and we must see it bit by bit.'

Whereupon she took my hand and we set off. In the morning sun the ruins of the burned Castle were less terrible than (as I had seen them for the first time) in the murk of the evening. The corner in which Andrés and his wife dwelt alone with Zaida had been roughly repaired. The rest was in the state in which it had been left when the Government troops took it and made short work of the Carlist garrison.

To my surprise I found that Zaida knew all about these stirring events. Indeed, a more circumstantial cicerone could not have been desired than this little maid who did me the honours of Miranda-Aran.

'Here it was they were 'passed-by-arms,' she said, 'a hundred and twenty of them. The Count told me - that is how I know. He was there, but because his brother's son was fighting on the side of the Government, they let him escape. But he had to go far away - yes, far and far away

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- and for many years!'

The bricked yard, walled all around, still bore the crumbly pock-marks of the bullets, a few scattering high and some low, but most about the level of a man's heart.

'They ran this way and that,' the little girl went on, pointing with her hand as if she saw the sight. Her dark eyes glowed, and her hair fell about her face. She tossed it back repeatedly that it might not hinder her from telling the story dramatically. 'The Blacks stood in the doorway yonder and shot the Count's men as they ran, one here and another there. Some of them laughed so that they let fall their guns. The Count told me. The officers of Don Carlos's own people did not run. They were shot here, where, as you see, the marks of the bullets are many and breast-high. But the others - the common sort - ran. Some tried to climb the walls, but they were too high. Only one mounted yonder where the cistern stands in the corner, and they say he fell dead on the other side. Others ran about on all fours like dogs to escape the bullets. They cried and wept. But not one had mercy. They all died.'

She straightened herself up and stood against the wall.

'I would not have run,' she said. 'I would have stood with the officers! Even thus! What would you have done?'

I told her I hoped I also should have done that, too - but I did not know.

'Of course you would,' she interrupted. 'You are not like these people you came here with, any more than I am like Andrés and his wife. They may run and crawl, but we . . . dare not!'

'Are they not kind to you?' I hazarded the question, for there was nothing childish or immature in the girl's determined expression.

'Kind? - Oh, yes, they are kind,' she assented, with dispassionate carelessness; 'but, you see - they are not as I am. They are no fit company for me. It is better when Sister Teresa is here.'

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'Who is Sister Teresa?' I asked.

'She is Sister Teresa. She teaches me. At present she is gone to her convent.'

'You love her?'

'Yes.' The open Spanish affirmative lends itself to a variety of meaning - better than our shut sibilant. Zaida's expressed tolerant agreement, with an undercurrent of protest. That is, yes, if she would not be for ever teasing me about joining her convent. I will not be a nun. I have told her so a thousand times. I will go abroad in the world. I will be a great lady . . . like my mother - . . . who, as no doubt they told you, is dead. Do you know I pray to her at night?'

'You mean,' I interposed hastily, thinking that my ear had caught the words wrongly, 'that you pray to the Mother of Jesus.'

'No - no - no!' she cried. 'I pray to her, of course, saying the words - as all the world does - even Andrés and Cristina - and the snuffy old priest down at the village. But when they leave me alone and the chamber is dark, it is to my own mother whom I have never seen, that I pray! Do you think that is wrong?'

She stood by the shattered gate where the Government troops had shot down her kindred, an eager vivid little figure, all transformed by her own earnestness, every word and pose showing the wayward wistful thoughtfulness of a child.

'It is wrong! You think it is wicked! I have told no one else - they would not understand. But I thought you would!'

And she began to cry.

'No,' I said. 'No little girl's prayer is ever wrong.'

But I had generalised too hastily.

'What!' she said, 'not when I pray that Andrés and Cristina and Sister Teresa may all die? I do sometimes, so that I may get away from here. Of course, I hope they will go to heaven!'

I evaded the ethical point.

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'But why,' I said, 'do you wish them to die - if they are kind? That is surely wicked?'

'I do not wish them to die,' she said. 'I only wish them not to be alive here - in this old castle. For then the Count would take me with him, and I would live far away and have playmates and sweethearts and pretty dresses all my own.'

'How do you know?' I said. 'Who put such thoughts into your head?'

'Oh, no one,' she said; 'they come - so!'

And spreading her arms wide she joined them above her head as if to gather in all the blue-and-white expanse of the heavens and the dark green of the flickering tree shadows.

'But,' she added, with her considering look on, 'some things I have learned from Carmelita and Amparo down at the brook yonder, at the edge of the palm-garden which was planted by the Count's grandfather. I go there often and they tell me tales. It is the best washing-place in the country they say. It makes clothes clean just only to bring them to look at the water. And I dance for the washerwives - that is, after they have told me stories. Come with me, and they will be glad to see you also, for my sake. What have you in that box? Is it sweetmeats? Oh, it makes pictures. Will you make mine? It must be a pretty one.'

We went down towards the river, and, looking over a wall, Zaida showed me her friends - Carmelita, Amparo, and their company. The quizzical array of dark eyes was embarrassing to a plain man but I was Zaida's guest, and - I had my camera.

In a quarter of an hour I had become quite wise in kneading and rolling and rinsing, in wringing, in shaking out and in bleaching - learning more in a few minutes of the science of making dirty clothes clean again than I had found out in thirty years.

'See - they hold the linen in the stream and let the water run through. So it comes clean in a hand-clapping,'

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explained Zaida. 'Give me your handkerchief and I will wash it for you,'

'I would rather see you dance, Zaida, as you promised,' I suggested cunningly.

'Shall I? Amparo, whistle for me.'

I had expected a guitar at least - but the methods of the Count's palm-grove were more primitive.

Amparo, a heavy, square-jawed, gipsy-faced girl, began to whistle - a slow sweet melody with birdlike trills. It was not the jota of Aragon nor any other of the well-known dance tunes. Most likely Amparo improvised to suit the little figure before her. For Zaida danced forward, holding out her skirt daintily, her eyes fixed on the musician. At each trill which interrupted the slow soft theme, she twirled round with a kind of laughing defiance, exactly like a bird flirting its wet feathers in the sunshine. Resting from their labours, the other washerwomen used their hands as castanets to mark the time, and all moved their heads in unison with the lilt of the air. They were, on this occasion, not so much an audience as a circle of admiring friends anxious for the success of a *débutante*. So that, when I applauded heartily, they all looked at each other well pleased, smiling and nodding. Zaida came forward and kissed my hand, whereat the kindly folk clapped their hands all over again, as at the courteous end of a performance.

After this we said our good-byes and crossed together some stretches of verdant field, half meadow, half watered garden, where the crickets were twirring in shrill myriads among the grass. Then came clumps of trees, and tall whispering cane-brakes, which told plainly enough that water was near. Presently we discovered the source of all this fertility in a splendid old *noria*, or waterwheel, whose plan (and possibly whose execution also) was coeval with the Moors. In the shadow of the leaves it made a striking picture. As we came nearer, a man approached from the river bank and harnessed a fine mule to the long sweep-pole of the *noria*.

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It was Andrés, but the little girl never even looked at him. Her gaze was fixed upon the mule.

'Dear Matador!' she murmured, and ran to the animal which fawned upon her almost like a dog.

'There is no one who dares to go near him but only Andrés and I,' she said, 'and Andrés only when he has a stick. They call him the 'wicked one.' He kicked off the priest on his way to altar service. Truly you know you did, bad Matador, and the holy father cursed you for it. Well for you that you are a mule and no Christian! For if you had been a Christian I know who would get you! The Black Man with the horns!'

The mule kept all the time thrusting forward his ears with an evident pleasure which surprised me. For no animal is more dourly unresponsive than a mule, or so free from any desire for mere human approbation.

Andrés asked Zaida to step aside that Matador might begin his work. Then with a groaning of ungreased axles and a splashing of cool well-water Matador moved round his circle, and each time as he came past the place where Zaida stood, he turned his head in her direction to see that the child was still there, anon bending himself more vigorously than before to the driving pole.

The grounds of the castle of Miranda-Aran were very extensive, but the Count had let them go back to a state of nature. The great pinewood on the northern slope, which his grandfather had planted, was a wilderness of tall reeds, ferns, and climbing vines. At certain hours of the morning the sunshine shone through it as down some glade of Eden, glorifying everything. A hill-brook making its way over white stone to the Ebro, glided unseen beneath. Many such I have seen among the Pyrenees, but never one so far south as this.

'I call it the Gate of Pearl,' said Zaida, as we paused on the opposite bank and looked up the hillside towards the plateau of Aragon. And indeed the name was nowise ill chosen. For the pale blues and the orange tinges on the dense fern-growths that hid the water-courses and the

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deeper sapphire and opaline smoke of the charcoal-burners' establishment, floating sun-touched among the tall pine stems, certainly drew the eyes upward, with a kind of expectation that within the Gate of Pearl one might see the City of the Twelve Foundations.

The little girl, a true beauty lover, stood entranced, worshipping, her eyes great and black. Then quite suddenly she turned to me and said, looking up, 'I shall love all these things more now - when you are gone - because it was I who told you the names of them - because you and I saw them together.'

She paused a moment and then added, with a certain sad premature wisdom, 'But - they will make my heart sore too!'

And with the swift gesture of a daughter of the South she laid both her hands palm downwards upon her breast, one upon the other, and bowed her head. I think a sob reached my ear - a very little one.

There was silence after this. We passed through a picturesque old gateway, round the corner of what had been the servants' quarters. There were pigeons fluttering and strutting about the roofs and a little farther on stood the waggon, with Penique playing at nine-pins in the dust of the yard, and our travelling merchant earning his keep by mending the great blue umbrellas of Andrés and his spouse.

I called out a greeting, but the little girl bore steadily upon my hand.

'Come away,' she said 'do not waste time with such people. I have still many things to show you. Let us go out upon the highway. They do not allow me to go there by myself. But with you, Dame Cristina would not dare to chide. Come!'

We passed down the brae, where I could still see the scrape of Babieca's hoofs of the night before, and so up again and out upon the great Ebro Valley highway.

'Look, look - Sancho Panza!' cried Zaida, laughing, and I was in time to mark down a glimpse of a stout

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waggoner seated on his ox team, taking a plenary swig at his leather bottel.

When he saw the camera he slapped his (lower) chest with great amiability, and cried out good-humouredly,

‘Share with me then, Doña Dulcinea - you and your honoured knight!’

For we were on the frontiers of La Mancha, where every one knows his Don Quijote as well as his mother’s house-place. The man passed on, taking suck after suck at his wine-skin till it was flat as a pancake fresh from the grid. Then he flourished it in the air with a gallant gesture and lifted his ox-goad. It was time to be getting home now, when the ‘little cow’ which gives the ruddy milk had ceased her yield! Up with the goad, then, and at ‘em! But, as usual, the great black beasts lifted hoof never a whit the quicker either for shout or goad.

The long wall of the Count’s orchard shut in the woods as well as his gardens. Outside there was only the dusty uneven highway and a broken, broomy, cactus-strewn waste, which the irrigating Ebro waters did not reach. As we looked across we saw a party at lunch in their camp - all women, a mule tethered near by also taking a scanty meal.

‘Come,’ said Zaida, quickly, ‘these are friends of mine - real gipsies of Soria. Their men are away horse-coping at the fair of Zaragoza; and one of them, Red Mary, the one nearest to the mule, cannot go because in that town she has not served her last sentence for fortune-telling!’

‘An excellent reason,’ I said; ‘but, tell me, does Cristina know of your friendship with these gipsy folk?’

‘No,’ said Zaida indifferently, ‘in what way does the matter concern her?’

‘Is she not here, with Andrés, that she may look after you?’

The little girl laughed.

‘Cristina lives at the Castle, not to look after me,

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but to mend my clothes and to lace my boots,' she answered, haughtily as any young princess.

'Then who looks after you, Zaida?'

'I look after myself, and my dear mother looks down from heaven and tells me if I do wrong!'

'But Sister Teresa?'

'Oh, I tell her what to do, and if she does not do it - why then, I run away and hide. She is good and holy, but somewhat heavy of the foot. Our good Sister Teresa grows old!'

Suddenly Zaida clapped her hand, not on that little semi-Oriental breast in which her vivid and sudden emotions went and came so passionately, but somewhat lower, even as Sancho Panza of the leather bottle had done on the highway.

'Holiest Virgin, but I am so hungry,' she cried; 'it will be time for second breakfast by this time. Let us go back!'

As I had broken my fast on a thimbleful of stiff chocolate and a glass of spring water, my objections were feeble.

As we went Zaida somewhat modified her statements concerning Doña Cristina.

'It is better not to say anything as to where we have been or whom we have spoken with.' She volunteered the suggestion in an off-hand detached manner, as if she were telling me wholly for my own good.

'But,' said I, 'I thought Doña Cristina was not in authority over you.'

'Nor is she,' said the small autocrat, 'but she can carry tales when the Count comes. And why do you call her Doña? She is no more 'Doña' than . . . that green frog in the pond yonder!'

We went back through the picturesque gateway to the corner of the house where we found Rodil and Penique, sitting down with Andrés and his wife. A table was laid for Zaida apart in an inner room which still showed traces of profuse carving and lavish decoration.

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But this division of the party that little lady would by no means permit. I must dine with her, or she would not dine at all, and she flung her knife and fork down on the floor forthwith, as a gage of battle. Cristina and her husband conferred together. I heard them say, 'Better let her have her way. The Count may be here any day now.'

So presently my place was set, to the huge amusement of Rodil, in the inner room along with the imperious young châtelaine of the Castle. Cristina waited upon us with a broad smile on her face, and it was a lesson in heredity to see how instinctively this child, who had never within her memory been outside the bounds of the estate (save trespassing for a stolen hour on the highway), did the honours of the mansion of which she considered herself the mistress.

Sister Teresa's powers of teaching French had been, naturally, somewhat limited, and Zaida had sometimes great difficulty in following when I filled up a chasm in my halting Castilian with a convenient phrase from across the mountains. But we understood each other marvellously well, and by and by Zaida ventured blushing into French herself - I fear more for the pleasure of 'intriguing' the listening Cristina, than to make me understand more clearly.

It took the little girl all that day to show me the remaining treasures of her wide and solitary domain - the thatched huts in the little palm-grove, where she often sat in state as an Indian queen and received the homage of those notable tributary chiefs, Esparto Grass, Potato Flower, and White Cotton-Tail. My representation of these characters was so successful that it was with difficulty and even a suspicion of tears, that I was finally allowed to disrobe, and become again, as Zaida remarked, 'nobody in particular!' We went down to the waterside to see Carmelita hang out her clothes, which in the fresh-blowing afternoon proved a pretty sight enough.

Then, with a kind of hushed terror in her voice, Zaida told me that there was yet one thing more to show

me - the Dwarf!

Zaida clasped my hand rather closely as we took our way towards the little tile-roofed village from which Carmelita and Amparo had come forth with their dirty linen in the morning. Women with dripping baskets on their heads trudged along beside us, and of course all of them saluted Zaida. As we entered the narrow unclean village streets Zaida asked me suddenly if I had got a real.

'I would ask for a 'perro chico,' she said, 'but that is too much like a beggar. So lend me a real - and I will give you back the change.'

I exhibited the coin gladly, and she went into one of the open booth shops, which clustered against the wall. 'Chocolates of the best mark - so many for a 'little dog' - so many more for a 'great dog.'" That was Zaida's order.

When she came out I wanted her to eat one, but she said indignantly, 'If they had been for myself, do you think I would have asked for the money, Señor? No, Don Esteban, I have been well brought up. They are for the dwarf, the Cagot who lives by the Well-House of the village.'

I had seen many such unfortunate creatures in the mountains, and had no desire to interview another. But I was surprised when, in shade of the newly-washed clothes, which were pegged to a line attached to the well-arch, I saw what I first of all took to be a child with an enormous head. This was 'Juan's Tizia,' the daughter of a well-known carpenter of Miranda-Aran. She was thirty-three years of age, but in expression and behaviour she appeared like a child of less than two. Only her head had grown to woman's size, and had left her poor body so far behind that she sat easily in a baby's chair. Zaida gave her the entire packet of chocolates 'of a good mark,' and the poor child-monster could hardly convey them fast enough to her mouth. Seeing this, the woman who was in charge of her during her father's absence endeavoured to take the chocolates away gently, for the purpose of doling them out to her one by one. But as soon as Juan's Tizia

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realised that her treasure was escaping her, she bent towards the woman's hand and bit her sharply on the thumb.

'Very well,' said the nurse, 'wait till Juan, your father, comes home tonight. Then wicked Tizia will be whipped and shut in the dark closet where the Bad Man lives.'

Whereat the poor half-witted thing grovelled and wept, pleading that her father might not be told.

'Is Tizia sorry, then?' demanded the woman severely, tying up her thumb in a piece of rag.

'Tizia sorry - Tizia much, much sorry!' cried the dwarf, beating the hot white paving stones with her hands as she lay on her face. The woman held out her other hand for the sweetmeats without speaking. I could see the fingers of the dwarf girl crisp with desire to fly at her keeper's throat. Her teeth gritted audibly upon one another.

'Quick!' said the woman. And Tizia gave the paper of chocolates without a word.

'It is only her father and the threat of telling him that can put her in fear - also she is strong. See - she has left her mark!'

She held up her thumb in the linen rag.

'Of course,' she explained, 'I am not ill paid for this, and most days Tizia is no great trouble; but now the children are preparing their dresses for first communion, and that always excites her.'

We went slowly back to the Château, and on entering the yard we were, I think, equally astonished to find the blue-tilted caravan ready for the road, Babieca harnessed, and Penique arranging the chain of the wheel-drag ready for passing down the steep hill which led from the Castle to the highway. Zaida turned to me a face sharp with sudden woe. The tears sprang to her eyes.

'You are going away and you never told me - you do not love me - not even a little!'

I was also astonished, and answered that I knew

nothing about the matter. But before Zaida had time to reply, Cristina swooped down and seized her.

'Quick!' she cried, 'come and have your best dress put upon you and be cleaned. What a time is this to be standing in foolish speech with a stranger! The Count and his brother are on the threshold. Their horses are almost at the crossing of the bridge. Pray the saints that brat may get his waggon down the hill and be safe out on the highway before they arrive - for his Excellency loves not strangers!'

The wife of Andrés looked at me as she spoke. The hint was at least a plain one. I stooped hastily to kiss Zaida goodbye, whispering to her, 'Keep the book about the little girl in Scotland.' I would not delude her with any hopes of ever coming that way again.

But she made me no answer, only breaking forth into a very torrent of sobs, in the midst of which she was removed by the justly indignant and bewildered Cristina. That good lady muttered what seemed like a malediction upon all intrusive foreigners, mingled with beseechings to her beloved Zaida to dry her eyes on the pain of having a 'pig's face' when the Count came. What would he say if his little maid were all be-blubbered - and all because of a stranger - one who went the country with a beggar's van? But Zaida cried not one whit the less bitterly for that.

Somewhat sadly I crossed the wide court-yard, and slanting sharply to the right I took my way through the palm groves to the river's brink. I could see two figures just turning into the little avenue of dark yew trees which led to the Castle. And in my ears was the sad last cry of my sometime friend: 'I do not want to see the Count - I do not want to be good. He will go away thinking I do not love him - ah, cruel!'

But the stranger did not think what Zaida feared - indeed, quite otherwise. Yet his thoughts were none the brighter because of that, for he cast his mind forward and wondered and feared what should become of this swift, passionate, love-hungry, impatient spirit in the years to

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come.

'God help the maid!' was all I could say. And then, and last of all, 'God keep the woman!'

The two riding figures came slowly past me up the hill deep in talk. One was Don Manuel Sebastian and the other - the Bishop of El Seo.

CHAPTER SEVEN

'GOD'S BABE'

I took my last look of Miranda-Aran from the verge of the table-land which overlooked the valley. Though my acquaintance with the place and with its impulsive little mistress was hardly more than a matter of hours, it may be confessed that there was a certain tightness about my heart as I looked back. Yonder were the naked pinnacles the fire had blackened - far beneath the white banners of the washerwomen, Amparo, Carmelita, and the rest - row on row along the river bank, while from an upper balcony Zaida herself, escaped from her nurse, waved a frantic handkerchief.

But my crowning perplexity was to form any theory which would connect my sometime friends Don Manuel Sebastian and the Bishop of El Seo with the little maid at Miranda-Aran, whose heart had been so quickly moved by 'one who knew about little girls.' As much as I could, I tried to keep my mind from the problem, for, after all, it was no affair of mine. There had been much that was mysterious about the Sebastians of San Severino, and I took credit to myself for prying no further than circumstances had compelled me into their secrets. As for the Bishop of El Seo, all my attention had been given to the man of God, his loneliness, his childlike simplicity. Of the man himself, or of his family I knew nothing.

The caravan was already some distance on in front, swagging painfully across the plain on the evilly-paven highway which leads towards Zaragoza and the north. As usual, the road ran straight and even to the horizon. Vast, naked, to the eye featureless, the plain was still not uniformly level, for many barrancas, or dry torrent beds, cut across it here and there. However, as no one could distinguish one of these a hundred yards in advance, the first token of their presence was usually afforded to Rodil

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and myself by a sudden tilting of the blue-covered waggon, and Penique's warning shout to Babieca to be careful. This, however, was superfluous. It was Babieca who should have shouted to Penique.

Right and left the young wheat made all the landscape a marvel of keen emerald and veridian. There was not a tree to be seen. We had not gone a mile before the valley of the Ebro had disappeared entirely, and only the snow in the gashes of Moncayo and on one or two peaks of the high Sierras to the north remained to remind us that the whole world was not as flat as a ball-room floor. Occasionally a shepherd herded his flock carefully along the margins of the fields, or set them nibbling by the roadside. Whether or not the sheep were ever permitted a sly bite at the young wheat I do not know, but when we saw them they were shouldering and pushing each other towards the forbidden ground exactly like mischievous schoolboys. It was hot on the wide plain, and, of course, water was not to be had. For we had left the Castle in too great a hurry to think of replenishing our skins. There was wine indeed, but I was fated to learn again that wine by itself is no Christian, and that it will not quench thirst unless it is first well 'baptized.'

I had made up my mind that I had looked my last upon my small friend Zaida of the Garden, and so, with what philosophy I might, I composed myself to open a new book of my wandering Odyssey. All about me the young green of the wheat was shot with silver and opal as the wind swirled and eddied. As for Zaida's garden, it lay back there, sunk out of sight, in the pit of the Ebro Valley, with Andrés and Cristina and Amparo and Carmelita, together with several other things which my eyes would see no more.

This reflection was made with my head bowed on my breast and my feet trudging slackly through the dust. Rodil paced alongside - silent, deep also, to all appearance, in his own thoughts. Suddenly he turned and looked back along the road. We were winding up the

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weary zigzag of a barranca, or dry ravine.

'It seemed that I heard a call,' he said. Then he lifted up his voice and shouted to Penique. But as for Penique, having mounted himself on the little driving shelf of the waggon as soon as Babieca reached the summit, nothing was farther from his mind than crying out.

'Yet I am certain I heard something,' Rodil repeated, as we looked around us in all directions. There was no apparent source or cause - not a tree, not a house, not a person, only the deep blue sky above and beneath the rippling emerald sea of the wheat - while in front, amid the swirling dust of the highway, loomed up the huge hump of the waggon, with Babieca and Penique equally lost to sight beyond it.

'Señores, wait, I pray you!'

The long Castilian vowels lengthened themselves interminably. There could be no mistake this time. Someone was calling us. But to all appearance the world lay blank as a test-map, in which are outline and colour only. Rodil made a trumpet of his hands and blared into the vague.

'Where are you?' he shouted; 'we cannot see!'

'Here - to the right! A la derecha-a! In the barranca-a-a!'

Mountainous Spain is a country of magnificent distances, and possesses a magnificent language for shouting across them. Even yet, however, we could see nothing. But presently, shading our eyes from the dust and sun-glare, Rodil and I made out a shape, small and inconsequent, as that of a flitting butterfly, which approached us from the depths of the gully. The creature came rapidly, springing up the sheer side like a very kid of the goats. And in a moment, lo! breathless, panting, but triumphant, there came running to us across the green braird of the wheat - Zaida herself!

At first I thought that something terrible had happened at the Castle - some sudden-falling destruction

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out of the clearness of the sky.

I did not know Zaida very well then.

Rodil and I only stood and stared. We gasped, 'Why - why?' And we kept on saying that.

Nor did she keep us long in suspense.

'They are come,' she said, sitting down among the young wheat that came right to the roadside, and lifting her skirt informally to wipe her brow, 'and they said I was to go on abiding there alone with Andrés and Cristina - nay, without even Sister Teresa. 'I will not,' said I. And so I have run away to travel all about the world with you. I will stay by the waggon - yes, even with yonder silly boy in it! And, oh, I am dying for a drink of water!'

Alas! even when the water was provided out of our scanty store, the situation was more grave than either of us cared to face. I was accustomed to cats and dogs attaching themselves on short acquaintance, but little girls with mysterious protectors - there lay a difference. And in Spain, too, - where it is more than usually dangerous to meddle in other men's matters.

Meantime, Zaida sat and looked at us, uncertain as to what we would do, forgetting even to ask for more water.

Rodil put his fingers to his mouth and produced a long melancholy call, half whistle, half 'coo-ee.'

'Four hundred devils take that boy,' he muttered; 'he is asleep again. I will tan the lazy hide upon his back when I catch him!'

But at that moment the waggon slewed slowly about, and the head of Penique appeared round the tilt to inquire, a black dot looking back to see what was wanted.

Rodil signed him to return, and in a little the caravan had tacked and Babieca was heading towards us again. I am sure that at that moment the Copper's thoughts were prayers. For Penique was a gregarious boy, and by nature he loved towns and the swarming bustle of streets. He endured the country for the most part silently, because he had a father who loved it. But he did not

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rejoice in the business of camping out, and, above all, he hated little lonely farmhouses, where there were no boys to play at ninepins, to toss for 'little dog,' or merely to rough-and-tumble with in the dust of the highway.

But we wasted no time. In five minutes we had Zaida out of the sun and tasting a little wine mixed with some drops of often-boiled water which had been discovered in the bottom of the kettle. But, in spite of our entreaties, she utterly refused to turn back without conditions made, and we were nonplussed by the resolution of so young a child.

'No,' she cried, 'I will not go back - at least, not to stay in that place with Andrés and Cristina - people wanting manners. It is not fitting - '

'Come back with me,' I said at last. 'I will speak with the Count and his brother. I know them.'

'Know them?' Zaida cried, greatly surprised; 'surely in this you are mistaken. The Count comes but seldom here, and his brother, the old priest, even I have never seen him before - that is, to remember. How, then, can you, a stranger, know the Count of Miranda-Aran and his brother?'

'Nevertheless, I know them both,' I said, 'and they would blame me sorely if anything happened to you, little Zaida - '

'Ah! you are afraid!' she said, her voice suddenly changing and her eyes flashing fire. (She stretched out her arm and pointed over the waste.) 'Go - I do not want you!' she cried. 'I am not afraid! I told them I would run away, and I have done so. I will not go back! There is always the Frenchwoman's Pool!'

Now was the time to find out how much of influence I possessed. So I went to her and sat on the low seat of the waggon which Penique had vacated.

'Zaida,' I whispered, 'if the little 'Heart of Gold' in Scotland were to run away, would not my heart be sore?'

'Not if she ran to you, it would not!' she answered, beginning to sob softly and continuously, perhaps

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knowing that I had set out to persuade her.

'But the Count - his brother - they love you, I am sure. At least, I know the old priest does -' For I remembered my picture of the little maiden in the snow he had looked at so often in the cloisters of La Delicia.

'They do not! - They do not!' she cried, striking the rough floor of the tilt-cart with her tiny palm, 'or they would not speak of leaving me alone there in that burned house - with only Andrés and -'

'But you forget, Zaida,' I persisted, 'there are your friends also, Amparo and Carmelita - !'

'They are washer-girls - I am a Señorita!' she cried. 'If you do not take me with you - if you are afraid, I swear to the saints I will drown myself in the Ebro - I know the place! It is where the Frenchwoman drowned herself when I was little. Amparo saw them take her out. There was a smile on her face, she says.' Doubtless it was a girl's foolish threat, but yet there was a passionate earnestness and an impulsive fire about the maid that I did not like.

'Well, I will go with you, Zaida,' I repeated; 'we will all go back, and I will speak with Don - with the Count and with his brother. Perhaps there is some other way out of it than that you should remain alone in the Castle with only Andrés.'

At this point Rodil whispered in my ear and looked towards the west. We had not long to make up our minds. The sun was dropping fast, and already the valley of the Ebro had become only a trough of blue mist.

'Trust me, Zaida,' I said, somewhat desperately, 'I will speak with your friends, I promise you. I know they will listen when I speak!'

It was an all too bold assertion, but anything was better than that Zaida should be lost all night from her home. For I knew that the Count would never rest until he found her.

'Very well then,' she said, a slow temperate decision in her speech, 'I take your word. I will go back with you. But remember, if it falls out otherwise, what I have said I

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will do. I will not be left alone again. The day I am left alone with only Andrés and Cristina, I will - go down there to the Frenchwoman's Pool!

We turned back, Penique speechless in a deep fit of the sulks, his father Rodil with his usual calm philosophy. All places are the same to the man 'whose mind his kingdom is.' I took Zaida on my back and ran races with Babioca, or danced double shuffles in the dusty road till that small and difficult person fairly chinked with laughter, quite forgetting, as I sneezed with the dust, all the passion and tragedy of five minutes before.

But when we came to the verge of the tableland, and looked down through the first sprinkle of the spring greenery on the fair valley of the Upper Ebro and the ruined buildings of Miranda-Aran, I heard her suddenly catch her breath and sob.

'Set me down,' she commanded soberly. 'Remember, Señor, I will do what you say because you say it. But - if you leave me alone again in this place, I warn you I have it in me - to do the other as well!'

We descended into the misty gloom which filled the valley, as water fills a pot, and at the foot, near the little clump of palm-trees, Rodil paused and spoke with decision.

'We will make camp here, Penique and I,' he said, 'do you go on and make what speed you can with your affairs. We will await your return.'

Down by the Ebro-side, or rather in among the wide sands and gravels which it deposits in winter, is a small triangular pitch of green turf, and on one corner, sheltered by great trees, a scrap of ruined wall breaks the valley wind. On the lee side of this last we found the marks of many fires. It was not the first time that the wandering folk had made their bivouac there, outside the bounds of Miranda-Aran.

'Here we will await your return,' repeated Rodil, 'go thou . . . with God!'

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In a general way Rodil did not lavish benedictions, and his grave air as well as his words intimated that he considered the situation a serious one. I had, I thought, reason for thinking otherwise. So I took Zaida by the hand and we turned once more up the brae. Lights were wandering here and there as if a search was in progress, and as we came near the house someone rode furiously down the road towards the bridge. Zaida said nothing, but I could feel her clutch tighten upon my hand. I stooped and lifted her up, and as I did so I could hear quite plainly the jolting beat of her little heart.

'You are frightened?' I said gently, as I settled her on my shoulder. She was small for her age - slim - indeed a very featherweight when compared with northerly children reared on beef and oatmeal.

'No, I do not think I am frightened,' she said, 'only the Count has never been angry with me before!'

'He will not be angry now, littlest!' I answered, 'take hold of my hair - there, under the cap at the back!'

We came out on the wide green space in front of the house. The gables and broken pinnacles stood forth ink-black against the full orange of the sunset. Before the great doorway two men were walking, deep in conversation. As Zaida and I came towards them they turned and looked at us. The taller took a step or two forward hastily and then stopped.

'It is the Englishman!' he said. 'What do you here, sir?'

'And with your little maid, you would ask me, Don Manuel,' I answered steadily. 'Indeed, you may well inquire.'

I set down Zaida, and she flung herself into the arms of Don Manuel Sebastian, sobbing. 'Let me go away,' she cried, 'I cannot stay here any longer!'

'What is this - what is this?' The Count bent down and lifted her up in his turn. As he did so the other, who was clad in simple priest's dress, drew near, and in the twilight peered somewhat anxiously into my face.

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‘Ah,’ he said, ‘it is my Englishman - he who came to me at La Delicia. All is well - he loves children. I know it.’

It was the sole virtue upon which they could reckon, but it stood me in good stead. Zaida was already pouring her tale into the ear of Don Manuel, and long before she had finished my former host of San Severino held out his hand.

‘You must think we are compact of mysteries, we Sebastians, but there need be none about this little maid. You know my brother here is the Bishop of El Seo. Well, he was a soldier once before he was a priest, and he had one only son. This is that son’s daughter!’

As he spoke Don Manuel put down the little girl. The Bishop laid his hand upon her head, and I think he prayed.

‘She calls you the Count of Miranda-Aran,’ I went on, hardly knowing what to say, ‘and I have only known you as Don Manuel Sebastian?’

‘I have a right to both names,’ said my friend, smiling, ‘but during the war the peasantry and the troops together burned this my house, and, as you understand, I have never been reconciled with the Government. So it is best for me to abide near the frontier, where, as you have seen, my sons and I have found means to make ourselves respected. But I come here when it is safe - as now, when the Government at Madrid has its hands full overseas. Also, for the first time in many years, my brother accompanies me.’

Don Manuel (to call him by the old name) glanced over his shoulder to see where Zaida and the Bishop were walking. Then he added in a low tone, ‘and, indeed, I think it was none other than yourself who sent him hither!’

‘I send him here!’ I stammered, too surprised to say more.

‘Yes, with your picture of the little Scottish maid eating her cake in the snow! Nothing else! That, he confessed, set his heart on the vanities of the flesh. So he

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has come with me to see his 'God's babe.'

'His son, then, is dead?'

Don Manuel nodded.

'Aye, surely,' he continued, 'or my brother would never have been a Bishop.'

I dared not ask any more, but all the same I longed to know of that prodigal son's life. I knew at once, by Don Manuel's tone, that there was something very tragic behind.

'That son,' he went on, 'was, as you may judge, no father's comfort. My lads are men, and, I grant you, possess among them pretty much all a strong man's faults. But this Don Alonso had in him all the devils, besides being a boaster and a traitor. He became of the police and - he died not well. Even my brother does not know how. So, when his son was dead, my brother, thinking himself the last of his family, and his mind lying naturally to holiness, at last permitted them to make him a Bishop. Then a strange thing happened.'

Don Manuel was silent awhile, as was his custom when he had something of importance to relate, like a man who arranges his sentence in a foreign tongue before he commits himself to speech.

'It was the high day of the enthronement,' he went on, 'and all the clergy of the diocese were there to kiss the hand of the new Bishop. You know the cathedral of El Seo - yes, I heard that you spent some time there. I had not thought you so well affected to the religion. At any rate, you remember the aisles, two on either side, and in the centre the choir. There is also a way kept clear for the processions. And when the Bishop, my brother, was seated in his chair, lo! a woman came swiftly up one of these. She turned the corner of the coro, and, running past the priests, laid a baby at the Bishop's feet, even upon the very skirt of his robes, crying, 'Holy father, behold your son!'

'Yes, doubtless at the time it was great scandal, and had almost broken any man except my brother down to

the ground, as a thistle is broken with a stick. But when they took the woman and made her speak, she professed that she was Don Alonso's wife - and that he had married her in France, near to Toulouse. But he had left her penniless and with the child yet to be born. So when it came she nursed it awhile, keeping silence and brooding on her purpose. Then suddenly, fleeing by night, she made her way across the mountains, God alone knows how. For it was the depth of the terrible winter when the passes were shut full four months. And, after all, on her arrival she found only her husband's grave. He died for treachery, as I told you, and in her poor brain she judged it must have been his father who had delivered him up. (It was not - though, indeed, it was a certain near relative who cleared the family dishonour.) And so she waited the Bishop's enthronement to take her vengeance.

They took her, still laughing, to the madhouse, but on the seventh day she escaped, and - by some strange knowledge, or profiting by some hint of Don Alonso's, she followed her child, tracking us step by step, even as she had done her husband across the mountains. Then she lurked in the woods and in the caves of the river-bank, waiting for a chance to steal the maid back again. And once when the nurse had been careless, she leaped through a window and carried off the babe from its very cradle. But Andrés, being near, gave chase, and without doubt would have caught the poor mad thing, save that she sprang into the pool on the Ebro, beneath the bridge, the same they call the 'Frenchwoman's Pool' to this very day!

'And she was drowned?' I asked.

'She fought for the child like a wild cat - Andrés bears the marks to this hour. He won the child, however, and as soon as she found that she could not keep that, she caught at the cane-brake roots in the pool bottom and so died, gripping with her elbows interlocked. It took three men, good swimmers, to bring the body up out of the water!'

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As he spoke, I remembered with a sudden thrill Zaida's threats that she would drown herself. 'In the French-woman's pool,' she had said - the same from which they had taken her mother out 'with a smile on her face,' as Amparo bore witness, who had stood on the bank and watched.

Then I told Don Manuel all that had befallen since I had left El Seo - of Rodil and Marinessia and the love of Biño. Like a true Spaniard, he said nothing, but followed my tale with grave attention, ever courteous and patient. That he denied himself even a cigarette was proof incontestable of his interest.

'Yes. You have the strange English itch to find things out,' he said at length. 'Why not be content? In my life I have found out too much - experienced too many things. Now I am satisfied to sit still and let things happen. So will you, Señor, when you come to my age. Of that I make no doubt at all!'

Then, seeing that the Bishop and his little granddaughter were going in by the door, I proceeded to urge Don Manuel to take Zaida away from a place where she had no companions, and to place her among girls of her age. Suddenly Zaida turned on the threshold and called back a word.

'You will not go away and leave me without warning,' she said, 'if you do - well, I have told you what will happen.'

Then I recounted to Don Manuel all, how she had threatened to throw herself into the same pool in which her mother had been drowned. The old man sighed and looked troubled, shaking his head from time to time, but hearing me out.

'It is a terrible thing to guide aright the daughter of such parents,' he said. 'God only knows what will come of it. My brother is, of course, all for the religious life. But - I have had daughters of my own, and I am sure that in a few years, to be a nun would either kill our Zaida or she would run away to a great disgrace!'

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For long Don Manuel and I walked to and fro under the stars, silent mostly, but speaking at times of the strange chances of life, of the heritage of birth, and of what in the end shall be accounted to a man or a woman for good and evil.

'My brother and I,' he said presently, 'hold the strange heresy that it is better to be of a poor religion than to have none. Also I am sure that not every woman is fitted to be shut up for life in a nunnery!'

'Why not take Zaida with you to San Severino?' I suggested, 'she would have all the liberty there she needs, with abundant companionship.'

'Ah, too much - too much,' he repeated, as if the thought had not come for the first time. 'She would run wild there. And then there is Doña Isidra, my daughter - it is not good that a child should grow up side by side with such sadness - certainly not the child of Alonso my nephew and the Frenchwoman. It is the middle course which is difficult to find.'

Then his thoughts took a new direction.

'What was it you told me just now of our excellent Biño?' he asked suddenly.

'He is to be married,' I answered, 'to Marinessia Alva, the traveller's daughter - she who across the mountains won the palms, and the pension which is her dowry. They are going to settle on his farm in the Ariège - I think, near Les Cabanes.'

'Ah,' said Don Manuel thoughtfully, 'there are good schools in France, I have heard. There is at Les Cabanes a convent of sisters to which she might go as a day-boarder. What sort of girl is this Marinessia Alva?'

After I had told him what I knew, he continued deep in meditation. 'Concerning this I will speak with my brother,' he said at length, 'he is a poor man. I also am nowise rich and have many to provide for. But, though it would not be well to bring Zaida up with great expectations, she shall not lack teaching, nor yet a dowry when her time comes. Only I would rather for all our

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sakes she would marry on the other side of the mountains. If, therefore, we find this to be hopeful, I count on you to persuade Zaida. Let us follow them in.'

As to the persuading of Zaida, there was indeed very little question of that. So long as she got away from Miranda-Aran and the companionship of Andrés and his wife, the little girl cared not where she went. Even school, being an unknown quantity, held no terrors for her. The French blood in her raced at the thought of gaiety and change. All novelty appealed to her, and after she had been assured that I would often see her in the Ariège, she was prepared to set out instantly - nay, she pressed for an immediate departure that very night.

The next day, early in the morning, I went down to talk the matter over with Rodil. Long ere the sun showed over the edge of the tableland of Aragon I was making my way through the palm-grove to the camp in the little plot behind the bridge. The caravan was at rest in a corner, but a pew of white reek curling lazily upward showed that someone was awake. Babiéca limped slowly round, his legs tied fore and aft with a rope. Evidently it was Rodil who was on foot, for I could hear Penique snoring within, I had, indeed, good reason to know that snore. It had kept me awake several nights when he slept under the waggon in the berth which belonged of right to Halte Là, the great Danois, to whom I had given the name of 'The Flea Pasture.'

As I turned the corner of the caravan, I found Rodil sitting on the step, engaged in making the most intimate repairs upon his wardrobe. He merely glanced up and nodded. He was in no way surprised to see me in the middle of the night, dropping upon him over the wall of the Count's palm-grove. Out-of-door-folk take small account of each other's capacity for doing without sleep.

'So,' he said, plying his needle, 'the Count did not haft his Albacete knife in you when you took him back his daughter, without even giving you a chance to explain!'

I looked at Rodil with a certain suspicion in my eye.

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'You know who the Count is, then,' I said, 'why did you not tell me?'

'In my time,' he said, 'I have repeated so many tales that lied, so many true tales that wounded - that now (when there is a chance) I have learned how much better it is to be silent.'

Whereupon I told him as much as I judged necessary of the Count's story, and asked him if he thought that Marinessia would undertake the care of the girl after she was married. But, as was his way, Rodil disclaimed any responsibility for his offspring.

'She has been well educated,' said Marinessia's father, 'but as to this I know nothing of what Marinessia will say or do. She thinks and acts for herself. I had resolved that she should have no taint of this wandering life, if I could help it. Besides, there is her uncle to consider!'

'And Biño?' I added, smiling.

Rodil shook his head.

'No,' he said gently, as if throwing the words up into the vague to take root where they would, 'I judge there will not be Biño to consider. There will be a shackle on good Master Biño's foot when he marries my Marinessia, or I am much mistaken.'

By this time I had become accustomed to trust much to Rodil's judgment upon such things as came within his province. I therefore put the whole matter before him and waited while he filled, lighted, and smoked out two pipes of strong tobacco.

Well, yes, on the whole, taking things, as it were, by and large, he was inclined to think that it might do. Marinessia was very good with horses. She had 'the way.' And even Penique was no trouble when his sister took him in hand. But what of the Count? Would he permit . . . one connected with his family to associate with a travelling merchant's daughter, even when she came of as ancient a family as his own?

For my part I was inclined to think that Don

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Manuel would not stand upon trifles.

'So be it, then,' said Rodil, 'I myself will speak with Marinessia on my return.'

It was pleasant to abide with Rodil down in the river-bottom, as the day began to grow and the long slants of sunshine struck down the side gulleys, drinking up the dew and causing the turquoise valley-haze to ascend and vanish. There were real gipsies in the shelter of the bridge-arches. I could see them lighting their fires and beginning to prepare their morning meal. But, as usual, the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.

'Accursed horse-coping demons,' quoth Rodil suddenly, making free of an expletive which I never heard him use before, 'tis a pity the Holy Inquisition had not made cleaner work of such when it was about it - instead of troubling the Moriscos, who, from all I can hear, were a very honourable people and liberal with their money.'

I asked Rodil if he could speak the crabbed Gitano, and at the word he spat orientally on the ground.

'Can I howl like a dog?' he demanded almost fiercely. He turned about and observed half-a-dozen little gipsy children, sloe-eyed and tatterdemalion, hanging round the waggon, probably on the chance of something to eat.

'Begone, spawn of the devil!' he cried, with quite unusual vehemence.

Then, taking up his task again he was silent awhile. His brow cleared gradually. The humorous twinkle crept back into his eyes, and finally he laughed outright.

'I have to ask your pardon,' he said, 'but I can no more help abusing a gipsy than you a mosquito! Each to his own hatreds, as his blood drives him. But I did wrong to curse. For all curses come home to roost. Yet, alas! I would not be a true Spaniard if I were not sometimes suddenly angry!'

Which also is a true word. The Spaniard is ever liable to quick anger over trifles. Then he is most dangerous. For he will strike with a knife, or a stone, or a

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log of wood as may come handy. I have seen a muleteer almost kill his best beast merely for scraping a valuable load against a rock. Yet an hour afterwards he would share bite and sup with that same animal, all being forgotten, and go to sleep with his arm about the culprit's neck!

But, on the other hand, the Spaniard is generally free of the accursed Italian vendettas which slumber on like half-dormant volcanoes from generation to generation, breaking out at intervals into some amazing explosion of blood and treachery.

At about eight o'clock I heard a voice from the palm-grove which I knew. It was Zaida calling me.

I left Rodil still busy among his umbrellas, and stepped up the bank. Zaida was running to and fro like a questing dog on a mixed trail.

'Ah, there you are!' she cried; 'you have been once more with these merchant-folk - the umbrella-menders. You love them more than you love Zaida! Do you? I bid you tell me at once.'

'Certainly,' I said, 'when Zaida is such a very foolish and wicked little girl as she was yesternight.'

'But Zaida is no longer naughty,' she said demurely, 'there is no need. The Count has promised to take me away - and' (her expression became irresistibly witching) 'the Bishop has been teaching me religion. My heart is changed. I feel it here!'

She laid her hand on her left side, a little above her stomach.

'You mean,' said I gravely, 'that you have got your own way!'

She dimpled and waved to and fro an imaginary fan, making (as it were) coquettish play over the top of it with her eyes.

'Perhaps,' she said, 'at any rate, there is a change. I will not now drown myself in the Frenchwoman's pool. I am to go to the Feast of the Children at El Seo. I am to be prepared for my first communion. The Bishop will teach

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me himself. He began last night and I lay awake - ah, so long!

'Thinking over and repeating the holy words he taught you, doubtless?' I demanded, for the persistent dimple showed that there was something lurking behind. Zaida continued to smile, more with her eyes than her mouth.

'Partly - yes,' she said, demurely, 'but - most of the time I thought about the dress I am to wear in the cathedral. All by myself I have decided upon it. It is to be of silk and baptiste - yes, and with much old lace - yellow (but not too yellow) because of my complexion, you understand. And also, because I read well, I am to read the lesson in church, and have an older girl to pull off my glove - such gloves, white and of many buttons. Ah, it is good to go where one can have beautiful things to wear - and be taught religion. Long might I have stayed here without having such given to me. I thank you a thousand times for speaking to the Count, as I bade you. Yes, I will be good and learn my catechism so quickly! Oh, you shall not be ashamed of Zaida!'

She was silent a while after this outburst of religious enthusiasm. Then she came softly up to me and began to pat the sleeve of my coat gently, and with the prettiest assumption of embarrassment.

'Do you think you could - ' she palpitated, then she broke off sighing, 'Oh, I shall never dare to ask you - but, if you could?'

She looked up in this pause.

'If I could . . . what?' I demanded, as grimly as possible.

She clapped her hands together with a little cry.

'Oh, I never can ask you if you speak like that - so grave and stern.'

Spite of this direct attack, I remained silent and waited.

Full well I knew that I should not have long to wait. Zaida glanced up again to see in what frame of mind I

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might be, discerned inevitably the twinkle in my eye, and instantly set up a triumphant cry.

'Ah, you will - I see you will,' she cried with renewed confidence. 'It is this that I ask. Not much - so little it is. Will you speak to the Count (he will do anything for you - as I would also) to get me the white dress of silk and baptiste at once? For, if it were really made, I could learn my religion so much more quickly. I do not want it to put on, you know, for that would be unlucky, but just to lie in a drawer where I could look at it. Oh, I could learn everything so much better, and never be a bad girl again - oh, never and never and never!'

Whereupon, eager to purchase so much goodness at so cheap a rate, I actually did ask, and, what is more, had the dress made immediately upon our arrival at El Seo, and laid in the drawer, duly to be looked at upon occasion, as a reward of merit or an encouragement to virtue.

There was really no reason why we should stay longer at Miranda-Aran, had not the weakness of the Bishop prevented his setting out that day. Zaida could hardly restrain her impatience, and set about hastening the departure by every means in her power. If she had been allowed, she would have gone in to inquire as to the Bishop's health every quarter of an hour. And in the meantime she set about collecting all her property of every kind, for distribution among her friends at the washing-bank, or getting it packed ready for Andrés to bring to El Seo upon his first visit there.

I do not think that either the overseer or his wife Cristina was very sorry to lose their mercurial charge, for though Cristina actually wept, I judged that her emotion was chiefly *pro formâ*.

Zaida herself made no pretensions to grief of any sort, but danced here and there like a wild thing. I saw her in the washing-grove promising Amparo and Carmelita any number of presents to be sent from El Seo.

'I will get the money to buy them from the Count -

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or from him!' she said importantly, indicating my own figure as it stood above on the bank relieved against the sky. 'I have only to ask. Besides, there are shops there where one can buy anything, and my first communion gloves are to have twenty buttons on each, all of the real clouded pearl!'

For Mistress Zaida did not in the least believe in hiding her light under a bushel.

It was the third day when we left behind us the waving kerchiefs of Andrés and Cristina. I watched Zaida till she was well over the bridge, and I was interested to observe that she never so much as cast a look in the direction of the Frenchwoman's Pool. It was as much as she could do to wave a hasty adieu to Amparo and Carmelita, who stood at the bridge-corner all beblubbered with crying - the coral necklace and the broad silver buckle she had bestowed upon them severally, displayed to the best advantage.

All life for Zaida lay before her, and so soon as she had passed these two, I question if she looked back even once at the only home she had ever known.

For, contrary to the dictum of the poet, the thoughts of youth are sometimes short, short thoughts. Yet, though now she was so eager to escape, I doubted not that the garden, with its perpetual hush of blown leaves, the murmur of the Ebro girding it, the wide green spaces, the ruined house, even silent Andrés and Cristina his wife, would return to Zaida, now and then all through her life. And when her heart was sick of much greater things, she would hear Amparo sobbing in the quiet and the chorus of the washing-women as they greeted her about their pool.

But for the moment there was nothing at all of this in her heart. At the end of a long vista she saw only the streets of El Seo crowded with little children, all dressed in white, and among them - a certain Zaida, in white also, and most exceedingly conscious of the famous gloves of many buttons. She had never played with children in all

her life, and the only church she had seen was the ruined chapel where every two months snuffy Father Laurence droned a mass under the booth of leaves and tinsel which Andrés put up, and for which Cristina prepared an altar.

I did not travel with the Count and his party, for I was trusted to Rodil. I was his guest, and Don Manuel and his brother had so much of true courtesy in their hearts that they never expected me to forego my companionship with the umbrella-mender because I had met in with them. Don Manuel even offered me a mule to ride on.

'You can make your travel with Rodil just the same,' he said, 'but you will get over the ground easier.'

It seemed better, however, to make no change. So I explained that I would follow in their train, and, if we met with no accidents, be at El Seo well-nigh as soon as they.

To this Zaida offered no serious objection. Her future was passing before her - golden, vague, far-reaching - and her burst of affection for me, though it had not passed away, was already overlaid with the keen enjoyments of the hour and the still stronger expectations of adventurous youth. I was still, perhaps, 'a little better than her dog, a little dearer than her horse,' but (privately) I think that I had become a bad second to the white baptiste and the many-buttoned gloves.

And, indeed, I counted it well that it should be so, for Zaida's preference, had it remained of its first strength, might, however flattering, have in time proved also somewhat embarrassing.

So that, on the whole, I took Mistress Zaida's inconstancies with considerable philosophy. Still, as I was really anxious that Marinessia and Biño should have the care of the little girl, I did what I could to prompt Rodil to lose no time. Whereupon, urged by his father, Penique made Babieca show his paces, and Rodil guided us through an intricate maze of paths and paved roads, on the average about as fit for traffic as a home

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street that is up for repair. For whereas in France you can take your dinner without platter off the average highway, in Spain there is no real difference between a country road and the hillside - except that the road has more stones upon it.

And if you ask a philosopher like Rodil why this is so, he will answer that it is to teach people to stay at home and be content. Travellers must expect inconveniences wherever they go, the world not being organised for them, but for the folk who live on the spot and attend to their honest businesses.

At this point I had a further taste of my host's quality in a confession which he made with the greatest frankness in the world, I had asked him how he could go and leave his business in El Seo so long, for I knew that he had rented a couple of rooms there, and possessed a large stock of cloth and ribbons, which he had rooted out of the caravan in order to make room for me and my impedimenta.

'Ah,' he said, 'my wife Concepcion is three times as good a man of affairs as I. It would nowise surprise me if she had disposed of the whole roomful with which I left her. Who but Concepcion could go the round of the merchants? - you see, in the town men would not dare to deal directly with your friends the Sebastians. Then, whatever remained, she would carry round the villages and farms in the vicinity, hiring a donkey if need were, and no man would molest her, knowing that she was the wife of Rodil y Alva!'

'Ah, such a wife as I have,' he continued, 'a wife worth having, indeed! She is not beautiful - no in that also Marinessia is her true daughter. But, then, no wise man chooses a wife for her looks. With a sweetheart it is different. When I was in the police and stationed at Vittoria (which is a great place for fair women, and a town also where a uniform on a well-looking man is appreciated), it chanced that I had three amigas - that is, sweethearts, who thought somewhat better than well of

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me. At the time I was used to that - being a young man and filled to the throat with folly and the hot blood of youth. So I must perforce take them out one at a time, each in her turn, on Sundays and feasts of the Church, to dances and merrymakings - in all innocence, of course!

'Of course,' said I.

Rodil laughed the little chuckling laugh which goes with old memories, and sucked upon his pipe.

'Ah,' he went on, 'also I did more church-going then and heard more masses than I have ever done before or since. Most women are unhaltered colts when it comes to church-going. They can never have enough of it.'

'And did none of the three find out about the others?' I demanded in the interests of science.

'They might hear,' said Rodil grimly, 'but they did not trouble me about it. I was a well-enough-looking young fellow in those days. So none of the three wished to quarrel with me. For when they went with me in their turn to the booths and fairs, I had the habit of the open hand in the matter of ribbons and sweetmeats.'

'And one of those sweethearts - was Concepcion?' I asked him, willing to shorten the digression. Rodil nodded.

'Truly, yes,' he said, 'the other two were pretty, indeed, one was a beautiful girl. But then, being both young, I had the devil's own trouble to keep them in good humour with presents and soft speeches - not once or twice, but all the time. And you know with what difficulty sweet talk comes to me - about as easily as knitting hose to an ox of the team. So I said to myself when the day came for me to leave the Carabineros - 'Rodil,' I said, 'it is time for you to marry. Whom will you choose? Each of these three in Vittoria will wed you for the asking. Be cautious, therefore, my Rodil! But Maria, the daughter of Martin, has been accustomed to be waited on hand and foot, while little Concha cannot help for her life making eyes at the officers as they pass. Both must be tended and guarded, made much of and babyfied, else they will

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sulk for days together. Now, in addition, consider, Rodil, that ten years hence their beauty will be past. It is true that Concepcion is older and of a plainer countenance. But then she will tend you, work for you, help you in your business, and when you are an old man - behold, you shall sit and warm your hands on the lee side of life, listening the while to the olla bubbling in the pot. Marry Concepcion, my Rodil!' said I. And so I did, and unto this present, without regret!

Rodil looked at me a little triumphantly.

'Such, in brief, is my philosophy of marriage - that of love being somewhat different.'

But Rodil y Alva had no time to develop the second thesis. For even as he spoke we topped the rise and saw before us, beneath the towers of the cathedral of El Seo, the scattered white roofs of the city. And lo! there was Marinessia herself coming up towards us, a letter for me in her hand.

She kissed her father on both cheeks with her usual calm gravity, and as they walked apart to talk I tore the letter open. It was from my friend Don Mark, and he wrote briefly and to the point.

'Would you like to visit a Carlist partida among the mountains? If so, meet me on Monday outside the citadel gate of El Seo. Greetings and salutation.'

When I came to where Marinessia and her father were talking together I heard the girl say, 'Let her be brought to my uncle's farm and left awhile with me. In a week we shall see whether the little maid will be happy. No, you need not consult with Biño!'

Whereat Rodil turned upon me an eye which said unmistakably:

'Did not I tell you so? The day of Monsieur Biño is over!'

CHAPTER EIGHT

IN A CARLIST CAMP

Much and sore did I desire to see a Carlist camp. I had heard that such things existed. The *Imparcial* and the *Liberal* and the *Diario* had informed me, in badly-leaded and worse-printed columns, that there were these rebel encampments. A state of war, so I was assured, existed in all the northern provinces. The government of Madrid were 'taking steps'! Troops were under order to proceed to all the disaffected territories.

In England, on the strength of telegrams, alarmist in their nature (and with all the proper names misspelt), that small part of the world which takes heed of such things, believed that Spain, the most distressful country of the continent, was once more on the verge of civil war.

But I, on the spot, had my doubts, and - my reasons for doubting. First of all, I knew that all, or practically all, Spanish news comes to England from Paris. Much of it, being retranslated, is fitted to astonish the intelligent Spaniard. It is a product of the Stock Exchange, and represents in the chill of type only the roaring of the bulls and the growling of the bears upon the Paris Bourse.

But for once there was something more in this report. Spaniards in Barcelona and Madrid believed. The Prime Minister proclaimed martial law in province after province. Groups beneath the Hotel de Inglaterra in Bilbao scuffled for late editions of the daily paper, and the voice of the news-boy hoarsely proclaimed terror and slaughters down the whole length of the Rambla of Barcelona.

True, in Madrid things were quieter. For, sole of all the cities of Spain, Madrid has cosmopolitan claims. The days are gone by when a thousand pesetas, adroitly manipulated, would engineer a revolution in the capital,

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when even the judicious expenditure of a paltry hundred might be counted on to produce a quite respectable riot in the Puerta del Sol.

But in El Seo nothing whatever had been heard of all this. Don Manuel Sebastian had been silent. Quietly as ever the Bishop read his Breviary and walked in his garden of the Delight. Even such specialists in Carlism (or in any other plot which promised excitement and a free fight) as Don Mark and Don John had said no word - that is, not till now. Then suddenly there came to me this message. Well, of course I would go and gladly - in a day or two, that is - if the adherents of the Absolute King would wait so long. But for the moment I was pledged up to the eyes to see the little Zaida into her new life. That done, I was heartily at Don Mark's disposal.

It was strange to find oneself again in the City of Dream after so long a wandering. Then once more there came to me the curious rediscovery which one makes, that cities have streets, pavements, and cobble-stones which hurt the foot by their uniformity and absolute lack of sympathy! The world also seems to contain a great superfluity of boys and girls - particularly boys. There are also (wonder to tell) shops where things are sold. And instantly, one becomes conscious of an infinite number of wants - not one of which had presented itself out on the open campo!

The affair Marinessia-Biño had certainly made progress. Biño was seated in the little custom-house outside the city, as it were, somewhat ostentatiously passing the time of day with the officers. As soon as he saw us he rushed impetuously out and embraced me. But while he did it he looked over my shoulder at Marinessia. Rodil only smiled quietly, and having sent on Penique with the caravan, the four of us, Rodil, Marinessia, Biño, and myself, walked towards the town-house of Marinessia's uncle. Rodil continued to smile quietly, while (perhaps to divert attention) Biño talked in one continuous stream. He had been very busy, it appeared,

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ever since we had left El Seo. But when asked for particulars, it came out that he had been helping Marinessia's uncle with his commerce in the town and his agriculture outside it.

'He has been paying you a wage?' inquired Rodil, innocently. Biño glanced at his father-in-law in prospect, took the twinkle, and answered with a face like a wall, 'Yes, a large wage!'

Whereupon Marinessia looked a little reproachfully at her lover.

'My uncle,' she began to explain, 'has been a good deal away, and, as there is much to be done at this season, Biño has been kind enough to assist me! He understands such things!'

'Ah?' said Rodil, quietly, 'yes, when I was in the police, before I was married, I also had time to be of a good deal of assistance to various uncles. Sometimes, indeed, I included fathers - though that, I understand, has now gone out of fashion!'

To this Marinessia said nothing, but Biño, passing between Rodil and his daughter, shamelessly took the girl's hand before us all.

'You are still, both of you, sharp-set on marriage?' inquired Rodil, bending his eyes on the pair.

'Aye, certes, I believe you!' said Biño, 'and as soon as may be.'

'Oho!' said Rodil, 'things have progressed indeed! I thought it was agreed that you were only to company with us a little, in order to see if my girl were sage.'

Biño darted a quick look of suspicion at me. Had I given him away? In his reply he was not quite so fluent as usual.

'Marinessia thinks' he began, stammeringly, 'that - ah - that we might be married almost at once!'

'Ah,' said Rodil with philosophy, filling his pipe, 'Marinessia thinks - does she? And so this is your method of consulting her father? I congratulate you both.'

'Her uncle is satisfied,' said Biño, calmly, 'he is to

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give Marinessia a dowry. And - we are to be married by the end of the week - that is, if we are so fortunate as to obtain your consent!

'Ah,' said Rodil, ironically, 'that is indeed well thought on. Better late than never!'

'You see,' said Biño meekly, 'Marinessia said that you would do just what she wished! And she wishes this!'

'Oh, most certainly!' retorted Rodil, 'did ever any one do aught else than what Marinessia wished? And in a month or two you also will find yourself falling into step, my gay Frenchman! Marinessia has not a mouth like that for nothing!'

'It is a lovely - a charming mouth,' murmured Biño, with evident reminiscence, as well as with some indignation.

'Ah,' said Rodil, irrelevantly, 'I have no doubt whatever, that you have been helping her to some purpose!'

'So I was! It is indeed true!' said Biño, suddenly and unaccountably red to the gills. 'Ask her uncle if it is not!'

Whereat Rodil chuckled.

Then it was that Marinessia came forward and informed her fiancé that she had undertaken the care of little Zaida. It would be a great help to the ménage in its early stages. But I think the young man sighed. He had foreseen a monopoly of his sweetheart. The duet had suddenly become a trio. But the magic was working and very obediently he replied that all should be as Marinessia wished. Her father nudged me as much as to say, 'What did I tell you?'

I had of course supposed that there would be no chance of carrying a bridegroom with me to a Carlist camp in the very first week of his nuptials. But as soon as the thing was mooted, Marinessia declared her will.

'Certainly, he shall go. It is a very excellent arrangement,' she said, 'for me. I shall be glad of the time to set our house in order, near to Cabanes in the Ariège -

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Biño's place, which the Señor knows. Men are in the way at such times. Biño shall go with you, and welcome. He will also conduct and protect you. You shall see all that is to be seen, and then descend at your leisure into the kindly valleys, which I love. By which time you will find our house very much otherwise than you left it! I know a man's way of leaving things - as if he had been shot!

And as she spoke La Dompteuse looked very strong and indomitable and determined - handsome too, and a little contemptuous, so that I could see there was no real chance for Biño. Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity were no more to him now than words printed over his town-hall doors. However, I did not pity him. Spiritless fellow! He was of those who are well content to hug their chains.

So Biño, the stout, and Marinessia Alva, the strong of face and brave of heart, were wed. Long had the ceremonial been spun out, even for Spain. But it was over now. Biño had chosen well. Every one said so. Marinessia was by no means of the 'cow' type of womanhood common in Spain. She had all a Frenchwoman's practicality, together with the active benevolence and goodness which looks out from beneath many a Scots 'mutch,' and takes in the cash behind many a Parisian comptoir. There is still a lack of this particular quality in the peninsula, where the husband often treats his womenkind almost as if he still wore a turban.

Now since the days of Ford and Don Jorge only two great unknown names have contributed to our knowledge of the heart of Spain - Luffman, my brother vagabond, and Hugh James Rose. Only these, that I am aware of, have studied the Spaniards in poverty (and every true Spaniard is poor - comparatively, that is). But these two speak truth, straight from the seeing eye and the understanding heart. Also they found out the great secret, that to know Spain you must take it 'across country,' and live as the Spaniard lives. The several hundred other books on the peninsula which I have

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laboriously collected, afford the reader an astonishing impression of the dullness of the race. One comes, of course, upon one or two delightful books on sport - above all, that of Mr. Abel Chapman. Also there are entertaining and delightful (but often superficial) chronicles of travel, like those of Gautier, Jaccaci, De Amicis, and Hans Christian Andersen. But, except Rose and Luffman, as aforesaid, no English author has got beneath the armour-plate of the Iberian. And of these two, Rose is perhaps more of a cataloguer than a writer, while Luffman is oftentimes tantalisingly bald.

For the rest, the dull tourist round is chiefly composed of bull-fights and disembowelled steeds, hired Grenadan gipsies, the Alhambra and the Alcazar - together with accounts of innumerable cathedrals, of which you can study the architecture far more at your ease in Street and Lomas. Who would imagine from the average Iberian traveller that Madrid is not a Spanish town at all, Barcelona hardly more so (and daily becoming more and more drowned in cosmopolitan money-getting), or that real bull-fighting is confined to half-a-dozen of the greater cities? Or who would not be surprised to learn from a practical observer like Mr. Chapman that wild camels are to be found on the marismas of the Guadalquivir, or that there are salt-workers scaled like fishes in the Mediterranean marshes, or that there is a great aristocratic under-world in Spain consisting of sheep-masters and their servants, of tunny-fishers, of brown-burnt vintagers, of soaked malaria-filled rice-growers, of stalwart Castilian harvesters, of rook-scarers black as the crows at which they sling the Scriptural 'smooth stone of the brook,' smooth and naked too themselves and slim as a black lead pencil?

But all this by the way! The story waits.

Don John and Don Mark were to take me to a genuine camp of the Carlists. And in doing so, we were to venture our lives among the rifles of the soldiers of the Queen Regent. Thus, at least, the affair was represented

to me. But those who might be supposed to be 'in the know' remained strangely calm. Rodil was coming if he could satisfactorily dispose of his mule, Babiaca, in such a manner that that noble animal would not eat its head off. Marinessia was willing, even eager, for her newly married and still unhoneymooned husband to accompany us. The Guardias Civiles, who in Spain really are civil, smiled upon us good-humouredly. There seemed to be a secret somewhere about. But as yet I was kept in the dark! The five of us met on the outskirts of the City of Dream. Rodil, at the last moment, managed to rid himself of Babiaca, of Penique, and even of his wife. I had never before seen that grave man in such excellent spirits. Though no great church-lover he doffed his cap to a very commercial-looking Monk of the Brown, who was carrying under his arm a framed advertisement of American vines - with which, it appears, the wine-growers are replanting the district, in a very natural fear of the dread phylloxera from across the mountains. I think the convent must have been making a speciality of the agency. For in proportion as he is being made uncomfortable in France, the commercial monk is appearing in gross and detail to the south of the Pyrenees.

'Hrrrump!' snorted Rodil, like a rogue elephant, as soon as he was out of sight. I think he felt that the next thing might be an ecclesiastical inroad upon his own wandering trade.

Down in the river-bottoms men were working at the coarse hay. There was a pleasant dreamy haze lying close along the water. Beside the branch of a fine canal, disused like most useful things in Spain, and along all the meadow-flats and on the outskirts of the little steeped villages, men were tossing the hay from fore-and-aft carts up to the summits of shapeless haystacks, such as any Galloway farm-lass would turn up her nose at. They did it lazily, as if all time were before them. The horses munched whenever they could pick up a lazy mouthful. Thus the world wagged on the levels of the river

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where the air was heavy.

But it is impossible at any time to remain long in a valley in Spain - that is, and keep moving. Up the hill you must go - or, on the contrary - down, down, down! We, of course, went up. And, lo! on the slopes above us, picturesque in the sweet southern light of afternoon, we saw the silhouettes of men and women raking the swathed hay which, a little later, the men would be tossing into fragrant heaps.

Up and up - by roads easy and paths perilous! We passed along the verges of kindly brooks, which, being full, suggested Devonshire - except, that is, for their selvages of white poplars and the olives grey on the slopes above. The waters dimpled and the leaves tossed in the sigh of the wind. Save for the dry heat in the air, this part of the experience might have been England.

Many bridges, too, there were - wonderful in a country where, as in Spain, there are neither roads to travel upon nor waters to cross - nor even, it may be added, travellers to cross them. Yet in our first hour we had passed, we five apprentice Carlists, at least as many admirable bridges - clean-shaped, practical, suited to the place and to the landscape as a becoming dress fits a pretty woman. This is a rare thing in bridges, and one which is almost never to be found in new countries, where a bridge is invariably an outrage upon the surrounding scenery.

Queer bridges we found - triangular bridges, unnecessary bridges, of wood and stone and straw and stubble - but never ugly bridges. I would like to write a book - copiously illustrated - upon Spanish bridges alone. That is, if I thought anybody could be found to buy it. But instead, being paid to write adventures, I must endeavour to earn my money.

Dogs barked at us from out of dusky archways as we passed through tumble-down villages. Don John, who was the chief farceur of our little company, put these ignominiously to flight by bending down his head and

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baying at them in most uncanny fashion, his face reversed between his legs - a thing which no dog can stand, at least in the south. I suspect that Spanish dogs must have preserved some kind of folk-lore (or dog-lore) about monsters with heads which grow upside down between their legs - for, one and all, they beat an ignominious retreat at the sight of Don John.

And then, the villages on that mountain route! If El Seo be the City of Dream, of a verity these are the Villages of Dream. Their wooden balconies are timber-strutted and overhang the rush of the water. For up there the water actually does rush. It is as much as your life is worth (if you turn the scale at anything over thirteen stone) to venture out upon one of them. The very family washing seems to endanger their frail picturesqueness as it flaps in the wind. The swallow's nest is the popular style of architecture in this part of the country - or rather was two or three hundred years ago. For such gables, such semi-round beetle-browed houses and built-out patios, I never saw in any burg built by living man. And never do I expect to see them again, till I adventure forth from the City of El Seo in search of that elusive Carlist camp.

For all that, we could see everywhere that we were in a land in which religion was still something worth fighting for - or, at least, that the respect for it kept up a certain tradition in the hearts of the people.

At the gable of every house of any pretension was a crucifix, or perhaps less frequently the statue of some saint. The crucifixes were of two kinds, old and new. The old were gigantic and framed of wood. They were set up on a great basework of crossed beams, all deeply embrowned with age. The modern were erect on stone pillars, and generally of hammered iron. It rather took one's breath away, however, when, interwoven in the ironwork of one of the newest-looking of these, I found the date 1689 - the date of our own glorious Revolution, when Dutch William came from Holland to set up all that is most solid and stolid, most respectable and permanent,

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in the British Constitution.

But presently we drew away, cutting across the spurs of the hills, till we saw again the fine free untravelled road beneath us, with its array of telegraph poles posting away northwards towards France and another world, while the River of Dream, become a torrent now, went thundering and foaming among the stunted pines at our feet!

I began (as I thought) to smell Carlism in the air. In such places lived the men who, counting not their own lives dear to them, had taken up arms, and in the closing years of the nineteenth century were fighting for an Idea. So at that time I believed of Carlism among the mountains. It is my duty to tell of Carlism as I found it.

The brief, one-sided, Spanish-American war was just over. Spain was a country without colonies, without a navy, almost without an army. Moreover, Spanish pride was deeply hurt. The Government staggered, and well it might. The Spanish have all noble qualities, but in matters of sentiment they are not a practical people. They did not know that the loss of their colonies and the confining of their energies within the rough-hewn square of the Peninsula, was the best thing that ever happened to their land - the mother-in-law of all colonies and the mother of none. These were yet too early days for that idea to take root. The people could not understand it. All that they knew was that the Government had been put down, with hardly a struggle, by the hated 'Yenkees.' And so it seemed the duty of every Spaniard, for the time being, to put down the Government. But, at the head of affairs, it chanced that there was a very wise far-seeing man, who, above all things, understood his countrymen.

Now there is in Spain one thing which touches to the quick the average man of the towns, the man of the larger villages, the householder of the populous pueblos of the centre, the great swarming masses of the south, the man of the north-west with his mines and quarries and innumerable ports, the white-breeched cultivator of

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the orange-spangled huertas of Valencia and the cornlands of Orihuela. That which they hate, with an unbounded hatred, is the spectre of a fourth Carlist civil war. They have had enough of it. Colonies lost - well, it is a pity! Navies sunk! Well, again - let us build more. Our prestige abated for a generation! That to a Spaniard is hardest of all - but, at least, let us have no more Carlism! At the very name we will levy in mass! We should certainly like to overthrow this halting half-hearted Government - one which first deceived us and then brought such shame upon the nation. But if the Government is all that stands between us and another Carlist war - why then, Viva! For the Government of Madrid, Viva! For Señor Sagasta, Viva! For anybody and everybody who will give us peace foreign, and especially peace domestic, Viva! And Viva! And again three times Viva!

‘Very well then,’ meditated that exceedingly wise head at Madrid, ‘let the country be saved - and, incidentally, with it the Government! If a Carlist rising will save us, by all means let a Carlist rising be provided. See ye to it!’ The word was flashed down by secret ways. Indeed, most ways are of the secretest in Spain, where no man speaks his thought to his dearest friend lest a bird of the air carry the matter.

And now I was going to see this most opportune insurrection - see it at its source. There is a new school of Carlists - and an old! Don Manuel and the Bishop were of the old - who had fought in a score of the fights, and seen men standing up with their backs to a wall and the cigarette alight in their mouths - in the day when, in the war of brethren, quarter was neither given nor taken.

But of the new school were most decidedly Don John and Don Mark. The nearer they got to the ‘seat of war’ - the large word describes the large thing - the more riotously joyous they became. Indeed, they were like schoolboys on the first day of the holidays with their journey-money safe in their breeches’ pocket. They sang,

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they shouted. They embraced each other - all, that is, except Rodil, who watched their ambles and gambols, all the while smoking his pipe with humorous gravity.

By this time we were getting high up. The river lay far below - towns, sands, vineyards, desert places, together with bridges to cross the links of the River of Dream at unexpected narrows. The keen air was like an intoxicant to Don John and Don Mark - even to Biño. I mentioned Don Carlos of Spain - Don Jaime of Bourbon! They laughed in my face. That is not what we have come out to see, they said. Their fathers would not have spoken so, I retorted. At this they laughed still louder, till I thought that of a truth they must have become 'fey' (or fated), as we say in Scotland, of those whose excessive gaiety seems to presage an impending doom.

'Carlists - oh, of course, we are Carlists,' cried Don John, 'but what has that to do with the very respectable 'whiskerado' who abides at the big hotel in Lucerne - which is, I believe, a town in Switzerland? Is it not so, Señor? The Duke of Madrid? Hum - well, let him take his breakfast in peace, good man. It is not for him or his like that any young Spaniard will fight today. No, I do not mean my father (he tapped his frontal bone) - the old are different. They have touched the real, of which we have scarce seen the shadow!'

But these gay young scamps gat their lesson ere they slept. It is not good to laugh at that which the fathers reverence. For just then, at the entering in of the little village where we were to rest, we came upon a crucifix casting a vast shadow upon a whitewashed wall, intense in the light of the setting sun. It was exceedingly impressive.

We stood gazing - all, I think, even the three merry-makers, not a little awed. I pointed up at it and said, 'There! You see! Sometimes the shadow may touch the heart - even more than the reality!'

But Don Mark, ever ready with words, had his answer pat.

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'Ah,' he said, 'that may be true enough. But - He is the crucified. He died for others. Whereas, so far as I have heard, the Bourbons of Spain have always let others fight for them - and die for them. And then in the nick of time - they ran away!'

And that, I venture to say, is what young Spain thinks about Carlism and its prospects today.

We stood awhile, simply looking. The great wooden crucifix, dominating the little square, turned in the setting sun to crimson before our eyes. The shadow on the wall grew black, and then began to dissolve, eaten up from below as the sun sank rapidly. The night came with a stride, and through the already grey and silent alleys we paced soberly to our inn. I cannot tell what was in the thoughts of the others. Mine within me were tinged with Eternity, yet they were not sad. I had seen the greatest sight left on earth - the Ideal of Man suffering for Man - I had seen men believing in that Ideal. Now I looked up where the stars were already sparkling - keen, set in regular perspective, blue, red, green, Sirius leading them on, like a chieftain among his hosts. Well, had THAT UP THERE ever spoken, except by the Man who died for men? I did not know. And truth to tell, I did not greatly care. The warm humanity of the Man of Nazareth abode. So much was sure. Even the shadow on the whitewashed wall somehow filled my heart. A carpenter had made that cross, and He - was a carpenter's son.

After that, Rodil, who, as I have said, was a man of thought, had no difficulty in keeping the boys quiet. They smoked, it is true, but there was no singing, no tinkling guitars, no jota. And the last words of our host as he sent us up to bed above the stable, with a lantern among the four of us, sounded like a benediction, 'Vaya Usted con Dios!' - 'Go ye with God!' he said.

Long after the rest were asleep, through the glassless windows of our loft I looked out, and there, erect upon the great cross of wood, the lonely figure cut a

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blank among the stars. Then I remembered the two lines of Pippa's song,

'God's in His Heaven. All's right with the World.'

I thought that this detour had brought me no nearer the long-sought camp of the Carlists, but I was wrong. The house in the little village where we had slept was garnished with an arcaded gallery giving upon the street, like a bridge for which at last the natives had found a use. Under this were doors and the entrances to houses.

I was told that the Carlists, when they sent down for provisions, stabled their horses under these very arcades! This was something like. Here I was, at last, upon the track of rebellion.

Our sleeping-room was a long gallery in the outer flange of these very archaux. In effect it felt just like going to bed in a flying buttress. The corridor was so narrow that the couches had to be placed lengthways, and so close together were they that in the dead time of the night Rodil grasped one of my ankles, which had gone exploring on its own account over the end of his bed. He was just about to stick a knife into it, taking it for a robber - or, at least, for something which had no right to come interfering with his nose.

It was yet grey morning when we settled our modest bill and went. Bills are always modest in Spain - still more so if a Spaniard does the settling. But what we found was a great change from yesterday's sun-drowned haymakers, our long tramp by the hazy river-side, and the loops of hot roadway blinking in the sun. Today the grey of earliest twilight had the snell grip in it which told of snow. There was snow in the air too. One's teeth chattered as we dressed - not that in going to bed we had removed so much of our clothing that they had a very long time in which to chatter!

The next moment we were out on the hillside with a lump of bread and some chocolate inside of us, and a

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well-founded belief in our hearts that it would be many hours before we saw more food, I had my half-plate camera under arm. Now this camera is quite a trifling weight when a friend only picks it up and sets it down. He remarks upon its wonderful lightness. But after a few hours over the Sierras, changing hands every half-mile and looking to see if the other fellows are inclined to help, it seems to be made of solid lead. Then, again, I could trust it with Biño, but by no means with farceurs like Don John and Don Mark. It was too precious for that.

We covered in a little shelter from a storm-flurry, and whilst it was clearing up I hurried out and took a couple of pictures of two lonely unnamed towers which dominated a quite modern-looking farm, but seemed much more in keeping with the grim hillside against which they were set. The snow began to lie thinly on all the slopes, and these rough towers, built of chance-found stones like a Scottish stone-dyke, seemed perfectly in unison with their desolate surroundings.

Up and up the road wound - rocks and wayside plants all thinly sprinkled with snow. The leggy, unhappy, spindling pines we passed were touched with it to their topmost twig. It mixed like salt with the dust of the highway. Evidently Carlism had to be sought for very high up. However, that was but natural. Virtue abides on the heights.

A carriage was returning in our direction and Don Mark hailed it. The answer of the conductor was unintelligible, but plainly insulting. Then it was that the two Sebastian boys showed the blood that was in them.

'He may be a governmental arriero, if he likes,' they said, 'he may be the devil himself, but, by Saint Vincent, he has no right to insult a Sebastian. Even now we will convince him of the error of his way. Pray lend us your revolver!'

But I declined to be mixed up with the coercing of a respectable coachman upon a turnpike road. Smuggling was well enough, but I had no idea of emulating the late

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Mr. Richard Turpin or Mons. Claude Duval. So the Sebastians, nothing daunted, borrowed from their countryman Rodil, who was either not so squeamish or better informed.

'They will only frighten him!' he said. 'Most likely he is a miserable hostler of the fonda which calls itself a 'Hotel' down at El Seo, and in that case it will be enough if the Sebastians tell him their names!'

So with no more said, Don Mark and Don John went off to interview the driver of the carriage. They returned in a trice with the news that the owner would be charmed to have our company. He did come from El Seo. At which I blushed. For I had visited a Bishop there. But so, for the matter of that, had the Sebastians, with whom the driver seemed now to be on excellent terms. They had let him see their own pistols, together with Rodil's revolver, also a couple of knives from Albacete, each about as long as the owner's leg from the knee down. They said that they thought he might possibly feel interested in the names of the makers.

He was - to the extent of being astonishingly polite to all of us, offering wine and black bread all round. Rodil and I went inside the coach but the two Sebastians sat one on each side of the coachman on the box and helped him to drive.

'Confidence?' said Don Mark, afterwards, 'oh yes, of course we had confidence in him! But there is no confidence like making sure of a thing yourself!'

Which dictum might be added to the Proverbs of Solomon, without spoiling the set, having regard to the amount of truth which, all simply and unobtrusively, it expresses.

Our driver had, it appeared, just taken down an important governmental official from the nearest point to the rebel camp. This commissioner had been empowered to treat with the Carlists. So at least the driver declared. But he could give us no exact information, because his fare had slept the whole time

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after he had picked him up by the roadside. Also he had complained of headache, both which symptoms we understood later.

'It is at this bridge I must stop, gentlemen,' he said. 'I cannot possibly cross it, or follow the road to Elisonda further with my waggon - which, indeed, is just new from the coachbuilder's yard. I shall, therefore, be obliged to take reluctant leave of you here!'

'Well, we bet you two duros that you won't!' cried the Sebastians. 'We can get you and your old equipage over a bridge ten times worse than that. And as for the road on the other side - why, it was made, laid, and levelled specially for Don Carlos, Duke of Madrid, whom God preserve! (Here they piously lifted their caps.) Now we are loyal soldiers of that unfortunate monarch, and we will show you that what is good enough for a Don Carlos is good enough for a shark-souled, greedy-toothed crétin of a hired shilling-a-league driver, from a heaven-forsaken venta which has the impudence to call itself a 'Hotel!'

Such was the sense, if not the exact words, of the allocution addressed by the Sebastians to the driver of the hotel turnout.

And sure enough the conveyance went over the bridge careering, a man at each wheel and the owner anxiously moderating his steed, which, naturally enough, objected to the reverberation.

'It is wonderful what can be done in this world with a little goodwill - properly applied!' said Don John. 'Now, between us, without the least trouble, we have frightened that fellow more than ever he will be frightened, till the little black imps with the tridents shake his miserable carcass over the pit of Hades!'

Fine, decided, all-there politicians were my young friends, the Sebastians! No wonder they were powers in the land. Generally also, I am bound to add, powers for good.

'He is not doing this for nothing,' explained Don Mark in an undertone, 'the rascal owes my father money,

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which he will never pay. And if the old rattletrap does fall into the ravine it won't matter a dollar to anybody.'

Luckily, however, it did not. In fact the road actually became better on the further side of the Segre. For this is the rule in Spain. Where there are millions of people and a great traffic, the ways are those which the Moors left behind them, and you wade waist-deep in the ruts. But when there are perhaps a dozen of possible passengers in a year, the roads are - well, as good as those of France or of Utopia, which is pretty much saying the same thing. The road upon which we now found ourselves, a little boulder-strewn because of the contributions to road-mending brought down by the spring avalanches (which, of course, no one had ever thought of removing), led slowly upwards through the snow-dusted trees.

'We are coming near the camp now,' said Don Mark, and he went off into one of his boisterous laughs.

'I cannot go there,' cried the coachman in despair. 'They will have my blood.'

'And small loss!' remarked Don John, unsympathetically.

'Let me go! Let me go!' The Jehu's plaint became acute, and he referred more than once to a wholly imaginary wife and children.

So, after making him sign a receipt that he had come so far out of his way of his own freewill, we let him go. The Sebastians considered all this a fine joke, and laughed abundantly. But, having been brought up to railway officials and the science of tipping, I managed to convey a piece of money to the unfortunate driver, without the knowledge of either Don John or Don Mark. I think if they had known they would have sent me back with him in the conveyance as wholly unworthy of confidence.

The carriage once out of sight we stood in the roadway stamping our feet and getting warm as best we could. For the chill of the high mountains cut into our

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bones, coming as we had done directly from the steaming ditch of the Ebro Valley, and over the dusty plains of Aragon upon which the sun lies all day heavy as a load.

Don Mark was right. We were indeed nearing our goal. Turning a corner there, beneath us, lay the little collection of houses which I shall call Elisonda - though, of course, according to agreement, that is not its name.

To all appearance it was little more than a Scottish 'farm-town.' What we looked upon was hardly more than the long-roofed collection of 'office-houses' which surrounds the dwelling of a thrifty 'big farmer' in the old country. Yet this was the famous Elisonda, the head and front of the Carlist 'rising.'

It did not look very terrible, and for a moment I was disappointed. What I wanted to see was a regular encampment out on the plain, or upon the mountain side! I think a score or so of tents of black camel's hair, like those of Bedu, might have satisfied me. But this range of comfortable farm buildings - all eligible property! Could that be the dreaded Elisonda about which the forces of the Government had been concentrating for weeks? Could this be the place whose name was shouted nightly along the Rambla at Barcelona, in the Plaza de la Independencia of Zaragoza, and down the Puerta del Sol at Madrid?

Where were the grinning black muzzles of the guns - 'quick-firers' smuggled over the frontier from France - so they said in the papers - old mortars wide enough of mouth to fire an iron bedstead, mattress and all? The Carlists, even, where were they?

At least I was not to be disappointed of these last. Here they came, a whole advance guard of them, spurring their best along the road, yelling and shouting, as if they had been forewarned of our approach. Some of them rode horses, but the majority mules. Shades of General de Lacy Evans and Cabrera, had it come to this? Yes, even worse! Far in the rear, as merry as any, rode a man upon a donkey!

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These were the bloodthirsty Carlists of Elisonda. These were the enemies of the City Fathers. These were the fierce hill-fighters, who gave no quarter to man, woman, or child.

And in a minute we had fraternised with this dreadful enemy - these semi-brigands of the Madrid papers, unrecognised by any Power, fighters each for his own hand. In appearance they were exactly like a lot of jovial farmers' sons out for a merry-making. They did not slay us on the spot. Contrariwise they embraced us even too warmly. They demanded not our money or our lives - but only if we were thirsty. We were. We were also cold.

We went back with them to Elisonda, and had soon made ourselves at home with the whole boisterous crew.

They had a camp-fire. But I think that camp-fire must have been a stage property, for I never saw any one sitting by it. The wide kitchen or house-place and the straw-filled barn suited their habits better. Guards were posted, but they were mostly four-footed and barked. One of these, called 'General Prim,' a meek animal, lay permanently on a wall and was ready to betray his trust at any time for a bone. After this I used to carry one in my pocket for the express purpose of bribing the general. I wrapped it in a copy of the *Correspondencia* which told of the bloody doings of the rebels of Elisonda. General Prim did not mind, specially if the bone had been left, as it were, 'in the rough.'

That night there was heard in Elisonda the sound of the pipe and of the tabor. Don John surpassed himself. Don Mark recounted (and embellished) our adventures in the smuggling line. All present were experts, and I received many compliments. Rodil listened and smoked, smiling quietly the while. The amount of white spirit which was drunk had better be referred to in round numbers. Its quality was not strained - its quantity quite unrestrained. There were headaches abroad in the morning, but General Prim and I were early at our posts. He and I went the rounds of the rebel camp together 'at

the good hour.'

On the way we fell in with Don Mark, who asked me if I had any bicarbonate of soda about me. He said he wanted it for a chemical experiment. Going back I gave him what I possessed, and he proceeded to see what would be the effect of dissolving the powder in water and drinking it upon the spot. General Prim and I left him to his experiment, and set forth again on our round of discoveries. A meek animal was General Prim. He snuffed at each snoring sleeper, and when he recognised any one to whom he had been introduced, he very courteously acknowledged the acquaintance before passing on.

Finally at the far side of Elisonda, where are certain steep precipices called colloquially 'Too-Bad-For-a-Dog,' the General and I came upon a young man moodily surveying the scene. He was dressed differently from the young farmers and countrymen who had spurred out to meet us the night before. He had not the dare-devil look of the smuggling Sebastians, nor yet was he of the city - a quiet, rather melancholy, dark-eyed fellow he seemed, with, however, unmistakable marks of breeding and education about him.

I spoke to him, a mere polite inquiry as to whether we were doing any harm. To my astonishment he answered in French, readily and fluently.

'Is there ever any real fighting at Elisonda?' I asked him.

'Oh yes,' he answered, smiling, 'quite regularly!'

I noticed that he pronounced the last words with a certain emphasis. He also pointed with his hands to the loop-holed barns and cow-sheds beneath us.

'When is the governmental attack supposed to commence?' I asked.

'Usually about three,' he said, 'that is, when it is warm and the snow has melted off the roof and rocks. Then it is more comfortable for everyone concerned. But if you are pressed for time I can send out word and have it

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begun earlier!

I stared at the young man in astonishment, as well I might.

'You - can - send - out - and - have - it - begun - earlier?' I said, slowly.

'Certainly,' he answered serenely, 'that is what I am here for!'

For a moment it occurred to me that I was in the presence of a spy, but a glance at the young man's face reassured me. Whatever he was, this youth with the sombre eyes was no spy. But he discerned my thought.

'Oh no,' he said smiling quietly, 'I am not betraying the confidence of our good friends down there, who are still snoring on the straw. But, all the same, I am here to conduct matters generally. You understand, the situation is this - if you will be good enough to listen!'

Almost automatically we had walked to a little knoll whence we could look down upon the snow-covered roofs of Elisonda. Low hills were all around us in a circle (perhaps from a mile to a mile and a half distant). My friend lifted his arm and pointed with a mock theatrical gesture.

'All these are held by the enemy - or we are the enemy ourselves,' he said, 'just as you happen to look at it! At any rate, there is a fierce engagement each afternoon in time for the results to be telegraphed to the Madrid and Paris papers. Nothing like it has been seen in the Peninsula since 'El Gran Lor' (Wellington) said 'Buenas noches' to his old friend Soult at Vitoria. Wait till three o'clock, and you shall see!'

While he was speaking I had been examining the ground and the out-buildings. Not a rut, nor a broken stick on a tree, nor so much as a pockmark on a wall.

'Yes,' he continued, smiling, 'you have come out to see war and you will see it on a truly magnificent scale, from Mauser pistols and revolvers up to siege guns!'

'And this goes on every day?' I queried, looking, suppose, no little incredulous.

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He nodded, his somewhat saturnine face lighting up with the pleasure of persiflage.

'But,' said I, marvelling, 'where are the bullet-holes, the marks made by the explosion of the shells, the pits of the round shot - all that I have read about so often in the papers?'

And I pulled out as much of the *Correspondencia* as my friend General Prim had left when I took him his last chop. I never saw such a dog for tearing up paper and chewing it. He would eat anything in which meat had been wrapped. But, I think, if he had a preference, it was for the *Correspondencia*. It might be called his favourite journal.

I did not ask any more questions. It seemed somehow undignified. Instead I only looked at the young man, and after a little he lifted up his voice and spoke. His explanation was remarkably clear and precise, yet with a tang of bitterness in every word, strange in one so young.

'This, mark you, is an insurrection!' he said. 'These people in the house-place snoring on the straw are Carlists - at ninepence a day and the fun! It is a godsend to them in the off-season. In vintage it would cost the Government at least three times as much!'

'It would cost the Government?' I cried in astonishment. 'What has the Government to do with it?'

He stopped and picked up a cartridge which lay at his feet. Its clear, clean, white-composition metal shone like silver in the light of the morning sun.

'The careless dogs!' he said, 'to take the pay of the Government and not even to be at the trouble to fire off the powder. For, observe, it is of Government mark!'

I looked. So it was, and apparently unexpended. The little yellow cap was unindented. I searched in vain for the mark of the needle.

But there was a peculiarity. The cartridge felt curiously light in the hand. The young man smiled and nodded.

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'It has not been fired,' he said. 'Now find me the bullet, if you please! Explore with your knife. There is no danger!'

There was none! The cartridge was blank as Mordred's shield.

The young man nodded encouragingly at me.

'Exactly,' he said, 'it is like the answer of a riddle, which one sees all at once and then cries out how stupid one has been! Or like the donkey cut out in white in the wood-engraving, which you cannot help seeing - after once your eyes have traced it. Now, do you understand?'

It was undoubtedly stupid of me, but I did not yet understand - at least, not fully, though I began to have an inkling.

'Well,' he said, 'I suppose, being a stranger, you must have the riddle explained. At three of the clock in the afternoon all these sleepers will be awake. By that time they will have had their breakfast of good Government provisions. Some of the tins have made the voyage to Cuba and back, but are no whit the worse for that. Then the brave Carlists will demand their day's pay, which will be given them in Government silver. I am not a soldier myself. I am a political in the secret service - only there is no particular secrecy about this. You can't keep a secret among three hundred men all picked up here, there, and everywhere - each one with a sweetheart at home to buy something pretty for at the next fair. Well, the troops and the Carlists fall on - horse, foot, and guns - at noon, or at three, or at six, just as I send them word! And all the correspondents of the papers are back there among the hills, and all the writers - only you must not write about this till it is well over. But there will be a merry time and enough noise to wake the sainted dead!

'Only there won't be any dead, nor yet any wounded, unless a man is careless when his gun kicks. For there is never a bullet, nor a shell, nor a revolver pea the size of a sugar-coated pill out of a new-fangled pharmacy. All is noise, and fury, and smoke - exceedingly

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terrible! And you will also have the privilege of beholding me sitting on this very knoll directing things with a stick. I have with me, of course, a man to work the heliograph, a proper soldier, not a stable-smelling Carlist.

‘And so - why, necessarily, there is plenty to write about, and certainly plenty to hear, and not a little to see! So everybody is content! And the people say, ‘It is necessary to have a Government which will take strong measures to put down these rascally Carlists! And what if the expense be great - what must be, must be!’ (They are quite right there! The expense is great. Tinned meats and ninepence a day!) And all the while down in Madrid, in a certain bureau, a very old man with a white beard sits among many portfolios, while his secretaries come and go, and they read him the telegrams as they arrive from the Seat of War. And he says, ‘Well done! Oh, well done!’ And one day, perhaps, he will take me apart and give me the Order of the Golden Fleece, or make me a grandee of the kingdom, or an ambassador or something. That is,’ concluded the young man, with a sudden drop into his habitual melancholy, ‘if he does not die or forget all about me, which is by far the most likely thing!’

Of course we stayed for the fight. It was all that the young man in the secret service had promised - and more. I wished I had found out that young man’s name - not that I would have dared to print it. But he was of marked ability, and I hope that the old man of the portfolios, before he died (reconciled to Mother Church, and going to his own place to the sound of wailing chaunts) remembered that young man, whose name I do not know, and made him a grandee, or an ambassador, or whatever else his heart craved after.

Crackle - crackle from the hills! It was (do not tremble) the fierce onslaught of the troops of the line. How brave their officers were, cheering them on! All colours of the rainbow were represented, specially pale blue coats

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and scarlet trousers, also hard kepis with stout bobs in front. Not a man there would have dreamed of condescending to the degrading concealment of khaki. For, say what you will, it is concealment. The artillery, too, set out its guns in plain view on all the hills. No earthworks there! Who's afraid? Not a man of them. Rattle! Bang! Thunder! R-r-r-r-r! Rack-tack-tack-tack! All the sounds of modern warfare, as it were, in a nutshell.

And the courage of these poor lads who had lain among the straw - these few hundreds of rude Carlists of the North, each fighting for his legitimate monarch! Ought we not to be put to shame - aye, every man of us?

Which of us is there, who would think nothing of lying out on the plain ground - with only a sack or a bundle of hay beneath our persons to keep the cold from striking through, sheltered by a stone no bigger than a sugar-loaf, enfiladed from every side by modern artillery and long-range guns, all for an Ideal - plus ninepence a day, and as much tinned meat and raw white spirit as could be stowed away comfortably at Government charges?

Ah, brave fellows! Not a man of them flinched - except, perhaps, to light a cigarette or to scratch. They had slept, you see, most of them, in the stable. So it is small wonder if they itched for battle. But there they were, the cavalry scouting valiantly after nothing at all, waving their swords, and charging (as often as their horses and mules could be brought into something like line) into the thickest of the fray! Never was gallantry so reckless seen in this world.

And all the time across the hills the telegraph wires were humming. And in Madrid, and in Barcelona, and in Paris the special editions were coming out, treading on each other's heels, reeking from the press. Stocks were going up and down. Exchange was 'pumping' like a barometer before a storm. Leathern-lunged louts were crying the terrible news along the Strand before midnight. And in the quiet streets about the British Museum, where

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the people sit up late, they were sending out good brown British coppers to pay for halfpenny papers! The news from Elisonda was buzzing all over the earth.

And on the knoll above the long roofs, from which the snow had either been melted or had blown away, sat the young man with the rueful countenance, who wanted to be an ambassador or a grandee. He too was smoking a cigarette, and when I went up to him he offered me a nip of cognac.

When I declined with thanks he only said, 'It is French, and of good mark! See the stars!'

Then he yawned.

'If you have had enough of this,' he added, rising, 'I have!'

Whereupon he turned to the heliograph man, who stood behind - grave, attentive, also a little melancholy, having seen the vanity of things human.

'Tell them to stop, will you!' said the young man, briefly.

Then we went away. But as we were going down the slope, the sad-faced political youth in the secret service turned once more to the manipulator,

'Have you finished your message?' he demanded.

'Yes.'

'Then add, "THE COUNTRY IS SAVED."'

And the Country was saved!

CHAPTER NINE

THE GOOD SAMARITAN - WITH AN EYE TO
BUSINESS

Wood is one of the precious commodities of Spain - especially pine-wood. Generally speaking, you must go to the Pyrenees for it. For, though some is reported from Galicia, I have never seen it. So (thought I) now that Carlism was done with, perhaps there might be some interest in arboriculture as practised on the mountain slopes. At any rate, I would see.

Besides, Don John had his young woman to visit - one of them, that is. And Don Mark betrayed an interest in the same young lady's sister. Rodil was anxious to take up the long-neglected business-round, in company with Babieca and Penique - his wife Concepcion being added without prejudice. She would always do what was expected of her. No surprises were to be anticipated from Concepcion. Wherever Marinessia had got that firm mouth of hers, it was not from her mother.

More than all, Biño had been visibly aching for the reconstructed country-house on the verges of the Ariège. He must go, he now declared openly, to see what Marinessia had been doing.

Consequently I felt myself the idle child of the lesson-book. No bird or beast or industrious bee would play with me any more. The gay Don John, the calm Rodil - even Benedict Biño himself - had each his own mission in life.

Very well, then - I would not play with them! I was sufficient unto myself. I would go back alone, and perhaps might learn the more. But I promised Biño, before I bade him goodbye - I promised Rodil, my yet better friend - to turn up at that white house with the grass-green railings and repainted shutters about which I had been hearing. At the latest and least, I was to be

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there on the Fourteenth of July, at Les Cabanes in the Ariège - the great Day of the Republic, when the bulls are driven through the streets, when the Sous-Préfet stands aloft on a high platform - a platform unscalable by hoof, unpierceable by horn, and tells the band when to play the 'Marseillaise' - as it can only be played in a southern Gascon village.

This was the promised delight. But really I chiefly wanted to see Zaida, and, incidentally of course, how Marinessia was comporting herself as a married woman. It would also be good to see my Biño fetching and carrying, and generally, as it were, toeing the connubial line.

So, not discontentedly, I shouldered my knapsack, containing a Jaegar sleeping-suit (insect-proof), a bit of soap, certain bandages, ointments, and medicines, a flask of the wine of my native country (for emergencies), and a few dozen spare films for the stout camera which I carried on my back. For at that time the pocketable 'Nydia' only existed in the ingenious brain of its inventor.

All was once more peace at Elisonda. Snow lay again on the roofs, and the bloodthirsty Carlists were asleep after the desperate fight of yesterday - all, that is, except a few who had gone over the hills and far away - 'to make a night of it' with the enemy. But even they would arrive in time for the next deadly combat at half-past three precisely. My young and melancholy ambassador-in-the-bud was sleeping after his labours. Indeed, so was everyone else. Only a faint 'pew-o'-reek,' as we say in Scotland, betrayed where Biño, the Ever-Ready, had been making my morning coffee. It was bitterly cold. Whoo! The wind of the gorges cut like a knife. A few hens were pecking at nothing out in Elisonda stableyard. What a vast deal of scraping they must put in for the smallest possible returns! They would have made admirable miners. Their patience did them credit. They might have done well in Klondike or Chilcoot - which last seems a good name not thrown away, considering the locality.

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But Elisonda back-yard, and the hens pretending to scrape under the gloom of an oncoming snow-flurry, were 'Chilcoot' enough for me! I would rather remain poor and warm all my life. Afterwards - if all tales be true - but there is no present need to go into that!

For the first part of the way I followed the same track by which we had approached the headquarters of revolt - at ninepence a day and a little white aguardiente. It was easy enough to follow. Like the streams on either hand, I had only to let myself go and gravitation took its course. If I went downhill I went right, leaving the snows - the snows more or less eternal - above me. But for the moment they were also underfoot, and my boots were thin. Therefore, I did not linger. It was only a sprinkling - what we would call the merest 'scuff' of snow. But here, gripping where it fell and declining to melt, it was certainly a great nuisance at five o'clock of the morning. However, I could see the pine woods beneath me, green and fresh, and I was making for them.

But, high above me there loomed up the wild peak of Peñalara, dominating the valley, with my two grey towers of yester-even, now looking quite different against the clean mantle of snow which covered all the upper country. Of course I photographed them again, standing with my feet wet among the damp meadow grass - hope in my heart, and two chlorate-of-potash lozenges in my mouth. My hope was that the plate would turn out well - not, as might have been expected, that I might be mercifully preserved from taking cold. Because I knew that I deserved to take cold, and would probably do so in any case. While, after all, the plates had done no wrong.

As I went my way I remembered that hitherto I had hardly ever gone a step of these Spanish adventures alone - upon which, so curious an animal is man, I stepped out the more briskly. The very thought of solitude - away from the good Biño, the excellent Rodil, the admirable Don Manuel, the too lively Don Mark (and Don John, still more lively), somehow invigorated me inexpressibly. The

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weight of my camera and my increased pace drove the cold rapidly from my limbs, I also took a little something at the back of a stone dyke - medically, as they say on pledge-cards - and as I did so I remembered that a good deal of excellent unprescribed medicine is taken at similar dykebacks, wherever these exist all over the world. For there are dry-stone dykes in Huesca as well as in Galloway. The only difference is that in Huesca they are quite unable to build one - in Galloway they can. I have seen a Spanish dry-dyke, built of the usual water-worn cobbles, tumble down when a dog barked. I think it must have been owing to the echo. But I am bound to add that he was a fine large dog - a wolf-hound, in fact. Still, whatever the explanation, the fact is beyond dispute. The suggestion of the reason is only thrown out for scientific men to worry over. They may as well quarrel over that as anything else.

There is another story about these same dogs. But this one can be sworn to on the pyx. Here it is. Spanish trains move slowly. Indeed it is almost an insult to the word to say that they 'move' at all. So does the hour-hand of a clock. Well, these wolf-hounds often (when there are no wolves about) earn their bread and put in their time by sitting on end and watching a flock of sheep. There is no special reason why they should, but time must be killed somehow. And, save us, how they yawn! Like the Mammoth cavern - and they have teeth like stalagmites, too. But all the same, they are on the look-out for any healthy excitement that may be coming along.

By and by a train comes in sight. Your experienced wolf-hound does not rush down to the line side and yough and bark and exhaust himself. He leaves this to puppies who know no better. No, he sits still and sniffs, and as soon as he perceives by the evidence of his highly-organised sense of smell, that the engine is burning the usual 'briquettes,' compounded of old dross and general filth, he sneers - a visible canine sneer, and waits.

Sometimes he lets his head droop on his paws and

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he goes, ostentatiously, to sleep. Then after a while the train comes up, the driver with his hand proudly on the lever. The fireman is shovelling in 'briquettes' as if they were real coal. The guard, smoking a cigarette, has his feet up on the white lace-covered cushions of the only first-class compartment - 'Reserved for Ladies Only' - according to the printed notice. It is a proud train, a complete train, according to Spanish ideas it is a Correos, or express mail train. It goes, at least, on the down grades, as much as six, or even seven miles an hour. Evidence in support of this statement may be had on application to the publisher.

Well, the wolf-hound wakes up. The train has passed. It is - no, not steaming away. 'Briquettes' do not produce steam. They only defile the landscape with smuts the size of florins, and as greasy as the cookery of a venta which calls itself a Hotel on the strength of once having had two Englishmen or one American stop there.

As has been said the wolf-hound wakes. He stretches himself. He rises, and leisurely pursues the train till he overtakes it. Then he runs along, barking in at the window of each several compartment, with his tongue in his cheek in the indescribable way Spanish dogs have acquired - just as if he were cursing you! And you know that he is too - not only cursing but laughing, at everybody in the train, from the engine-driver to the occupant of the compartment for 'Ladies Only' who, because it is hot, is now arrayed with much simplicity in official braided trousers and an unofficial dirty shirt. Then, with a final volley of abuse directed at the cow-catcher on the engine, the faithful animal takes his way back to the flock, which has never for a moment missed him - feeding peaceably the while without a murmur on the nearest neighbour's young winter wheat.

And so all once more is peace - duty has been fulfilled, and a little healthy exercise indulged in. The wolf-hound calls himself - in a low but quite distinct tone of self-approval, 'Good-dog!' Then he lies down with his

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chin on his paws and one eye asleep, with, deep in his cynical heart, the consciousness of having done his day's duty.

Apropos of 'briquettes' there is another tale - not, however, such a long one this time. Upon a certain occasion I made the acquaintance of a young engineer - Swiss he was, in charge of a mountain railway. He got me a pass over one of the great lines to a point which I wished to reach, where some money was waiting for me. It is a good rule in Spain never to pay for anything when you can get it for nothing. This applies to other countries also. It is called the Rule of the Dead Head, and the observance of it causes you to be much respected, and to die very rich.

So, well munitioned with pass and passport, I started over the line, keeping my eyes open. The young Swiss engineer accompanied me part of the way. We passed many large black heaps by the side of the line. They interfered with some of my best foregrounds. I asked if there was no redress. He said, 'No, I do not think so!' But, upon being cross-examined, he could only give the shallow reason that, after all, the Spanish authorities of the Madrid, Barcelona, and Alcoy Railway, had not asked me to come photographing along their line, nor even arranged their stopping-places with a view to anybody's convenience but their own. Any true artist will see the absurdity of this. Of course I threatened to communicate with my consul at once.

'Well,' said Herr Werther, 'certainly you may. But all the same, I can tell you something that is worth an odd photograph or two. Do you see that pile there?'

See it - I should think I did! Had it not spoiled the finest - but no matter!

'Well,' continued Herr Werther, calmly, 'that is best Cardiff coal at thirty-five pesetas a ton, delivered at Bilbao!'

'Why, man,' I cried, for I was learned in the evil stuff at that time, owing to a coal strike in my own happy

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country, 'that is the very worst sort of briquette, and at the most is not worth more than five francs a cartload!'

'Four, fifteen - to be exact,' he answered, 'but all the same, it is best Cardiff coal at thirty-five pesetas a ton, and I have the papers to prove it!'

And he had. For he pulled out immediately the report of the railway on which we were travelling. They burned nothing else than best Cardiff at the price named! And the difference was divided (so at least said Herr Werther) between the railway manager and the son of a certain minister in Madrid. I will not be more particular because I do not wish to be stopped again at the frontier. But the facts are as stated. This shows how a little Cardiff coal leavens a whole lump - of briquettes. And now I understood all about the greasy flakes of smut. My only wonder is that they are not the size of my hand. I believe that on some lines naturalists chase them round with insect nets under the belief that they are a rare species of black butterfly! But as this may be untrue, I do not vouch for it. I myself have never even seen a naturalist in Spain, and the sole signs of his recent passage are the excellent and useful lists published in Mr. Hans Gadow's 'Northern Spain.'

There is another story - but there is nothing so hard to stop (except a brawling woman in a wide house) as a succession of stories. Once I lunched with a novelist and an editor, and after lunch it chanced that one of the party had an engagement, so that only two of us got in the stories we were aching to tell. They related to our boyish days, and were of a humorous and exaggerative character. It was the (other) romancer and myself who were the successful competitors. But, in spite of an excellent lunch, the editor went away with bitter words on his tongue and a grudge in his heart. And he has (of course wholly without reason) slated all and sundry of our books since. And you can ask Mr. Robert Barr if this story is not true. He will, I know, back a brother up.

As for the editor, one of us is going to put him in a

book. We are to toss for the office of executioner, and the poor fellow's worst enemy cannot wish him a worse fate. Nevertheless, let justice take its course. He brought it upon himself. We will not even say, 'Let his name be forgotten!' because an editor's name always is forgotten.

But I am in Spain and coming down, alone, through the snow, from the Pyrenean heights of Elisonda. A vague distant booming, which somehow made me think myself for a moment in Norway, had all at once grown louder. It increased till the thunder of it seemed to shake the world. Curiously enough I never once thought of a waterfall. In Spain they are too careful of their water-power to consider the picturesque. But this morning I was for once to see a Spanish river in flood. The Segre was flinging itself down furiously from the mountain heights. What had been a mere drift of rime down on the roofs of Elisonda had evidently fallen on Peñalara in a solid 'onding-o'-snaw.' And now, the sun coming out, behold the Segre roaring in spate! I had the camera in action, literally, in a couple of shakes, amid the boom and the gusting spray. The great white agony of distressed water rose up in mist to the skies, tinged with the glories of many rainbows, which, alas! the best camera of today does not yet enable us to seize.

A bridge crossed the torrent near the spot, and it was all I could do to keep the Zeiss lens clear of the drifting spray, long enough to secure a picture. A little hunchback man with a quick inquisitive eye came up and watched my movements. He appeared from nowhere in particular, and, had it been in the twilight, he might, to the superstitious eye, have passed for a brownie or the Black Dwarf himself. His skin, too, was yellow and parchmenty, and his hair matted. His arms hung below his knees, and his hands denoted great strength, being both knotted and bony, with square joints, as if they had somehow been fitted with more than their proper complement of bones.

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But for all that he was a good little man and wise withal. At first I could make little of what he said. But as soon as he knew that I understood some Spanish and a good deal of Provençal, he stopped trying to talk French, and became intelligible.

He was, he said, the guard of all the forests at the back there. They were of pine, and yearly becoming more valuable. They belonged to a certain Señor Valtierra. But there were many evil people about, and some who thought nothing of cutting a branch or even snipping off the top of a young tree in the bygoing, leaving it for a fortnight - and then, forsooth, asking him, Miguel, to give it to them for fuel to boil their pot! But he was equal to them. They could not deceive him.

Would I come and see his house? Ah, would I not? Was there anything I would like better? It was nothing much of a house, he exclaimed, apologetically. But - such as it was, the Señor was welcome to all that it contained. And as for wood and wine and soup and bread - well, these were, after all, the food of every man - all that he needed for his life.

Miguel Toro, that was his name. He had had a sister Cyrilla, he said, but she was dead. Since then he had been a 'bachelor.' Married? No, who would have him with That upon his shoulders? Then, he added this with an odd half-beseeching glance, 'They call me 'The Devil who lives among the Stones!'' It was indeed a terrifying name, but for all that there was a certain sweetness, almost childlike, in the little creature's face. And I tried my best to remember words not out of Ollendorff to express my sympathy.

The abode of the 'Devil among the Stones' was just on the edge of the young pine forest - indeed, it was set among a perfect wilderness of fallen rocks, boulders, and jutting tables of stone. I think it was the strangest spot to be chosen for the abiding-place of man that I have ever seen - the rocky wilderness all about in front, the young

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pinces immediately behind, and the older growths of thirty or forty years tossing their solid green tops beneath us far down in the valley.

The house itself might have been built by the first man who ever trod the peninsula. If, like Pompeii, it had happened to be overwhelmed and dug up again, tourists would have come to see it from all over the world. It was compacted of smallish stones, gathered from the surrounding country, and appeared to be roughly unified by a kind of cement made of shell lime - which, however, was a thing wholly impossible, thus far from the sea. To the front there were two glassless windows, while three or four steps of broad granite conducted to a roof, low and flat, of which the rough-hewn Cyclopean flags no more suggested that men dwelt beneath them than the boulders of the mountain-side itself. A heap of stones at one end roughly covered with scraps of tarpaulin showed where this roofing had given way, while two very modern chimneys with peaked wind-breaks of red earthen tiles, evidently baked within the last year or two, looked about as incongruous as a gilt weathercock on a mountain top.

Inside, however, everything was of the neatest. The blasts certainly had done their liveliest in the matter of dust. But then we were high up, and if the valley wind brought in microbes, it also took them out again - and generally with extreme promptitude.

But then, after all, the storm only blows one way at a time, and there were interior wooden shutters which could always be closed on the windy side. The floor of the cabin was perfectly clean, and stools and old wine-casks made comfortable enough seats. The only curious article was a photograph of a beautiful girl in a cheap gilt frame, such as are usually sold by travelling Teutons.

'I can make myself a bed in the corner, and you shall have mine,' said the hunchback, 'if you will do me the honour to remain, and see my pines!'

But this favour I declined, on the double plea that the bed was too short and I too long. Adding also that in

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case of need I understood the art of confectioning a shake-down in the corner as well as any man. 'The Devil among the Stones' looked at me, as if taking in my avowal.

'You are, then, a poor man?' he inquired.

'So poor,' I answered promptly, 'that I shall scarce be able to repay you for your hospitality!'

He laughed, well-pleased in a moment, a kind of relief coming over his face.

'Ah,' he said, 'then I am glad. Most here are afraid of Miguel Toro, though he is as respectable a man as any. But as soon as I saw you, I knew that you were not afraid. Men who have instruments to look through, boxes that click, are not afraid of the evil eye. I remember when the railway came through Tardiente near to Huesca, where I lived then - there were many who thought that it would go through all the Ebro Valley even into France. Then it was that I first saw the men that ran about everywhere, and gazed, and drew on tables, and twisted little screws, almost as you did today! And one of them, a Frenchman, stayed long with me, and I gave him the best goats' milk. Thrice in the day I gave it him, so that ere he went he was cured of the very devil's own rheum, which had long oppressed him, before ever he came to our country.'

'But,' said I, 'if you let me stay, you must also let me pay - that is, as I can!'

'Sir,' cried the hunchback, 'all this house is yours, even as if, were I in your country, yours would be at my service!'

It was a lesson in high politeness, by which I trust that I profited. At any rate, I took off all that was left of my hat and bowed silently. There was no more to be said, at least on my side.

But the little man desired to put me completely at my ease.

'See,' he said, 'it is not as if the little you can eat and drink had to come off my poor possessions. I have, it

is true, a good wage, a proper wage - but then Señor Valtierra knows when he has a man in whom he can repose confidence, and he gives me in addition all the wine that I can drink. For I am no drunkard, as you shall see, nor encourager of drunkenness - like these Carlist rascals up there at Elsonda! I suppose your honour has heard of them. A pretty lot! - Heavens, what gulls we of the mountain provinces are! We are never happy unless we are deceiving ourselves. Which, after all, is a harmless thing in comparison with deceiving other people - though, they tell me, not nearly so profitable! And the Señor also allows me wheat and barley, as much as I like, from his barns, for the making of bread. I have an oven there at the back - all is complete within itself. And of the resin which flows from the tapping of the trees - both the dry white stuff that clings about the carré, and the golden-brown that flows down like honey into the little dishes of red clay, I get a full twelfth! Ah, there are not many masters like Señor Valtierra!

‘Nor,’ said I, making him a low bow, ‘many such faithful servants as Don Miguel Toro, the steward and caretaker of the aforesaid Señor Valtierra!’

He sprang forward and seized me by the hand. Against his will the tears welled up in his eyes. I think he had not known much kindness in his life.

‘I wish my sister Cyrilla had been here,’ he said, ‘if it were only to have heard the gentleman stranger speak thus of her poor brother - that would have given her great pleasure. But, Señor, she is dead. God took her. And it was just in time, for, indeed, this place was not fit for her!’

I could not help thinking, however, that it was possibly the lack of glass in the windows and the superfluity of draughts in the chambers that had caused the ‘disappearance’ of the late Doña Cyrilla.

But in this I was wrong. The story of the Doña Cyrilla went far deeper, and, by a strange chance, I was to find it out. The least curious of persons at home - abroad

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and among the common, unpretending, broadly-humoured folk of other lands, I become like the beasts in the Revelation, 'full of eyes behind and before.'

When it was bedtime we brought in the dry, keenly aromatic plants of the waste - bracken from the pine-wood edges, juniper, the great sterile mare's-tail fronds from among the boulders, the birch and dwarf heath from the bridge-end. And so in no long time a couch was laid out in the corner, fit for a king to rest upon.

As we shook hands that night the little hunchback said, 'Friend of mine, you have done me the honour to abide in my house. Tomorrow I will show you the secrets of the woods, and as I have also seen you look at her picture on the wall there - I will tell you the story of Cyrilla, the sister whom I have lost. That too will do me good.'

Tomorrow dawned in a great wash of lemon yellow, deepening to orange behind the pines. A lake of crimson collected in a hollow, as it were for the sun's morning bath. Flakes of pink and salmon-colour flew every way like rockets sent up to announce his coming. It was a sunrise worthy of an Order of the Golden Fleece - even in Spain. I have never forgotten it among the many thousands I have seen. For I never miss a sunrise, if I can help it - though, truth to tell, I would hardly go across the room to see a sunset. Which, of course, is a matter of temperament - and partly temper.

I had been long on the roof. In spite of the delight of my balsamic couch, I had not slept much. But then that in no way interfered with my enjoyment of the hour. For in these days I had got my sleeping down almost to the one straw which proved the limit of the ass in the matter of diet.

What really mattered was that Señor Valtierra's pines were that day to render me up their secrets. They seemed very calm about the affair, tossing their heads with a high-bred action, in the moderate wind which the

sunrise had brought with it from the east. But the pines, those noble heedless fellows down there, were fated to become infinitely more personal to me than I had ever anticipated.

Now if I had been writing a novel, I never would have dared to put in that which follows. A novel is life with the connections put in. Or contrariwise, life is a novel with the connections left out.

In a novel you must explain and explain, leading up to how Jane came to know Julius - how the black-hearted murderer Morpher, thinking to rob a church, opens the door and finds himself face to face with his own long-lost daughter, who is the caretaker. Such things must be explained - in a novel.

But everyone knows that in real life it is not so. The actual connections are never those which you think of. You review an unknown man's book in an obscure periodical, and his daughter becomes your wife through all time. In a house where you never were before, and where you are never likely to be again, you notice a girl sitting in a corner. She lifts her eyes - and for the two of you, death itself doth not divide. You knock up against a man in the street. He is extremely uncivil. He has been in the gutter and you threaten to call the police. He ceases his abuse and is in the act of begging a sixpence, when - lo! before you stands the college comrade who 'roomed' with you through half-a-dozen years, who shared a crust off the same loaf, slept in the same bed, and, when you parted, swore an eternal friendship. You had never heard of him since! That is life - there are no connections. You go on from street to street, and at every corner something happens to you. Can you say what or who is waiting for you just round the next?

The big droning city, the clattering street, the shrill station, flavoured with its floating drifts of steam, the hurly-burly of mounting and dismounting from railway carriages - these are the true connectives of life. But they will not do for the novelist - at least not for him who

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would conquer and keep the confidence of his readers. In a story a thing must not only have happened, but the writer must make it appear that it could not possibly have happened otherwise!

Now our criminal cases are but indifferently reported compared with those of France. Yet take such a consecution of events as was laid bare in the comparatively recent Monson-Ardlamont case, or in that of Madeleine Smith in the later fifties. How bewilderingly impossibility follows on impossibility! They tread on each other's heels - so fast they come. Nothing, say the critics, says the average novel reader - could possibly have happened so.

Today the great paper in which to find criminal reports in France - and a most fair, sane, all-round journal - is *Le Petit Parisien*. Now I venture to say that of the twenty or thirty cases reported there every week, scarcely one runs on 'natural' lines. Hardly one which would be credited if transported wholesale into the pages of a novel. Some are too monstrous - all are too crude. It is the *reductio ad absurdum* of realism. This one and that are unbelievable, because the victim's mother - his wife - his eldest son could not possibly have acted so. But the strange thing is that they did. The detective and his quarry voyaged together to Le Havre, neither suspecting the other's identity. But, as the local officers had been warned by telegraph and were on the alert, it was (of course) the detective who was arrested! The criminal got clean away. This is not the plot for a comic opera. It is only a fact. But it would not do for fiction, save perhaps as an extravaganza in *Punch*, charmingly written by Mr. Anstey, with illustrations by Bernard Partridge or Gordon Browne.

I had sat on the roof waiting for the little hunchback to awake. He had been sleeping in another room, somewhere to the back, from the window of which he could see far up into the alleys of the pines, as they

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climbed the hill-slopes and spread themselves out scatteringly across the plain. Long straight avenues were driven clean through their serried ranks - left probably in the planting. And any evil-doer had a bad time of it, if the sharp eyes of Miguel, the caretaker of Señor Valtierra's woods, lighted on him, as they often did from his window-sill.

For me, I sat and waited in innocence, smoked also, and listened for the first stirrings of my host underneath. But I listened in vain - and that for a sufficient reason. He had been up and away, in order that he might make his necessary rounds, long before I was awake.

A good résinier must, in the season, visit three or four hundred trees a day - tapping, cutting, emptying, scraping, closing up old wounds. And Miguel Toro knew that, with his short legs, it would be impossible for him to do justice to his master's work, and also afterwards explain the processes to me, as he had promised to do. Besides, there was the story of Cyrilla.

So, before the earliest grey light of dawn he had stolen out, moving like a shadow. He had passed my couch, yet I had not awaked - though the beetle tapping with his head on the beam to summon his sweetheart, or a bird twittering on the roof, will usually call me from the deepest slumber. Yet Miguel Toro I had not heard.

On his shoulder he had taken his ladder, his pitay - the easily-carried, single-framed ladder, with rounds projecting at either side, which the forest-guard carries with him in these northern piñadas.

An hour went past - two hours - three, and the little man did not return. To my northern stomach it seemed that it was time for a meal. I descended, entering by the door, and there on the table, plainly laid out for me, I found a loaf of bread, some goats'-milk cheese, and a flagon of wine. I had passed them before in the dark, intent only on the waking glory of the sunrise without, which, as it were, was ringing an alarm bell through the open window spaces.

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It was all very pleasant and thoughtful of the little man, and I partook heartily. But what of my host? It was surely time that he should have returned. I took a photograph or two here and there, and then, mounting again upon the roof, looked out every way for Miguel Toro. But the sun, now driving upwards from the mountains above, soon made it too hot for me up there, and I retreated into the cabin. Now I found out why the flagstones had been quarried so thick, and the windows left glassless and unframed. But taught by experience I closed the rough interior shutters on the sunny side, and the stone cavern, for it was little more, became at once the coolest place for miles. I made a raid on the water-pitcher, which, of grey porous pottery, stood in an unlighted cellar with a wet cloth about it. If in any land there is anything cooler than Spanish water thus kept, I envy that country the beverage and its people the drinking of it. Afterwards I found that the cottage had been placed where it was, out of the forest, for the double reason that a spring lay close beside it, under a great flat boulder, and also that, owing to some peculiarity of the soil or the absence of stagnant water, the mosquitoes, all too plentiful in summer, confined themselves mostly to the lower forest glades.

My little hunchback had turned the gilded picture-frame with its face to the wall, an action which (I found afterwards) he performed carefully every night - probably in fulfilment of some superstitious vow of his own. I returned it, and looked long at the photograph. It represented a dark-haired girl, with a full passionate mouth and great, wide-open, somewhat bold eyes. From the kind of paper upon which the photograph was printed I could tell that it must have been taken about ten years ago. That particular kind of Printing-Out Paper with the imitation enamel glaze upon the surface, had been put upon the French and English markets about that time. The photograph itself had been taken at Toulouse. Doubtless a woman would have drawn much the same

conclusion from the dress of the subject. But as only the girl's head and shoulders were included (loathsomely vignette, with marks of the adherent cotton wool) that might have been a more difficult investigation. But, at any rate, I was quite sure about the Printing-Out Paper.

Yet all the while, no word of my host. I looked out of the door repeatedly, but there was no sign of him. Once again I mounted to the hot roof. The pine alleys were bare and greyish-white. The sun, as it rose higher, had licked up bit by bit the blue shadows. But there was still coolness in the pathless aisles of the wood. I would go and look for him. I would shout. Perhaps - I hoped not - some ill had befallen the poor little man.

I remembered suddenly that he had spoken of evildoers who had threatened his trees - his precious earthenware resin-cups. I was sure he would make a fight for them. He was going to a far back part of the wood, so he had told me. It came upon me quite suddenly that he might have fallen into hands unfriendly. So, for the first time in Spain, I took out my revolver, oiled, cleaned, recharged it, and, slipping it loosely back into the pocket of my jacket, I stepped over the boulder which kept the well-water cool, and strode off into the green quiet of the piñadas.

The restless tits cheeped and whistled aloft, sending down little crackling messages, as is their wont. A large green snake, harmless enough, rustled away. Crickets sang loud among the fallen pine needles. A frog croaked in a hollow crotch of a tree, in which probably there was some rain water. But these noises did not detract from the silence, and when I shouted it sounded like insulting the solemn reposefulness of a cathedral.

'Toro - Señor Toro!'

As ever, the Spanish vocables carried far. But, near or far, only the echoes came back to me. I shouted again. Still the same uncanny silence! I wished that I had had 'General Prim' with me then, though I had not the ghost of a bone to give him, nor so much as a snack at a

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number of the Correspondancia. Still, for old sake's sake - who knows, he might have helped me.

Then I tried all the old detective dodges I had read about - from those of Monsieur Ducocq to the more modern methods of Mr. Sherlock Holmes. But perhaps I had begun too late in life. At any rate, I made no headway. Either the ground was too dry, or on this occasion I lacked the eyes behind and before. Certainly I had not the key to the situation. All I found out for my pains was that piñadas are inhabited by a peculiar long-bodied, brown-black ant, unchristian of temper and carnivorous in its habits. I found this out by having a field-force of these animals crawl up my trousers. So I had to strip on the spot and pick off each ant in detail, tearing him (probably it) limb from limb, and, after all, leaving the head sticking. These are not good table-manners, I know, but let the precisian who objects write and tell me (no, the publisher!) what he would have done in like circumstances.

Besides, after all, there were only the tits to observe me, and they did not look particularly interested - though one did come and sit with his head to the side, while I turned my trousers inside out, hanging them over a branch for the purpose of making a more critical inspection. A smallish Pyrenean bear came sniffing past, but, evidently not liking the look of the top-heavy grey thing perched on the two white poles (and besides being a strict vegetarian by habit), he went on grumbling down the slope. The natives hereabout say the bears are fond of ants after they have eaten honey - possibly as a sort of relish - so this gentleman may have taken me for a bear and a brother. For at that moment my quarry was the big brown ant. But in reality I was no competitor. Señor Bruin can have all the ants - black, white, red, and brown - that he wants for me.

All the same, I tied a string tight about each ankle to discourage any more insect tribes from attempting to establish a right-of-way. Then I plunged deeper into the

forest. In spite of the bird noises there is a peculiar stillness about a pine wood. The leaves do not rustle and shiver, yet the shade is deep. The coolness is like a bath. A pine-wood is my earliest conscious memory. I think I should die easier in one, especially if there were an outlook from it giving upon the heather. Furthermore, one can dream such noble day-dreams there - almost as good as those which come to you in church in sermon time.

Deeper and deeper I penetrated into the obscurity, but still no sign of the little résinier. The fear that something had happened redoubled within me. Through the silence I sent my voice - going forward rapidly as I did so. From the shortness of the echo I knew that I was nearing the outer edge of the wood, where it ceased abruptly on the hill-side. Presently I could see the talus of rough avalanche stones, and beyond the great uplift of the mountain bastion, to which not even a pine would cling.

Then all at once, so close that I almost fell over it, I saw before me, in the middle of the path, the body of the little hunchback. His ladder had slipped sideways from the trunk of a great tree, and he had fallen - not very far truly. But in falling he had struck his head against a stone, and so lay silent and unconscious. Hastily I knelt by him, with a hand thrust underneath his blouse upon his heart. He was alive - only stunned. There was a considerable gash on his temple. His hapshot lay by his side, and also the pot in which was the clear honey-like goma resina he had been collecting.

Dipping my finger in the pot I smeared the wound freely to stop the bleeding - which it did at once. Then I took the little man on my back. He felt no heavier than my half-plate camera does after a league or two - such a rickle of bones was he.

I do not remember much about that homeward journey. My heart drummed in my ears and the sweat poured down. Also I had many thoughts. I was alone in a strange land. I had found a man wounded, perhaps unto

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death. There might be vengeance. There would certainly be law. In the meantime there must be humanity. So I carried the little man home, as one carries a child. I had wandered, as it seemed, idly among the columns of the trees, when I went out to search for him. Now I seemed not to waste a step. I knew the way as if I had been born among the pines. Not once did I swerve from the direct line to the stone hut. Thus I brought home poor Miguel of the Evil Eye, the 'Devil among the Rocks,' all my heart mourning over him.

It was the last two hundred yards in the full sun-glare that took it out of me. And, I am not ashamed to tell it, it was I who took the first draught of water from the big water jar. Necessarily so, otherwise Miguel Toro might have waited long enough for his. But the sudden coolness of the hut striking me within and without, brought me to myself. My ears stopped singing. I dipped my handkerchief in the overflow and wrung it out on his head. Then I poured a little wine and water slowly down his throat.

Upon which he looked about him with that unsurprised vagueness and content which is characteristic of those who have been long unconscious.

'Who are you?' he asked, gazing fixedly at me.

I told him what had happened so far as I could. He strove to rise.

'I must go for my hatchet and the ladder,' he exclaimed, 'there are many bad people about! And they are the property of Señor Valtierra.'

I told him that I would go myself for them, as soon as it was safe to leave him. He touched his head, which by this time I had bandaged securely.

'I must have hurt myself in falling from the pitay,' he said. 'Cyrilla always prophesied it before she went away. But a ladder with double sides is too heavy for me to carry!'

I had happily all manner of dressings in my little case, and also some simple medicaments with me. It was

therefore possible for me to dress the little man's head properly. It was doubtless a bad scalp wound - still, cleansed and dressed, there was no reason why it should be dangerous. But his heart was beating far too fast. I think there must have been something the matter there - too close packing, or, owing to his hunchback, the organs in some fashion thrust out of their places. I had some pellets of phenacetin with me - Burroughs and Wellcome's. So, rightly or wrongly, I took it upon me to exhibit four of these at intervals of a quarter of an hour. After the second dose the dryness went from his skin. With the third his heart fell to a regular gait. He began to breathe regularly, and presently he went quietly to sleep. I believe that I might have killed him by this treatment. Doctors have told me so since, and also that my homicide would not, like theirs, have been 'covered by prescriptions.' But I was in for so many risks already that one more did not seem to matter much. At any rate 'the proof of the puddin' was in the preenin' o't' in this case, and my amateur doctoring worked as well as if it had been sanctioned by several Royal Colleges of Physicians. While the little man was asleep I went back into the forest for his ladder and tools so that I might bring ease to his mind. They were by his bedside when he awoke, and, I think, did him as much good as the medicine itself.

After the accident began one of these times, scarce pleasant in themselves - that is, from the hotel-bedroom and afternoon-tea standpoint of comfort - which yet dwell with a curious insistence in the memory. The forest-guard was so seriously wounded that it would be some time before he could take up his duties again. In addition to the cut on his head he had twisted his ankle, so that he could not set it to the ground without severe pain. Doctor there was none nearer than El Seo. Any hospital was as far off as Zaragoza.

And besides, asked the forest-guard pertinently, what in the meantime was to come of his dearly-beloved,

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well-considered pines, the pride of his life? Could they be left to the 'evil people' of whom he spoke so often? Well, I bethought me, what if I myself should become locum tenens? I had my writing materials and plenty of ideas - such at least as they were. It might be an excellent thing for me to settle down in the hut and thus gain a certain new experience of life. So this is what I did. No one looked near us from morning till night. Once only I walked down to a town, eight leagues away to the south, where there was a branch of a bank, whence I returned with my correspondence, a packet of criss-cross foreign writing paper and some violet ink, sticky as gum.

But I was wholly without instruction as to the method of collecting resin, and the hunchback Miguel had to teach me from the alphabet upward - all lying on his back. I did not even know how to make the necessary incisions in the bark. But I brought in a fresh branch, hewn for the purpose, and with four neat strokes of his hapshot Toro showed me how to cut the requisite depth into the bark, how to arrange the wound so that the thicker white resin should collect about the cicatrice depositing layer on layer, and how also to make the little vertical trench for the clear-running gemma.

Seldom have I done pleasanter work. Never perhaps have I lived so close to the original life-story of man. On his part the hunchback had a curious consuming reverence for my work of writing. He would lie long hours as I scribbled on my knee by the window, smiling and watching. I wish that all critics had the same reverence for literature - or at least for mine. When I was out about the trees, or busied in the cellar with my photography, he would ask that the loose leaves of my book should be left on the little wooden table beside his bed for him to look after. They were a comfort, he said, and as he could not read a word there was no invidious personality in the compliment.

When I changed my plates or developed he loved to watch every movement. So I did the deed beside him,

generally at midnight, with all the windows closed and the wooden shutters stuffed about with rags. But the hunchback, thinking that his eyes were beholding the marvels of science, never made the least complaint, though long before I had finished you could have cut the atmosphere with a hapshot. And he never tired of my showing him the same little pocket collection of children's photographs, which the Bishop had loved so much. He would beg for them to be laid beside him when I went out into the wood. And he would turn them over with one finger, tenderly - lying and looking a long time at each, sometimes an hour at a time, so that his eyes had grown misty and wistful by the time I came back.

But the woods - ah, the woods! High on the hillside in the early morn I scrambled up and up till I got to the limit of the domains of Señor Valtierra, which were also mine for the time being. I grew rich in this perfection of solitude and took as much pleasure in doing a good 'round' all by myself as if I had been Miguel Toro himself! I knew that when I came in the forest-keeper's first act would be to examine the leather-bound packet of barras, or ingots of crude white resin, which I slipped off my shoulder, as well as the strained honey from the dripping earthen pitchers, the goma or, in patois, gemma. And when Miguel praised me, which was not always, I knew I had done well. And I was happy, almost as when the One-a-man-loves praises what he has written, which I take to be the truest pleasure of literature - far above publishers' accounts.

But because it is a new thing, I must tell the story of one of my Pyrenean mornings - so little like the scramble of cities, or the numbing routine of our northern life, with its meals at regular hours, its responsibilities, its interruptions, even its pleasures. For a while, then, I would live as the first man lived when he came down out of the branches. Indeed, as it was, I had much to do with the branches and the tree-things, with the sweet clean scents of the woodlands - at least of those pine

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plantations which had been of set purpose leaned up edgeways against the mountain sides. I learned how easily injured the young trees are by the downward silt of the slaty débris, the harassment of torrents bursting from above, the bombardment out of the thunderclouds, the steady pressure of the congealed snow which breaks the branches. I had time to let all this knowledge soak in - and, oh! how much desire!

The morning usually showed grey before I set the ashes of the last night's fire alight, piling some dry pinecones upon them to make my coffee. The little hunchback lay watching me, a kind of grave amusement mingled with his gratitude. For one who could write with a fountain-pen, and manipulate screws, and make photographs as he had seen me do, I was strangely awkward at such simple things as cooking ham and frying eggs. When I burned my fingers, he laughed. When the charcoal fell out and I stamped - he laughed again. Often and often I did these things on purpose, for the pure delight of hearing him laugh. It did him good like medicine, to see me so stupid, and after a while he would take it upon him to scold me and say that if Cyrilla had been there, she could have showed me the way. Never was such a clever girl as Cyrilla. Never one so attractive! Men - rich men even, came seeking her in marriage from far away. But - I knew what women were. How they would take no advice! Well, no more would Cyrilla - not even from her brother. And so - and so!

But the story - ah, that was a long business. He would tell it me another day. In the meantime, if I had finished the breakfast, would I put the basin and towel where he could wash up the dishes - and, if I could spare them, the bundle of children's photographs beside him?

There was a little cane-built hut, just on the verge of the woods, where there were some of Señor Valtierra's tools and implements left from the last wood-cutting. For at thinning time many pit-props and telegraph poles went

down the Segre and so on to the railway. Aye, he told Miguel Toro that some of them even went as far as England. But Miguel could not understand how that could be, because he knew it for a fact (the screw-turning railroad surveyor had told him) that the Segre did not flow through England. Nor did any of the railways of the Peninsula run thither, owing to the changing of the gauge at the frontiers. Ah, what a fine idea! That was done to prevent - and here Miguel Toro became excessively military. Or at least would have done, if I had not wrapped him about in a blanket, and carried him like a child out into the little cane-shed on the forest edges. I laid him there on the side which looked towards the woods but was sheltered from the sun. From his couch he could see his beloved pine trees, and I set about him the pictures that his soul craved, a loaf of bread and a rough sweating pitcher of wine and water. I would be back before the heat of the day, I promised him. He nodded - eager, as I knew well, to be at the pictures. I picked up my ladder, a longer and heavier one than that used by Miguel, my hapshot or long-handled chopper, my leathern bag for harras and my sticky collecting pot.

By this time the sun had risen high, and the edges of the woods began to dry up. Only in the deepest recesses did the dew on the undergrowth of toadstools and giant mares'-tails wet the stockingless uppers of my feet where they emerged from my alpargatas.

After the first plunge into the silence I had time to look about me. Here was a tree to be tapped anew. Miguel's old scars were upon it. To be successful I must go lower or higher - to this side or that. Here, however, was a virgin yet intact. But the time was at hand - first a notch about which to sling the earthen pot, then four cuts shrewdly administered on the shady side, and a deft runnel beneath for the oozing yellow honey. Then down the ladder I skipped, whence I looked at my work from below with satisfaction. Whether Miguel, upon his recovery, would share that satisfaction, I knew not - but

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certainly I did the best I could.

For an hour or two after this there was little repose for me. From this tree to that, I passed - scraping, arranging, healing up, renewing the wound on the side where it had been clogged by the barras. Let it be set down that on the whole I was a good locum tenens. For, if I did not gather in many new patients, I at least preserved those committed to me in good and paying disrepair.

Of course, after a while, not being to the manner born, my energies, such as they were, began to flag. The bag was full and heavy, the pot nearly so, and my hands of necessity extremely sticky. A rest was absolutely requisite. The good workman is worthy of his siesta. The bad one takes it whether or no. Good or bad, therefore, I stretched me down on my back, and in the forenoon silence let my mind loose to explore. This was to me the hour of hours.

The sun might be in full blaze outside but here one heard only the weet-weet of the tits, and, far off, the half-smothered drumming of the torrent which hurled itself down the slope just outside the domains of Señor Valtierra.

Gradually, however, as the hours passed, hunger overcame the noblest thoughts, and, in very truth reluctantly, I made my way homewards. Once I found Miguel Toro half-fascinated, half-alarmed, leaning up on his bed, his swathed head looking ghastly enough in the dim green scatter of the light through the caña-thatch.

He held a photograph in his hand - one developed and printed at El Seo - as rude and crude as the absence of apparatus and the scarcity of washing water could make it. But I had mounted it on brown paper with a protective flap, and it looked none so ill.

'It is strange - strange!' he said, his voice suppressed. 'Who is this?'

'That,' said I, 'is a little Spanish girl belonging to a great Carlist family of the Sierra Moncayo. At present she is being educated in France.'

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‘Still it is strange,’ he said, ‘indeed more strange than ever. She is very like Cyrilla - my sister - Cyrilla - who went away, she whose picture you turned to look at, and - forgot to put back again with its face to the wall!’

And after this followed, what I had so long desired to hear, the story of Cyrilla, the sister of Miguel the Hunchback.

CHAPTER TEN

CYRILLA

This is the story which the little hunchback told me, lying on his couch of heath and juniper, under the shady eaves of the cane-roofed hut, whence his eyes could take in the green haze of woods, with, beyond them, the grey and purple hillside quivering through the heat of noon.

My father (said the hunchback), who was a cultivator near Ripoll, just where you trench the hills to descend into the valley - they have made a road that way now - died when I was but a boy of fourteen, and, with very little money, left me one treasure to look after - this little Cyrilla, my sister.

Yes, a strange name, and an uncommon - but beautiful and suitable for her. She, too, was of a loveliness - yes, and winning, even knowledgably winning too, all the days of her. Ah, no, Señor - you do not understand, she and I had no companions then, girl or boy. I was but a child when my father died. And - I had this between my shoulders. True, they did not call me then 'The Devil among the Stones.' But they called me - other things which hurt even more. But though no other girl would look at me, she loved me, this little Cyrilla, and was nowise afraid of me or of my ugly looks.

And one day the great Señor Valtierra saw her, when she and I were out at the goat-herding on the scanty pastures my father had left me. And as she ran this way and that, chasing a butterfly and screaming for the joy of being alive, Señor Valtierra turned to look after the child. He was on horseback and he looked long, as a man of forty may look at a little maid of six or seven - thoughtfully, pondering on the things which ten years might bring her.

'Ah, and in all that came after, I had no fault to find

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with Señor José Lopez Valtierra. He was (and is) a very king among men, and that which he did, he did for the best and the wisest.

‘And – ‘At any rate, Miguel Toro,’ he said, ‘your father being dead - how do you expect to educate a girl like that?’

You understand, Señor, he has the short abrupt Catalan manner of speech, even when he talks Castellano. It is natural to him, and also, in a way, he prides himself upon it.

‘That,’ I answered, abashed, ‘is as God wills. He it is who opens up the way for us poor folks. But, if I can keep goats and make cheese to some purpose, I may surely hope to feed and clothe this my sister!’

‘He pondered, the Señor, watching her from his saddle, while she tried to make a riding-horse of Ramon, our great wolf-hound. Then he rubbed his grizzled cheek. ‘I am of full age,’ he said, ‘and have the name of being rich. As a man you know me, Miguel! Or at least your father did. Give me your sister that she may be educated along with Juana, my daughter. She is pale and - perhaps, who knows, this wild goat of the hills may lend her some part of her life. Never have I seen a child in whom the blood runs so fast. Come hither, little one!’

‘So, giving up the chase after her butterfly and her teasing of Ramon, Cyrilla came - but even then none too willingly. And I think that, smiling behind his big beard, Don José Lopez thought none the worse of her for that. Aye, even when she was but a little child, there was no one like my Cyrilla to draw the eyes of men. They pondered upon her. They watched her - good men too, wondering, as did the Señor Valtierra, as to where she would arrive. Yet here am I, at whom no woman would look - and, lo! I am safe and sound, with the pulses beating in my wrists like the ticking of a clock, while she - is not!’

‘All the same it was some time before I could make up my mind to let her go from me. For what was I - alone

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there on my father's hillside, ploughing a few hard-featured acres with pain and toil? If it had not been for Cyrilla, would I have had the courage to go on? Had I anything to go on for?

'At last, however, I made up my mind to let her go with Juana Valtierra - after all it was only to a school in Tarragona - with the Good Sisters to teach these two. But when she came back the first time, telling us that she, too, was going to be a nun and that she had already chosen her name - Sister Encarnacion it was - I declare I laughed aloud. For, you see, she had grown beautiful. Señor, the red blood kept coming and going as she spoke, in her cheeks, and when she pouted her lips (which she did often) they were red as the blossom of wild poppy out on the campo yonder! And once I caught the little witch biting them to make them redder. But that was when Señor Valtierra was expected to ride by. So in that case there was some excuse.

Thus things went on. The days ran like a flowing river and the years were added up like a sum given out in a school - of the which Cyrilla told me, for I was never in such places myself.

Then one day as I came down from the mountain with my flock, lo! at the door, gloved and veiled, with a dress the like of which I had never seen, stood a lady - a young, a very young lady. But, Señor, when I tell you that she might have been the princess - the king's own daughter - I tell you no lie - save in this, that I very handsomely flatter any Bourbon who ever lived. For I have seen their women-kind, and, compared with my Cyrilla, they are all as the commonest of kitchen-wenches.

Nevertheless Cyrilla it was. And she laughed with glee at me standing stupidly there on the pasture edge, and especially at my taking her for a young Señorita! Then she pulled off her gloves and put away her hat in one of her mother's presses, on the top of the old linen that smelled of lavender. Afterwards she rolled up her

sleeves, caught her new pretty skirts about her with a nurse's pin, and so fell to the sweeping. Hardly had she done this when in came - who but young Adan Blasco. Fate it was - yes, hard fate for him. For had he trodden on a poison-snake he could not have gotten a greater misfortune. Because if Cyrilla looked beautiful before, in her veil and pretence of city ways, she looked ten times more so now - especially when, having flown to explore the contents of the larder, she rolled up her sleeves yet further and set herself, like her father's own daughter, to the bread-making.

'And ever as she worked she glanced up at Adan. Ah, I am not blind, even I - the Devil among the Stones - can see as well as another. For I have the heart in me to sympathise - mayhap too much, with the doings of young folk. All the more, perhaps, that it has not come to me - no, nor ever will!

'She glanced up once and then again at Adan, that wicked Cyrilla. Well enough I saw her. And I could have told her that there was not the least need to make hay of the heart of poor young Adan Blasco, who was a shepherd, and (at that time) had a heart as soft as that of the tenderest, prettiest lamb in his flock. But for all and all, she would not let him go. Then she would come over to me, putting her arms (all floury they were, but of the mould of a goddess) about my neck, and rubbing her soft cheek against mine, complaining all the while of the bristles! Oh, if I could tell but half of the ways that she had learned at Tarragona, to tease and tantalise that poor young man, I should not be believed - even by you. But perhaps it might be a warning to some!

'Yet it seems strange to me that, when, the next day, there came her friend Juana Valtierra, that was a Señorita in deed and in truth (because her father was a great proprietor), lo! she had none of these ways at all. Indeed, she was pale and sapless as a willow six weeks cut and laid in the sun, and her lips - why, they looked as if they had never been kissed once in all her life.

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'Well, the two girls went about our poor little place and laughed and whispered, and seemed greatly pleased with each other. But it was Cyrilla that whispered the most and Juana who giggled. Then nothing would do the pair but I must send over word to Señor Valtierra, that his daughter would stay all the night at our house, sleeping in one bed with Cyrilla. Because their talk was not half done, they said. How could they separate? Yet was I quite sure that so soon as he heard the thing, Don Jose would mount and bring back his daughter in anger - perhaps forbidding my minx Cyrilla ever again to enter his doors.

'Howsomever, the girls being decided - it ended, of course (as you, who understand women, know) in my giving way. You may resist one woman - but two women, when they have made up their minds - and set themselves separately to the coaxing, are as death and destruction!

'So, because I was under great obligations to the Señor Don José Lopez Valtierra, I resolved to go over on my plough-horse and tell him everything myself. I could ride a horse then, Señor. You would scarce believe it, to look at me now. But, indeed, I rode none that ill.

'So I set out, pursued even to the edge of the great road by the messages, sweet and submissive on the part of Juana, impertinent and irreverent on that of Cyrilla, which they gave me to convey to Don José!

'But, of course, I did not mean to repeat these. Ill would it have become me! Well, I found the Señor Valtierra among his grapes, watching his people driving them in chariots to the vintage houses, and passing them through the presses till the vintagers were dyed purple from head to foot. And all the time there was laughing and great merriment.

'But when I told Señor Valtierra that his daughter would remain for the night at our poor house, promising that I would guard her well, and bring her back the next day, instead of being angered he laughed aloud.

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‘Guard her safe!’ he cried, clapping his hand repeatedly on his thigh. ‘I’ll wager she is safe, if that sister of yours - the Señorita Cyrilla, I mean - has her under her care. God forbid that I should be the man to bring into those eyes of hers the black anger-flash. They would be more deadly than any knife of Albacete! Indeed, such a man might chance to get the knife in him too. I tell you she is any man’s full handling - that maid of yours!’ Then he added, ‘What may you be going to do with her afterwards, Señor Toro?’

‘For he is ever polite and of good manners to high and low alike, our noble Don José.

‘So I answered him truly that I had not yet decided. At which he laughed again.

‘My friend,’ he said, ‘I would be in no hurry to decide, if I were you! Why, that Señorita Cyrilla can set up my monkey Juana against her own father. And between them they get what they want. I would not give one poor brown Perro Chico (half-penny) for your chances of managing her - who are only a brother at the best!’

‘She affirms that she is going to be a nun,’ said I. ‘She has even chosen her name - ’

‘What is it?’ said he, with a twinkle in his eye.

‘Sister Encarnacion,’ I answered him simply; for I did not approve of even Don José, my good master, laughing at my sister, my father’s daughter,

‘But I think he saw my feeling, and checked himself - though doubtless on the borders of a great shout of laughter.

‘I know,’ he said, soberly enough, ‘my monkey told me a week ago that she was going to be a nun too! And her name is - what think you - Sister Candida!’

‘But he laughed at that heartily enough, the girl being his own daughter.

‘Candida, indeed, and Sister of Innocence - that is very well,’ he continued. ‘I hope I am a good enough Christian. But the priests are not going to get the money I have worked for, through my daughter - except, that is,

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enough to pay for some few masses on behalf of my poor soul. No, no - Juana is a good girl. She shall marry Arturo Bringó when the time comes. And then, before I am too old to take pleasure in it, I shall hold my grandchildren upon my knee. For, after all, child-bearing and child-rearing are the best of all sisterdoms of mercy and good works - at least, when there is but one girl in a home - as in yours and mine.'

'And, if you will believe it, the very next morning, Don José Lopez Valtierra rode over himself to bring back his daughter, a herdsman with a saddled mule following behind him. Also he was more carefully dressed than usual. And it was a great honour to us - in vintage time and all!

'Not that Cyrilla was grateful! Not a whit. Nay, as soon as he came in sight, she came hastily over to me and said, 'Remember that you are not to kiss his hand!'

'For that was the custom which our mother had brought with her from Sardinia. And then I rebuked Cyrilla, telling her that she was no more than the sister of one poor man, the daughter of another - and him dead!

'Well,' she said, 'if you go kissing Señor Valtierra's hand just because he chooses to come gallanting over here on his big horse - I declare I will throw a lump of mud at him from behind the cow-sheds! Now, remember, Miguel, I shall keep my word, and I am a good shot!'

'Aye, and she would have done the thing too. For she was never one of the submissive sort. But rather took men with daring and that defiance which provokes. Such, in the good days as in the bad, was Cyrilla, my sister.

'Yet when Don José Lopez came into the yard of our little farm, what did this madcap Cyrilla do but pretend to kneel and kiss his hand mockingly! And the great, big, full-aged man, mounted on a horse that looked as noble as himself, blushed and would have whipped his fingers behind him, like a child taken in a fault. Whereat Cyrilla laughed like bells in a peal. The very syllables of her

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name as she pronounced them (mocking me, when I cried out shame upon her), seemed to sound a carillon of scorn.

“Cyrilla! Cyrilla!! Cyrilla!!!” she mimicked, picking up her skirt a little and dancing out at me provokingly, as in the balanced cadences of Andalusia. Where the witch had learned such things I do not know. But at any rate, she played them off rarely upon my master, and I think partly - for she was of those who spared nobody, even for the benefit of me, her brother. She wished, I think, to show me how far she had grown beyond my control. But, indeed, I never made any mistake as to that. I knew it from that first time when she rolled up her sleeves over the baking dish, all to make a fool of poor Adan Blasco, with his burring speech, and the great hands that could have slain a man, but which you could see trembling when he picked up Cyrilla’s glove from the ground!

That was the beginning, so far at least as our poor little house - that had been sufficient for my father and for my mother - was concerned. But it was not the end.

‘Such a vintaging and such an after-vintage time as we had that year with Cyrilla at home, have I never seen. Aye, and it was gladsome also. I think I was never so happy. Though, being as it were, Cyrilla’s brother and her mother and all, I was anxious too. But yet, the very danger was sweet - for me that could never know it, to see them all bowing down before Cyrilla, and admiring her ways, and worshipping her beauty.

‘For the time being, I think I never felt the weight of - This - the Burden that God has bound between my shoulders. But I always knew that it could not last. It was too good to last - too sweet a lot for - [here he laughed painfully] for ‘The Devil among the Stones!’

That was the season when Cyrilla bloomed suddenly like the opening of a scarlet pomegranate flower. And when, at last, having been schooled with Don José’s Juana, she returned finally again to the mountains, the like of her had never been seen - no, nor ever will be

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again. And she knew it - ah, if she had not known it! But indeed she knew it well.

For one thing, there was poor Adan Blasco always at hand to try her tricks upon. When the days were fine she would go and sit by the wayside with a book, or making believe to knit. I have watched her often from behind my horses. She would choose a place far away from his proper pasturage. And all for what? That she might see him work his flock round the hill and round again, always edging the sheep nearer, till, with snap of finger and click of tongue to his dogs, he had brought them nigh to the place where sat our Cyrilla. Then, as like as not, when he was within the matter of fifty yards or so, Cyrilla would gather up her wool-cards and sewing-things, or as it might be her papers and books - making no haste, but rather as if she had never once seen poor Adan - and so she would betake herself demurely back to the house, her eyes upon the ground.

Then the flock, left without their master's care, would be seen straying along the wayside, or nosing and shouldering down the hot slats and stones of the bridlepaths. For Adan was far behind, walking as in the Valley of the Shadow, absorbed in the thought of that beautiful, cruel Cyrilla.

'So much so that it became a jest - indeed, an excellent jest, at which the very children of the village would cry aloud: 'Yonder goes Adan's flock up the waterside - but where is Adan? Let us ask of Cyrilla Toro!'

'Sometimes, again, she would speak kindly to him, asking him for his umbrella, or for his capa to sit upon. Or she would stand and talk, and then flash out her eyes upon him suddenly, till many of the neighbours thought she would end by driving the poor fellow fairly distract, or even to suicide. But this she never did - Adan being preserved from that by a certain health of digestion. Only one morning, having been afield all night (I suppose deep in his thoughts of Cyrilla, or perhaps suffering from moon-stroke) he brought his flocks back home through

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the village gate at six of the clock on a brave May morning. And so the laughter spread from valley to valley, and with it the fame of Cyrilla, the sister of Miguel Toro, the hunchback, the jorobado!

Yes, doubtless it was cruel. But, you see, the girl had no desire to marry, nor, indeed, vocation therefor, declaring always that she would never be any man's slave - 'that is,' she would add, with her arms thrown about my neck, 'except the loving servant of this dearest Miguel here, who is all the world to me!'

'She would say this, I remember now, most often when Don José came over to see us. For after she had returned to our farm, Cyrilla would go no more back to her benefactor's great house - no, not though Juana cried her eyes red, and her father, the Señor Valtierra, would ask and ask again. She would not leave me alone, she said - her one brother - her poor darling - her beloved Miguel!

'And to go beyond the village church she would not be coaxed - though, indeed, our farm, little more than a common mas of the country, a rough hand-to-mouth, was indeed no place for the abiding of a girl like Cyrilla. But work - oh yes, she worked! Indeed, there were few who could work like her. But, of course, I did not permit her to do any of the hard out-of-door work, that I could help. But always when the men came far and near to see me - yes, of course, to see me, poor Miguel Toro (who else?), Cyrilla would be busy at the baking-dish, with her sleeves rolled elbow-high, or mayhap carrying water from the well along the edges of the vintage slopes.

'She looked best so. And - she would rest a moment, pushing back her hair, being tired - for no maiden could be so gracefully out of breath as our little Cyrilla. I call her little, though she was taller than I - indeed, well made and of a shape full and perfect from nape to ankle.

'Flirt' - that is what you would call her? No, Señor, I think not so. We in Spain have not the word - nor, as you explain it, have we the thing either. That is for cities, and

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places where people have nothing to do - and much time to do it in. And our little Cyrilla meant no evil. Moreover, I think that she could not have helped it if she had tried. Though, indeed, true it is, also - that I never saw her try!

‘Of course it is now clear to me that this could not last. A girl in Spain, to conduct herself wisely, must be sage, submissive, of a douce and sensible obedience. But, on the other hand, our Cyrilla was none of these things. Tempestuous rather, given to sudden angers and tears as sudden - to quick pretty poutings and angry silences, ending ever with as unreasonable and impulsive reconciliations. What was a man like me to do with a girl like that?’

‘And yet, as I think it over now - there is plenty of time to think in these pine forests of Señor Don Jose - perhaps such things made part of her charm. For she cared no whit more for the great than for the small. Yes, ever Señor Valtierra was to her of no more account than poor Adan, the hillside shepherd. She spoke to them both equally, as if they had been her hired servants - or rather, her dogs to come to heel at will. And, what is more strange than all, they both liked it. Indeed, I myself - but it is no need to speak of that! I spoiled her - that is all. But then, so did all the world.

‘Well, at any rate, it could not last, as you know. Of a certainty the pitcher would go too often to the fountain. And so one day when the din of Carlism - real Carlism, that is, not this new make-believe - made all the north a valley of tears, sending half the women desperate for the loss of lovers or husbands or fathers, this our Cyrilla, going one day through the woods - other forests far to the north of those through which you bore me (here he reached out his hand) - found, even as you found me, a wounded stranger stretched out - a young man - beautiful of countenance. And, ah, had I but known - I would have completed the Carlismists’ work or ever the man had crossed the doorstep. It was, as I tell you, in our old house, and though all was rough enough, God knows, yet

accommodation was ampler and more fitting there. So he had Juana Valtierra's room - the one she slept in when she came, or rather, in which she was supposed to sleep. For, girl-like, the two young things preferred lying together, so that they might whisper the best part of the night. So I have heard them often, sleepless myself. Yes, even I, the hunchback, know something of the ways of women-kind. For had not I Cyrilla, my sister, to teach me - a woman incomparable and complete?

'This fellow gave out, truly enough, that he was a wounded Carlist. He did not tell that he had been shot down for treason - or, at any rate, upon the suspicion of it - by his own people, while they were carrying him off to be tried by a headquarters' court-martial. However, being unable, or unwilling, to face it out, he endeavoured to escape, but a bullet overtook him, and he was left for dead.

Thus, so strange are the ways of things, so exact the fitting of the joints of Providence, that here our proud, man-contemning Cyrilla, in a traitor left for dead in the forest, found her fate! Ay, Señor, and at the same time, even as she nursed him day by day back to life, she found something else too.

'Why are girls made thus and thus - to be pitiful where they had better set their knives to the hilt in the Thing's heart, and to be hard and scornful and full of contempt, when the great and true - yes, like Don José himself, I need not hide it - there is no shame - or the poor and loyal, like Adan Blasco the shepherd, came from far to woo them? Answer me that, Señor, out of your much wisdom.

'But such - say you, is some women's nature? They are built with a secret spring, may-be, like a box that once I saw at Don José's, cunningly wrought. Their fate is that they belong in life and in death - aye, and after death also, I suppose - to that man who knows how to touch that hidden spring.

'At least, that is how I have thought it out in the

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silence of the woods - pondering upon it many a lonely day while going my rounds among Señor Valtierra's pines.

'Señor, what good will it do if I answer your question? And his name? Ay, you are new to Spain, and, happily for you yourself, know not such men. Indeed I am not sure this one was truly of our blood. I think he was rather of the French of the Midi - may-be of Toulouse. It was from Toulouse that the photograph was sent. Let that not be forgotten - also the letter that came with it.

'But, since you will know, while the young man abode with us he called himself Don Alonso, and gave himself the style of the nephew of the Count of Miranda-Aran!

[Here at this point of his tale the little man lay long looking out among the trees, and for the first time in my life I saw the reason why folk, whom Miguel Toro had no cause to love, might call him 'The Devil among the Stones.' But shortly the look faded away, and I knew my friend once again.]

'Four months and four days he abode with us,' he continued, 'this Don Alonso, if that were indeed his name. And though I noticed nothing, the life went gradually out of our Cyrilla. The glad readiness faded from her tongue. The spring was no more in her instep. She cared not to tease poor Adan, nor even to rally Don José, sitting gloomily erect on his great horse. She would turn away with her head down and the tear in her eye. Ah, I wish now that I had taken my knife and done justice upon the hound who lay couched within, smiling and listening.

'What gave him the power? I know not. But one night she came in late, from off the despoblado, where, across the torrent bridge, begins a very desert of heath and thyme, even at our father's boundary stones. And at this I spoke somewhat sharply to her. She did not answer me - not a word, which was by no means her way - the

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way of Cyrilla Toro, my sister.

'But in the morning, lo, she was fled - she and the young Carlist, he who called himself Alonso, the nephew of the Count of Miranda-Aran!'

Now at this place comes in the unexpected, the inexplicable - the life connection. I was hearing from the lips of a dwarf, chance-found in a grove of pines, the story of the mother of little Zaida, whom I had met, also by chance (if indeed there be such a thing), in the ruined house of Miranda-Aran. After all, that is the way things happen in life.

What was I to do? The little hunchback had seen Zaida's picture. He had held it in his hand, and I expected each moment the question as to what I knew of her father and mother. But it did not come. The hunchback seemed too much wrapped up in painful memories. Besides, I saw not the good any tale-telling would do. It could only end in the reviving of a family feud, if I told Miguel Tore that his sister's daughter was alive. I would also deprive the good Biño and Marinessia of that which would be a comfort to both. I must betray the confidences of the Bishop, and more particularly those of Don Manuel Sebastian. Moreover, I did not see that Zaida would be happier, cooped up in the stone house of the forest-guard among the vines of Señor Valtierra, than under the care of Marinessia, and watched over by Manuel Sebastian and his formidable sons.

So, rightly or wrongly, I resolved to listen and to be silent. I would, so I told myself, let well alone. But so far as knowledge went, I was certainly fitting together very rapidly the pieces of a most strange puzzle. They had never (so I supposed) all been in one person's hands before.

Meanwhile the little hunchback shaded his eyes with his fingers, deep in thought. Great indigo-blue humble-bees, booming and dunderheaded, drove in and out of the cana-hut, growing hotter and crosser all the

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time, perhaps to find that so large and black a flower held so little honey. The leaf-thatch above our heads crackled in the hot sun, and a supple blade or two pulled itself loose with a dry swishing rustle within the cane-brake. The wind through the woods came breathing down upon us, cooling, restorative, terebinthine. And through it all I heard the sound as of a human sob. I made haste to say something then. I did not wish that also on my hands. I had known before what is prone to happen when men do so.

‘Did you never hear from your sister again?’ I asked. ‘There was the photograph, was there not, and a letter?’

He mastered himself by an effort of will, which lasted for just as long as a chaffinch sings, without stopping for breath.

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘I heard. She wrote me that she was married. She was living in France and very happy. But though I answered her, writing many times by means of the curé down at the village, and even by Don José - to whom I told all, saving of the picture and that one letter - never have I heard another word of my Cyrilla from that day to this! So because of that, I know - I have long known - that Cyrilla is dead. She would never have left Miguel, her sole brother, Miguel Toro, so long without news of her - that is, had she been alive.’

With a kind of a gasp, I awoke as from a dream. He knew nothing then, after all! Nothing of that wild journey of vengeance - nothing of the betrayal - of the crossing of the winter Pyrenees - of the attempt, mad and desperate, to cast the blame upon the good Bishop on his consecration day, of little Zaida laid upon the violet of the episcopal gown - in especial, nothing of the ‘Frenchwoman’s Pool’ beside which I had seen Amparo and her companions wringing out the clothes, laughing merrily - and above all, nothing of the deathgrip of those pretty hands of Cyrilla, which had so often been round his neck, upon the weeds and stones at the Ebro bottom!

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After all, God is very merciful, and like balm falls His mercy after the cruelty of man. Man, for the most part, does indeed try to cover up his deeds of cruelty and pain - but it is in a graveyard and with a spade. But when God says, 'Ashes to ashes' there is an unearthly sweetness in the saying, like the wind among the pines. And flowers come up with the grass that covers the resting-grave of the dead.

Of a surety He had spared these things to the poor man with the burden upon his back. Had it been otherwise, it might have been more than he could bear.

The dwarf spoke again, after a long pause.

'Sometimes,' he continued, 'it seems as if there were some reason why Cyrilla had not written to me. The fellow she fled with might after all have been speaking the truth. She may at this moment, while we are talking together, be the Countess of Miranda-Aran, There are, I have heard, many noble Carlist families still in exile in France, She may not be permitted to communicate with a poor hunchbacked forest-guard. She may -'

He broke off brusquely.

'Señor, you have gone much about the world,' he began in quite another tone, as if beseeching me to speak, 'have you never in any land met with a Count of Miranda-Aran?'

It was not the question I had been dreading, but it was one almost as difficult to answer.

'Yes,' I said, after a slight pause, 'I have met with a man, who in his own country had once been the bearer of that title. But, when I knew him - he did not use it, and went under another name.'

'And what was that man like - I bid you tell me?'

'He was an old man of over seventy - with white hair, strong and erect of stature.'

'No,' cried the dwarf, with a sigh, 'certainly that is not he!'

Then he thought a moment.

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'Was this man married?' he asked me, 'and this little girl, whose picture you showed me, was she one of his children?'

The double question, permitting a choice of answers, saved me, as it often does the witness in the hands of an unskilful cross-examiner.

'The little maid was not of his children,' I answered firmly, 'they were all grown up, and all dwelt at home - the sons smugglers and herdsman - all strong, fierce men of their hands - who, if ever they did a wrong would have stayed to answer it, face to face with any man that ever lived.'

'Then,' said the dwarf, drawing a long breath of relief, 'this Alonso lied. I always believed that he did.'

That night Miguel Toro was so excited that I took it upon me to give him a strong dose of opium, which he took with the grimace of a child. Aye, and went to sleep like one too.

Now there was a question which had been on the tip of my tongue all the while he was speaking of Cyrilla, and her going away with this young Alonso. What had Don Valtierra to do with the matter, and for what cause and by what means had he changed Cyrilla's brother from unsuccessful cultivator to successful forest-guard? I cannot follow a trail like a Red Indian along the bare-rock scarps or over the dry pine-needles, but in questions of motive and the human heart - well, at any rate I judged that there was more in this matter than met the eye - even an eye which had already taken in, as it were, both sides of the history.

I resolved that if ever fate led me again to the neighbourhood of Toulouse I should have a few inquiries to make. And then, all in a moment, a light flashed upon me.

Is not the Ariège the natural gate southward from Toulouse, and was I not going there soon? Yes, on that very Day of the Republic, when, according to agreement,

the Sous-Préfet would stand on a platform, high and lifted up, and clap his hands for the bulls to be driven in.

As was to be expected after the opium, my little man had a headache the next day. But goat's milk hot, and - a certain excellent family medicine which I need not advertise, brought him speedily round.

He did not again refer to his sister Cyrilla, rather avoiding the subject indeed - nor did he look at the packet of child-pictures. Nevertheless he seemed eager and even restless, asking often when he would be well enough to go about his duty. Soon he began to move round the house and always had the simple meals ready for me upon my return. He never embarrassed me with any spoken gratitude, though I knew well enough that I had a friend for life in the person of the little hunchback.

It happened, I think, on the fourth or fifth day after the tale-telling, and while Miguel, though recovered from his fall, was still detained indoors, that I had gone to the farthest corner to report, as best I could, on some trees that had been but recently planted, which the forest-guard thought might have been damaged by the drought or by the 'evil people.'

But everything was clear, and to my eye, at least, doing well. I looked out on to the strip of pasturage which stretched southward from the forest edges. No one was to be seen except a solitary shepherd slowly directing his flock away from me, feeding as they went. He was a tall, determined-looking young fellow, with that weather-beaten air which comes to migratory folk who are here today and gone tomorrow.

As he was the first person I had seen since the beginning of my sojourn in the hut with 'The Devil among the Stones,' I was eager enough to speak with him. I expected from the man only some mumbling patois, but instead he spoke Castellano beautifully and clearly.

'You are a servant of Don José Lopez Valtierra?' I asked of him, to open the conversation.

'No,' he made answer, 'I serve another master.'

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I think that I must have looked my surprise. For he added, with a little glint of teeth, only partially good-humoured, 'I am within my rights here. This is one of the old 'mesta' roads, and I have a right to pasture fifty yards on either side.'

I nodded. Whether he had or had not was nothing to me. So I said that I hoped he had found the most excellent of pasturage and a master as good as the Señor Valtierra.

'Oh,' said he, 'as to that I have a better. For I am my own master, and come and go at my will.'

There was still something in his tone which conveyed the impression that he did not love Don José. Which was strange, for all that I had heard of the sheep-master had been more than favourable, and as for Miguel Toro, he would have died for him, I think.

I went on to ask the shepherd if he found himself far from home. For I knew that all the land in the neighbourhood belonged to Señor Valtierra. He answered me like one of my northern countrymen, with the counter-question, 'Are you, Señor, the Frenchman who has been dwelling with Miguel Toro these many days?'

I denied the nationality, but otherwise admitted the correctness of his information. But in rural Spain, untrod of 'the personally conducted,' all foreigners are taken for French citizens.

Then all in a moment he asked a curious question, which at the time made me doubt his sanity. It seemed to break from him against his will.

'Is it on account of his sister Cyrilla that you remain with Miguel Toro?'

'I found him lying in the forest,' I answered simply. 'He had fallen from a tree and hurt himself. I carried him home, and ever since I have been doing as much as possible of his work. I know nothing of his sister - of any sister of his. I understand he had one only, and that she is dead.'

The man's features took on a stern and severe

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expression - not the soldier's battle-face - rather the more contracted look of personal animosity.

'Ask Don José Valtierra as to that!' he said.

'So,' said I as curtly, 'and who, shall I say, bade me put that question?'

He hesitated a moment, hanging on the word. And then, in a grating voice, as it were whetted with anger, he answered, 'Tell him it was one Adan Blasco who bade you ask!'

'What, the shepherd?' I cried, surprised out of my caution.

'He has been telling you,' he said, looking sidelong at me.

I shook my head, answering plainly that I had never even spoken with Don José.

'Then Miguel Toro has spoken to you of his sister - that is, he has told you - as much as he knows!'

I had thought myself the only possessor of the terrible secret of the Frenchwoman's Pool. But here was another, and one too for the present the nearest neighbour of Miguel Toro, who seemed clearly to intimate that he also was fully informed on the subject. A great fear seized me. He might go and tell the hunchback. And then - through my careless curiosity I might have brought trouble upon the Sebastians - my first friends in the country, upon Biño and his wife Marinessia, and especially upon little Zaida. So, scarcely knowing what to say, I parleyed with the shepherd.

'Miguel Toro has not yet recovered,' I said; 'he is in great need of quiet. If you know anything sad about his sister, I pray you do not tell him. He is more happy as he is, and -'

'Do not be afraid,' the shepherd said bitterly; 'nothing that I might have to tell him shall ever pass my lips. The taste is not so pleasant in the mouth that I should go about asking this one and that to share the morsel with me.'

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A thought struck me. This man Blasco was a wanderer, though only, of course, along certain well-defined lines of 'drove' road, where his flocks had rights of pasture - if not now by law, at least by ancient custom and prescription. It was possible that he also knew of Miranda-Aran, and of the little girl who had been a guest with Andrés and his wife. Yet I did not see how to ask the question without setting him on a possible trail - if, as was very possible, he knew nothing of Zaida.

At last it came to me to ask concerning something, which of a certainty he must know.

'You have met this Don Alonso of Miranda-Aran?' I asked him.

I had expected to meet again the fierce look, but instead there was only a bitter sneer.

'Alonso of Miranda-Aran - pah - !' he cried. 'I see you have heard the story and also that you know my name. But if you would hear more of Cyrilla Toro, ask your information of Señor Don José Lopez Valtierra!'

And with these words very deliberately he turned his back upon me, and with his dog at his heels drove his flock on down the road. I watched him in the glimmer of the evening light till his figure was lost among the willows by the water-courses, which Señor Valtierra had made to keep away the torrents from his pines. I watched till the slow padding sheep were indistinguishable from the rough stones by the wayside. But Adan Blasco, the shepherd, the lover of Cyrilla, never once turned to look at me as I watched him out of sight.

That evening when I reported to the little forest-guard concerning the trees along the edges of the campo, it may well be understood that I said nothing of my meeting with the shepherd, or concerning the purport of his discourse. Yet, so strange a thing is the consciousness of a secret, that it seemed to me as though Miguel watched me more carefully than usual that night. So for something to do, I took my camera to pieces, lenses

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and all, and showed him the fitting of the parts, explaining their uses as to an intelligent listener.

Whether Miguel watched me or the camera I do not know, or whether he had other thoughts in his head than those which concerned the young trees by the old campo road. At any rate no more was said between us concerning Cyrilla.

We got us to bed - I on my couch of juniper and heather, drawing about me the coverlets, old and clean, which had belonged to Cyrilla's mother. True, I did not sleep very much, but, through the great black gap of the window, open to the sky as in an observatory, I lay and watched Orion slowly trail his complicated splendours across the blue-black square. Then lo! star after star - I could see them processing in his wake, just missing Sirius, till through the opposite wall-chinks there struck in the first faint streaks of dawn.

Then I went out among the pines, while it was yet very early - earlier indeed than I had ever set out upon my rounds. Perhaps it was some curious expectation of seeing once more the shepherd Adan that sent me in the same direction as on the night before. It was a longish walk, and I had to push through the dew-wet underbrush of the young wood, till not only were my alpargatas soaking, but my trousers, also, high above the knee. However, as soon as the sun would rise, I knew well that that would matter little.

I had stolen out with caution, and Miguel had not stirred. The dawn arose flecked and wispy out of the east - pale lilac mostly and delicate straw-coloured gold. I stood on the edge of the wood and looked pensively over the late pastures. Stubble alone showed where the crops had stood, leaving behind them the marks of the reaping-hook and the bleached stances of the stook bottoms.

Here I stood and watched the sun rise swiftly from behind the great rock bastion against which our forest of pines was tilted. Its shadow jutted out suddenly westward along the plain and winding road - then slowly began to

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shorten in again as the morning heightened.

Entranced I stood, my little axe in my hand, the ladder leaning against my shoulder, collecting tools and pots on my back, looking down across the brightening plain.

‘Ola, Señor!’ there cried, so suddenly that I started, a voice I had never heard before - a voice at once hearty and heartsome, with something in it good to hear, ‘have I gotten me a new forest-guard without knowing it? Or are you, by chance, one of Miguel’s ‘bad people?’

I turned, and there, quite near me, his horse’s feet on the elastic carpet of pine needles, himself tall against the dusky aisles of the forest, was a horseman, with the master-look writ large upon his face. There was also a cheerful breeziness which set well upon him. The broad white brow somehow inspired confidence. The slightly grizzled hair told of one who had sometime passed his first youth. But the tall stature and the erect carriage, as well as the ease and grace with which he sat his horse, told of the man of sane natural life, of outdoor habits, the man who had been all his days accustomed to say to this man ‘Come,’ and to that ‘Go’ - and to see to it that this man and that came and went accordingly.

The visitor appeared behind me so unexpectedly that, though I knew he could be no other than Señor Valtierra, I found myself struggling to answer his questions, without having had the time to prepare a sentence in a foreign tongue. Seeing my difficulty, and possibly also the innocence of my intentions, the tall man laughed, and asked, in excellent French, as to the health of Miguel Toro, his forest-guard.

I told him of the accident and of my work for the last fortnight.

‘Why, then,’ said he, laughing, ‘instead of warning you off my property as a poacher, I doubt that I am somewhat in your debt!’

‘On the contrary,’ said I, ‘that is a matter between Miguel and myself.’

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And then, almost like the opening of flood-gates, one of those strange inexplicable impulses which often change the lives of men and women, came over me. I had resolved to be reticent. Who was I that I should meddle in other folk's business? I was wholly without rights in the matter. So much was perfectly evident. Yet, for the life of me, I could not resist the impulse to speak.

'Señor Valtierra,' I said, 'I have a message for you. Have I your permission to put a question? A man yester-even bade me ask it of you.'

A shade passed across the broad brow, which might have been surprise, but might also have very well been some anger at the uncalled-for intrusion of a stranger.

'I pray your pardon, Señor,' I went on, 'if in anything I take too much upon myself. But I assure you there are reasons - '

'Who was the man?' he interrupted brusquely.

'The shepherd, Adan Blasco,' said I, with equal brevity.

'And the question?'

'He bade me ask,' said I, looking directly at him, 'what you know about Cyrilla, the sister of Miguel Toro, the hunchback?'

Now a stranger speaking a new language cannot choose his words. He has to take those he knows, a thing which, though it often causes his speech to sound abrupt, yet gives him also a certain advantage of directness. Señor Valtierra was visibly troubled. His hand gripped the reins, and the sensitive beast he was riding tossed its head and shook out its mane in sympathy with its master's agitation.

'By what right, Señor, do you ask that?' he cried, hotly.

'It is the question of Adan, the shepherd - not mine,' said I.

'But what may be your interest in the matter?' he demanded - with, I admit, much justice.

'First of all, because I have nursed her brother for

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fourteen days,' I answered. 'He has told me all. And, besides, I know the child of Cyrilla Toro. Look!'

And I held out the photograph which I had taken of little Zaida at El Seo.

As he took it from my hand the strangest range of expression passed rapidly over the strong man's face - first a kind of fear, then doubt, then a hopeful anticipation, last of all, something approaching to violent emotion.

'Mon Dieu!' he cried, 'where did you get this - the eyes - the very eyes look out at me!'

'I myself took it,' I said. 'It is the picture of a little girl - as I told you, the daughter of Cyrilla Toro.'

'Where - where - where?' he gasped, holding the poor brown paper-covered photograph in one shaking hand and reaching out the other as if to wring the secret from me.

'First of all, you will inform me as to your right to ask,' I said - for it was my turn now.

'I will assure you fully on that point - I swear it!' he said, 'only tell me. You must tell me all - all!'

I thought a moment. As things were, I had no right to tell him anything. There were the Sebastians, the Bishop, Zaida herself, to be considered. There was also the hunchback.

Valtierra saw the uncertainty struggling in my face.

'I will show you good reason,' he said, 'the best of all reasons - that is, if only you will come with me. Meanwhile, we will send someone to care for Miguel and to do his work. It were better that he should know nothing - for the present. Afterwards - in time - but of that you shall be the judge.'

He held Zaida's picture in one hand, almost with the gesture of the Bishop in the garden of La Delicia - first near his eyes, and then far off.

'May I keep this?' he said. And without even waiting for an answer he pulled out his pocket-book and stowed it

safely away among many papers.

Then he dismounted, and, without another word spoken to each other, we walked soberly back to the little house of stone where I had left Miguel the hunchback. He hobbled out to meet us at the sound of the horse's feet on the rocks.

'My master - oh, my dear master!' he cried. And bending down he took Don José's hand and kissed it repeatedly. But to me it seemed that Señor Valtierra drew it away somewhat quickly, as if he were ashamed that such a thing should happen under my eyes,

Entering the room he looked about as if he missed something. And by instinct I knew that he was looking for the portrait of Cyrilla Toro, which her brother turned every night with its face to the wall. Then his hand stole slowly up till it rested on the breast-pocket where he had hidden the picture of little Zaida - the picture from which he had seen her mother's eyes look out at him.

Then I knew that at last the secret of Zaida and of Zaida's mother was very close to me.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE FEAST OF THE DEAD - AND OF THE LIVING

Four days Don José Valtierra abode among his pines. He had great reason to wish that we were once more well on our way, and I could see that he was nervously excited all the time. But he was nervously excited all the time. But he was a strong, determined man, this Señor Valtierra - open of countenance, large and generous of heart, and evidently, to look at him, a cast-back upon that Gothic type which once filled the Spanish North and gave permanence to its best characteristics.

Besides, there was Miguel Toro to be thought of - and Don José thought of every one. Miguel was desolated to be left again alone. Even the promise that I should before long return, and his master's offer to build him a new house during the winter on the site of the old, failed to arouse him from his melancholy. I think that, perhaps, the result of the injury to his head had not quite passed away. For the little hunchback's most fixed idea was that I should remain in permanence by his fireside and help him with his pine plantations for the term of my natural life.

The new house, however, he would hear nothing of. He held by the old. It was 'good enough for him'

That was his unfailing retort. He had nothing to live for now; and when the Englishman, his friend, had forsaken him - why, what was there left but that he should go back, as of old, to 'gnawing the cud of his silence'?

He had words, this poor Miguel the hunchback.

But a brand-new, French-made stove all the way from Zaragoza on which to do his cooking (suggested by me) and window-frames containing real glass, which could be taken in and out according to the weather, to some extent promised to divert his mind from his troubles

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during the dreary months of winter. At any rate, he would not be left entirely to 'gnaw the cud of his silence.'

'For I promise you,' said Don José, 'that I will send my own carpenter Raphael from the valley farm - a lazy dog, whom you must keep stiffly to his work. For of a surety, if I am not here to lay a whip to his back, the rascal will not work. Let me think - yes, I have it, I shall leave you a packet of postcards, and you will tell me every day or two how Raphael is working. And since you cannot write and he can, let it be convened between us that when Raphael works well there shall be an 'X' drawn upon the back, but if he is lazy, then instead the postcard shall bear an 'O.'

By this call upon his mental faculties the little hunchback seemed somewhat relieved, and put away the packet in a drawer with an air of obvious importance.

As we went out, Don Jose said to me in French, 'And that will also tell us that Miguel remains where he is in the meantime - whether that pig Raphael works well or ill!'

Clear and crisp as an English after-harvest day or a sunny morning in the Scottish 'back-end' was the early hour when we rode away from the abode of the 'Devil among the Stones.'

The year was closing in. Not that that makes much difference in Spain, except among the mountains and in the extreme north. But then we were in the north, where, save in the kitchen, even in the greatest houses there are no fireplaces, and those few generally bricked up with care to prevent draughts!

The little hunchback came with us to the edge of the pines; but he could hardly bid us adieu for falling tears.

'My heart is full! - My heart is full!' he repeated. 'Do not forget it, my master and my friend! But there is a promise - you will come back? - yes, with the new year and the opening weather! You will come back, both of

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you! And then you will see the French stove from Zaragoza with the three olla pots all simmering upon it at one time. Ah, that Cyrilla had been here to busy herself about them! You have not forgotten Cyrilla, my master?’

And Don José, shaking his head gravely, laid his hand upon Miguel’s shoulder and told the little hunchback that he, José Lopez Valtierra, would forget the Señorita Cyrilla only when they laid him with his silent kin under the yew-trees in Old Castile.

‘And that reminds me - ’ said the hunchback; ‘it is pitiable - yes, terrible, with the Day of All the Saints, the Feast of the Dead so near - that we cannot even go and lay a wreath upon her grave, you and I, Don José - we who have loved her with a long love! It is denied us! We know not the place of her sepulture!’

And Don José lifted his hat from his head as if in salutation.

‘No,’ he said, gently patting the arm of the forest-guard, ‘it is true. We know not the place - neither you nor I!’

Zaragoza lies high, and the winds blow cold there. It is out of the shelter of the Pyrenees, and no kindly pine-woods circle it about. The sun, blazing hot long before noon, takes an appreciable time to vanquish the hoarfrost, even after it rises in the morning. If anywhere the capa is welcome, of a surety it is there; and on the morning of Todos los Santos (called the Feast of Tosants) Don José and I were glad to come in sight of the beautiful bridge and see the glancing city roofs, with the hope of finding ourselves once more in a Christian house before the hour was over.

But I had my camera strapped behind me, and the famous cathedral was glittering multi-coloured in the light of the morning, its Oriental pinnacles all busked out with tiles shining gay and rainbow-like in the sun. A few loafers with flat blue Basque caps on their heads obtruded themselves promptly in front of the lens, as if

they were as worthy of being immortalised upon the excellent Edwards' isochromatic film as El Pilar itself. I had much ado to prevent Don José from ordering them to Jericho or (alternatively) riding them down, much as a knight might have cleared off the rabble who gathered about the tournament palisades.

We entered the capital city of the North on the greatest day of all the year. All Saints' Day is little more than a name in England - not even so much as that in Scotland. But in Spain - upon that day the whole world goes forth to adorn the graves of the family dead. And all is done with a gentleness and sweet sorrow, a unanimity of sentiment that to me is infinitely touching.

Even in France there is something of it left, though not so much. In cynical Paris it is the sole religious function of the year. Thirty years of republican institutions and anti-clerical crusade have submerged the Christian religion as an interest for men - all, that is, but the Cult of the Dead. Christianity itself is hardly even worth talking about, since Renan is not there to do the talking. The Church has become mere political capital in every village and every commune. Certainly all French families are divided, for or against the Altar. But even so, religion is only a political bone of contention - a weapon for use along with others, such as colonisation, the frontier fortresses, submarine boats, the National Debt, and so forth, either to insult or to defend the existing Government. For the rest, religion is left to the women and the priests.

But once a year, the day of 'All the Saints' draws forth, to stand uncovered before the Graves of the Dead, socialist deputy and militant anti-clerical, nationalist and Dreyfusard elbow to elbow, majority and minority alike - a strange sight to see at Montparnasse and Père la Chaise.

But to Spain must you go to see the true inwardness of the Feast of the Dead. A little whirl of leaves accompanied us along the bridge as we rode into the town, and even chased us when we turned down a

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riverside embankment, where the onions were hanging over the wall literally by tons. It was not yet ten o'clock, but the streets of the city were already thronged with people, for the most part scrupulously clad in mourning. They were issuing out of churches with little black prayer-books clasped in their right hands. They were entering in a solid stream the great cathedral of El Pilar, which we kept on our left as we took our way quietly towards the dwelling of Don José.

'In the summer,' said my host, 'I often go to Vichy to drink the waters, and also because things are gayer in France. But in spring and winter I live mostly in Zaragoza, because from there I can the more easily visit my various properties - farms, mines, and forests.'

During our journey Don José had said nothing whatever about the picture of Zaida, nor had I so much as seen it, though I knew that he carried it in his pocket-book. Neither had the name of the hunchback's sister crossed his lips. He had been silent upon all that concerned the momentous question of the shepherd Adan, 'What do you know of Cyrilla Toro?' Yet, for all that, there had been nothing of the nervous anxiety of innocence trying to clear itself, still less of the equally obvious defiant ease of guilt hiding its ostrich head, about Señor Valtierra.

It was easy to be seen that he was a man familiar with affairs - wondrously exact and businesslike for a great Spanish proprietor. He had promised me a certain explanation. In due time he would give it, just as at the appointed time he would be prepared to meet his other obligations, financial and commercial.

I cannot help saying here that I admired him more and more. He was cloaked and booted and spurred like a true Caballero. Indeed, master and gentleman were written all over him. He was mounted on a magnificent steed. On the contrary I had beneath me only a stout and very ugly hired mule with a back like an arm-chair, and the Aragonese saddle on which I sat was the very chair

itself, equipped with stirrups as large as salt-boxes. Then I still wore alpargatas - though now with socks of various colours drawn over them for warmth's sake. My hat possessed no brim, but in revenge was effectively ventilated by a tear in the top, provisionally mended inside with green oiled silk from my little medicine-case. My coat had once been well cut, but now hung about me in rags of tatters. I still wore bragas of white linen - alas! too short and only to be denominated white, as it were, by courtesy, and for the sake of old times. Draped about my shoulders was a striped horse-cloth after the manner of Sitting Bull or any other untamed savage of the West - whom, indeed, with my hair, long unbarbered, escaping through the top of my hat, I must somewhat have resembled.

The magnates of the city saluted my companion and he saluted them, talking all the time to me as to an intimate friend, and including me in any chance conversations with an infinite grace. There is no man in this world who can outdo an honourable Spanish gentleman, even of this present year of grace, in that courtesy which is his by race, by self-respect, by goodwill, and by that heart which is as gracious to the poor as to the rich. Such a man may refuse a beggar (though he seldom does), or he may send a murderer to the garrotte, if such be his duty. But he will do these things feelingly, humanely, with something of the ancient Christian humility of, 'There goes Richard Baxter - but for the grace of God!'

Naturally, however, Don José was more comfortable than I. It seemed as if I must be taking away his character every moment in the eyes of his townfolk. Suddenly it occurred to me - I note it because matters connected with clothing rarely do so occur - that there ought to be a small leathern trunk of mine in the custody of a certain banker of the city. Upon inquiry of Don José he said that the Bank would, of course, be shut on All Saints' Day, but that the manager, a Frenchman, was a

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personal friend of his, and that anything I wanted of him could be effected - probably at once.

'Because, being a Frenchman, and knowing no better,' said Don José, smiling, 'he does not lie long abed of a morning.'

Good Monsieur Emile Fabre turned out to be a man of fifty, wearing a tufted beard, and with the comfortable, somewhat puffy aspect about him of one securely beneficed for life. But he was bald, amiable, accessible - and so, happily, was my trunk. The banker was willing also to let me have some money on Don José's introduction, though my appearance did not at all tally with the description which had been sent from Paris along with my letter of credit.

'Never mind,' said I, 'wait till tomorrow. I have been long in the wilds, and if everything is in the box that I expect, I hope by that time not so greatly to disgrace my honourable introducer!'

'Our seals are intact upon the box,' said M. Fabre with a touch of severity; 'I am sure you will find all within of an exactitude!'

I wished to knock up a barber on the way, to have my hair cut, as we went through the city. But Don José, who evidently could wait no longer, either for his home welcome or for his correspondence, said that there was no need. He could summon a coiffeur in a few minutes to do that which might be requisite in my own room. Our horses, he said, had need to be put in stable - which, indeed, was very evidently true of my arm-chair son-of-a-he-ass, for it had been fit for nothing else ever since we left the piñadas of Miguel Toro.

We came at last to Don José Valtierra's house, pleasantly retired in a wide and silent square, the centre of which was planted with trees. High walls, in which was a railed gate of gilded iron, contained the front garden. The window-shutters were open to let in the sun and air, a practice which in the North of Spain is not considered so conclusive a proof of lunacy as it is in the smaller

towns of the South of France.

There was also to the right an entrance for carriages. So, unlatching this with his own hands, Don José led his horse within a small courtyard, while I followed with my unspeakable mule, scraping and plantigrading along the causeway like a furniture van.

A smartly dressed groom, or general servant - smart at least as to his nether person, ran out to meet Don José, seemingly considerably surprised at seeing him. He began a copious explanation as to how he had been caught napping, but his master cut him short.

'Is the Señora within?' he said.

No,' answered the man, 'I do not think so. Not expecting you, I know that it was the Señora's intention to take Benita, and go out to hear the Great Mass sung in El Pilar. But wait, in a moment I will advertise you!'

'Do not,' said Don José, 'there is a porter following from the Bank with a trunk. When it arrives, take it up to this gentleman's bedroom - the white room over the garden - and after that send for a barber.'

The servant, to whom his master generally referred, after his jovial fashion, as Don Picaro, or Sir Rascal, seemed no little surprised that Don José should introduce such a scarecrow as myself into his house. Afterwards he told me that he quite understood - as soon, that is, as he knew I was an Englishman. He had often been in France with his master, and had heard many speak of the 'mad English.'

But at first it was decidedly embarrassing, for Tomasillo (which was the more ordinary designation of Don José's servant) looked carefully round my chamber to see that nothing of value had been left lying about. I had expected to go to an hotel, and indeed would have preferred it, for it is but seldom in the cities that a Spaniard will invite you into his own house. In the country it is, of course, another thing. I have lived for months at a time as the guest of the great sheep-masters of Leon, passing from house to house and from farm to

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farm, my only care and occupation being how most fitly to remunerate my generous hosts.

And it was of such a stock that Don José came. He had simply transferred the hearty hospitalities of a thinly-peopled, well-to-do country to the city in which he made his winter home.

With his own hands he brought me a bath, and with his own hands he filled it. I had got the length of luxuriating in the huge rough towel when the barber was announced. With him came Sir Rascal, that most respectable man, who, having the key of my trunk supplied him, laid out, shook out, dusted out, and brushed out its various contents, his jaw falling lower with astonishment as each layer of respectability was reached.

While the silent barber - he held of Zaragoza, not of Seville - was doing his work, and while Sir Rascal descended to bring up a selection of proper Spanish hats (of fine soft felt such as is not now worn in England), I bethought me of Don José's question to his servant in the courtyard.

Could it be that Señor Valtierra was again married? Miguel the Hunchback had said nothing of that. I felt sure that he would not have kept silence if he had known. Perhaps the word Señora might designate Don José's mother? Or Juana, his daughter, might have been married, and returned to her father's roof a widow, and with the title of Señora. For the moment I could not solve the puzzle. But as I dressed a tabernacle, no longer quite so vile, in the best of undergear and overgear, I resolved that life was worth living - if it were only for the number of things one has yet to find out.

When I issued forth, leaving the contents of the trunk, as if stirred with a long pole, strewed about the room, I was pleased to observe that Don Picaro was thoroughly astonished by my appearance. I was, so he informed Señor Valtierra, of a correction to go forth, even with his master, on the great day of Tosants. But Don

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José was so careless, and he had feared - .

He did not venture to state what he feared, but I judge it to have been my torn white trousers and the tufts of hair sticking Indian-fashion through the crown of my hat without a brim. For Don Picaro had the greatest care of his master's respectability, always dressing, when on duty, like an undertaker himself - except, as it might be, when it was his night off, and he was going to a ball. On which occasions he favoured the company with a striped waistcoat and a red sash about his waist.

Midway down the stairs I met Don José.

'We will have something to eat first,' he said. 'It is possible that the Señora may not return, but rather stay with one of her friends to lunch after the Misa Mayor, before going out to the cemetery.'

I think, however, that he made haste. There was no ceremony at table. Tomasillo (who was of a truth no rascal, though his master affectionately called him one) waited gracefully and silently - that is, as a rule, for once or twice he was tempted into joining in the conversation, which he did without servility and with the true Spanish self-respect. His master might call him Don Picaro, if he liked - but it was easy to see that he held himself the equal of any other person whatsoever.

We set out along the street, which was now busier than before. For me I was feeling quite miserable, being attired with that infinite raspy respectability which seems all buckram and swaddling-bands after the free airs that had visited my skin upon the campo and in the forest, entering by the wide bottoms of my linen bragas and coming out (with the perfection of scientific ventilation) by the hole in my hat. To the sorrows which afflict just and unjust, I think the wise Singer of Songs might very judiciously have added the affliction of new clothes, of hairy clothes, of clothes which you have to fit instead of their fitting you, clothes that have a spite against your chin, that grip you where you breathe, and fail to touch where you have been accustomed to wear a belt about

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you, or, better still, the silken sash of Cataluña.
Anathema Maranatha!

If the demure and modest reader will skip her eyes over the next paragraph, I will tell the rest of the world what I most wanted to do at that moment.

(Pause while the Court is being cleared.)

Well, I wanted to scratch! And that not in one place, but comprehensively, and as one determined to do an entire justice to the subject. To the comfortable reader the tragedy may not seem very terrible, but on the streets of a great city, in the midst of well-attired crowds, all of whom were at one with their underclothes, it was as bad as a violent desire to laugh in church.

In the cathedral things certainly went better. For there at least the crowd pressed about one, and there were pillars - as comforting as those erected by his mythical Grace of Argyll for the behoof of his distressed countrymen.

Still all this detracted from the solemnity of the service, and I never knew before how far man was the creature of his sensations, even of the most apparently mean and trivial. The hard-shell Buddhist is right. There is no great and no little. My new clothes spoiled the very Misa Mayor of El Pilar for me. The ever-heightening thrill of the chants, the young voices ringing out, the older ones coming in with a solemn sonorous rumble like chariots jolting over the floor of heaven, the mounting smoky kopjes of the incense, the silver tinkle of the bell that sent us all to our knees - I own that they affect me more now, as I sit and write, than they did then. It ought not to have been so. But then it is written that there is a devil told off to attend church-services, in order to keep the people from benefiting by them. Sometimes he even mounts into the pulpit. I walked away from a church door once with a very celebrated preacher, after a thrilling display of oratory which had moved every listener.

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We walked silently awhile. I did not like to break in upon that solemn pause. I felt that there was still emotion unexpressed in his heart. At last he spoke.

'Did you ever see a church with as many bald heads in it?' he demanded suddenly.

I then directed his attention, with some remains of his own earnestness, to the fate of certain who in another place had called out, 'Go up, Bald Head.' We were passing a wood at the time, but, instead of taking warning, he said that bears had been a long time extinct in our country. He even gave the date, because he had recently bought an encyclopaedia on the instalment plan.

It was, indeed, with something of the same inappropriateness that the unaccustomed excellence of my clothes affected my spirits within the cathedral of El Pilar in the city of Zaragoza.

Yet so strange is man, that as soon as I got out upon the streets again, the feeling wore off. For one thing, I found an excellent subject for a picture in a friend of Don José's - a friend who kept an orange-stall on the pavement. She was the widow of an officer who had died at his post. But with the customary day-after-tomorrow gratitude of the Spanish Government, her pension, often promised, had never yet arrived. She had refused all private bounty, and instead had set up a well-patronised stall on feast-days and Sundays near the cathedral porch. You could pay anything you liked for an orange or a handful of nuts. To well-dressed persons she returned no change, but instead, the widow's blessing. She was known to all the city, and, I fancy, did not greatly lose by the non-arrival of her official pension.

'The Señora,' said Don José, after looking about him a little discontentedly, 'is not in the cathedral. She must therefore have gone on to the cemetery. It is, you understand, the Great Day of the year with us. All the world goes. We shall assuredly find her there.'

'Are your folk buried in Zaragoza?' I inquired of him,

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expecting only an affirmative answer.

But his reply completely undeceived me, so that I showed my surprise.

'By no means,' he said; 'I hold not of Aragon, but of Old Castile, and my mother was a Catalana. We Valtierras find sepulture in Valladolid!'

'Then why has Madame - the Señora, I mean - ?'

I began, but stayed myself. If Don José could wait to explain, surely I could wait to hear.

'Oh, it is the custom!' he said, with a certain brusqueness foreign to his open nature. And then, as if repenting him of having spoken thus sharply to a friend, he added, 'But in this case the Señora has a special reason.'

I noted it as a curious fact that even when talking French - which, out of consideration for a guest, he did habitually to me - Don José always spoke of La Señora.

The road to the cemetery of Zaragoza was a curious sight that great day of the Tosants. Vehicles rushed uphill and down by the hundred - great omnibuses and drags, crowded and lurching, their drivers urging on their horses in order to make as many journeys as possible within the hour. There were also many private carriages, together with a few horsemen, chiefly officers of the army and police, or farmers, from the countryside, who had come in to see the sight. Then, surrounding and swallowing up all, there poured out of the city the great stream of the common folk on foot, all in black, and all setting their faces towards the Hill of the Dead. Through this turmoil Don José moved as through his own piñadas, a good head and shoulders above his fellows - great, kindly-humoured, with the ready word and the ready smile, giving no offence and taking none from any man.

Presently, at the foot of the fine Avenida de la Independencia, that entrance worthy of kings, he hailed a returning vehicle.

'The Señora has the carriage,' he explained, 'and we

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shall doubtless come back with her. She had no idea I would be here in time.'

Then he added, gravely, 'And, indeed, no more had I, when I went away!'

The conveyance was a huge swag-tailed waggonette - there were no others. And Don José, after mounting me up beside the driver, stood by the door, inviting all and sundry, women and children, the old or the footsore, to mount and ride.

'Lazy fellows may walk afoot - as I myself should do, had I the time!' he cried, 'but if this lady will graciously do me the favour to enter, I shall be honoured!'

The gracious lady in question was a poor woman in tarnished black mourning, holding a great baby, far too heavy for her to be carrying in her weak thin arms. The waggonette was soon filled to overflowing, and many were the smiles from city magnates passing in their carriages at Señor Valtierra. For it was soon evident that the good sheep-and-forest-master was considered by all to be an original, and that his actions were commented upon by the entire town. Indeed, I learned afterwards that some of his exploits were only kept out of the city press by a well-grounded fear that, if anything amusing or personal appeared in print, Don José was very likely to come up that journalistic staircase and break the editor's head with a stick! Of all the men I have known in the South, Don José was the most northern in his methods of argument.

Once (so the story is told) he had a difference with the overseer of one of his farms, a very surly Gallegan, with a most evil temper. Don José knocked him down, and, I fear, thrashed him most un-Britishly while in that position.

'Now,' he said, 'get up, and if you want to kill me with a knife, you will find me asleep by ten o'clock, and my door will be unlocked!'

So surprised was the man that he bent his knee and asked Don José's pardon on the spot.

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‘But,’ said he uncertainly, ‘I suppose now you will send me away?’

‘Oh! not at all!’ quoth Señor Valtierra; ‘why should I? If you are satisfied, I am. You are a good overseer, though you do possess the temper of a foundered mule! If you say nothing about what has passed, why - no more shall I.’

‘Maria Purisima!’ as the crowd themselves said (all of them speaking together), how many things there were to see in Zaragoza that day! If, that is, I had only had the time to see them - with a mind clear of little Zaida and her elusive relatives, together with the engrossing private affairs of Miguel the hunchback and brave Don José. For, by all the saints, there were certainly a power of things to be seen in the capital city of Aragon upon the festal-day of Todos los Santos.

Just when we started across the Plaza in the full glory of the sunshine, there came a procession of seminary priests, all going jovially with the rest of the world in the direction of the Hill of the Dead. Sorrow was not on their faces, hardly even of a decent professional sort - for they belonged, with few exceptions, to a distance, and, as in the case of Don José, their folk were buried elsewhere. But the Señor did not offer them the hospitality of his carriage.

‘A little exercise will do the Seminarists no harm!’ he said grimly; ‘they are all young and lusty enough, surely! March on, then, ye holy men!’

There were also services going on at most of the churches by the way, and if they did not sell doves within the sacred portals, it was about the only thing they did not vend. I saw one good old Aragonese dame calmly roasting chestnuts well within the portal of a church near the city barrier. And so strong was the affluence of buyers about her, that I question whether she had not a larger congregation than the preacher within. Bakers’ shops, open to the street as in the East, comfortably invited the

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sense of smell with deliciously fresh-baked bread and sweetmeats specially confectioned for the occasion.

Out of a gloomy archway issued a Monk of the White. He also was on his way to mourn, a tin lantern and a candle concealed under his ample cloak, to let his light shine before the graves of his ancestors.

Little processions of nuns, with hushed faces, some of them recently expelled from a hard-hearted neighbouring republic, wended their way down quiet streets, side by side with jingling bullock teams. This was for them one of their days of ingathering. And in a little while they could be seen taking their stand - one here, another there - by the great gates in the glare and the heat and the dust, a little collecting-box in one hand and the other holding an umbrella each over her bowed head - very peaceful with sweet, downcast eyes, not so much asking as receiving the alms of the faithful.

Most interesting perhaps of all (and certainly that which pleased me the most) was an old Aragonese peasant and cultivator resting a moment upon a bench under the trees at the foot of the Plaza. He was dressed in his ancient and picturesque attire. His old wife, too, had donned her best blue-and-yellow for the occasion. The light was good, and I was fortunate in 'getting' the group in the only way in which groups are of the least use - that is, without the knowledge of the subjects. One cigarette, you observe, has already been finished by the deft fingers of the old lady. She has very considerably passed this on to calm the nerves or the temper of her husband, excited by the length of the services in church. The smoker, already tasting the pleasures of anticipation, is feeling in his pockets for a match, and while the old lady is rolling another, a grandson, evidently town-bred, watches her swift manipulation with consuming interest.

[If any one does not know what the often-named *alpargatas* are, they can be seen in their most primitive form upon the feet of the old peasant in the picture. They are a kind of sandal, with soles of finely-knotted string,

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above which the wearer generally wears his hose cross-gartered - or, in lieu of hose, his naked legs.]

Our team of three horses started with a vast scraping and clattering of hoofs, and there was a good deal of emulation on the part of the several drivers as to passing each other - so much so that I should not have been surprised if a few additional graves had been required in the cemetery immediately upon our arrival there. Yet Don José rather stimulated his man than otherwise, by demands as to whether he meant to allow that cross-eyed, slack-wristed rascal from the Gran Parador to pass him - the best driver in Zaragoza. And, to my surprise, even the poor widow, with the great heavy softish baby in her arms, developed into an ardent partisan, and, instead of showing any fear actually laughed aloud as we passed carriage after carriage - Don José giving driver after driver the back of his hand as at a chariot-race in the circus.

Mostly the defeated drivers laughed also, if they were at all good-humoured fellows. 'It is only one more of the jests of Don José!' the loser would cry to his next neighbour. But one red-faced, deceitful-looking rascal from the Fonda Suiza cursed us as we went by. Whereupon Don José called out to him that his horse looked as if it had been well used to the task of conveying people to the cemetery on the hill - one at a time!

On the whole, it was not a particularly solemn journey, and yet no sooner had the driver been paid and the gates of the Home of the Dead were in plain sight before us, than a hush fell upon every one. The little woman, erstwhile so excited, put her handkerchief to her eyes and cried quietly into it. A shade came over the faces of the others. Even Don José was silent.

Nevertheless, as an unattached outsider, I paused a moment to note the parties on the scanty grass - women in twos and threes with carts and a couple of tethered mules or so - all of them, even the mules, enjoying impromptu picnics outside the walls. About the gates of

the cemetery, as in the town itself, were many gay flower-stalls, their awnings of striped stuff, generally red and yellow in colour. At these, wreaths, crucifixes and plain bouquets, were to be got for a few pence. Frequently also, the same stalls sold nuts for the pocket and even herbs for the salad-bowl.

But beneath all this surface levity, the evident sincerity of the people, their true reverence, especially during the time of the vigil by the tombs, their appreciation of any little chance kindness, showed me once again the genuine, solid, and noble characteristics of the Spaniards of the North, who are, spite of all defects and through all defeats, one of the finest peoples in the world.

At the upper end of the little mortuary-chapel a solitary light burned. Otherwise it was empty, swept and garnished. Service was either over, or had not yet begun.

Don José took my arm, and, like one who knows his way by heart, moved through the crowd. I had actually to beg that I might be allowed to expose one or two plates upon this strange and, to me, unparalleled scene.

In the richer parts of the cemetery the throng was not nearly so dense. We were, happily, too early for the great folk. They would come later. Here and there a man in the quiet livery of domestic service in Spain - officer's orderly or what not - was busy arranging wreaths of flowers, trimming the lamps which would be lit at the approach of darkness, or, above all (and taking the eye before all else), winding about the graves those long streamers of broad purple ribbon with inscriptions in gilt upon them - 'To our Well-loved Friend, Estanislao Fraile' and so forth.

In these aristocratic quarters all was of marble, and the lots carefully defined and plotted out. Consequently, save for a few strangers moving about, gazing at the tombs and comparing their dressings, the place was deserted. By-and-by the grandees would arrive - when, as Don José remarked rather bitterly, 'there is nothing for

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them to do but to adjust their capas, kneel down and pray - before going home to supper.'

But the chief interest centred in the poorer portions of the cemetery, where the crosses were mostly of wood. There one saw whole families about every burying-place, clustering thick like bees. There were all sorts of decorations too. I saw one very large wreath made of thyme from the hillsides. A woman in her peasant costume and a boy in a blue blouse kept guard over it. Even where there was no cross at all, or any monument except the regulation cemetery number, there was always a diamond-shaped lantern and a penny candle. But (and it was no wonder) Don José, at last losing patience, hurried me past these things, and we turned sharply through a small door into another and apparently wholly private portion of the vast graveyard.

Here there were many avenues of dusky yews, and the monuments were generally fewer and simpler in taste.

Suddenly we stood before a tall beautifully-formed tomb of the purest white marble, with only a single line of inscription in raised letters upon it - all, save the little blue shadows which these cast, of the same dead whiteness. There were several wreaths upon the monument, but they also were either of white or of the palest blue. To the right, and a little retired, a rose-tree was still thrusting one or two blossoms athwart an artificial rockery. Here, by no means in bad taste, had been constructed a little shrine of the Virgin.

The white marble Virgin with her attendant penitent stood well back among the foliage. It was certainly beautifully carved, and as different as possible from the tinselled dolls in the churches. Deeply shadowed, the figure of a woman kneeled beneath in an attitude of reverence, her hands clasped and her eyes looking upward with a kind of wonder, at once mild and sad. I could only see the bent head, together with the curves of her shoulders and waist. Don José held up his hand and we moved softly away.

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He did not speak, but, for all that, I knew I had seen the mysterious Señora. Don José put his hand within the flap of his coat, where he kept his pocket-book. He took from it the poor ill-printed photograph he had seen for the first time on the outskirts of the piñadas near the hut of Miguel Toros. I had not seen him look at it since, or, indeed, did he now. Instead, he lifted his finger and pointed to the inscription on the stone of white marble. I read:

To
FRANCISCA ZAIDA
WHOM,
HAVING LOVED,
I LOST.

Few words, yet they might almost have served for the universal tombstone inscription of the world - ever since Eve, expelled from the Garden of the Four Rivers, laid away Abel under the soil and wept as she looked out towards the Land of Nod. But Don José continued to point, at the same time bending down till his lips almost touched my ear.

'Now is the time,' he whispered, 'for you to redeem your promise, Señor - or to break a woman's heart. You asked for a reason why I had a right to ask you where abides Zaida, the daughter of Cyrilla Toro. Well, there is your reason!'

And his index-finger passed slowly from the tomb of white marble to the dark figure of the kneeling woman.

'Be gentle with her,' he whispered. 'Remember, she believes that the child is dead!'

Then he spoke, quite in his natural voice:

'Cyrilla!' he said.

As in the sudden crises of life we generally stand quiet and chill, so also when we are very greatly surprised. At least, I did so now. Even wonder seemed to be lacking. I only grew a little colder.

The woman turned her head at the voice,

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uncomprehendingly at first. And then, seeing Don José standing there with a smile on his face, she ran to him, suddenly transfigured, crying out, 'My husband! My husband!'

While she laid her head on his bosom and sobbed, I thought of Miguel Toro. It was almost his voice - nay, the very accent he had used when he told me how his sister Cyrilla had promised to stay with him for ever and ever.

'Hush!' said Don José, gently touching her on the shoulder, 'here is a stranger! To weep is good, beloved, - it eases the heart - but not here - not in a public place!'

The lady whom Don José had called his wife lifted up her face, and, even through the mist of tears, the eyes looked out at me.

There was no mistake. These, and no others, were the large passionate eyes, that, the wistful mouth with the self-same eager love-craving expression that had gone to my heart in the little girl Zaida. All was the same - but older, sadder, yet somehow serener too. The cloud had been long in passing. The waters had been deep. They had gone over that dark and shapely head. Grief and tears had moulded that full mouth till it was now carven like Niobe's. Instead of spiced wine, they had given her vinegar to drink. Lover and friend had been put far from her - at least once on a time, in the days of darkness, that had indeed been so. But, thank God - and the man - it was not any longer!

'Cyrilla!' Don José had called her. And I did not doubt for a moment that there before me, in the flesh, stood the woman who as a girl had been Cyrilla Toro - so careless, so light-hearted, to men just a little cruel, the winsome Cyrilla Toro.

I had no idea what was to come next. Behind us, among the yews, I could hear the stir of other visitors. And though the little shrine and the marble monument were apart from the other graves and the path to them little trodden, yet we could by no means count on being alone. For me, I had lost initiative. I must leave everything

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to Don José, who stood still with his arm about this Cyrilla - risen, so far as I was concerned, abruptly as Lazarus from the very tomb's mouth when they rolled away the stone.

'Cyrilla,' said Don José very gently, 'dearest, this stranger brings news that may be good. He is of the English, but has been long in France and Spain, and has wondrously come to learn many things, even concerning that which is closest - closest to your heart! Will you hear him speak?'

It did not seem a very promising opening, but I judged that Señor Valtierra knew his own business best. So I reached out one hand for the photograph. With my other I was about to open the flap of rough brown paper which covered it, when, by a stroke of good fortune, my eyes fell once more on the letters of the inscription. Instinctively I read them aloud:

WHOM, HAVING LOVED, I LOST!

'But,' I added, looking straight at the Señora, 'sometimes the lost are found again!'

The Señora kept silence. Either she failed to understand (which afterwards I found to have been the true state of the case) or she did not believe me. At most she had a vague impression that I was endeavouring to administer some sort of amateur ghostly comfort.

It would not do. It was necessary that I should try again. I did so, handing her the El Seo photograph without a word.

Once more the pictured eyes of Zaida did their work. I thought the Señora would faint. All vestiges of colour left her face. She became white as the marble against which she had been leaning.

'Speak no lies to me!' she cried, turning her great sad eyes on me. 'Give me no false hopes - I cannot bear them again - not again! I had begun - yes, a little - to forget!'

As usual, words came back to me with a rush. 'There is a hope, Señora!' I said. 'I have come from afar to

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give it you. I bring you the picture of Zaida, the daughter of Don Alonso of Miranda-Aran. She is not dead. She has been brought up by her grandfather, the Bishop of El Seo, and his brother, Don Manuel Sebastian, called the Count of Miranda-Aran.'

'But, no - she was stolen away from me - years ago - years ago, I tell you!' she cried; 'stolen when she was but a babe - by the Wicked Woman. They told me she was dead. Almost I died then! And I would have died altogether but that Don José here, my husband, found me - drew me - saved me - gave me shelter - and rest, and - that love of his which I deserve so little!'

'Hush thee, then - hush! Let us go home! All will be made clear there. Come, Cyrilla!' said Don José, drawing her away affectionately.

'Tell me first when last you saw her,' she urged, clutching at me, 'is she well? You are sure she lives? It is as you say? Ah, do not deceive a poor woman!'

'At least,' I answered, lightly as I could, 'she was well a few days ago. She is in France, in the Ariège, safe with one of the truest of women and one of the loyalest of men - !'

But all the excitement had proved too much for her, and she sank quietly back with a soft breathing sigh into the arms of her husband. Don José carried her rapidly to the carriage which was in waiting at a side gate. The crowd everywhere made respectful way. Indeed the incident caused no astonishment whatever.

'Ah, the poor lady, she lost her first, her only babe! I have seen it so written on the tomb!' I heard one woman whisper to another.

'And she has set up a shrine to the Mother of Consolation - Purisima! She must, indeed, be a good Christian!' came the answer.

'What better comfort can there be to a mother than to pray to The Mother?' asked the first, with uplifted eyes.

You find religion - aye, and true religion too, though perhaps not quite undefiled religion, in every woman's

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heart in Spain. The grain is good grain, even though it has not been sifted. Yet who among the doctors is prepared to say how much of religion and how much of superstition there is in any human soul?

Don José lifted Cyrilla out of the carriage and carried her within as if she had been a child. Going up the steps she opened her eyes, and meeting the kindly look and calm assuring face of her husband, she said slowly, with her sweet and languid smile, 'Now I shall have something to add to the stone in the cemetery by the grotto of our Lady of Tears:

WHOM, HAVING LOST, I FOUND!

Then seeing, or seeming to see, with one of the quick inexpressible intuitions of women, the shadow upon her husband's face - as if he had been left out in the pronoun 'I' which she had used, she added, patting his cheek,

'Ah, José mine, this your little Cyrilla was also lost! And who but you could have found her?'

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CHAPTER TWELVE

HOW LOVE CAME HOME

Immediately in front of Don José's windows women were teasing 'flock' mattresses with the easy friendliness of Spain. A thin icy drizzle was falling which made the men who hurried by draw tighter about their throats the folds of their capas. But, for all the difference the weather made to these busy workers, it might have been the soft airs of spring which were visiting them. I could not help hoping that the people to whom the mattresses belonged might be equally indifferent to 'th' heat o' the sun, and the furious winter's rages!

I sat and looked down at these women, wondering with that curious automatic 'other half of the brain' what they were, how and where they lived, who had been their 'playmates and companions,' if they were wedded or single - while at the same time all my being was taking in, with a keen and delighted wonder, every detail of the story of Cyrilla Toro, told me by her own lips - her husband, Don José, acting meantime as suggester, prompter, brake, and the man who lets down the curtain.

For in spite of all, Cyrilla Valtierra remained much of the old Cyrilla - though every trait was curiously blurred and altered, as if some exquisite work of art had been dipped into a fiery bath of metal, from which it had emerged as precious, perhaps - but different.

No, the fine gold had not grown dim - only its most glittering facets had been overlaid. She who had been a winsome mischievous girl had become sweet and patient - emergent from suffering, like, let us say, that 'other Mary,' when at the end of things John took her to his own home.

While I had been sitting in the great, somewhat bare room, waiting for Doña Cyrilla and her husband (for once

Don José had to take the second place), I cast my thoughts back and noted how curiously the story of little Zaida had pursued me ever since I had entered the country. I saw how I had been led on from point to point - from less to more - from ignorance to knowledge. The man in whose care Zaida was now, Biño, the faithful, had brought me into Spain, and had served me ever since with complete though intermittent loyalty. Zaida's great-uncle, Don Manuel Sebastian, had been my first host - and, perhaps, take him altogether, was the greatest figure the Peninsula had revealed to me. Her second-cousins had taught me how to smuggle, according to its various shades of black, white and grey. Zaida's grandfather it was who had showed to me the beauty of holiness, in a threadbare violet gown in the garden-garth of La Delicia near by the City of El Seo. It was the father of Zaida's foster-mother, one Rodil, a caravan-merchant, who had brought me into her presence. In his company the trustfulness of that bright young face had first greeted my eyes, among the blackened ruins of Miranda-Aran.

Here all unexpectedly I had come upon the history of her father Alonso, that unworthy son of Armandus, Bishop of El Seo. Last of all I had heard the story of Cyrilla, her mother, who at the first had seemed almost equally unworthy, in that she could apparently attempt to bring dishonour upon one of those rare souls, who truly walk with God.

The Carlist camp and the various connubial and adventurous excuses of my companions had brought me to the strange stone hut of the forest-guard among the pine woods of Señor Valtierra. There for the first time I had heard the true story of the girlhood of Zaida's mother, how Cyrilla Toro had been no adventuress, however gay and unthoughtful for herself, or even careless of the feelings of others. I heard how she had taken her life in her hand and gone forth, discounting the reproach. Such a woman could not be reckoned either selfish or ignoble.

But till Don José came walking his horse upward

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through the piñadas, till he found me doing the duties of forest-guard among his pines, till he had taken my photograph of the little maid in his hand, till he had stood marble-pale at shepherd Adan's question, I had believed (what I now knew to be false) that the Frenchwoman's Pool ended all. The little shrine of the Virgin seen on the Day-of-All-the-Saints, and the empty tomb with its simple inscription, had told me the rest. So, sitting thus and watching the flock-pickers on the wet pavement, I heard feet on the stair, and rose to receive Don José and his wife.

Already Cyrilla looked more composed and happier than on the day before. She took my hand in a long clasp.

'I know now that what you told me is true,' she said, 'my little girl lives. God has revealed it to me in the night!'

Her husband lifted a quiet informing eye upon me, and so, bowing only, I let her go on. With a swift and dainty gesture she lifted the picture to her lips.

'Oh, I can hardly bear to wait,' she cried. 'I want so to kiss her - to clasp the little one in my arms. But Don José, who is wise, says I must wait. We must first, it seems, see Don Manuel Sebastian and the Bishop. It is right, he says. They have cared and thought and loved, during the years. We not - because we did not know. She was lost - lost for ever. And but for him - (here she patted her husband's cheek with a look that is quite inexpressible) I too would have died. I wanted to die. But now - to live - to live years and years is my desire!'

She held out the print at arm's length. It was a poor picture at the best, but it got infinitely more than its meed of praise in Spain that day.

'I think from this,' she cried, with the sudden dainty bird-like turn of the head and the same dimple of smiling assurance that was so charming in Zaida, 'that she promises to be - as pretty - as I used to be!'

'Never!' cried Don José loyally, 'never!' Then seeing the two seas meet - pleasure and disappointment joined on his wife's face - he added hastily, 'But she will be

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lovely all the same, doubt it not. This gentleman says so. And indeed, even in the picture the eyes - the very eyes - of my Cyrilla look out at me!

And at these words the eyes of the true wife lifted upon him, and if ever little Zaida's were destined to look at any one like that - well, he ought to be a happy man, that is all.

From that time it was the voice of Cyrilla only that I heard speaking - she that had been dead and was alive again. Sometimes the story was supplemented and amended by her husband, when Cyrilla's memory failed her, or indignation seemed ready to burst forth. And this which follows was the story that I heard, looking down upon the mattress-clearers 'teasing' the fluff in the thin icy drizzle - the 'flock' which, once more compacted, was destined to sow influenza and rheumatism and chills innumerable among the honest citizens of Zaragoza.

WHAT CYRILLA TOLD ME, WRITTEN DOWN IN HER OWN WORDS

Why did I love him? I do not know. One woman may make another woman understand that, but never a man. A man never really understands why a woman can love any man except himself? Such is his nature, as I have known it - yes, even Don José.

But did I once love this man - Alonso the Carlist? As one remembers a dream of the night in the glare of noonday, it comes back to me that I did. As one who has walked in his sleep, and, having fallen, awakes sore wounded and wondering - so seems my life with Alonso to me now and here.

Once I know it was not so. Let me think. It began thuswise.

I saw him lying there, wounded, weak, saying nothing, asking nothing, caring for nothing. He was so different from the others, who were always coming on horseback, speaking praises and clad as men that ride

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forth to woo. But this man was pale, lying still and seeming ready to die - even wishful that he might. But as often as I came within his room I knew that my coming was his heaven, and that, when I went, the sun set for him that day.

How did I know these things? How does a woman know anything about a man? Perhaps the Señor in his wisdom thinks that she needs first to see it printed in a book?

So went many days, and somehow by-and-by, in the quiet of these summer hours, there fell a constraint upon me. My brother was far away in the piñadas. The work of the household was soon done. Within that door, as it were, ever present to my heart, there lay a man praying - yes, praying that I might open it and only smile upon him - no more. Sometimes the thought drove me out into the shadows of the woods. And I tried to do - well, as I was used to of yore, such a long time ago - sit and sew, watching the road for the cavaliers, cloaked with blue, cinctured with vermilion, horsemen young and bold, who came riding upon horses, all to show themselves off before me!

But it would not do. No, in a little while I began to feel the strings tugging at my heart - as if one had drawn me with cords, or, as Father Gregorio says, 'with the bands of a man.'

I saw, clearly as in a vision (sitting there in the woods), the little room, the open window with the shutters closed on the crosshasp, and one ray of green sunlight wavering through the fig-tree on the whitewash of the walls. And on the bed lay a man, very quiet, with swathed head, who only watched the shut door, and - yes, as I said before - prayed for the sound of my footsteps along the flagged passage.

The others - they could do everything for themselves. They offered to do everything for me. They had great horizons - vistas wide as those you see from a mountain top when the heavens are clear of cloud. This

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man alone could do nothing for himself. If I would not help him, sit by him, care for him, I knew he must abide lonely and perhaps suffering all day till my brother's return.

I was all the world to him. He could give me nothing - offer me nothing. That was his first charm. He was about to die, and asked no better than that he should die - with his head . . . where no man's head had ever been. Yet he did not ask it. He only looked. But all the same I knew.

Now do you understand?

Well, not fully perhaps. But more so than Don José, who never will understand, or, indeed, will let me speak about it - saving this one time, which we owe to you fairly for that which you have brought us.

And so - and so - the pines had no more of me for a while. Perhaps it was the mother in the girl that had awakened. I wanted to 'mother' Don Alonso, the wounded man - not knowing that - well, what I know now. Almost as in after days with my babe, I lifted him and laid him. And it ended as, I suppose, all very wise people would have foreseen from the beginning - I loved him.

But, being no more than a young and ignorant girl I did not know, I could not foresee. How could I? Had I not always been sufficient for everything that came my way before? Aye, truly - and something more! Perhaps if Don José, my friend, had been near to me the end might have been different. I do not know. At any rate, so it was.

And when Don Alonso grew better, and was able to go out among the trees, he must needs have my arm, and, after every few steps, rest. Then he seemed to depend on me more than ever. But, all the same, there came suddenly upon me one day the sense that I was bound - captured - taken - as in a net I have seen a wild thing of the forest. I struggled to be loose, and tried my most desperate to free myself. But I think, like the bird in the meshes, I only ruffled my wings and lay panting.

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Then one day, late in the evening, we came home together, he and I, thinking no evil. And lo! we found my brother (who had passed us in the deep places of the wood, unseen himself) angry with a terrible anger. And that night we fled together and - I have never seen Miguel Toro since!

After that, he told me that we must go very far away - across the mountains into France. But first I caused Alonso to accompany me to Father Gregorio, who, choosing between two evils, and knowing my nature from a child, gave us that blessing which a priest can give, and said the Holy Mass over our heads as we knelt to take communion. It was, I know, no strict marriage, but it held as well as another. Nevertheless Alonso promised that in France we should be wedded again according to the law of that State. For, desiring safety, he had made himself of the French nation.

It was the height of summer, and the mountains were mostly as bare of snow as the palm of your hand. So sometimes we walked and sometimes we rode in ox-waggons, abiding in cabins of the shepherds and métairies by the wayside - till at last there came the rest-house on the pass, the white roads like spread tables, and the long descent into France.

He was taking me to his home, he said, and I was content. Who, indeed, would not have been?

Aye, and to make me love him more, at Toulouse he kept his word. We were married duly, and after the Mayor's room in the town-house, we went also to another church and heard words said over us by a French priest. But my real marriage was done by Father Gregorio, who knew all from the beginning, and can witness even to this day if in aught I have spoken untruly. He is in this city now, and even ere we go we shall seek him. Nay, José, it is my wish that this stranger shall know all - all. If he gives me back my Zaida, why - there is nothing I would refuse to him which my tongue can utter.

But in Toulouse, after a week or two, I found Don

Alonso strangely altered. He had lived in that city before, but his work kept him much away, in cafés and places where men meet and come forth smelling of tobacco and wine. Moreover, this work of his - I know it now, though I did not then - was to spy upon his fellow countrymen, and to find out their secrets. He used to go off on long journeys to Bayonne, to St. Jean de Luz, to Biarritz, even to Bordeaux. Wherever the Carlista exiles were gathered together, there went Alonso of Miranda-Aran. And they welcomed him for the sake of his people and his good name, telling him their secrets and thinking no evil.

Nor, indeed, did I, though I was lonely - very lonely - having then no child, but instead - as is the custom of women - the need to cry, to be 'made of' and petted, which - but, after all, you are but two men! How can I expect you to understand? No, I bore it all for love's sake, and in a way was happy enough. Till one terrible day a woman laughed at me in the street and called after me, so that I set my fingers in my ears. No, not for my own sake, for not a word did I believe. But for the sake of the innocent thing that should one day be. Yes, that was it. Nevertheless I went home and cried alone. Then in the evening, after it was dark, came this woman again, and when like a simpleton I opened the door, she pushed past me, clamouring! Yes, mad - I do indeed think she was mad! For she cried out upon me that the house was hers, that it had been hers for a long season - that my husband Alonso was hers - yes, had been hers for years, before ever he set eyes on me!

At the first I stood dumb, not taking in a word, far less believing it. For I loved this man and had followed him to a far land. So I called the officers and had her put forth. But as she went she cursed the babe unborn with a great evil, and promised that it should die unbaptized, for that which I had done to her. She would keep her word, she said, blaspheming. She was, as I thought, but a poor street-trull, decked out with gewgaws. My husband could never - no, never - have looked at such. I loved him too

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well even to soil my soul with thinking it.

But on the next day, a neighbour who dwelt in the same house - a woman who, perhaps because I was younger or better to look upon than she, wished me no good - took me aside and told me that it was all true. And because even then I would not believe, she brought in other neighbours to testify to her story.

And so in the dulling afternoon I was left there - alone. I sat down and wrote a letter to Alonso - who had been my husband - at Bayonne he was. But he never answered, going instead to Spain - as they told me, with this woman. But that, at least, was false. She abode in the city and waited for her vengeance. For Alonso was dead already.

So in the fulness of the time the child was born - Francisca Zaida, I called her - the name coming to me in a dream as if written in letters of fire. In the blackness of such sorrow as I pray that no woman may know - that is and live - this pearl of price came into my arms.

But the neighbours went in and out, making much of me and of the child - especially the woman who had given me the evil information about my husband. And when I was again about the house - well of body, and able to care for the babe, lo, this woman bade me come quickly one night to her room, for that one of her children had fallen unconscious, and she knew not what to do. So, as I had the skill in simples which one learns in woods and in the country, I went, the babe Zaida being fast asleep.

Also, about that time my heart began to uplift in me, for I said to myself - after all, it is of the nature of the men of our country, at least in cities. Moreover, it had been finished, as even the woman herself said, before ever he had set eyes on me. Perhaps, I thought, that was the reason why he used to sit, and look so long and so sadly at me - because he did not dare to tell me!

So in my heart of hearts, I even began to forgive my husband, and wrote the second time to tell him so. And

though he lay still with the red earth over him, long or ever the letter reached him, still I am glad to think now that I wrote that to him for a last farewell. No, José, do not smite the table - I am glad!

Well, feeling the life thus coming back, and, happy in the beauty of my babe, I went not unwillingly to help the other woman's child. Also, being lonely, it is woman's nature to wish to speak to some one of her babe and its beauty. But when I got there - lo, it was all nothing. The boy sat eating an orange. I remained awhile talking - oh, to think upon the folly of it now!

And when I went back to my own chamber above, and bent over the cradle, to look and worship the babe - my little Zaida was gone!

Ah, Señor, whatever my sins (and indeed my own heart condemns me), surely I, a poor girl, had not deserved that! Even Father Gregorio says so. Yet God entered into judgment with me. I never thought to find Him gracious again. And indeed it has taken Him a long time!

My child was gone, and only waiting to look about the house (for, I thought, someone might have hidden her for a jest) I ran out into the night! The streets were busy with many people. And some mocked at me, while others - oh! that Don José had been there! The evil beasts! Then I went to the police folk, but they would do nothing. They would send and inquire - oh yes, tomorrow. The commissary would present himself. But at present it was impossible. He was dining. Besides, the child would surely turn up. Who wanted to steal a child? So once again I ran back to ask of the neighbours. But they mocked at me, or at least so it appeared. For the house was hateful to me; all the more that there was one there who said loudly that Alonso, my husband, owed him money, and that everything in the house was his and not mine any more. I must take nothing away. I did not care. I only wanted the babe, and I would go. Oh, right gladly!

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Perhaps I did not understand. You see, I did not then speak the French language as I do now. Mayhap some of them wished to be kind. But this I know, they would not help me to find my babe. So I ran out again into the darkness. It was in the beautiful spring weather, but, as is the custom there in the twilight, the chill wind of the Midi was blowing.

Now, there was no doubt in my mind at all as to who had done this thing. It was the Evil Woman. She and no other had taken my child - his child - all to be revenged on me. She would seek him with the child, and (so in my folly I told myself) bribe him to love her with the beautiful babe that was mine alone. Now I am wiser. I know that when women seek to win men, they do not take them other women's children.

[Here Don José gently stroked his wife's hand.]

Well (she continued, calming herself), I cannot tell much more. Those lighted streets - they seemed to pursue me. I asked a man passing along a boulevard, where there were trees and shops with closed shutters, if I was upon the right way to Spain. He caught me by the wrist, laughing. But in a moment I flashed a knife before his eyes, clear in the yellow shine of the gas-lamps. Ha! if he had not fled, there had been one dog the less in Toulouse that night! So I went on and on till I was clear of the town and the dreadful spying of the lamps. Then bit by bit there came back to me the learning of the stars, which had been taught me by my brother in the piñadas on the hillsides. Easily I found that strange North Star, on which the world turns, and I set my back to it. Any road, so I thought, must end by taking me to Spain so long as I kept my back steadily to that star.

How far it might be to my own land I knew not. We had come by train part of the way, my husband and I. But now, I had not even thought to take what money there was in the house. It was little - my husband having promised to send me more from Bayonne. Only two sous did I possess in all the world. And I was a woman with a

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child to find, wandering in search of her through the world - weak also, the faintness of child-bearing being still upon me.

For the rest I know not much, I went on till I fell down. And when I could I rose up again. Sometimes it was day, and then again it would be night - without any reason. I was wet with the rains and presently dry again in the wind. Here and there people spoke to me, and some - though whom I remember not now - must have been kind to me, giving me food and drink. And always I made inquiry for a woman - and a babe the most beautiful in the world, a maid-child called Zaida. But the woman was hateful to look upon.

I am sure they thought that I was mad. Yet all the same - perhaps the more because of that - they let me go on. However, ask as I would, high or low, hill-land or valley, none had seen any such woman. Indeed, all my journey is now but a blur to myself. One night I remember I was high among the hills, and there fell a spring storm, called a bourrasque. How the snow swooped down! For I was high up, and I hid me behind a rock, and said, 'Now all will be well! I shall sleep and wake no more! Then, maybe, I shall find my babe! At the worst I shall not know!'

Whether or not I would have remembered, God only knows! But that I would at least have died every shepherd on the hills, every forest-guard, every smuggler can tell you. Not that I was sorry for that - save when I thought of those who should bring up Zaida perhaps to be devilish - like the Woman. I laid me down, for it seemed warmer behind the stones. And strange lights flashed before my eyes, and were gone. And in my head fiery balls began, small as garden-peas, but they grew and burst at last great as thunderbolts. And then - I remembered God. Utterly I had forgotten Him, not, I mean, as every one forgets Him except when they are in want of something, but I had forgotten that there was such a thing as God!

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There are people who doubt even that, you say? Ah well, then, I say this - they have never sought their own little babe through a snowstorm upon the Pyrenees!

There is a God - I, Cyrilla, know it, for I cried to Him out of the depths - yes, bitterly I cried, reproaching Him that He had entered into judgment with me - with me, who had never missed making monthly my confession to Father Gregorio - with me who had ever loved the Holy Virgin - she who had but one Child - but One - even as I!

And I vowed - oh, Señor, I would tell you if I could! I am hiding nothing, but indeed what I vowed I cannot remember. And the storm came on worse and worse every moment, and I never a whit the colder. I heard the winds howling, and sometimes a fleck of snow would drive behind my rock. But it came not about me, save as a bank to break the blast. That was because the God who held the storm in the hollow of his hand made Himself a shelter about me. At least, Father Gregorio says so, and who should know if not he? He is such a good man. But as for Cyrilla, she only wanted to die.

At last I fell asleep, expecting never to wake - hoping it, indeed!

And lo! Señor, listen to this, for indeed it is very wonderful. When I came to myself, it was upon the arm of Don José here! He had followed me step by step - aye, all the way from Toulouse, as the shepherd searches the hills for his lost lamb.

For he knew long aforetime where it was that Don Alonso had his home - indeed, it was a thing known to many. A man like Don Alonso cannot be hid. To gain his living he must be known and so far approved of many. And he had pretty ways - pretty and manly, too. But though Don José had been in Toulouse - yes, often during the time I was there, putting Juana into the Convent of the Sacred Heart (for, after all, she had decided to be a nun), he had never once come near me. And for that I do

not quite forgive, even yet. Though if you ask him - of course, like a man, he has his answer ready.

But as soon as he knew that Alonso, my husband, had been slain and I left alone, at once widow and mother, (for he knew of that, too), lonely in a strange city, he had left all behind him and come to seek me! It had been his idea to put me into Juana's convent, that I might be sheltered till things should clear themselves a little. For, oh! his heart is big and true and wise - yes, it is, José mine, and I will say it to the stranger. But, indeed, he knows it well of his own seeing, for none can be so long with my José without seeing the manner of man he is. Oh! José, why - why did you give your love to a poor, foolish, broken thing like me?

And then - yes, I will go on with the story. There is not much more to tell now - no, not much. Don José set the police folk on the track, together with the telegraph and all those things that I had not known how to use. And he followed after step by step as they traced me from village to village. And at the last before the final ascent of the Pass, he arrived just at the storm's beginning. Whereupon he had gotten together many men - with promises of silver and gold, doubtless, as is his way - also horses and dogs, and had tracked me over the mountains, through the snowdrifts, casting a wide net and fetching a compass about me. But though that was all wise and good, I know indeed - as Father Gregorio says - that it was God who guided Don José to the rock - He to whom I had cried in the dark out of a heart made desolate - yes, Señor, a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit and a wife of youth, as it had been, refused.

That is what Father Gregorio says. And, indeed, he has reason. For one more tossed with tempest than Cyrilla Toro there was not that day between the Land of the Living and the Place of the Dead.

So Don José, finding me there, under the great rock with the snow all about, drew me out, and, awaking

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slowly, I lay still, knowing only that I was safe, and that there was no more for me to do. Ah! it is good to know that, if you are a woman and weak. He took me to the Lady Superior of Juana's convent, for she was then, as now, with the nuns - aye, and of the best of them, full of love and kindness as ever, Juana, my sister.

And after that, for long and long, I stood out, and would not come to him - because, after that night, somehow my head would not get well. And even now there are times - when - yes, José, I will tell - when I am not kind even to him - mourning for my child. But all that will be past when I have found Zaida, the babe whom I counted as dead.

But once there came a time when Don José stayed away a long season - many weeks. And I was lonely and afraid - most of all fearing myself. So then I knew that I could not do without him. And I spoke to Juana, who knew all things, and she to the Mother Superior, and between them they sent word by telegraph to Don José, a message costing many francs. In the nunnery they still speak about the cost. But he paid them back. And when at last he came, I told him how I had tried - but could not do without him any more!

Whereat he said that, being no longer of the youngest of men, it was a pity that so much good time had been wasted. So we were married and he brought me here. But even in the warm shining of his love and the great safe covert of his heart, there has been within me, night and day, an ache - an emptiness - until - .

(Here she reached me out her hand for the first time during the telling of the tale, adding only these words:)

'But now my heart is full - full!'

Then to this absorbed audience of two I told all the tale which, having told it before, I need not repeat - the story of my meeting with the Sebastians, concerning Zaida and Miranda-Aran, of the soiling of the Bishop's robe on the day of the enthronement, of Andrés and his

wife. Last of all I spoke of the Frenchwoman's Pool, and of what had taken place there.

And at this Cyrilla, who had been listening with the apple of her full throat rising and falling, as if she were drinking alternate draughts of sweet and bitter, suddenly sprang to her feet. Her husband's arm shot out as if to restrain her.

'Oh, then she is dead!' she cried, her eyes shining - 'the Evil Woman! I am glad she is dead. God is good. She took my babe. She tried to take my husband. She would have drowned my Zaida, if she could. But there is a God after all, who punishes iniquity. It is not 'all the same!' And she knew it before she died - I am so glad - so glad! Ah, before she passed, when the waters were black in her throat, then even as I, she knew the bitterness of death!'

For this Cyrilla was of the old race of Spanish women, and made no pretence, in the sudden volcanic outpouring of her heart, long pent up, to the milder virtues of forgiveness. I judge that a fairly ancient type of woman spake in these words of Cyrilla Toro.

Her husband tried to soothe her.

'After all she is dead! Let be!' he said, touching his wife, and endeavouring to draw her again down to her place by his side.

'I am glad of it - glad of it!' she cried, clenching her hands convulsively by her side, as if she would bury her nails in the flesh.

Moving his head ever so slightly, Don José signalled to me to go. He followed me to the door, and, under pretext of closing it, came a step without. And as I went he whispered, 'These fits come upon her - though now but rarely. Leave us for a little - I and only I can manage her. For this cause I have not told her brother till they are well enough to be brought together. Because you know our poor Miguel's head is sometimes troubled also. It is the sorrow that has fallen upon these two. Go now. In a little I will come! I think your news is the best medicine after all. It will not be long.'

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I went. I waited. But instead it was Cyrilla who came herself to find me, with clasped hands and gentle petitionary grace.

'I am sorry,' she said. 'Sometimes I forget myself when I think on the Evil One. But you, who know, will forgive me. I promise you, the day I take Zaida to my bosom, I will forgive - even her! At least, I will try.'

And from that and from what followed after, I learned that a bad woman may sometimes forgive, but a truly good one - never. She says it over to herself that she does - but even, in the saying of it, up leaps the eternal unforgiveness, eager, poignant, not to be denied. Yet one day that rancour also will depart, dissolved and lost in the first cool wash of eternity. Doubt it not!

Once more then we journeyed from Zaragoza to El Seo - first on one of the great through-lines of Spain - then more laboriously on small mountain railways, climbing asthmatically up towards the summits of the hills, with engineers who lit their pipes as their train plunged into a tunnel and had them finished to the last huge whiff ere the king's lieges again saw daylight.

At length we came to a little wayside station, beyond which, owing to the disturbed state of the country, even the construction trains did not 'function.' Here we found mules and horses, ordered by Don José to carry us to El Seo, that minutest of all the cathedral cities of Spain, where as yet the hoot of the steam whistle hath never been heard, nor have flakes of briquette dust defiled the clean land.

Of El Seo nothing remains to be said. Even in the snell bite of the oncoming winter, it could not look otherwise than what it is ever - the veritable City of Dream.

We found the Bishop, simple in his tastes as always, resting, staff in hand, upon a seat just outside the little cathedral, his feet deep in the fallen leaves, and his beautifully clear-cut face turned towards the setting

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sun. I went forward alone to salute him, and he came to himself as with a start from his reverie.

He knew of Don José Valtierra by name, and that made the explanation easier. We had left Cyrilla at the fonda, in my old room, where some of my smuggler traps still remained, with no little of that 'bloom of time' upon them, which comes so readily in dusty Spain.

Perhaps the habit of listening to confessions helped the good Bishop Armandus to believe us. Men who daily hear such histories in the way of their profession do not hastily discredit anything. All things are possible to them that believe - even Belief.

And as he listened, this good man of the silver locks - the simple cooing of his cathedral doves in the belfry above alternating with the chimes that told the quarters - he nodded his head in gentlest sympathy. He had loved and yearned over the little maid. But here was one with a greater right.

'Well then, even now I will go and speak with your wife, Don José!' he said, rising from his seat, with what I could not but see was increasing difficulty.

As we went down one side of the quiet cathedral square, a woman coming from confession by some side-door, passed us with her eyes in a handkerchief. The Bishop raised his hand in almost imperceptible benediction. I did not see the woman look up. But, whether or no, he had blessed her unknown sorrow. It was, I thought to myself, very characteristic of the man.

By gloomy cloisters we went, the Bishop leading, then through a disused arcade, with the sunshine flickering sparsely between the pillars, and so emerged at last upon the back of the inn. In another minute we were at the door of the room, and Cyrilla was kneeling before the grandfather of her child.

Don José drew me away.

'This concerns us not!' he said, 'she is neither my child nor yours!' And truly it did not; but, for all that, I knew the Bishop's way of dealing with souls - and was

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content.

It was the better part of an hour that we had to wait there in the chill little hall of the fonda. Before half of the time was over I had perused all the labels with which the third-rate commercial traveller in Spain lards the hostel of his choice - under the hat-pegs, chiefly, and spattered round the flyblown receptacle for letters (heaven help their senders!) like bullet-marks round the eye of a target.

At last Cyrilla came forth to us, like one who has been shaken to the very springs of life, but with a new light moist in her eye, a quiver of the lip which broke anon April fashion into a smile, and with some of the good Bishop's own serenity upon her face.

'You will wait,' he said, 'all of you must be guests of mine. In my palace it is not permitted. But you will go to La Delicia, and tomorrow I and my brother will wait upon you. Tonight Don Manuel is to arrive at El Seo.'

Don José and I looked at each other. 'Good,' said our four eyes, 'that will save us the long pilgrimage to San Severino!'

The Bishop would have ordered out the state coach, but I managed to get an opportunity of warning Don José.

'No, no, my lord Bishop, that I cannot accept!' he cried. 'It will do the Señora good to walk, if you will graciously permit!'

To which Bishop Armandus agreed with a sigh - perhaps in part a sigh of relief. For I think the good prelate stood not a little in awe of Baltasar, his coachman and macero. Also he might well be anxious lest the coach would reconstitute itself into its component staves upon the cobble-stones of the descent into the valley.

Incomparably more beautiful than ever was La Delicia - the river flowing clearer - the autumn leaves lying ankle-deep upon the ground - the glamour of Indian summer in the air - the distance all marled and aerial, seen through the framework of the trees - like a dream within a dream. Upon the little island stood the crosses which the banished monks had set up to their brethren.

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From a tangled disarray of cords, I gathered that certain of the tribe of the washerwomen occasionally used these for drying-poles. I was shocked, but the moment after I remembered that probably the dead monks did not mind - certainly not the living Bishop.

The morrow came, and with it the Bishop and Don Manuel Sebastian - the elder brother looking the younger by twenty years.

The tale was told by Don José, this time entirely. And as he listened the stern, grey-headed Chief of the Sebastians set a considering knuckle to the squareness of his chin. It was a strange story. But, then, Don José Valtierra was not a man to speak aught but the proven truth. He had no rights save those of the head of the family - but in Spain these count for something even to this day. Also, was I, who vouched for these things, not the Englishman and his friend? Yes, he, Don Manuel Sebastian, would go with us to Les Cabanes in the Ariège - that is, if his brother gave him full powers to act for him.

That, right gladly, the Bishop would do. His work was to abide in his place and pray.

‘Domine, labia mea aperies. Et os meum annuntiabit laudem tuam,’ he murmured.

‘Only,’ he added, ‘let all be done for the happiness of the little one. Because said He not, ‘Whoso shall offend one of these . . . it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into . . . into - ’

The Bishop’s anathema died away in a murmur, but, as for me, I thought of the Frenchwoman’s Pool and what had been cast therein. Truly the Word held fast.

It was after the ancient cavalier fashion that we crossed the Pyrenees - Cyrilla mostly pensive, Don José and Don Manuel finding much to say to each other, while, so long as there was a carriage-road and a possible vehicle, I wrapped my Aragonese capa about me, and sat aloft with the driver.

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High up on the sierras, beyond the wintry granges with the snow-clouds drearily surging above them, and the wind whistling through their naked trees, at a turn of the pass we came on the true promoter of fraternity among the nations.

'Now there are no more Pyrenees!' said, somewhat hastily, Napoleon the Great. However, it turned out not to be so. For this snowed-up road-engine, abandoned to the weather, was the true pioneer of civilisation. The snow lay thick upon chimney and fore-roller. It had drifted into the cab, which looked like a freshly filled saltcellar. The van where the men had lived (with 'Villa Plein Air' rudely painted in red above the door), was snow-covered from stem to stern. But in a year or two there would be another practicable pass added to the few existing carriage-roads out of France into Spain - and of that consummation, 'Villa Plein Air,' with its attendant monster, was the symbol and now silent forerunner.

It was still snowing thickly when we entered the valley of the Ariège, and struck the high-road which leads towards Les Cabanes. But as we went on we found less and less snow on the low-lying lands, so that we were clearly approaching another civilisation.

There is no inn at Les Cabanes (that is, to call an inn, though there are two which call themselves hotels), and it was a neighbouring proprietor, M. de Gudane, a friend of Don José, who had been forewarned to receive us. No news whatever of our coming had been sent to Biño or his family.

It was curious that I, still mounted aloft, should again be the first to see Marinessia. As at El Seo, she was at the fountain, with a placard of the last Fourteenth-of-July fête over her head. She was filling her pails, and looked at the carriage, wonderingly, as it went trundling past. A little way along I got quietly down and sent the others on to the house of M. de Gudane.

It was hardly fair, I thought, to spring such a mine under the household arrangements of two such good

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friends as Biño and Marinessia, without giving them at least some warning.

So I spoke freely to Marinessia - that is to Madame Biño (as I called her that name for the first time, she blushed brightly). Biño, it seemed, was absent at the farm along the river-side. As I had expected, Zaida was at the convent-school, but presently Marinessia would be going to fetch her. All was well. The little girl had been not the least trouble, and both of them already loved her. She seemed to be happy in the place where she was.

Now Marinessia was one of those who really love right, and who strive to do it for its own sake.

'No,' she said, when I proposed some middle course, 'a child should go to her mother. That is just. I will help you all I can. Count upon that.'

'I fear,' I said, 'I have done you an ill turn, Marinessia.'

She smiled cheerfully, as she relieved me of the pitchers at the top of the hill which led to their house.

'You did me one turn so good that now whatever else you do is right!' And with her pitcher on the top step, and one hand resting on her hip as before, she indicated Biño coming slowly up the road, guiding a team of oxen with his wand of office.

Not till the morrow did we see Zaida. That happened to be a day of festival. The sun kept trying hard to shine through a haze of cloud, thick as a nun's veil. Don José and his wife had come early in the afternoon to Biño's house. Cyrilla was to see Zaida for the first time in a religious procession, so that, if any crisis of nerves should supervene, it might be well over before the child was presented to her. This was Don Manuel's idea. He had had experience of Isidra, and I do not doubt that the thought of that daughter at home, stealing out to listen by the mound, over which in spring the Lent Lilies were blowing, made his grave face seem even graver. For to Isidra the unhappy, there could never come any such

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resurrection of love.

So we waited there, Marinessia and Biño well to the front, on the balcony at which Zaida would look up and smile as she passed. At the next window, dissembled behind the curtains, sat Cyrilla, with Don José close by her side. Behind and also unseen, I stood shoulder to shoulder with Don Manuel Sebastian. No one of us said a word. Not even the sound of our breathing was heard.

At last the procession came, passing slowly along the face of the ancient monastery, to the eye half religious institution, half stable. There were a few people assembled to see them enter, mostly relatives of the children - but the Ariège is not a department favourable to street processions of a sacred nature - at least, its present rulers are not. But, standing out well against the thin drift of snow which sheeted the roads under that November sky, the neat black-and-white figures of the pupils of the convent were succeeded by three tall and gloomy shapes, who were the Sisters themselves. Veiled and hooded, they stalked solemnly along, looking like the witches out of Macbeth, save that the last of them read steadily in her Prayer-Book as she went. Then came a row of little girls, who last season had received their first communion. These still wore the white robes of innocence.

First among them was Zaida. She looked up and smiled back at Marinessia. But for the gloomy sisterhood so near, I think she would have kissed her hand. At that all of us moved closer to Zaida's mother, expecting some wild scene of passion. But instead, Cyrilla only clutched her husband's arm more tightly, following the procession with her eye till it was lost under the archway of the ancient church.

Then Cyrilla sighed a deep long sigh, and turning to me, she said very simply, 'You have spoken the truth! It is my Zaida - but, why have they done her hair like that?'

Upon which, as may be imagined, there fell a great relief among us, while Marinessia explained that when

Zaida left the house her coiffure had been becomingly arranged, but that at the convent the Mother Superior had her own ideas about decorum in hair-dressing. Then, quite suddenly, there came an unexpected trembling about the mouth of Cyrilla. The tears welled up into her eyes. Her husband touched her arm warningly, for in many things she was still the child-woman.

'Well,' she pouted, but answering nevertheless to the check, 'she smiled and kissed her hand to Marinessia - and - and - she did not see me, her mother! She never once even looked!'

'Nonsense, dearest,' said Don José practically, 'it was impossible for her to see you. But it will not be long till she is here. Let us discuss what is to be done with her. You cannot win a child's heart - nor a woman's for that matter - all in a moment. Now, it is my opinion that for the present Zaida is better where she is, at the convent-school, and under the care of these kind folk!'

'But I want her,' cried Cyrilla. 'I have the right! Am I not her mother?'

And at heart and in spite of my friendship for Biño, I think I was of her faction - that is Cyrilla's. But after all it was Don José who had the contract on his hands. My reason agreed that he knew best.

'There is Monsieur de Gudane,' said Don José, 'he has a new house which he does not use. It is good and fit and habitable. I will hire it from him, Cyrilla mine, and you shall stay there all the winter - seeing Zaida every day, having her with you every Sunday and Thursday, and gradually - little by little - the love will come!'

'But I want it all to come at once!' cried the old Cyrilla, her throat swelling as she spoke.

Her husband made a little helpless movement with his hands.

'That is as God wills!' he said softly. 'I can but do what a man can!'

'Well,' said Cyrilla, 'I shall also will it very much to come - and perhaps that also may help! It used to.'

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Don José looked about him, I think for assistance, but all of us were silent. Our feeling was that every man must rule his own house, and that with his heart-joy or his heart-bitterness, a stranger would be singularly unwise to intermeddle.

Then she added a further query.

‘And as to Miguel, my brother?’

‘Oh,’ said Don José, with clearly affected ease, ‘Miguel would not leave his beloved pine-woods for anything. But this will we do. We will go on with the building of a new house there in spite of him - the one which we have so long intended to begin, Cyrilla, as soon as you were better. Then we shall all go and stay with him in the spring.’

‘No,’ said Cyrilla, ‘he has waited long - just because I was naughty and unhappy - because I would have hurt him with my angers. But now I am cured, and I want us to be all together. This is what you will do, José. You will buy the place here from Monsieur de Gudane, or give him something in exchange for it. You can if you will - oh, easily!’

Don José made a little grimace, and shrugged his shoulders half humorously at us. But I think that in our hearts we were all glad to see the strong man, the wilful man, doing word for word as a woman bade him. And Biño from his corner glanced meaningly at Marinessia, as if to say that he too had had his medicine out of the same bottle. In which he was wrong, for Marinessia Alva was no wilful child-woman, nor had been all the days of her.

‘Well,’ said Don José at last, ‘perhaps the thing might be managed as far as M. de Gudane is concerned. He is to some extent indebted to me. But you do not know Miguel - he would never leave his beloved piñadas. I fear we must wait and go to him!’

Cyrilla rose to her feet with the quick gesture which denotes the consciousness of power.

‘What!’ she cried, ‘not know Miguel Toro - my own brother? I will show you, foolish Don José! This minute

will I write a letter that will bring Miguel to me as fast as hoof of horse can move through the valleys and over the mountains - your horses, too! Oh, yes, he cannot read, but he will take it down to the curé of the village. All will be as I say.'

And, rising, she went to a table, and, with Marinessia standing by to supply her with materials, she wrote a few words:

'Miguel, come to your Cyrilla. She has been nigh unto death, nearer even than you. But she has found life. Don José, her husband, gave her that. She has found her child. The Englishman gave her that. She has found her soul. God gave her that. And now she wants her own brother. You alone can give her that! Come, Miguel, my brother!'

She handed the letter to her husband to read. He nodded his head slowly.

'You have the great heart, Cyrilla. He will come to you, and also - I think - the love of the child.'

'You think - I know!' said Cyrilla, proudly.

But at that moment there came a whirlwind of steps on the stairway. A vision of flower-wreaths and whiteness tore impetuously in, shedding hood and cloak as it came.

'My Englishman - my Englishman!' Zaida cried. 'He has come! They told me - they whispered it along the benches during the service - that there were strangers here - one of them with a great black box under his arm. And I knew - oh, I knew - ah, there he is!'

And with all the old élan, and some added avoirdupois to give weight to her assault, she sprang right off the ground into my arms.

I led her to where Cyrilla was sitting - now pale as the useless marble of the monument under the yew trees in Zaragoza.

'Do you know who this is?' I said. Zaida stared long, and then, though without taking away her eyes, she slowly shook her head.

'It is your mother!' said I, feeling that on this

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occasion curtness was the best kindness.

Promptly and all unexpectedly Zaida began to weep.

'No, not another!' she said, 'I love Marinessia, but - there is the Sister Agnes who teaches me - and - the Lady Superior who - scolds me, and Sister Agatha in the kitchen, they all say that they are my mothers. But - my dear mother is dead!'

The colour came flooding back into Cyrilla's face. She was on her own ground now. Her eyes brightened with a kind of joy - the joy of the winning of love.

'Look, Zaida!' she said, slowly, 'look in my eyes. Am I like those who tell you that they will be mothers to you - Sister Agnes and the others at the convent?'

With a gesture of infinite tenderness Cyrilla opened her arms. I could see her bosom heave. Her face seemed fairly to shine with love.

'Come, baby!' she murmured. 'Come to me - I and no other am your mother!'

'My mother is dead!' The voice of Zaida came again - but in a whisper this time. Indeed, it was only by the movement of her lips that I could make out what she said.

'No, Zaida, she is not dead,' Cyrilla answered. 'The Englishman has brought her back to you - I am your true mother. Come, baby!'

Zaida half turned to me for confirmation, but somehow she could not loose herself from the drawing power of those wondrous eyes, so like her own.

And as I looked I saw that mother and daughter were alike - line for line, expression for expression, the love and the need to be loved, their equal danger and their equal joy, shining from the face of each.

'Come, baby mine!'

Coo of ringdoves on tree-tops in the summer heats, tender voices of lovers hid deep in bower, the grave sweet melody of a far-heard psalm, sung on a communion Sabbath day - all are sweet, but there is nothing on earth like the voice of a mother calling upon her child to love

her.

With a sharp cry, Zaida suddenly broke away. She cast herself impulsively into Cyrilla's arms.

'Mother! My mother!'

As for me I went out then - to take the northward train. I had no more to do, and what could I see of better, or sweeter, or more godlike, if I travelled the world over?

And as I issued forth through the door, two doves in the niche above were caressing each other with low murmurings. Perhaps they too were mother and child, lost and found!

At any rate it was a good omen, and I turned into the little white station to take my ticket with joy in my heart.

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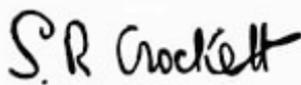
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'Mayhap that is the best fortune of all – to be loved by a few greatly and constantly, rather than to be loudly applauded and immediately forgotten by the many.'

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. R. Crockett". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.