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**THE TREE
OF KNOWLEDGE**

WORKS OF
PÍO BAROJA

CAESAR OR NOTHING

YOUTH AND EGOLATRY

THE STRUGGLE FOR LIFE

A Trilogy

1
THE QUEST

2
WEEDS

3
RED DAWN

THE LORD OF LABRAZ

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

BY PÍO BAROJA

f

Translated from the Spanish by

AUBREY F. G. BELL



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PART ONE
THE LIFE OF A STUDENT
AT MADRID

ANDRÉS HURTADO BEGINS HIS CAREER

IT was about ten o'clock of an October day. In the court of the School of Architecture groups of students were waiting for the doors of the lecture-room to open.

Youths kept entering from the street which passed along this court and as they met inside greeted one another with talk and laughter.

By one of those anomalies for which Spain is famous those students waiting in the court of the School of Architecture were not budding architects but future doctors and chemists.

The lectures on general chemistry which formed the preliminary course for Medicine and Chemistry were at that time held in the former chapel of San Isidro converted into a class-room, and the entrance to this was through the court of the School of Architecture.

The number of students and their evident impatience to enter the lecture-room was easily explained by the fact that this was the first day of the course and the beginning of their new studies.

To begin to study for a career after taking the degree

of Bachelor of Arts always gives the student certain illusions. He imagines that he is more of a man and that his life is changed.

Andrés Hurtado, a little surprised to find himself among so many fellow students, kept his eyes fixed, as he leant against the wall, on the door in the corner of the court through which they must pass.

The students formed groups outside that door like people waiting at the entrance doors of a theatre.

Andrés was still leaning against the wall when his arm was seized and a "Hullo" greeted him. He turned round to find his fellow student Julio Aracil.

They had studied together at San Isidro; but it was some time since Andrés had seen Julio who had, apparently, spent his last year of study for the bachelor's degree in the provinces.

"What! Are you also attending these lectures?"

"I am."

"What are you studying?"

"Medicine."

"So am I. We will study together."

Aracil was with another youth older than he, apparently, with clear eyes and a light-coloured beard. These two respectable youths spoke with disdain of the other students, mostly rough provincials who expressed their pleasure and surprise at being together, with shouts and laughter.

The doors opened and the students began to pass through, pressing and pushing as though they were going to see some entertaining show.

"We shall see how they enter in a few days' time," said Aracil mockingly.

"They'll be as keen to come out as they are now to go in," answered his friend.

Aracil, his friend, and Hurtado sat next to one another. The lecture-room had formerly been the chapel of the Institute of San Isidro when it belonged to the Jesuits. Its ceiling was painted with large figures in the style of Jordaens; at the corners of the moulding were the four evangelists and in the centre a number of figures and scenes from the Bible. From the floor wooden tiers of seats rose steeply almost to the roof, with a central staircase, and this gave the lecture-room the air of a women's gallery in a theatre.

The students filled these benches almost to the top; the professor had not yet arrived, and as many of the students were of a rowdy disposition one of them began to beat on the floor with his stick; others followed his example and a deafening din arose.

Suddenly the small door behind the platform opened, and a pompous old man made his appearance, followed by two assistants.

This theatrical entrance of the professor and the two assistants was greeted with murmurs; one of the bolder

students began to applaud, and when the old professor not only showed no annoyance but bowed his thanks, the applause increased on all sides.

“Ridiculous,” said Hurtado.

“He evidently does not think so,” answered Aracil laughing. “But if he is such a fool as to like to be applauded, applause he shall have.”

The professor was a poor ridiculous man full of presumption. He had studied in Paris and had acquired the affected gestures and attitudes of a petulant Frenchman.

The good man began his lecture with a greeting to the students in high-sounding, emphatic words, with some sentimental touches; he spoke to them of his master Liebig, of his friend Pasteur, his comrade Berthelot, of science and the microscope.

His white hair, his waxed moustache and pointed beard which trembled as he spoke, and his hollow, solemn voice gave him the air of a severe stage father, and one of the students, noticing this, recited in a loud and cavernous voice the lines of Don Diego Tenorio as he enters the inn of the Laurel in Zorrilla’s play:

*That one of my nobility
Should to so low a place descend.*

Those who sat near the insolent reciter began to laugh, and the other students looked at the group of interrupters.

“What is it? What’s this?” said the professor, putting on his glasses and coming to the balustrade of the platform. “Has anyone shed a shoe up there? I entreat those who are near the ass who brays to such perfection to move away from him, for his kicks must necessarily be fatal.”

The students laughed whole-heartedly; the professor put an end to his lecture and retired with a ceremonious bow, while they applauded furiously.

Andrés Hurtado went out with Aracil, and the two, with the youth of the light-coloured beard whose name was Montaner, made their way to the Central University, for the lectures on zoology and botany.

At this last lecture the students attempted to repeat the uproar of the class in chemistry, but the professor, a short-tempered old man, cut them short and gave them to understand that no one was going to laugh at him or applaud him as if he were an actor.

From the University Montaner, Aracil and Hurtado went to the centre of the city.

Andrés felt considerable dislike for Julio Aracil, although he recognized that he was in some ways superior; but his dislike for Montaner was much greater.

The very first words that passed between Montaner and Hurtado were unamiable. Montaner spoke with an assurance which was a little offensive; he no doubt con-

sidered himself a man of the world. Hurtado answered him curtly several times.

In this first conversation the two fellow students were in complete disagreement. Hurtado was a Republican, Montaner was a champion of the Royal Family; Hurtado was an enemy of the bourgeoisie, Montaner stood up for the wealthy and aristocratic classes.

"Enough of that," Julio Aracil said more than once. "It is as stupid to be a Republican as to be a Monarchist, to defend the poor as to defend the rich. The essential thing is to have money, and a carriage like that one there and a wife like her yonder."

The antipathy between Hurtado and Montaner broke out again in front of the window of a bookshop: Hurtado preferred the Naturalist writers and Montaner did not like them; Hurtado was an enthusiastic admirer of Espronceda, Montaner of Zorrilla; they disagreed in everything.

They passed through the Puerta del Sol and went up the Carrera de San Jerónimo.

"Well, I am going home," said Hurtado.

"Where do you live?"

"In the Calle de Atocha."

"Then we are all close neighbours."

They went together to the plaza de Antón Martín and there parted coldly.

THE STUDENTS

MADRID at that time was one of the few cities which preserved a romantic spirit.

Every city no doubt has its own practical rules of life, the result of its race and history and of the physical and moral atmosphere. These rules and individuality constitute a useful pragmatism, synthetic in its simplicity.

This national pragmatism achieves its object when it leaves the way open to reality; if the way is blocked then normality disappears in a rarefied air and ideas and facts take on a false perspective.

Madrid was then living in a fictitious atmosphere formed by an old and unrenovated pragmatism.

The Madrid student, especially if he came from the provinces, arrived with the intention to copy Don Juan and amuse himself, to gamble and make love to women, in fact, as the professor of chemistry said with his usual solemnity, to burn himself out in an atmosphere too full of oxygen.

Except for a religious feeling which most of the stu-

dents, careless about such matters, did not possess, the students at the end of the nineteenth century came to Madrid with the mentality of those of the seventeenth, and were determined to imitate Don Juan Tenorio to the best of their ability, in a life of

Duels and love affairs

In fierce assault.

The cultured student, however much he might wish to see things as they were and acquire a clear idea of his country and the part it played in the world, was unable to do so. The influence of European culture in Spain was in fact confined to technical matters; the newspapers gave an imperfect idea of everything; and the general tendency was to induce the belief that what was great in Spain might be small outside it, and vice versa, in a kind of international bad faith.

If France and Germany never mentioned Spain or spoke of her only in jest, that was because they hated us; our great men, it was solemnly averred, Castelar, Cánovas, Echegaray, were the envy of other nations. The whole of Spain, and especially Madrid, lived in an atmosphere of absurd optimism, and whatever was Spanish was best.

This natural tendency to falsehood and illusion on the part of a country isolated by its poverty, contributed to the stagnation and fossilization of thought.

This atmosphere of distorted stagnation was reflected in the professors, as Andrés Hurtado found when he began to study medicine. The professors of the first course were extremely old; some of them had been lecturing for close on fifty years.

They possessed sufficient influence not to be placed on the retired list, and there was, besides, the sympathy and respect which in Spain is always shown for what is useless.

The scandal was greatest in the Chair of Chemistry. The aged professor recollected lectures given by celebrated professors of chemistry at the Institut de France, and he imagined that if he showed how nitrogen and chlorine were obtained, he was making a personal discovery and was very pleased when they applauded. He satisfied his childish vanity by leaving spectacular experiments for the end of his lecture, so that he might retire, like a juggler, amid loud applause.

And the students did applaud him, laughing heartily. Sometimes in the middle of the lecture one of them would get it into his head to go away, and simply rose and went out. His steps echoed as he descended the wooden stair and the other students beat time to his steps with their feet and sticks.

During the lecture they talked, smoked, read novels, and no one paid any attention to the lecture; one of them even came with a French horn, and, when the professor was about to empty some potassium into a glass,

he blew twice on his horn; another brought in a stray dog and it cost no little trouble to put it out.

Some of the students were quite shameless in their insolence: they shouted, brayed, and interrupted the professor. One of the pranks of these students was to answer under an assumed name.

"You there," would say the professor pointing with his finger, his beard trembling with anger, "what is your name?"

"Who, I?"

"Yes, sir, you, you; what is your name?" added the professor, looking at his list.

"Salvador Sanchez."

"Otherwise called Frascuelo," would add another student who had arranged the affair with him beforehand.

"My name is Salvador Sanchez; I do not know if anyone objects, but if anyone objects let him say so," the student would answer, looking at the bench from which the voice had come and pretending to be offended.

"Go and have a swim," would answer the other.

Then various voices would cry, "Outside! Get out!"

And the professor, fearing the consequences of these disputes, would say, "Very well. Enough. Go away."

The student would go away and a few days later would repeat the jest and answer in the name of some celebrated politician or bullfighter.

During the first days of these lectures Andrés Hur-

tado could not get over his astonishment. It was all too absurd. He would have wished to find a strong but affectionate discipline, and he found grotesque lectures and the students openly mocking the professor. His initiation into Science could scarcely have been more unfortunate.

ANDRÉS HURTADO AND HIS FAMILY

AT almost every moment of his life Andrés had a feeling of being alone and neglected.

The death of his mother had left him with a great void and a tendency to melancholy.

His numerous family consisted of his father and five other children. His father, Pedro Hurtado, was tall and slim, elegant, a handsome man who had been wild in his youth.

Fiercely egoistic, he considered himself the centre of the universe. His character was disconcertingly irregular and his mixture of aristocratic and plebeian sentiments was intolerable. His temperament revealed itself in a number of unusual and unexpected ways. He ruled his household despotically, with alternations of parsimony and carelessness and arbitrary tyranny, which set Andrés beside himself.

Several times, when Don Pedro complained of the trouble the management of his household cost him, his children told him he should let Margarita take charge;

she was twenty and knew better than her father how to manage a family; but he always refused.

He liked to have the purse-strings in his own hands; from time to time he would spend twenty or thirty dollars on some personal caprice, although he knew that the money was needed for something indispensable at home.

Don Pedro had the best room of the house, his clothes were of the best, he could not use cotton handkerchiefs like the rest of his family—they must be of linen or silk. He was a member of two casinos; he maintained friendships with persons of a certain position and a few aristocrats, and administered the house in the Calle de Atocha where they lived.

His wife, Fermina Iturrioz, had been a victim; she spent her whole life in the belief that it was a woman's natural lot to suffer. After her death Don Pedro Hurtado was ready enough to recognize her great virtues.

"You are not like your mother," he would say to his children. "She was a saint."

Andrés disliked these continual references to his mother and sometimes he would answer angrily, bidding him leave the dead in peace.

Of his children the eldest and the youngest, Alejandro and Luis, were his favourites.

Alejandro was a debased copy of Don Pedro. Even more useless and self-centred, he always refused to do

anything, either to study or work; so they found him a post in a state department, to which he went only when it was a question of drawing his salary. At home there were disgusting scenes, for he would come back late at night, dead drunk, from the taverns and annoy everyone.

When Andrés began to study for a career Margarita was about twenty, a decided girl, somewhat peevish, domineering, and selfish. The next in age to her was Pedro, who was philosophically indifferent and good-natured. He was studying to be a lawyer and passed his examinations through influence. He went to the theatre, dressed elegantly, and was in love with a new girl every month. Within his means he enjoyed life gaily.

The younger brother, Luisito, four or five years old, was a sickly child.

The mutual affections of the family were curious. Don Pedro preferred Alejandro and Luis, behaved to Margarita as if she were grown up, was indifferent towards Pedro, and almost hated Andrés because he would not accept his authority. The natural affections of a father were in his case hidden very deep.

Alejandro shared his father's likes and dislikes; Margarita preferred Pedro and Luisito, esteemed Andrés and respected her father. Pedro was mainly indifferent: he felt a certain affection for Margarita and Luisito and a great admiration for Andrés. As to Andrés himself, he

liked Pedro and Margarita, although he was always quarrelling with the latter; he despised Alejandro and almost hated his father; he found him insupportable, vain, egoistic, foolish, and conceited.

The temperaments of father and son were utterly incompatible; they could agree in nothing; one of them had only to affirm a thing for the other to deny it forthwith.

ISOLATION

ANDRÉS's mother, a fanatical Navarrese, had taken her children to confession as soon as they reached the age of nine or ten.

As a boy Andrés had been very frightened at the mere idea of confession. The first time he went he carried with him a list of all his sins, as a matter of immense importance; but the priest that day must have been in a hurry and sent him away without paying much heed to his little moral transgressions.

This first confession was to him a douche of cold water. His brother Pedro told him that he had confessed several times without ever troubling to remember his sins. Andrés went to his second confession determined to tell the priest only two or three things mechanically. The third or fourth time he communicated without confessing, without the slightest scruple.

After his mother's death his father or sister would ask him occasionally if he had performed his religious duties, and he answered indifferently that he had.

The two elder brothers, Alejandro and Pedro, had

studied at a college for their bachelor's degree; but when it came to Andrés his father said that it was too expensive, and he was sent to the Institute of San Isidro, where he was neglected. This neglect and companionship with the children of the street woke Andrés up.

He felt isolated from his family, without mother and alone, and his loneliness made him reserved and sad. He did not share his brother Pedro's taste for a crowded holiday street; he preferred a novel in his own room.

His imagination galloped ahead, devouring everything beforehand. I will do this and then this, he thought; and afterwards? And when he had settled that also, another and yet another prospect would present itself to his mind.

On taking his bachelor's degree he decided, without consulting anyone, to study medicine. His father had told him several times to "study whatever you like, it's your concern."

Nevertheless he was secretly indignant that his son should follow his bent without consulting anybody.

Don Pedro was always prejudiced against him; he considered him unmanageable and rebellious. Andrés would not yield in what he thought were his rights and would be violently and aggressively obstinate towards his father and elder brother.

Margarita was forced to interfere in these disputes

which nearly always ended by Andrés's leaving the house or going to his room.

The discussions began over the merest trifle; the antipathy between father and son required no special motive to show itself: it was absolute. Any subject would start hostilities and they never exchanged a friendly sentence.

Most often the subject of the discussion was political; Don Pedro laughed at the revolutionaries, covering them with contempt and invectives; Andrés answered by insulting the bourgeoisie, the priests, and the army.

Don Pedro affirmed that a respectable person could only be Conservative: the advanced parties were necessarily formed by the canaille.

For Don Pedro the only real men were rich men; riches to him were not mere chance but a virtue; and he believed that to money nothing was forbidden. Andrés recalled the frequent case of witless sons of rich families and pointed out that a man with a chest full of gold and a couple of millions invested in the Bank of England would find them quite useless on a desert island; but his father paid no attention to such arguments.

These discussions in Hurtado's home had their counterpart on the floor above them, between a Catalán and his son. There, it was the father who was a Liberal and the son a Conservative. But the father was a candid Lib-

eral and could speak Spanish but poorly, while the son was a mocking and sarcastic Conservative.

Often down in the court one would hear a voice of thunder exclaim with a Catalán accent, "If the late glorious Revolution had not stopped half-way, you would have seen what it would have made of Spain."

And then the voice of the son sarcastically. "The glorious Revolution! A fine farce!"

"What silly discussions!" Margarita would say contemptuously to her brother Andrés. "As if anything you can say could set matters right."

As Andrés grew to manhood, the hostility between him and his father only increased. He never asked his father for money; he considered Don Pedro a stranger.

ANDRÉS'S RETREAT

THE house in which the Hurtado family lived belonged to a marquis whose acquaintance Don Pedro had made at college.

Don Pedro administered it, collected the rents and spoke frequently and with enthusiasm of the marquis and his country-houses; and this to his son seemed entirely vile.

The Hurtado family was well related; Don Pedro, with all his arbitrary behaviour at home, was exceedingly amiable outside it and quite capable of maintaining useful friendships.

He knew all the lodgers in the house and was very kind and friendly towards them, with the exception of those who lived in the garrets, whom he hated.

The practical inference from his theory that money implied merit was necessarily that a penniless man must be a knave.

Don Pedro was unconsciously old-fashioned: the idea that a workman might consider himself to be a human being or that a woman should wish to be independent seemed to him a personal insult.

He only made an exception in the case of poor people if they had no sense of shame or decency. Anyone whom he could address in the second person singular, such as rogues and prostitutes and gamblers, was the object of his friendly regard.

In one of the rooms on the third floor lived two former dancers, under the protection of an aged senator.

To the Hurtado family they were known as the Hair-knot family.

The nickname came from the small daughter of the aged senator's favourite. They did her hair with a small knot of it on the top of her head, and the first time Luisito saw her he called her the girl of the little knot of hair and the nickname was at once extended to her mother and aunt. Don Pedro frequently spoke of the ex-dancers and praised them; his son Alejandro applauded his father's words as though they were spoken by someone of his own age. Margarita grew serious at these allusions to the free life of the dancers, and Andrés turned his head away to signify that he considered these cynical displays on the part of his father were ridiculous and out of place.

Andrés only met his family at meal-times; for the rest of the day he was not to be seen.

While studying for his bachelor's degree he slept in the same room as his brother Pedro; but after taking his degree he asked Margarita to put him in a room under

the roof, in which odds and ends of old furniture were kept.

Margarita at first refused, but presently relented and ordered the removal of the trunks and cabinets, and Andrés installed himself there.

The house was a large one and had those rather mysterious passages and odd corners found in ancient buildings.

In order to arrive at Andrés's new room it was necessary to ascend several flights of stairs, and this made him completely independent.

The room looked like a cell; Andrés asked Margarita for a cupboard and filled it with books and papers, and on the wall he hung the bones of a skeleton given him by his uncle Dr. Iturrioz, so that the room had somewhat the air of a magician's or necromancer's den.

Here he felt at ease, alone; he said that he could study better in that silence; but often he spent the time reading novels or simply looking out of the window.

The window looked onto the back of several houses of the streets of Santa Isabel and the Esperancilla and on some courts and sheds.

Andrés gave romantic names to all that he could see: the mysterious house, the house of the stairway, the tower of the cross, the bridge of the black cat, the roof of the water-cistern.

The cats of the house in which Andrés lived used to

go out by this window and make long excursions over these sheds and eaves; they stole in the kitchens of other houses and one day one of them arrived with a partridge in its mouth.

Luisito loved to go to his brother's room and watch the cats and examine the skeleton; it all filled him with delight. Pedro, who had always felt a certain admiration for his brother, used also to go up to his den and admire him as a rare bird.

At the end of the first year Andrés began to feel very afraid of failing in his examinations. The subjects were enough to confuse anyone and the books on each subject were very voluminous; there was scarcely time to understand them properly. Moreover the lectures, given at different places far distant from one another, meant loss of time and many a distraction by the way.

Besides, and here he could not blame anyone but himself, he used often after a lecture to go to see the guard changed at the palace or to the public park of the Retiro, and at night, instead of studying, he would read novels.

May came, and Andrés began to devour his text-books, to see if he could make up for lost time. He was afraid of not passing chiefly on account of the sarcastic remark his father was likely to make: "You scarcely needed so much solitude for this."

To his amazement he passed in four subjects, and, not

at all to his amazement, failed in the last, which was the chemistry examination. He was unwilling to admit this misadventure at home and pretended that he had not gone in for that examination.

“Well, you were a fool,” said his brother Alejandro.

Andrés resolved to study strenuously during the summer; it would be so quiet and easy in his cell. But he soon forgot his good intentions and instead of studying he used to look through a telescope at people showing themselves in the neighbouring houses.

In the morning two girls could be seen on a distant balcony; when Andrés got up they were already on the balcony, doing their hair and putting ribands in it.

He could not see their faces well because his telescope was not a strong one and also it cast an iridescent hue over everything.

A youth who lived opposite these girls used to throw a ray of sun on them by means of a small mirror. They scolded him till they were tired and then sat down to sew on the balcony.

In a neighbouring garret lived a woman who painted her face every morning. Probably she had no idea that she could be seen and she carried out her task conscientiously; it must have been a real work of art, and she looked like a cabinet-maker varnishing a piece of furniture.

Andrés read his book of chemistry through and

through, but its contents meant little to him and he found that he could only remember the first lessons.

He bethought him of the need of influence. He was unwilling to speak to his father and went to the house of his uncle Dr. Iturrioz and told him how matters stood. Iturrioz asked him if he knew anything about chemistry.

"Very little."

"Haven't you studied?"

"Yes, but it all goes out of my head at once."

"One must know how to study. The passing of an examination is a question of memory; one must learn the minimum of facts and learn them thoroughly. Well, it is too late now; take this letter to the professor at his house."

Andrés went to see the professor, who treated him like a recruit in the army.

His examination a few days later was terrible, and he went out shame-faced and amazed. He was now certain that he must have failed, but found to his great astonishment that he had passed.

THE DISSECTING ROOM

THE next course had fewer subjects and was a little easier, as there was less to remember.

Nevertheless the subject of anatomy alone was enough to try the best memory severely.

A few months after the opening of the course, when the weather turned cold, the dissecting class began. The fifty or sixty students were divided among ten or twelve tables, five to each table.

At the same table were Montaner, Aracil and Hurtado, and two others whom they regarded as strangers.

Without apparent reason Hurtado and Montaner, who had been so hostile during the previous course, now became fast friends.

Andrés asked his sister Margarita to make him a blouse for the dissecting class: black with oilskin sleeves edged with yellow.

Margarita did so; but these blouses did not keep at all clean, because pieces of flesh remained on the sleeves and dried there unnoticed.

Most of the students were eager to go to the dissecting room and plunge their knives into the bodies, as

though they had inherited some reserve of primitive cruelty.

They all pretended to be indifferent and jovial in the face of death, as if it were a most amusing thing to disembowel and cut up the bodies of the unfortunate persons who were brought there.

In the dissection class the students liked to find death grotesque: they would give a corpse a paper pipe to smoke or put a paper hat on its head.

There was a story of a second-year student who had played the following prank on a friend who, he knew, was rather timid. He took a dead man's arm, wrapped it in his cloak and went up to greet his friend.

"How do you do?" he said, putting out the hand of the corpse from beneath his cloak.

"Well, and you?"—answered the other and shook his hand but shuddered at the coldness of it—and was horrified when he saw the arm of a dead man coming out from the cloak.

Another incident that occurred about the same time was much talked of among the students. One of the doctors of the hospital, a specialist in nervous diseases, had given orders that in the autopsy of one of his patients the brains should be extracted and sent to his house.

The assistant did so, sending an attendant with them to the doctor's house. The servant, seeing the parcel, thought that it was a parcel of cow's brains, took them to the

kitchen, cooked them and served them up for the family's dinner.

Many other stories of the kind, true or not, were told with real glee. These medical students had a tendency to a class spirit consisting of a disdain for death, a certain enthusiasm for surgical brutality, and a great contempt for sensibility.

Andrés Hurtado showed no more sensibility than the rest: to see bodies cut open and dismembered made no impression on him.

What he did dislike was the way bodies were taken out of the cart in which they were brought from the hospital mortuary. The men took hold of them, one by the arms, the other by the feet, swung them up and threw them onto the ground.

The bodies were almost always thin as skeletons and yellow as mummies. As they fell on the stone floor they made a strange, disagreeable sound as of something unelastic being extended; then the men took the corpses, one by one, by the feet and dragged them along the ground, and as they passed down some steps to the court where was the mortuary belonging to the lecture-room, the heads knocked lugubriously against the steps of stone. It was a terrible sound; it seemed the ending of some prehistoric battle or of a fight in the Roman circus, the victors dragging the vanquished at their pleasure.

Hurtado imitated the heroes of the novels he read and

reflected on the problems of life and death; he considered that if the mothers of those unfortunate persons whose bodies were thus carried to the spoliarium could have foreseen so miserable an end they would have wished them to be still-born.

Another thing that Andrés did not like was to see how, after the dissections, the pieces that remained were placed in cylindrical caldrons painted red, in which one could see a hand close to a liver and brains, or a dark and turbid eye embedded in lungs.

But these things, however repulsive, did not really occupy his mind; he was interested in the dissection and anatomy.

This curiosity to get at the source of life, this very human instinct of inquisitiveness, he shared with nearly all the other students.

One of those in whom it was strongest was a Catalán friend of Aracil's who was still a student at the Institute.

Jaime Massó, for this was his name, had a small head, fine black hair, a yellowish-white complexion and a projecting jaw. Although not intelligent, he was so interested in dissection that whenever possible he would take home the hand or arm of a corpse in order to dissect it at his pleasure. The remains he averred, he spread on some flower-pots or threw onto the balcony of a neighbouring aristocrat whom he hated.

Massó, singular in everything, bore the marks of de-

generacy. He was very superstitious: he would never walk on the side pavement but always in the middle of the street. He said, half in jest, half in earnest, that as he went he left behind him an invisible thread which must not be broken; and in a café or theatre he would come out by the door through which he had entered so as to take up the mysterious thread.

Another thing distinguished Massó—his uncompromising enthusiasm for Wagner, which contrasted with the indifference of Aracil, Hurtado, and the rest towards music.

Aracil had formed a group of friends, whom he dominated and mortified, and among these was Massó; he played great pranks on him, mocked him and treated him like a clown.

Aracil almost always displayed a contemptuous cruelty, of a feminine kind, without brutality.

Aracil, Montaner, and Hurtado, with their homes in Madrid, associated little with the provincial students, and despised them thoroughly; all those stories of a village casino, of engagements and dissipation in some small town of La Mancha or Extremadura seemed to them plebeian and suited to persons of low station.

This aristocratic leaning, more prominent in Aracil and Montaner than in Andrés, caused them to shun the loud, vulgar, and vile; they were disgusted by those end-

less parties in which the students from the provinces lost course after course stupidly playing billiards or dominoes.

Although these friends would have had him accept the ideas and life of a Madrid gentleman of good family Hurtado resisted.

Under the influence of his family, of his fellow students, and of his books, somewhat diverse elements contributed to the forming of his mind.

His library grew by acquisitions at second-hand; several antiquated books on medicine and biology had been given him by his uncle Iturrioz; others, chiefly feuilletons and novels, he had found in the house; and some he bought at second-hand bookshops. An old lady, a friend of the family, presented him with an illustrated history of the French Revolution by Thiers. This book he began thirty times to read, and could not finish it; at last he read it and it interested him. After this history by Thiers he read Lamartine's "Girondins."

With the unbending logic of a young man he considered Saint-Just the greatest man of the Revolution. On the fly-leaf of many of his books he wrote the name of his hero and surrounded it with sun-rays.

This ridiculous enthusiasm he kept to himself and did not mention to his friends. His revolutionary likes and hatreds did not go beyond his own room; and in this way

Andrés Hurtado felt himself a different being when talking with his friends at the theatre and when he dreamed in the loneliness of his room.

He had two friends whom he occasionally saw; he discussed with them the same questions as with Aracil and Montaner, and was thus able to compare their points of view.

One of these friends, Rafael Sañudo, was a student at the Institute and was to be an engineer; the other, Fermín Ibarra, was an invalid.

Andrés met Sañudo on Saturday nights at a café of the Calle Mayor called the Café del Siglo.

As time went on Hurtado realized how different were his tastes and ideas from those of his friend Sañudo, with whom as a boy he had been so closely in agreement. Sañudo and his friends in the café spoke of nothing but music, of the operas of the Royal Theatre, and especially of Wagner. For them science, politics, the revolution, Spain, everything was insignificant by the side of Wagner's music. Wagner was the Messiah, Beethoven and Mozart were the forerunners. Some admirers of Beethoven refused to accept Wagner not only as the Messiah but even as a worthy heir of his predecessors; they kept on talking ecstatically about the Fifth and Ninth Symphonies. Hurtado, who did not care for music, was filled with impatience by these conversations. He began to suspect that the common supposition that a love of

music indicates a spiritual temperament was false. He could see nothing of the spiritual in the cases before him. Among these music-loving friends of Sañudo many, nearly all, were mean, ill-conditioned, and envious. No doubt, thought Hurtado, who liked to explain everything, the vagueness of music gave the envious and vile, as they listened to the melodies of Mozart and to the harmonies of Wagner, a refreshing rest from the internal bitterness of their bad thoughts, as a kind of neutral antidote to an excess of chloride.

Most of the frequenters of the Café del Siglo were students; there were also a few families who grouped themselves round tables, to the despair of the waiters, and a few girls of dubious appearance. Among these the most striking was a beautiful blonde, accompanied by her mother, a short stout woman with large twisted teeth and the glance of a wild boar. Her story was public property: she had lived with a sergeant, the father of this girl, and had then married a German watch-maker who at last, weary of his wife's irregular conduct, had kicked her out into the street.

Sañudo and his friends spent Saturday nights speaking ill of everyone and afterwards they would discuss with the pianist and violinist of the café the beauty of a sonata of Beethoven or a minuet of Mozart. Hurtado realized that the place did not suit him and ceased to go there.

Sometimes Andrés would enter a *café chantant* with its raised platform for the singers and dancers. He liked the "baile flamenco" and the singing when it was simple, but the café specialists, fat men who sat, busy with a toothpick, and began to draw deep breaths with a very melancholy face, seemed to him repulsive.

There were some cafés and gaming-houses, difficult of access, which Andrés considered dangerous. One of them, the Café del Brillante, was frequented by loafers, servant-girls and dancers; another was a den in the Calle de la Magdalena, with windows hidden by green curtains. Andrés would say to himself: "No, I must go in," and entered trembling with fright.

These frights of his were intermittent. For some time he was afraid of an unknown woman, an adventuress of the Calle del Candil, with black eyes darkly shaded and a smile showing her white teeth.

Andrés had only to see her to be set trembling with fear. One day he heard her speaking with a Galician accent and all his fear vanished.

Often of a Sunday afternoon he would go to visit his fellow student Fermín Ibarra, who was laid up with arthritis and spent his days reading attractive books of science. His mother treated him as a child and bought him mechanical toys to distract him.

Hurtado told him of his doings, of the dissecting room, the *café chantants* and the night life of Madrid,

Fermín listened with resigned curiosity. The absurd thing was that when he left the house of this poor invalid, life seemed pleasant to Andrés. Was this a vile feeling of contrast, that of being strong and healthy as compared to the feeble cripple?

At all other moments his studies, his discussions, his home, and his friends and adventures, all these things combined to impress him with a feeling of sorrow and bitterness. Life in general, and especially his own life, seemed to him ugly, dark, sorrowful, and unintelligible.

ARACIL AND MONTANER

ARACIL, Montaner, and Hurtado were all successful in their first course of Anatomy. Aracil went off to Galicia where his father held an official post; Montaner went to a place in the mountains, and Hurtado remained without friends.

He found the summer long and wearisome; in the mornings he would go with Margarita and Luisito to the Retiro Park, and the three ran about and played there; the afternoons and evenings he spent at home reading novels, all the feuilletons published in the newspapers during several years. The elder Dumas, Eugène Sue, Montepin, Gaboriau and Miss Braddon were eagerly devoured; but such a dose of literature, crimes, adventures and mysteries soon palled.

The first days of the new course were unexpectedly pleasant. On those autumn days the Fair of September in the Prado, near the Botanical Gardens, had not yet broken up; and by the stalls with toys, the merry-go-rounds, the shooting-booths and mounds of nuts, almonds and medlars, there were booths of books where the bibliophiles congregated to finger and turn over the

leaves of volumes covered with dust. Hurtado used to spend the time while the fair lasted examining folios, between a grave man of professorial air, dressed in black and wearing spectacles, and a spectre-thin priest with worn cassock.

The new course gave Andrés certain expectations: he was going to study physiology and thought that the study of organic life would prove as interesting as a novel. But he was mistaken—it was not so. To begin with, the text-book was a stupid *réchauffé* of French books, written without clarity or enthusiasm. It gave no clear idea of the mechanism of life: man appeared in it like a cupboard with a number of devices inside as completely separate as the departments of a ministry.

Moreover, the professor displayed no keenness for his lectures; he was a senator, one of those wearisome persons who spend the afternoon in the Senate discussing unimportant trifles and sending the fathers of the country to sleep.

With such a text-book and such a professor nobody could possibly feel any desire to penetrate the secrets of life. Physiology, so studied, seemed dull and insipid, without interesting problems or attractions. Hurtado was grievously disillusioned; he would have to study physiology like everything else, without enthusiasm, one of so many obstacles to be surmounted before taking one's degree.

This idea of a series of obstacles was Aracil's. He considered it madness to expect to find any kind of study pleasant.

Julio in this, as in almost everything else, was right; his clear sense of reality rarely deceived him.

During this course Hurtado became more intimate with Julio Aracil. Julio was a year or eighteen months older than Hurtado and seemed more grown up. He was dark, with bright goggle-eyes, a keenly expressive face, fluent conversation, and quick intelligence.

One might have supposed that with these gifts he would be attractive, but so far was this from being so that most of his acquaintances did not care for him.

Julio lived with some old aunts. His father, an official in the capital of a province, was a man of modest position. Julio was very independent; he might have sought the help of his cousin Enrique, who had just obtained in open examination the post of doctor in the hospital, and who could have helped him. But Aracil wished for no protection and did not even go to see his cousin; he wanted to owe everything to himself. Considering his practical character, this refusal to receive assistance seemed a little paradoxical.

Julio was very clever, he scarcely ever studied but always passed his examinations. He sought out friends less intelligent than himself and exploited them. If he encountered any kind of superiority he at once retired. He

even admitted to Hurtado that he disliked to go about with anyone superior to himself.

Julio learnt all games with the greatest ease. His parents sacrificed themselves to pay for his books, his course, and his clothes. His aunt used to give him a dollar each month to go to the theatre, and Aracil managed, by playing cards with his friends, to go to the café, to the theatre, and to buy cigarettes, and at the end of the month he had not only his aunt's dollar but two or three more.

Aracil was rather vain; he took care of his hair, his moustache, and his nails, and liked to be considered smart. His real desire was to dominate but he could not do so on an extensive scale nor on a considered plan: all his will-power and cleverness had to do with trifles. Hurtado used to compare him to those energetic insects which keep on going round and round with useless but unassailable decision.

One of the things that pleased Julio was the thought that Madrid was very depraved and vicious.

The corruption of politicians, the frailty of women, anything implying weakness, gave him pleasure; to know that an actress, in order to play an important rôle, came to an understanding with an old and repulsive manager, or that an apparently honest woman met a man at a certain house, filled him with delight.

This omnipotence of money, disgusting to a man of

delicate taste, seemed to Aracil something admirable and sublime, a natural offering to the power of gold.

Julio was a true Phœnician type; he came from Mallorca and probably had Semitic blood in his veins; certainly he had Semitic tendencies. He dreamed of Eastern travels and always said that, if he had the money, the first places he would visit would be Egypt and Asia Minor.

Doctor Iturrioz, Hurtado's uncle, used to assert, perhaps arbitrarily, that in Spain there were two moral types, the Iberian and the Semite. To the Iberian type he attributed the vigorous and warlike qualities of the race, and to the Semite the more rapacious inclination to intrigue and trade.

Aracil was a finished example of the Semite type; his ancestors must have been slave-traders in the Mediterranean. Julio disliked anything violent or lofty: patriotism, war, political or social enthusiasm; he was fond of display, riches, jewels; and as he had not the money to buy real ones he wore false; he almost preferred the false to the genuine article.

He attached so much importance to money, especially to money earned, that he was pleased to find how difficult this matter of earning money was. As it was his idol and his god, he would have been sorry to find it over-easy to acquire. A paradise attained without effort does not fill the believer with enthusiasm: at least half

its pleasure consists in its difficulty of attainment; and to Julio the difficulty of obtaining money constituted one of its chief charms.

Another of Aracil's characteristics was his easy adaptation to circumstance; for him there was nothing disagreeable: whatever he considered necessary he accepted at once.

With his ant-like prudence he would calculate the quantity of pleasure to be derived from a certain amount of money; and this was one of his chief cares. He set a money value on everything, like a Jew, and if he found that he had bought for a penny what should have cost a penny and a half he felt keenly annoyed.

Julio read novels by French writers, half naturalistic, half erotic; and these accounts of the luxury and vices of Paris enchanted him.

If one were to take Iturriz's classification seriously, Montaner likewise belonged rather to the Semitic than to the Iberian type. He disliked everything violent or extravagant, was lazy, quiet, and fond of taking his ease.

His character was gentle, but one's first impression was one of peevishness and energy, which was merely a reflection of the atmosphere of his home in which, with his father and mother lived several unmarried sisters, of a hard and sour disposition.

When Andrés really knew him thoroughly he became his friend.

The three students finished their course. Aracil went away to his family in the country, as in other summers; Montaner and Hurtado remained at Madrid.

The summer was stifling; of an evening, after supper, Montaner went to Hurtado's house, and the two friends went along the Castellana and the Prado, which at this time had the air of a provincial promenade, dusty, languid, and wearisome.

Towards the end of the summer a friend gave Montaner a ticket for the gardens of the Buen Retiro, and thither they went every night. They listened to old-fashioned operas, interrupted by the cries of holiday-makers on a *montagne russe* which crossed the garden. They followed girls, and on leaving the gardens sat down to drink horchata or lemonade at one of the stalls of the Prado.

Both Montaner and Andrés had little good to say of Julio; they agreed in considering him selfish, mean, sordid, incapable of doing anyone a good turn. Yet they never failed to associate with him when he came to Madrid.

A FORMULA OF LIFE

THE following year, the fourth of the course, brought to the students, and especially to Andrés, a subject for curiosity, the lectures of Don José de Letamendi.

Letamendi was one of those men of universal fame who had begun to appear in Spain during the last twelve years or so, men of universal fame whose very names were unknown on the other side of the Pyrenees. Europe's ignorance of such mighty genius was explained on the absurd hypothesis, openly maintained by no one but accepted by all, that by an international hatred and bad faith the great things of Spain were made to appear small in other countries while the small things of other countries were made to seem great in Spain.

Letamendi was a thin, short, slovenly gentleman with grey hair and a white beard. His face was of the acquiline type, with curving nose and gleaming deep-sunk eyes. He had evidently "made himself a head" as the French say. He always wore a close-fitting frock coat and a tall hat with flat brim, one of those famous hats of the long-haired professors of the Sorbonne.

At the Hospital of San Carlos it was considered as an

indisputable truth that Letamendi was a genius, one of those eagles who flies far ahead of his time. Everyone found him hard to understand because he spoke and wrote with much pomp, in a style half-philosophical and half-literary.

Andrés Hurtado, eager to find something which would penetrate to the core of the problems of life, began to read Letamendi's book with enthusiasm. Its application of mathematics to biology seemed to him excellent. He soon became one of Letamendi's disciples.

Those who believe themselves to be in the possession of a truth are always inclined to proselytise, and Andrés accordingly one evening proceeded to the café in which Sañudo and his friends met, in order to talk of the doctrines of Letamendi and explain and comment on them.

Sañudo was there as usual with several engineering students. Hurtado joined them and took the first opportunity to bring up his subject and set forth Letamendi's formula of life and attempted to explain the corollaries derived from it by its author.

Life, said Andrés, according to Letamendi, was an indefinite factor between individual energy and the cosmos, and this factor could only be sum, difference, multiple, or quotient; and since it could not be sum, difference or quotient, it must be a multiple. But one of Sañudo's friends began to laugh.

“What are you laughing at?” asked Andrés in surprise.

“Because in all that there is a good deal of falseness and sophistry. To begin with there are many other mathematical functions besides adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing.”

“Such as?”

“Such as raising to a certain power, extracting the root, and so on. Besides, even if mathematics were limited to these four primary uses, it is absurd to think that in the conflict between the energy of life and the cosmos, two elements of which one at least is very diverse and complicated, there must be multiplication because there is not addition, subtraction or division. Moreover it would be necessary to demonstrate the impossibility of there being addition, subtraction or division; one must demonstrate too the possibility of two simultaneous functions. It `s not enough to affirm it.”

“But it is logical.”

“No, no, excuse me,” replied the student. “For instance, between that woman yonder and me there can be several mathematical operations: addition if we help each other to do a thing; subtraction if she is of one mind, I of another, and if one or other gain the upper hand in this; multiplication if we have a child; division if I cut her or she cut me into small pieces.”

"This is mere jesting," said Andrés.

"Of course I am jesting, like the professor, but my jest has its part of truth, namely, that between the force of life and the cosmos there is an infinite number of possibilities: addition, subtraction, multiplication, anything—besides the possibility of the existence of other factors which mathematics has no means of expressing."

Andrés Hurtado, who had gone to the café under the persuasion that his propositions would convince the engineering students, was a trifle perplexed and crest-fallen at finding himself thus refuted.

He read Letamendi's book again and continued to attend his lectures; and he soon convinced himself that all this matter of the formula of life and its corollaries, which had at first seemed to him so profound and serious, was nothing but the tricks of a juggler, ingenious or commonplace, and always completely divorced from reality, whether metaphysical or empirical.

All these mathematical formulas and their development were a series of commonplaces disguised under scientific terms and adorned with rhetorical phrases which the silly professors and students mistook for the visions of a prophet.

Essentially this good gentleman of the long hair and eagle's glance, this artistic, scientific, and literary dilettante, a painter in his moments of leisure, a violinist, a compositor, and in everything a genius, was an audacious

mystifier, with the spectacular and reckless temperament of a Mediterranean type. His only real merit was literary: he had a talent for rhetoric.

Letamendi's rhetoric excited a desire in Andrés to know more of the world of philosophy and he accordingly bought cheap editions of the works of Kant, Fichte and Schopenhauer. He read first Fichte's *Theory of Knowledge* and could not make head or tail of it. It seemed to him that the translator had himself been unable to understand what he was translating. Then he read *Parerga and Paralipomena*, which seemed to him almost light reading, somewhat ingenuous and more amusing than he would have imagined possible. Finally he attempted to decipher *The Critique of Pure Reason*. He found that by fixing his attention he was able to follow the author's reasoning as one might follow the solution of a mathematical theorem; but the effort seemed too great for his brain and he left Kant for future study and continued to read Schopenhauer, whose droll and entertaining counsels pleased him.

Certain pedants told him that Schopenhauer was now out of fashion, as though the work of a man of extraordinary intelligence were like the shape of a silk hat.

His fellow students were amazed at these explorations on the part of Andrés Hurtado and asked if Letamendi's philosophy were not enough for him.

"That isn't a philosophy at all," he answered. "Leta-

mendi is a man without a single profound idea; his head is full of words and phrases. But of course they seem to you extraordinary because you do not understand them."

In the summer, during the vacations, Andrés in the National Library read some new philosophical works by French and Italian professors and was surprised that the greater part of these books had nothing stimulative of thought about them but the title; all the rest was an everlasting discussion of methods and classifications.

Hurtado cared nothing for methods and classification, nor whether sociology was a science or a puzzle invented by learned men; what he sought was fresh light, a truth which should be at once spiritual and practical.

The science stores of the Lombrosos and Ferris, of Fouilées and Janets did not excite his admiration.

Thus Latin spirit and its celebrated clearness seemed to him most insipid, trivial, and colourless. Beneath the pompous titles of these books was nothing but what was commonplace. They bore the same relation to science as quack remedies advertised in the newspapers bear to true medicine.

In every French author Hurtado seemed to see a gentleman after the fashion of Cyrano, with magnificent gestures and speaking through his nose; while in every Italian he saw a musical comedy baritone.

Finding that the modern books failed to satisfy him

he returned to Kant and by a great effort read the whole of *The Critique of Pure Reason*.

His reading had begun to be a little more fruitful and he remembered the general outlines of the systems he studied.

A BACKWARD STUDENT

AT THE beginning of the autumn, when the new course commenced, his younger brother Luisito fell ill of a fever.

Andrés felt towards Luisito a jealous and fierce affection. His worry over him was almost morbid, and it seemed as if all the elements had conspired against the child.

Doctor Aracil, Julio's relative, came to see him and a few days later was able to declare that it was typhoid.

Andrés had days of great anxiety; in his despair he read up in books of pathology the description and treatment of typhoid and discussed possible remedies with the doctor.

Doctor Aracil rejected them all.

"It is an illness," he assured him, "which has no special treatment. Give him baths and food, and wait; one can do nothing more."

Andrés was the one whose work it was to prepare the bath and take Luis's temperature.

Sometimes the patient had a high fever. In the mornings, when the fever diminished, he kept on asking for

Margarita and Andrés. Andrés during this illness was amazed at the energy and vigour of his sister. She spent the whole night looking after the child, and if it occurred to her, the thought of possible contagion was unimportant.

Andrés began to feel a great esteem for Margarita—their affection for Luis had brought them together.

After thirty or forty days the fever disappeared, but the child was very weak, a mere skeleton.

This first attempt to play the doctor made Andrés very sceptical. He began to wonder whether medicine was perfectly useless. He was sustained in this scepticism by the lectures of the professor of therapeutics, who considered all drugs useless if not actually harmful.

This was not the way to increase his pupils' enthusiasm for their profession, but the professor was undoubtedly sincere in his view and did right to express it.

After his fever Luisito remained so weak that he was continually giving his family some unpleasant surprise: one day it was a touch of fever, another day it was convulsions. Andrés often had to go out at two or three in the morning for the doctor and afterwards to the chemist's.

During this course Andrés became the friend of a backward, elderly student who took two or three years at least to get through one year's study.

One day this student asked Andrés why he was so

gloomy and sad. Andrés told him that his brother was ill, and the other student attempted to comfort him and set his mind at rest. Hurtado was grateful for this sympathy and became his friend.

This backward student was a Galician called Antonio Lamela; thin, nervous, ill-favoured, with a sharp nose and a tuft of black hair in his half-grey beard; another sign of debility was his lack of teeth.

Hurtado was struck by his mysterious air and Lamela no doubt remarked Andrés's concentrated look. Both were separated by an inner life from the rest of the students.

Lamela's secret was that he was in love, very much in earnest, with an aristocrat, a titled lady who drove about in a carriage and had a box at the opera.

Lamela made Hurtado his confidant and told him all about this love of his. She was very much in love with him, so he averred; but there were certain difficulties and obstacles which prevented them from meeting.

Andrés was pleased to find someone out of the ordinary. In novels it was an anomaly for a young man to have no grand passion, but in real life it was the other way about. In fact Lamela's case was the first he had come across, and it interested him accordingly.

Lamela was intensely romantic and combined this with the coarser tendencies of a practical man. Lamela believed in love and in God, but this did not prevent him from often giving himself up to drunkenness and

dissipation. He said that the body must be given its mean and gross desires in order that the spirit may be kept clean.

He condensed this philosophy of his into the following axiom: One must give to the body what belongs to the body and to the soul what belongs to the soul.

“But all that about the soul is moonshine—” Andrés would answer—“mere inventions of the priests in order to obtain money.”

“Be quiet, don’t talk such nonsense.”

Lamela really was backward in everything, both in his career and in his ideas. He reasoned like a man of the beginning of the Nineteenth Century.

The present mechanical conception of the world in its economic aspects and of society, for him did not exist. For him there was no social problem. It could all be solved by charity and generosity.

“You are a true Catholic,” Andrés would tell him, “and have made for yourself the most convenient of worlds.”

One day Lamela pointed out to him the lady of his heart and Andrés found to his amazement that she was an ugly dark-complexioned spinster with the nose of a cockatoo and more years than the oldest of parrots. Apart from her unattractiveness, she took no notice of the Galician student and merely gave him a sour and unpleasant look of contempt.

Reality had no place in Lamela's strained imagination. Despite his humble smiling appearance, he was very proud and self-confident, with the serenity of one who believes that he penetrates to the essence of things and of men's actions.

When other students were present he did not speak about his love, but when he could get Hurtado alone his confidential revelations knew no end. He interpreted everything in a strained and complex way.

"I saw her yesterday," he would say smiling and clutching Andrés by the arm.

"You don't say so!"

"Yes," he added mysteriously, "she was with a lady of society. I followed her, she entered her house, and shortly afterwards a servant came out onto the balcony. Strange, wasn't it?"

"Why strange?"

"Because he did not close the windows of the balcony."

Hurtado gazed at him wondering what was the matter with the brain of this friend of his who found the most natural things in the world strange and was able to believe in the good looks of that lady.

Sometimes when they were talking in the Retiro Park Lamela would turn round and say:

"Look, and say nothing."

"What is the matter?"

“That man coming towards us is one of my enemies and maligns me to her. He has come to spy on me.”

Andrés was amazed at such delusions. When they had become more intimate, he would say:

“Lamela, if I were you I would present myself to the Psychological Society of Paris or London.”

“Why?”

“And I would say to them: ‘Examine me, for I believe I am the most extraordinary man in the world.’”

And the Galician would laugh his good-natured laugh.

“You are a mere child,” he would answer. “When you are in love you will see which of us is right.”

Lamela lived in a lodging-house in the Plaza de Lavapiés. His room was small and untidy, and, as he studied in bed when he did study, he used to tear out his books in sections and keep the loose sheets in his trunk or scattered over the table.

Occasionally Hurtado came to see him here.

The ornaments of his room consisted of empty bottles everywhere. Lamela bought wine and kept it in the strangest places, so that the other lodgers should not come into his room and drink it, as often happened, he said. There were bottles up the chimney, in his trunk, and in the chest of drawers.

At night, he told Andrés, he placed a bottle of wine under the bed and if he woke up would take the bottle and drink half its contents at one go. He was persuaded

that nothing sent one to sleep like wine, and that, compared with it, sulphonal and chloral were of no effect.

Lamela never discussed the opinions of the professors nor did they greatly interest him. For him professors were to be divided simply into two kinds: kindly professors who gave one good marks, and ruthless professors who flabbergasted one in the conceit of their learning.

Lamela indeed divided mankind in general into two classes: those who were frank and honest, sincere and generous; and those who were mean and vain.

Lamela placed Aracil and Montaner in the latter class, among the mean and worthless.

It is true that neither of them took Lamela seriously. Andrés at home used to tell of his friend's extravagant behaviour. Margarita was greatly interested in this love affair of his. Luisito, who had the imagination of a sickly child, had, after listening to his brother, invented a tale entitled, "The love affair of a Galician student and the queen of the cockatoos."

THE HOSPITAL OF SAN JUAN
DE DIOS

ANDRÉS HURTADO continued to advance in his career, steadily, although without special brilliance.

At the beginning of their fourth year Julio Aracil took it into his head to attend some lectures on venereal disease given by a doctor of the hospital of San Juan de Dios. Aracil invited Montaner and Hurtado to accompany him. A few months later there were to be examinations for entering the General Hospital as assistants; all three meant to go in for them and it would not be a bad thing to see as much as possible of sick persons.

This visit to the hospital was a new source of sadness and depression for Hurtado. It seemed to him that in one way or another the world was certainly showing him its ugliest side.

After attending at the hospital for some days Andrés was inclined to believe that Schopenhauer's pessimism was a truth almost capable of mathematical demonstration. The world seemed to him a combination of madhouse and hospital; to be intelligent was a misfortune and happiness could only be found in stupidity or mad-

ness. Lamela, living among his illusions, was unconsciously one of the wise.

Aracil, Montaner, and Hurtado visited one of the women's wards at the hospital.

For an excitable and restless man like Andrés the spectacle could not be anything but depressing. The patients were of the lowest and most miserable class. To see so many unfortunate women forsaken and homeless in this gloomy room, a human refuse-heap; to verify with his own eyes the poison that undermines sexual life impressed Andrés painfully.

This hospital, now fortunately pulled down, was a disgusting, dirty, evil-smelling place. Its windows looked onto the Calle de Atocha, and besides their iron bars had a wire netting, so that the sight of the women at the window should not offend the neighbourhood. Sun and air were thus excluded.

The doctor in this ward, a friend of Julio's, was a ridiculous old man with long white whiskers. Although tolerably ignorant, he wished to have the airs of a professor, and this could not seem a great crime to anyone; but the vile and disgraceful part was that he treated those unfortunate women with useless cruelty and used them roughly both by word and deed.

Why? It was inexplicable. That vain idiot would order the patients to be shut up in small rooms for several days for imaginary offences. If during his visit there was any

conversation from one bed to another or if a woman complained of the pain of the treatment, or for any little thing he would impose these penalties. At other times he would order them to fast on bread and water. He was a cruel bogey who had been entrusted with the humane task of caring for poor sick women.

Hurtado could not put up with the brutality of that idiot of the white whiskers; Aracil laughed at his friend's indignation.

Finally Hurtado decided not to return to the hospital. There was a woman there who constantly kept in her lap a white cat. She must once have been beautiful, her eyes were black, large, and shaded, her nose slightly aquiline, her type Egyptian. No doubt the cat was all that was left to her from a happier past. When the doctor came she used secretly to put the cat off the bed onto the floor, and it would hide in fright as it saw the doctor enter with his pupils. But one day the doctor saw it and began to kick it.

"Catch it and kill it," said the white-whiskered idiot to his assistant. The assistant and a nurse began to chase the animal through the room while the patient looked on in consternation.

"And shut this woman up in the closet," added the doctor. The woman was still following the chase with her eyes and when she saw that they had caught the cat two large tears ran down her pale cheeks.

“Wretch! Idiot!” exclaimed Hurtado, advancing towards the doctor with raised fist.

“Don’t be silly,” said Aracil. “If you don’t like it go away.”

“You need not be afraid, I am going away sure enough, so as not to trample that miserable idiot under my feet.”

He refused to return to the hospital after that incident.

This humanitarianism of Andrés would have become even more pronounced had it not been for certain influences acting on him. One of these was that of Julio who laughed at all exaggerated ideas, as he called them; another was that of Lamela with his practical idealism; and finally Schopenhauer’s *Parerga and Paralipomena* led him to refrain from action.

In spite of these restraining influences Andrés was for several days greatly impressed by the speeches of some workmen at an anarchist meeting at the Rius Lyceum. One of them, Ernesto Alvarez, a dark, black-eyed, grey-bearded man, had made an eloquent, exalted speech about forsaken children, beggars, and fallen women.

Andrés felt the attraction of this perhaps somewhat morbid sentimentalism. When he expressed his ideas about social injustice, Aracil would give him an answer based on his good sense.

“Of course there are evils in society,” he would say.

“But who is going to set them right? Those self-seeking speakers at the public meetings? Besides, there are misfortunes that are common to everyone; those stage masons in popular plays who complain that they are cold in winter and hot in summer are not the only ones—it is the same with all of us.”

Aracil’s remarks threw cold water on the exalted humanitarianism of his friend.

“If you want to devote yourself to such things,” he said, “become a politician and learn to speak.”

“But I don’t want to become a politician,” Andrés answered indignantly.

“Well, that is the only way.”

Naturally any reform in a humanitarian sense must be collective and must be carried out through politics; and Julio had no difficulty in convincing his friend of the corruption of politics.

Julio introduced an element of doubt into Hurtado’s romanticism, and he had no need to insist in order to prove to him that politics was merely a profession embraced for gain.

Really Spanish politics have never been of a lofty or noble character, and it was not difficult to persuade an inhabitant of Madrid to distrust them.

Inaction and a feeling of the vanity and corruption of everything inclined Hurtado more and more to pes-

simism. His tendency was towards a spiritual anarchism based on sympathy and pity, without any practical solution.

The fierce and revolutionary logic of such men as Saint Just no longer aroused his enthusiasm: it seemed to him artificial and unnatural. He considered that in life justice did not and could not exist. Life was a vague, tumultuous stream, and the actors in it played a comedy which they were unable to understand, while men who had reached an intellectual outlook contemplated the scene with pity and compassion.

These desultory ideas, this lack of plan and of a restraining purpose made Hurtado's life very aimless and continually and uselessly agitated his mind.

ASSISTANT IN A HOSPITAL

HALF-WAY through the course the examinations were held for assistants in the general hospital.

Aracil, Montaner, and Hurtado decided to appear for them. The examination consisted of questions made up at random by the professors on subjects in which the students had attended lectures. Hurtado went to ask his Uncle Iturrioz to help him with his influence.

“Very well,” said his uncle. “Are you keen on your career?”

“Very little.”

“Then why do you want to enter the hospital?”

“What should I do? Perhaps I shall become keen. Besides I shall earn something, and I need it.”

“Good,” said Iturrioz, “with you one knows where one is; I prefer that.”

Aracil and Hurtado passed the examination. At first their duty consisted of keeping memorandum-books; they had to enter the doctor’s prescriptions every morning, and in the afternoon fetch the orders from the chemist and distribute them, and there was night duty. From this they would go on to a higher class, with nine instead

of six dollars a month, and afterwards become assistants with twelve, which meant the respectable sum of two pesetas a day.

Andrés was sent for by a doctor, a friend of his uncle, who was visiting one of the rooms devoted to medicine on the third floor of the hospital.

This doctor, an industrious man, had learned to diagnose cases with the greatest skill. Outside of his profession nothing had any interest for him: politics, literature, art, philosophy, astronomy, everything that was not the sounding and analysis of people's bodies was to him a dead letter.

He held, perhaps rightly, that a medical student's duty was to concern himself entirely with medicine and in all else have a good time. Andrés was more interested in the ideas and feelings of the patients than in the symptoms of their diseases.

The doctor of the hospital soon realized how little Hurtado's career meant to him.

"Your thoughts are everywhere except with medicine," he said to him severely.

And he was right. This new student was unlikely to attain clinical proficiency—it was the psychological side of things that interested him. He wanted to know what the sisters of charity were doing and whether they liked their work; he was curious to learn how the hospital

was administered and inquire how the money assigned to it by the authorities vanished.

Corruption was rampant in this ancient building. From the provincial authorities themselves to a band of students who sold the hospital's quinine to the chemists of the Calle de Atocha, there were certainly all kinds of ways in which the money disappeared. On night duty the students and chaplains spent the time playing cards and gambling; the lowest stake was one penny.

The doctors, some of whom were great rascals, the priests who were also rascals, and the students spent the night in gambling.

The chaplains were ready to stake their very eyelashes; one of them was a small, cynical, fair-complexioned man who had forgotten his priest's vocation and taken a liking to medicine. The course of studies to become a doctor was too long for him and he intended to go in for the examination for assistants and if possible definitively give up his priest's profession.

The other priest was a rough, tall, strong man of energetic features. He spoke in an authoritative, despotic tone and used to tell amusing *risqué* stories which the others commented on crudely enough.

If a pious person reproached him for his unseemly language, he would change his voice and gestures and with great hypocrisy and a falsely unctuous air, which

went but ill with his dark complexion and expressively bold black eyes, would say that religion must not be confused with the vices of its unworthy professors.

Some of the students who had known him for a long time and familiarly used to call him Lagartijo because of a certain likeness between him and that celebrated bullfighter.

"Listen, Lagartijo," they would say.

"How gladly would I exchange my stole for a bullfighter's flag and set myself to kill bulls instead of helping men to die," would be the priest's answer.

As he frequently lost at cards he was often hard up.

Once he said to Andrés, with picturesque oaths:

"I can't go on like this. I shall have to go out and say masses everywhere and swallow fourteen wafers a day."

Hurtado was not attracted by this cynicism.

Among the assistants some were very curious types, real hospital mice who had been there fifteen or twenty years without ever succeeding in taking their doctor's degree and who on the sly in the poorer parts of the city visited more patients than many a full-blown doctor.

Andrés became a friend of the sisters of charity assigned to his ward and of some others.

Although not of a religious disposition, he would have liked in his romanticism to have believed that the sisters of charity were angels; but in the hospital he found that they limited themselves to practical adminis-

trative matters and to calling a confessor when a patient took a turn for the worse.

Besides they were not idealistic mystical creatures who considered this world a vale of tears but poor girls, and some of them widows, who became sisters of charity as they might have adopted any other profession.

And these good sisters reserved the best rooms in the hospital for their own use.

Once a nurse gave Andrés a notebook found among some old papers which had been thrown away in the sisters' quarters. It was the diary of a nun, a series of brief laconic notes, including some impressions of life in the hospital and extending over five or six months.

On its first page was a name: Sor María de la Cruz, and by its side a date. Andrés read the diary, and it surprised him. The account of life in the hospital was so simple and ingenuous and told with so much charm that it touched him.

He wished to know who Sor María was, and if she was still living in the hospital or elsewhere. He soon learned that she was dead. One of the older nuns had known her and told Andrés that soon after she came to the hospital she had been transferred to a typhus room and had there caught the infection and died.

Andrés did not dare ask what she was like to look at, although he was longing to know.

He kept the nun's diary as a relic and so often won-

dered what she must have been like that she began to haunt him.

A strange mysterious character in the hospital who attracted much attention and about whom many stories were told, was Brother Juan. Nobody knew where he came from. He always wore a black blouse, sandals, and a crucifix hanging from his neck. Brother Juan preferred to look after the contagious cases; he was apparently a mystic, living ever within himself in the midst of suffering and sorrow.

He was short, with a black beard and gleaming eyes, gentle gestures, and a soft voice. He was a Semitic type.

He lived in a narrow street between San Carlos and the general hospital. This street was crossed by two bridges with glass windows along them; under one of these, that nearest the Calle de Atocha, Brother Juan had established his den, in which he would shut himself up with a small dog as his only companion.

Whatever the hour they sent for him, there was always a light in his room and he was always awake.

Some said he spent his time reading doubtful books, others said that he spent it in prayer; one of the students said that he had seen him writing notes in French and English books dealing with sexual pathology.

One night when Andrés was on duty one of the students suggested that they should go to see Brother Juan and ask him for something to eat and drink.

They all proceeded to the back street where he lived. There was a light in his den; they tried to see in, but there was not a crack through which they might see what the mysterious nurse was doing inside. They knocked, and immediately he appeared in his black blouse.

“We are on night duty, Brother Juan,” said one of the students, “and have come to see if you can give us something to appease our hunger.”

“Ah, poor fellows,” he exclaimed, “I am very poor, but I will see if I have anything.” He disappeared behind the door, which he carefully shut, and soon afterwards reappeared with a packet of coffee, another of sugar, and another of biscuits.

The students returned to the room of those on night duty, ate the biscuits, drank the coffee, and discussed Brother Juan.

They were unable to agree; some thought he was a man of good family, others that he was a former servant; according to some he was a saint, according to others he was more perverted than saintly.

Brother Juan was the queer bird of the hospital. When he received money, from some mysterious source, he would invite the convalescent patients to a meal and give the other patients things that they needed.

Despite his charity and his good works, Brother Juan produced in Andrés an unpleasant physical feeling of repulsion.

PART TWO
THE MINGLANILLAS

THE MINGLANILLAS

JULIO ARACIL and Andrés had become intimate. Their life in common at San Carlos and in the hospital had made them alike in habits although not in ideas or fancies.

Julio, with his hard philosophy of success, began to feel more esteem for Hurtado than for Montaner. Andrés had, like him, become an assistant student in the hospital, whereas Montaner had not only failed in this examination but had lost the whole course and had begun to let himself drift, ceasing to attend lectures and spending his time making love to a girl who lived near his house.

Julio Aracil then began to feel great contempt for his friend and to wish that he might fail in everything he undertook.

With his small salary at the hospital Julio did extraordinary, marvellous things; he even gambled on the stock exchange, invested in mines, and bought a Government bond.

Julio wished Andrés to behave likewise as a man of the world.

"I am going to introduce you to the Minglanillas," he said one day, laughing.

"Who are the Minglanillas?" asked Hurtado.

"Some girl friends of mine."

"That is their name?"

"That is my name for them, especially for their mother, who seems to have come straight out of a comic poet's brain."

"Who are they?"

"They are the daughters of a pensioned widow, Nini and Lulu. I have come to an understanding with Nini, the eldest; you can get to know the younger one."

"In what way do you mean that you have come to an understanding with her?"

"In every way. We meet in a room in the Calle de Cervantes that I know of and that I can recommend to you on occasion."

"Are you going to marry her?"

"Not I, indeed! A pretty fool I should be!"

"But you have spoiled the girl's life."

"I! Nonsense!"

"But you have."

"Well, and who knows of it? And what's more who cares?"

"But——"

"All that is nonsense; one must make the most of one's

opportunities. If you can do likewise and don't, you will be a fool."

Hurtado did not like this egoism, but he was curious to make the acquaintance of this family and one afternoon went with Julio to pay it a visit.

The widow and her two daughters lived in the Calle del Fúcar, in one of those miserable houses with a court common to all the lodgers and passages with many doors.

There was a sad air of extreme poverty in the widow's apartment. Mother and daughters wore patched and threadbare garments; the furniture was cheap, with the exception here and there of a remnant of past glories; the chairs were in holes, and one caught one's foot in the ragged matting.

The mother, Doña Leonarda, was not an attractive woman; her complexion was as yellow as a quince; her expression, hard and falsely amiable; she had a hook nose, some moles on her chin and a forced smile.

The good lady had grotesque aristocratic pretensions and spoke of the time when her husband was under-secretary of State and they used to spend the summer at St. Jean de Luz. The names of the daughters, Nini and Lulu, were due to a French nurse they had had.

These memories of former splendour were recalled by Doña Leonarda as she gesticulated with her closed

fan as though it were a conductor's baton, with many a sigh, and eyes turned heavenwards.

When they arrived, Julio began to talk to Nini, and Andrés had to maintain the conversation with Lulu and her mother.

Lulu, without good looks, had a certain charm; her eyes were dark and green, with black rings—they pleased Andrés; there was too much space between her nose and her mouth and between her mouth and her chin, which gave her face a certain monkey look; the forehead was small, the mouth had thin lips and a half-ironical, half-bitter smile; the teeth were white and pointed; her nose was slightly turned up, her complexion pale and unhealthy.

Hurtado saw that she had plenty of charm and malicious wit, but she lacked a girl's chief attraction, ingenuous freshness and candour. She was worn out by work, poverty, and restlessness of mind. At eighteen she seemed no longer young.

Her sister Nini, of irregular features and less intelligent, was more of a woman, she was anxious to please and pretend and dissemble. Her constant effort to appear candid and ingenuous gave her a more feminine air and at the same time made her more commonplace.

Andrés convinced himself that the mother was aware of the real relations between Julio and her daughter

Nini. No doubt she herself had allowed her daughter to compromise herself thinking that Aracil would not forsake her.

Hurtado was not attracted by the family; and to take advantage of their poverty, like Julio, in order to make love to one of the daughters and forsake her afterwards seemed to him the act of a knave.

Had he not known Julio's intentions he would have gone to Doña Leonarda's without any feeling of unpleasantness; but the certainty that one day his friend's love affair would end in a small tragedy of tears and lamentation, in which Dona Leonarda would scold and Nini would faint, was not a prospect to delight him.

AN ENTERTAINMENT

ONE day before Carnival Aracil said to Hurtado: "Have you heard that we are going to have a dance at the Minglanillas'?"

"Oh! When?"

"The Sunday of Carnival. The paraffin for the lamp, the cakes, the hire of the piano and of the pianist are to be by subscription, so that if you wish to come you must contribute your mite."

"Good, I don't mind. How much do you give?"

"I will tell you one day soon."

"Who are going?"

"Some of the neighbours, girls with their fiancés; Ca-sares, that journalist friend of mine; a writer of farces; and some others. It will be pleasant enough; there will be pretty girls."

On Carnival Sunday, after being on duty in the hospital, Andrés went to the dance. It was eleven o'clock. The night watchman opened the door. Doña Leonarda's house was crowded with people; they even overflowed onto the stairs.

Andrés as he entered saw Julio with a group of young

men he did not know. Julio introduced him to the writer of farces, a stupid, funereal man who, no doubt to show his profession, at once began to make jokes, each of them older and sillier than the last. He also introduced him to Antoñito Casares, public official and journalist, who had a great reputation among the women.

Antoñito was an Andalusian with a ruffian's morals; he considered it the height of stupidity to allow any woman to escape without getting something out of her. In his eyes every woman, by the mere fact of being a woman, owed him a tax and contribution.

He divided women into two kinds: the poor to play around with, the rich to marry for their money, if possible.

Antoñito searched for a rich woman, with Anglo-Saxon determination. As he was not ill-looking and dressed well, the girls at first accepted him as a desirable suitor. He on his part boldly tried to gain ground, spoke to the servants, sent letters, and walked past the house. This he called working a woman. The girl, so long as she thought him a desirable suitor, did not reject these advances; but when she found that he was only a humble official and an unknown free-lance journalist she would have nothing more to say to him.

Julio Aracil had an enthusiastic admiration for Casares; he considered him a worthy associate and the two were determined to help each other to get on in life.

When the pianist began to play, all the young men set off in search of partners.

"Can you dance?" Aracil asked Hurtado.

"No."

"Well, go and sit by Lulu, for she likewise refuses to dance, and treat her with every consideration."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because," added Julio ironically, "a moment ago Doña Leonarda said: 'My daughters, Julito, must be treated as if they were virgins.'"

And Julio Aracil smiled, as he imitated Nini's mother, a ribald, heartless smile.

Andrés made his way through the throng. The drawing-room and the room next to it were lit by several paraffin lamps. In the small dining-room there were trays on the table with sweets and cakes and bottles of white wine for the guests. Of all the girls at the dance the one who excited most notice was a blonde of imposing beauty. She had a history. A rich gentleman who was paying his court to her had carried her off to the Hotel de la Prosperidad and some days later she had escaped from him as from a satyr.

Her whole family was abnormal in one way or another. Her father, a venerable old man in appearance, had been tried for seducing a girl, and her brother after firing two shots at his wife, had attempted to commit suicide.

This pretty blonde, whose name was Estrella, was

hated exceedingly by all the women of the neighbourhood.

Her crime apparently was that in order to excite the envy of her neighbours, she displayed on her balcony black openwork stockings and silk beribboned chemises and other magnificent and luxurious articles of clothing which could not have been acquired by honourable means.

Doña Leonarda was unwilling that her daughters should associate with this girl; she could not countenance certain friendships, she said.

Estrella's sister, Elvira, twelve or thirteen years old, was very pretty, very impertinent and no doubt trod in her elder sister's footsteps.

"A shameless girl indeed," said an old woman behind Andrés, pointing to Elvira.

Estrella danced like the goddess Venus, and as she moved, her thighs and well-developed breast became almost insolently prominent.

Casares, seeing her pass, said:

"God be with you, fair Amazon."

Andrés made his way to Lulu and sat down by her.

"You have come very late," she said.

"Yes, I was on night duty."

"Aren't you going to dance?"

"I don't know how to."

"You don't?"

"No. And you?"

"I don't want to. It makes me giddy."

Casares came up to Lulu and asked her to dance.

"Listen, my black beauty," he said.

"What is it, my white beauty?" she asked brazenly.

"Will you come and take a turn with me?"

"No, I will not, sir."

"Why?"

"Because it doesn't suit my constitution," she answered with a rascally air.

"You are ill-tempered, my dark one," said Casares.

"And you all the reverse, of course," she retorted.

"Why did you refuse to dance with him?" Andrés asked her.

"Because he is an idiot—a repulsive fool who thinks that all women are in love with him. He may go and hang himself."

The dance continued with increasing animation, and Andrés remained seated at Lulu's side without speaking.

"You amuse me very much," she said suddenly, laughing with an almost animal expression.

"Why?" asked Andrés flushing quickly.

"Did not Julio tell you to come to an understanding with me? He did, didn't he?"

"No, he said nothing about it."

"Oh, but confess that he did. Only you are too fastidious to admit it. To him it seems only natural. First

a poor girl, some penniless young lady such as we are, to amuse oneself with; then a woman with money to marry."

"I do not think that is his intention."

"But of course it is. Do you imagine he is not going to desert Nini? He will do so as soon as he takes his degree. I know Julio well. He is a selfish scoundrel. He is deceiving my mother and my sister for no good reason."

"I don't know how Julio will act. I know that I would not act like that."

"Because you are different. Besides there is no question of it, as you are not going to fall in love with me, even as an amusement."

"Why not?"

"Because you are not."

She realized that men did not care for her. She herself liked girls better; not that she had perverted instincts, but the truth was that men made little impression on her.

No doubt the veil which Nature and modesty alike draw over all the motives of sexual life had been too soon torn asunder for her; no doubt she had learnt the truth about men and women at a time when instinct scarcely existed for her, and this had caused in her a mixture of indifference and actual repugnance for everything connected with love.

Andrés suspected that this repugnance was due more than to anything else to an organic poverty, to lack of food and air.

Lulu confessed to him that she had no desire to live, and not from any romantic motive: she simply believed that she would never be able to have a pleasant life.

Conversing in this way, Andrés and Lulu became close friends.

At half past twelve the dance came to an end; this was an indispensable condition made by Doña Leonarda; the girls had to work next day, and although everyone begged that the dance should go on, she remained inflexible and by one o'clock the house was empty.

THE FLIES

ANDRÉS left the house with a group of friends. It was intensely cold.

"Where shall we go?" asked Julio.

"Let's go and visit Doña Virginia," suggested Casares. "You know her?"

"I know her, indeed," answered Aracil.

They went up to a neighbouring house in the same street, next to the Calle de la Verónica. On a balcony of the first floor one could read the following sign by the light of a street lamp:

VIRGINIA GARCÍA,

MIDWIFE LISCENSED BY THE COLLEGE OF

SAN CARLOS

(*Sage femme.*)

"I see a light, so she must still be up," said Casares.

Julio called the night watchman to open the street door for them, and they all went up to the first floor. An old servant opened the door and showed them into the dining-room, where the midwife and two men were sitting at the table with a bottle of wine and three glasses before them.

Doña Virginia was tall and stout, fair-haired, with the face of an angel of Rubens after forty-five years of sojourn in this world. Her complexion was lit up with a reddish glow, like the skin of a roast suckling pig, and some moles on her chin gave her the appearance of a bearded woman.

Andrés knew her by sight from having met her in the hospital of San Carlos, always in a light-coloured dress and ridiculous girl's hat.

Of the two men, one was the midwife's lover. Doña Virginia introduced him as an Italian professor of languages at a college. His conversation gave one the impression of those people who travel abroad, staying at hotels at two francs a day and can never afterward accustom themselves to the lack of comfort in Spain.

The other, a man of sinister air, with a black beard and spectacles, was nothing less than the editor of *The Illustrated Mason*.

Doña Virginia informed her visitors that she was on night duty, looking after a woman in childbirth. Her house was fairly large, with mysterious small rooms looking onto the Calle de la Verónica. These were reserved for girls of a certain position in life who had got themselves in trouble.

Doña Virginia affected the most exquisite sensibility.

"Poor things!" she would say, referring to these guests of hers. "How wicked you men are!"

To Andrés she seemed repulsive. Seeing that it was impossible to remain there, the whole party of men left the house. A few yards farther on they met a young fellow, the nephew of a money-lender, in company with a poor girl with whom he intended to go to the dance at the Zarzuela theatre.

"Hullo, Victorio," said Aracil.

"Hullo, Julio," he answered. "How are you? Where are you all coming from?"

"From the house of Doña Virginia here."

"A fine knave she is, too; she exploits those poor girls who are taken to her house on false pretences."

A money-lender calling a midwife a shark! This was surely somewhat unusual.

The editor of *The Illustrated Mason*, who was next to Andrés, told him that Doña Virginia was a dangerous woman. She had dispatched two husbands to the other world with two cups of coffee; she was afraid of nothing, practiced abortion and miscarriage, and sequestered and sold girls. Accustomed to massage and gymnastics, she was stronger than a man and could hold down a woman as though she were a child.

In her villainous trade she showed endless audacity. Like carrion flies which are attracted by dismembered animals and dead bodies, Doña Virginia appeared with her soft speeches wherever she could track down a ruined family ready to be dragged to the *spoliarium*.

The Italian, the editor of *The Illustrated Mason* assured them, was not a professor of languages nor anything of the kind but an accomplice of Doña Virginia in her wicked business, and if he knew French and English it was because he had spent many years as a hotel thief.

They all accompanied Victorio to the Carrera de San Jerónimo, and the money-lender's nephew invited them to go on to the dance at the Zarzuela; Aracil and Casares, however, suspected that Victorio had no intention of paying their entrance ticket and refused.

"I know what we will do," said the friend of Casares who wrote farces.

"What?" asked Julio.

"We will go to see Villasús. Pura by now will have returned from the theatre."

Villasús, Andrés was informed, was a dramatic author whose two daughters were ballet dancers. He lived in the Cuesta de Santo Domingo.

They made their way to the Puerta del Sol, bought cakes in the Calle del Carmen at the corner of the Calle del Olivo, and went on to a large house in the Cuesta de Santo Domingo.

"Here we must not make a noise," observed the writer of farces, "or the night watchman will refuse to open."

The night watchman opened the door and they found themselves in a large hall from which Casares and his

friend, Julio, Andrés and the editor of *The Illustrated Mason* ascended to the attic, striking matches to see their way up the broad staircase.

They knocked at a door, and a servant-girl showed them into a painter's studio, and presently a gentleman, grey of beard and hair, appeared wrapped in a dressing-gown.

This gentleman, Rafael Villasús, was a poor devil of a writer of comedies and of detestable dramas in verse.

The poet, as he called himself, lived the life of an artist and Bohemian; he was really a poor fool who had ruined his daughters through his stupid romanticism.

Pura and Ernestina were in fact ruining themselves; neither had the least aptitude for the stage, but their father believed only in art and had sent them to the Conservatory, and then placed them in an obscure theatre and introduced them to journalists and actors.

The eldest, Pura, had a son by a friend of Casares, a writer of farces; and Ernestina was the mistress of a ticket speculator.

Pura's lover, besides being a perfect idiot, a maker of silly jests after the manner of his kind, was a ruffianly fellow disposed to lay his hands on whatever he came across. He was there that night. He was a tall, thin, dark-complexioned man with a hanging underlip.

The two writers of farces made a display of their wit, producing a whole collection of the stalest chestnuts.

These two and the rest, Casares, Aracil and the editor of *The Illustrated Mason*, took the house of Villasús by storm and behaved in a disgusting and heartless way.

They laughed at the folly of the father of the family, who imagined that it was all part of the artistic life. The poor idiot did not notice the real malice in all their jests.

The two daughters, both of them stupid and ugly, greedily ate the cakes their visitors had brought them and paid no attention to anything else.

One of the writers of farces pretended to be a lion and crept along the floor roaring; and the head of the family recited some verses which were applauded furiously.

Hurtado, tired of the noise and the wit, went to the kitchen to drink a glass of water and found Casares and the editor of *The Illustrated Mason* there. The latter was in the act of contaminating the water in a great earthenware jar. He thought this very funny.

"You are an ass," said Andrés curtly.

"What?"

"I say you're an ass, a beast."

"You can't say that to me," cried the Mason.

"Can't you hear that is precisely what I do say to you?"

"You won't dare repeat it in the street."

"In the street and everywhere else."

Casares had to intervene, and as he was no doubt anx-

ious to leave, he took the opportunity to go away with Hurtado, saying that he did so in order to avoid a scene. Pura went down to open the door for them, and the journalist and Andrés went together to the Puerta del Sol. Casares offered to protect Andrés; no doubt it was his habit to promise help and protection to everyone he met.

Hurtado went home sad enough. Doña Virginia exploiting and selling women; young men mocking a poor unfortunate family. Charity seemed to have fled from the world.

LULU

HURTADO'S talk with Lulu at the dance made him want to know her more intimately.

Really she had a certain charm and attraction. One of her eyes was higher than the other, and when she laughed her eyes became two slits, giving her face a malicious expression; when she smiled the lines of her lips were raised and her face took on a sharp, satirical look.

She was frank enough; indeed she usually said the most outrageous things, and there seemed no limit to the license of her mind; and a cynical expression would show in her eyes.

The first day that Andrés went to see Lulu after the dance he told her of their visit to Doña Virginia's house.

"You went to see the midwife?" asked Lulu.

"Yes."

"A pretty swine she is."

"My child," exclaimed Doña Leonarda, "how can you use such expressions!"

"Well, what is she but a procuress, or something worse?"

“Good heavens, what words!”

“She came to me one day,” went on Lulu, “to ask if I would be willing to go to the house of an old man with her. What a swine!”

Hurtado was amazed at Lulu’s mordacity. Hers was not the common run of jests picked up at the theatre; her vocabulary was all popular and of the street.

Andrés began to go frequently to the house merely to listen to Lulu. She was certainly an intelligent, intellectual woman, like most of the girls who live by their work in a great city and aspire rather to see, understand, and shine than to experience sensual pleasures.

She startled Hurtado, but did not inspire him with the least inclination to make love to her. He would have found it impossible to think of ever being to Lulu more than a cordial friend.

Lulu did embroidery for a shop in the Calle de Segovia and might earn three pesetas a day. On this and Doña Leonarda’s small pension the family subsisted; Nini earned but little, for although she worked, she was not much of a hand at it.

When Andrés went there of an afternoon he would find Lulu with her embroidery frame on her knees, sometimes singing at the top of her voice, sometimes very silent.

Lulu quickly picked up the songs of the street and sang them with the sauciest air; the ruffianly tunes

with grotesque words were those that especially appealed to her.

The tango beginning

*A certain cook of Cádiz, who must be known to you,
Compared all the ladies to nothing but a stew.*

and those others in which women enlist or go as sailors, that beginning "Well, little girl" or that in which women are made to ride bicycles, thus giving rise to the following quatrain:

*That is why discussion now
In a thousand speeches
Asks if they should still wear skirts
Or be seen in breeches;*

All such songs she sang most charmingly.

Sometimes she was out of humour and relapsed into those silences filled with thinking characteristic of restless neurotic girls. At such times her thoughts seemed to turn inward and the force of her ideas impelled her to silence. If she were addressed suddenly during one of these fits of abstraction she would stammer and red-den.

"I don't know what she can be scheming when she is in these moods," her mother would say, "but it can be nothing good."

Lulu told Andrés that as a young girl she had spent

a long time without being willing to speak at all; to do so made her feel extremely melancholy, and ever since she had been subject to these silent moods.

Often Lulu would leave her embroidery and go out to buy something at a haberdasher's nearby and would answer the remarks of the shop assistants with the most shameless outspokenness.

This disinclination to keep a distance proper to her class seemed in the eyes of Doña Leonarda and Nini a real disgrace.

"Remember that your father was well-known," Doña Leonarda would say pompously.

"And we are dying of hunger," would answer Lulu.

When it grew dark and the three women left their work, Lulu would stand in a corner leaning against several things at the same time and in a kind of narrow box formed by two chairs and the table or by the chairs and the dining-room cupboard, she would proceed to talk with her customary cynicism, to the scandal of her mother and sister. All kinds of human deformity delighted her. She was accustomed to respect nothing and nobody. She had no friends of her own age because she used to outrage the prudes by her barbarous remarks; on the other hand she was kindly towards the old and the sick; she understood their manias and egoisms and laughed at them. She was ready enough to render services, did not mind taking a dirty child in her

arms or looking after a sick old woman in a garret.

At times Andrés found her more than usually depressed; standing between her parapets of chairs, she would rest her head on her hand and laugh at the wretchedness of the room, looking fixedly at the ceiling or at one of the holes in the matting.

At other times she would sing the same song over and over again.

“Do be quiet,” her mother would say. “That air of yours is driving me mad.”

Lulu would stop singing, but would soon begin again on the same song.

Sometimes a friend of Doña Leonarda’s husband would come to visit them. This Don Prudencio González was fleshy and corpulent. He wore a black frock-coat, and white waistcoat with a watch-chain full of trinkets. He had small, disdainful eyes, his short moustache was dyed and he had a red face. He spoke with an Andalusian accent, and assumed academic attitudes during the conversation.

When he was there Doña Leonarda excelled herself.

“You who knew my husband—” she would say in a tearful voice—“you who have seen us in a position so different——”

And with tears in her eyes she discoursed of past splendours.

MORE ABOUT LULU

SOMETIMES, holiday afternoons, Andrés would accompany Lulu and her mother for a walk in the Retiro Park or in the Botanical Gardens.

Lulu liked the Botanical Gardens best because of their popular character, because they were near her house, and because of the acrid scent of old myrtle bushes in the walks there.

"I allow *you* to go for a walk with Lulu," Doña Leonarda would say with an emphatic air.

"All right, mother," Lulu would answer. "All that's quite unnecessary."

In the Botanical Gardens they would sit on a bench and talk. Lulu spoke of her life and impressions, especially those of her childhood. The memories of her infancy were deeply imprinted on her imagination.

"It makes me sad to think of my girlhood," she would say.

"Why?" asked Hurtado. "Was your life a pleasant one then?"

"No, no; but it makes me very sad." She said that as a child she used to be beaten for eating plaster on

the walls and newspapers. At that time she had headaches and nervous attacks; but it was now a long time since she had suffered anything of the kind. Not that she was always the same; sometimes she felt capable of being on her feet for a tremendously long time; sometimes the slightest effort exhausted her.

This organic variableness had its spiritual and material aspects. Lulu was very arbitrary, her likes and dislikes were quite unreasoning.

She did not care for a regular meal or for hot food; it must be cold, highly flavoured, with vinegar, pickles, oranges——

“Ah, if I belonged to your family, I should forbid that,” said Andrés.

“You would?”

“Certainly.”

“Then consider yourself my cousin.”

“Oh, you may laugh, but I would keep you in order.”

“Oh, oh, oh, my head is turning round,” she answered, singing the words insolently.

Andrés Hurtado knew few women; had he known more and been able to compare, he would have felt respect for Lulu.

Underlying her lack of illusions and of morality, at least of the current morality, this girl had a very human and noble idea of things. She did not object to adultery or the worst crimes and vices; what she hated

was dissimulation, hypocrisy and bad faith. Loyalty meant a great deal to her.

She said that if a man courted her and she saw that he really loved her, she would go with him whether he were rich or poor, single or married.

Such a statement seemed indecent and monstrous to Doña Leonarda and Nini. Lulu did not recognize social rights and customs.

“Each must do as he wishes,” she said.

Her precocious childhood had developed in her strong ideas.

“You would really go with a man?” asked Andrés.

“Certainly, if he really loved me—even if afterwards he took to beating me.”

“Without marrying him?”

“Without marrying him. Why not? If I had two or three years of illusion and enthusiasm I should have had my day.”

“And afterwards?”

“I would go on working as I do now, or I would poison myself.”

This tendency towards a tragic end was frequent in Lulu; the idea of ending, and ending melodramatically, attracted her. She said she would not like to live to be an old woman.

She spoke cynically, with her extraordinary frankness. One day she said to Andrés:

“You know, a few years ago I nearly lost my honour, as we women term it.”

“How so?” asked Andrés, astounded to receive such a revelation.

“Why, a brute of a neighbour assaulted me when I was twelve, and if I hadn’t resisted and called out, I should be dishonoured,” she added grandiloquently.

“It seems that the idea doesn’t greatly terrify you.”

“Why, for a woman like me without good looks and constantly at work it is not a matter of great importance.”

How much truth was there in Lulu’s mania for sincerity and analysis, Andrés would ask himself. Was it spontaneous and sincere or was there an element of ostentation, to appear original? It was difficult to say.

Sometimes of a Saturday night Julio and Andrés would invite Nini, Lulu and their mother to go to a play, and afterwards they would all go to a café.

MANOLO THE BUFFOON

A FRIEND with whom Lulu used to exchange small services was an old woman called Venancia who took in ironing.

The Señora Venancia might be sixty and was constantly at work; winter and summer she was in her poor room, ironing incessantly. The Señora Venancia lived with her daughter and son-in-law, a ruffian called Manolo the Buffoon.

This Manolo, a man of many trades and none, was rarely seen to work and lived on his mother-in-law.

He had three or four children, the youngest being an infant in arms which was often to be found in a basket in the Señora Venancia's room; Lulu used to walk up and down the passage with it in her arms.

"What will become of that child?" people would ask. And Lulu would answer:

"A gutter-snipe," or, she used an uglier word; "and so she will have her carriage, like Estrella."

Señora Venancia's daughter was dissolute, idle, drunken, and spent her time quarrelling with the neighbours. As Manolo, her husband, did not like work, the

whole family lived at the expense of Señora Venancia, and the money she earned by ironing naturally was not enough to go round.

Whenever Venancia and her son-in-law quarrelled Manolo's wife took his part, as though the good-for-nothing had a right to live on other people's work.

Lulu, who had a strong sense of justice, seeing the daughter one day insulting her mother, came to the support of Venancia and was soon exchanging personalities with the wife of Manolo; she called her a harlot, a drunkard, a slut, and added that everybody knew her husband was a cuckold. In return she was told that she and all her family were wretched paupers; it was only owing to the intervention of some other women that they did not come to open violence.

This exchange of compliments gave rise to a conflict, as Manolo the Buffoon, who was a cynical ruffian of the cowardly kind, made up his mind to demand from Lulu an explanation of her words.

Doña Leonarda and Nini were scandalized when they heard what had happened; and Doña Leonarda scolded Lulu for having anything to do with such people. Doña Leonarda's sensitiveness was confined to questions concerning her social status.

"You are determined to disgrace us," she said half-crying. "And what are we to do when that man comes?"

"Let him come," answered Lulu. "I shall tell him that

he is a wastrel who would do better to work and not live on his mother-in-law."

"But what does it matter to you what other people do? Why do you associate with such people?"

In the afternoon Julio Aracil and Andrés came, and Doña Leonarda told them what had happened.

"Well, you will be all right; we shall be here," said Andrés.

Aracil, when he heard of Manolo's forthcoming visit, would have liked to go away, for he had no liking for a row; but not wishing to be thought a coward he remained.

In the middle of the afternoon there was a knock at the door, followed by the words:

"May I come in?"

"Come in," said Andrés.

Manolo appeared, dressed in his Sunday best, very smart and imposing, with a broad-brimmed bullfighter's hat and a great silver watch chain. On one of his cheeks the black hairs of a mole were curled like the spring of a watch. Doña Leonarda and Nini trembled at the sight of him. Andrés and Julio asked him to explain the object of his visit.

Manolo placed his stick on the forepart of his left arm and began a rigmarole of reflections and considerations on the subject of honour and imprudent words.

Clearly he was feeling his way to see if he might put

on a bully's airs: the two gentlemen might be weaklings or they might be manly fellows who would give him a good thrashing.

Lulu was listening nervously, moving her arms and legs and ready to jump up at any moment. Manolo began to grow bolder when he saw that no one answered, and raised his voice.

"For she, there," pointing to Lulu with his stick, "has called my wife a harlot, and my wife is not a harlot. There are looser women than she—and she," again pointing to Lulu, "has said everybody knows me for a cuckold and by — I will eat the heart of anyone who dares to say that."

And at the end of this sentence Manolo struck the floor with his stick.

Seeing that he was becoming insolent, Andrés, a trifle pale, got up and said:

"Very good; sit down."

"I am very well as I am," said the ruffian.

"No, sir. Sit down. You have been speaking for a long time standing up, and you will tire yourself."

Manolo the Buffoon sat down somewhat unwillingly.

"And now," went on Andrés, "say what it is, in a word, that you want."

"In a word?"

"Yes."

“I want an explanation.”

“What for?”

“For the words that she, here—” pointing once more to Lulu—“spoke against my wife and against your humble servant.”

“My good man, don’t be a fool.”

“I am not a fool.”

“What would you have the lady say? That your wife is not a harlot, nor a drunkard, nor a slut, and that you are not a cuckold? Very well; Lulu, repeat those words, so that this good man may go away in peace.”

“I won’t allow any little fine gentleman to laugh at me,” said Manolo, getting up.

“What I am going to do,” said Andrés angrily, “is to break a chair over your head and kick you down the stairs.”

“You?”

“Yes, I.”

And Andrés went towards the ruffian brandishing a chair. Doña Leonarda and her daughters began to shriek. Manolo rapidly went toward the door and opened it. Andrés came nearer, but Manolo closed the door behind him and escaped down the passage, calling out taunts and insults.

Andrés wanted to follow him and give him a thrash-

ing so that he might learn how to behave; but Julio and the women persuaded him to remain.

During the whole dispute Lulu was nervously keen to join in it; and when Andrés took his leave she shook his hand with more than her usual warmth.

THE STORY OF VENANCIA

AFTER the comic scene with Manolo at Doña Leonarda's house Andrés was considered a hero. One day Lulu took him to Venancia's work-room. Venancia was one of those spare, clean, hard-working old women; she never rested during the whole day.

Her life-story was a curious one. As a girl she had been a maid in several houses, until the death of her last mistress.

Venancia's idea of the world was a capricious one. In her eyes the rich, and especially the aristocracy, belonged to a higher order than other men.

To an aristocrat everything was permissible—vice, immorality, egoism; he was as it were above common morality. For a poor woman like herself to be capricious, selfish, or an adulteress seemed to her a monstrous thing, but in a great lady she found it pardonable.

Andrés was astonished at so strange a philosophy by which he who possesses health, strength, beauty and other graces has a right to other privileges than one who knows nothing but illness, weakness, ugliness and dirt.

Although it may not have the highest authority, the

belief exists that in the Catholic Heaven there is a saint, St. Pascual the Dancer, who dances before the Almighty and keeps repeating: "More, more, more. If a man meets with good fortune, give him more, more, more; if a man meets with misfortune, give him more, more, more." This dancing philosophy was that of the Señora Venancia.

While she ironed, she told stories about her former employers, and Andrés liked to listen.

Her first mistress was capricious and insane, with a terrible temper; she used to beat her children, her husband, and her servants, and liked to quarrel with her friends.

One of her tricks was to get one friend to hide behind a curtain, and when another arrived incite the new arrival to speak ill of the one listening behind the curtain.

She used to make her eldest daughter dress in a shabby and ridiculous fashion so that no one should notice her. She even went so far as to hide some silver in the garden and accuse a servant of the theft and have him taken to prison.

Once in this house Venancia was watching beside the bed of one of her mistress's children who was dangerously ill. At ten o'clock in the evening it died. Venancia went in tears to tell her mistress, and found her dressed to go to a ball. On hearing the sad news she said, "Say nothing about it at present." She went to the ball and

on her return began to weep and pretend to the greatest sorrow.

“What a fiend!” was Lulu’s comment on hearing the story.

From this house Venancia went to that of a duchess, a very pretty, generous, and dissolute woman.

“She had lovers by the dozen,” said Venancia. Often she would go to church in a religious dress of brown serge, spend hours and hours there praying and on coming out find her lover waiting for her in a carriage and go off with him.

“One day,” said the woman, ironing, “the duchess was in her bedroom with her lover; I slept in a room which communicated by a door with hers. Suddenly I heard a great noise of bell-ringing and knocking. ‘Here comes the husband,’ I said. I jumped out of bed and opened the side door into my mistress’s room. The duke, who had been let into the house by a servant, was beating furiously on the door of the bedroom; the door was fastened only by a weak bolt, which would have yielded to the slightest force. I replaced it by a curtain-rod. The frightened lover, in a ridiculous plight, did not know which way to turn. I took him out through the side door, gave him some clothes belonging to my husband and took him out to the head of the stairs. Then I quickly dressed myself and went to the duke, who was roaring with anger, a pistol in his hand, and raining blows on

the door. His wife, on hearing my voice outside, realized that I had saved the situation and opened the door. The Duke entered and searched every corner of the room, while she watched him serenely. Next day the duchess kissed and embraced me, and told me that she was truly repentant and intended henceforth to lead an honest life; but a fortnight later she had a new lover.

Venancia knew all the intimate life of the aristocratic world of her time—the flea-bitten arms and erotic fury of Queen Isabel II; the impotence of the Queen's husband; the vices, the illnesses, and the habits of the aristocrats were known to her personally and in detail.

Lulu was interested by these stories.

Andrés maintained that all those people were a miserable canaille, undeserving of sympathy or pity; but Venancia, with her strange philosophy, was of a different mind. They were, she said, very good and charitable people who gave away a lot of money and relieved a great deal of distress.

Sometimes Andrés attempted to persuade her that the money of the rich was derived from the toil and sweat of the poor labourers in field and farm. He declared that such injustice might be altered; but to Señora Venancia this was a mere chimera.

“Thus we found the world and thus we shall leave it,” said the old woman, convinced that her argument was unanswerable.

OTHER CHARACTERS IN THE HOUSE

IT was characteristic of Lulu that her attention was so centred in her own neighbourhood and district that what happened in other parts of Madrid did not interest her in the least. As she worked at her embroidery she kept note of the doings of her neighbours.

Although the house in which she lived did not at first sight seem very large, it had great depth and a great number of families lived there. The garrets especially held a numerous and picturesque crowd of lodgers.

Strange types of Madrid's poor and outcast passed through them. One of the lodgers in the garrets who was always in trouble was Tía Negra, an old market-woman. The poor woman used to get drunk and when the worse for liquor suffered from a political mania which consisted of crying, "Long live the Republic," and insulting the authorities, the Government, and the rich.

The police considered her blasphemous and every now and then would take her off to prison for a fortnight; but she never mended her ways.

When sober and in her right mind she wished to be called Señora Nieves, for such was her name.

Another curious old woman was Señora Benjamina, nicknamed Doña Pitusa. She was a little old woman with a hook nose, penetrating eyes, and toothless gums.

She used to beg at the Jesus and the Montserrat churches. She kept on repeating that she had had serious misfortunes and losses, believing perhaps that this justified her love of brandy.

She would traverse half the city begging under various pretexts and sending in tearful letters. Often at night-fall, with a black veil over her face, she would waylay a passer-by in the streets and in a theatrical voice repeat her tragic story: she was the widow of a general; her son of twenty, her only support, had just died, and she had not a penny to bury him or light a candle by his dead body.

Sometimes the listener was filled with pity; sometimes he answered that she must have a great many sons twenty years old as they so frequently died.

Her real son was more than twenty years old; he was known as the Chuleta (Mutton-chop) and was employed at an undertaker's shop. He was flat-nosed and very thin, rather hunch-backed, of a sickly appearance, with saffron-coloured hairs on his chin and the eyes of a fish. Gossip said that he was the author of his mother's melodramatic stories. He was a funereal-looking man,

and it must have been most unpleasant to see him in the shop among the coffins.

He was very rancorous and vindictive and forgot nothing; he entertained a venomous hatred of Manolo.

He had many children and they all looked as forlorn and tragically stupid as their father and were all as ill-natured and vindictive as he was.

In these garrets too a squint-eyed, broad-shouldered Galician woman, la Paca, kept a lodging-house; among her lodgers was a one-eyed servant from the dissecting room of San Carlos, known to Aracil and Hurtado, a nurse of the General Hospital and an unemployed official called Don Cleto.

This Don Cleto Meana was the philosopher of the house, a cultivated, well-educated man who had fallen on evil days. He lived on some little money given to him by friends. He was a short, thin little old man, very clean and carefully dressed with his grey beard neatly trimmed. His clothes were worn but unstained and his shirt collar was spotless. He himself cut his hair, washed his clothes, painted his boots with ink when they showed white cracks and trimmed the edges of his trousers. Venancia washed his collars for him for nothing. Don Cleto was a Stoic.

“With a bit of bread and a few cigars I can live like a prince,” the poor man said.

He used to go for walks in the Retiro and Recoletos,

sit down on the seats and converse with people; when no one was looking he would pick up cigar-ends and put them in his pocket. As he was a gentleman he did not choose to be seen at so menial an occupation.

Don Cleto enjoyed the sights of the street; the arrival of a foreign prince or the funeral of a politician were for him great events.

Lulu, when she met him on the stairs, used to say:

“Are you going out, Don Cleto?”

And he would answer:

“Yes, I am going to take a turn.”

“Going to amuse yourself, Don Cleto.”

“Ha, ha, ha,” he would laugh, “these girls!”

Another well-known character of the house was the Maestrín, a pedantically wise Manchegan, chemist, leech, and quack. He had a shop in the Calle del Fúcar and was frequently there with his daughter, a very pretty girl courted by the money-lender’s nephew. The Maestrín who was very fastidious in questions of honour was—or so he said—prepared to stab anyone who attempted to seduce her.

All these lodgers paid their rent, in money or in kind, to Victorio’s uncle, the money-lender of the Calle de Atocha, Don Martín, familiarly known as Old Skinflint.

Old Skinflint was a bent, clean-shaven, glowering old man. A square bit of black cloth which he wore over one

eye made his face all the more sinister. He was always dressed in black; in winter he wore felt slippers and a long cloak which hung from his shoulders as from a peg.

Don Martín was unwilling to speak to anyone; he went out very early in the morning and spent the day, watchfully, at the back of his establishment. On cold days he spent the whole time by a brasier, breathing air full of carbon monoxide.

At nightfall he went home, had a look at the plants on his balcony, and closed the windows. Besides his shop in the Calle de Atocha he had a smaller one in the Calle del Tribulete, where the principal business was the pawning of poor people's sheets and mattresses.

Don Martín was unwilling to speak to anyone; he considered himself ill-used by society. A servant, an honest man apparently, whom he trusted, had played him a nasty trick. One day he seized the ax which was used in the pawnshop for cutting up wood for the brasier and fell upon Don Martín and nearly killed him.

Thinking he was dead, the youth took the money in the till and went to a brothel in the Calle de San José and was there arrested.

Don Martín was indignant when at the trial various extenuating circumstances were taken into account and the youth was only sentenced to a few months of imprisonment.

“It is a scandal,” said the usurer thoughtfully. “There is no protection in this country for honest persons, mercy is reserved for criminals.”

Don Martín was a dreadful person, without pity for anyone. He confiscated the she-asses of a donkey-man who could not pay him interest due; and when the man said that if he took away the asses it would be all the more difficult to pay him he would not listen; indeed he was capable of eating the donkeys to get some use out of them.

Victorio, the money-lender’s nephew, gave promise of being a hawk as keen as his uncle, but of another school. This Victorio was the Don Juan of money-lenders. Very smart and elegant, with a curled moustache and his fingers full of rings, he played havoc with women’s hearts. He exploited the money-lender, and the money extracted by Old Skinflint from the wretched lodgers passed into the pockets of Victorio, who spent it splendidly.

Yet far from ruining himself, he was likely to become rich and prosperous.

He was the owner of a gaming den in the Calle del Olivar, where forbidden games were played, and of a tavern in the Calle del Leon.

Victorio’s tavern was highly remunerative. Certain ruffians who had arranged the affair with the owner of the tavern, would start a gambling game, and when there was money on the table one of them would cry:

“Gentlemen! the police!” A few eager hands would seize the coins on the table, while the police, a party to the trick, entered the room.

In spite of his exploiting the poor and playing Don Juan among the girls, the people of the neighbourhood did not hate Victorio; they all thought what he did very natural and logical.

UNIVERSAL CRUELTY

ANDRÉS felt a great desire to comment philosophically on the lives of these lodgers in Lulu's house; but his friends were not interested in these comments or philosophies, and one morning, a holiday, he resolved to pay a visit to his Uncle Iturrioz.

When he first knew him—he had not met him till he was about fifteen—Iturrioz seemed to him a dry and selfish man who looked on everything with indifference; later, without exactly knowing how far his dryness and egoism went, he found he was one of the few persons with whom one could discuss transcendental subjects.

Iturrioz lived on the fifth floor of a house in the Argüelles quarter, a house with a fine flat roof.

He was attended by a servant who had been a soldier when Iturrioz was an army doctor.

Between them they had set the house-top in order, painted the tiles with pitch to make them waterproof, and set up steps for the wooden boxes and tubs full of earth in which they kept their plants.

The morning on which Andrés paid him a visit, Itur-

rioz was having his bath, and the servant took Andrés up to the roof.

Between two tall houses one had a view of the Guadarrama Mountains; to the west the roof of the Montaña barracks concealed the hills of the Casa del Campo; and on one side of the barracks appeared the Torre de Móstoles and the highroad to Extremadura with some windmills near it. Further to the south shone in the April sun the green patches of the cemeteries of San Justo and San Isidro, the two towers of Getafe, and the hermitage of the Cerrillo de los Angeles.

After a little Iturrioz came out onto the house-top.

“Well, is anything the matter?” he asked, when he saw his nephew.

“Nothing; I came to have a talk with you.”

“Very good. Sit down; I am going to water my flower-pots.”

Iturrioz opened a tap at a corner of the terrace and filled a tub with water, and then with a piece of pot began to throw water onto the plants.

Andrés spoke of Lulu’s neighbours and of the scenes at the hospital as strange things requiring a commentary, of Manolo the Buffoon, Old Skinflint, Don Cleto, and Doña Virginia.

“What inference can one draw from all these lives?” he asked.

“For me the inference is easy,” answered Iturrioz,

waterpot in hand: that life is a constant struggle, a cruel carnage in which we devour one another. Plants, microbes, animals."

"Yes," answered Andrés, "the same idea occurred to me, but I do not think it will hold water. In the first place the conception of life as a struggle among animals, plants, and even minerals is an anthropomorphic idea; and then what kind of a struggle for life is that of Don Cleto, who refuses to fight, or of Brother Juan, who gives his money to the poor?"

"I will answer the two questions separately," said Iturrioz, setting down his watering-pot, for such questions were his delight. "You say the idea of a struggle is an anthropomorphic idea. Well, of course we give to all the various conflicts the name of a struggle because it is the human idea best fitted to express the relations which with us produce a victor and a vanquished. If that were not, essentially, what we meant we would not speak of a struggle. The hyena picking clean the bones of a carcass, the spider sucking the life out of a fly, is acting precisely in the same way as the kindly tree which takes from the earth the moisture and salts necessary to its life. An indifferent spectator like myself watches the hyena, the spider, and the tree and understands them; a man with a sense of justice shoots the hyena, crushes the spider under his foot, and sits down

under the shade of the tree, imagining that he has done a good deed."

"Then you consider there is no struggle and no justice?"

"In an absolute sense there is none; in a relative sense there is. Every living thing has first to gain possession of space, of a place to exist, and then of the means to grow and multiply; this process carried on by the energy of the living against the obstacles which surround it is what we call a struggle. As to justice I think that, essentially, it is what happens to suit us. Suppose, for instance, that the hyena, instead of being killed, kills the man, or that the tree falls upon him and kills him, or that the spider gives him a poisonous bite; nothing in all that seems to us just, because it does not suit us. Yet, although essentially it is no more than a question of utilitarian interest, who can doubt that the idea of justice and equity is a tendency which exists in us? But how are we to put it into practice?"

"That's what I ask myself, how put it into practice?"

"Are we to grow indignant because a spider kills a fly?" went on Iturrioz. "What are we to do— Kill the spider? If we kill it, that will not prevent spiders from devouring flies. Are we to cure mankind of these ferocious instincts to which you object? Are we to erase the Latin writer's verdict that man is a wolf to man:

homo homini lupus? Very well; in four or five thousand years we shall be able to do so. Man has converted a carnivorous animal like the jackal into an omnivorous animal like the dog; but it requires centuries to effect this. You may have read that Spallanzini taught a dove to eat meat, and an eagle to eat and digest bread. That is the case of these great religious and lay apostles: they are eagles eating bread instead of raw meat; they are wolves turned vegetarians. Brother Juan for instance.”

“I don’t think he’s an eagle, nor a wolf.”

“He may be an owl or a martin, a perverted one.”

“Possibly,” answered Andrés, “but I think we have wandered from the point; I don’t see what inference is to be drawn.”

“The inference that I wished to draw is this: that a man of clear mind confronted with life has but two practical courses open, either to abstain from action and contemplate everything with indifference, or to limit his action to a small area; in other words one may be quixotic in an anomalous case but to be so as a general rule is absurd.”

“Then you think that a man of action must limit his love of justice within narrow bounds?”

“Of course he must; you may include in your view your house, your town, your region, society, the world, every dead and living thing; but if you attempt to act,

and to act in a spirit of justice, you must restrict yourself more and more, even perhaps within your own conscience."

"That is the beauty of philosophy," said Andrés bitterly. "It convinces one that it is best to do nothing."

Iturrioz walked up and down the house-top and then said:

"That is the only objection you can bring against me, and it's not my fault."

"I know it."

"To entertain an idea of universal justice is fatal," continued Iturrioz. "Adapting Fritz Müller's principle that the embryology of an animal reproduces its genealogy, or, as Haeckel says, that ontogenesis is but a recapitulation of phylogenesis, one may say that human psychology is but a synthesis of animal psychology. Thus we find in man all the forms of struggle and development: that of the microbe, the insect, the wild beast. How many incarnations cannot zoology show of that usurer you have described to me, Old Skinflint! We see the acinetids sucking the protoplasm from other infusoria; and the various animals that fatten on decaying matter. And the mutual antipathy of those people: is it not seen perfectly in the obstinate antagonism of a certain bacillus for certain bacteria?"

"Possibly," murmured Andrés.

"And among the insects how many Old Skinflints and

Victorios! How many Manolos! There is the ichneumon which lays its eggs in a worm and gives it an injection of a substance which acts like chloroform; there is the sphex which takes small spiders, holds them down, winds thread round them and places them alive in the cells of its larvæ for their food; there are the wasps which do the same thing with other insects which they paralyse with their sting; there is the estafilino which treacherously hurls itself upon another individual of its own species, holds it down, wounds it and sucks out its life; there is the insect which penetrates surreptitiously into the honeycomb of the bees, enters the queen's cell, eats its fill of honey, and then devours the queen's larva; there is——”

“Yes, yes, you need say no more: life is a horrible carnage.”

“It is characteristic of Nature that when it intends to ruin you, it does so thoroughly. Justice is a human illusion; essentially everything is destruction and creation. Hunting, war, digestion, breathing are instances of simultaneous creation and destruction.”

“But what must one do?” murmured Andrés. “Become indifferent? Digest, fight, and hunt with the serenity of a savage?”

“You believe in the serenity of the savage? What an illusion! That is another of our inventions. The savage has never been serene.”

“Is there no possible plan to live with a certain decency?” asked Andrés.

“Only if one invents one for one’s own use. And, today, I believe that whatever is spontaneous and natural is bad, that only the artificial, man’s creation, is good. If I could I would live in a London club; I would never go into the country except to a park; the water I drank would be filtered, the air sterilized——”

But Andrés was no longer listening to Iturrioz, who had begun to follow the bent of his fancy. He got up and leant upon the balustrade running around the roof.

Some doves were flying above the neighbouring roofs; on a large gutter cats were running and playing.

In front, separated by a high wall, were two gardens; one belonged to a girls’ college, the other to a monastery.

The convent garden was surrounded by shady trees; that of the college had nothing but plots of grass and flowers; and it was a strange thing, not without a certain impression of allegory, to see at one and the same time the girls running and shouting and the friars walking silently round their court, in rows of five or six.

“Both the one and the other are life,” said Iturrioz philosophically, and began to water his plants.

Andrés went out into the street.

What should he do? How order his life? he asked himself searchingly. And with this problem in his mind the people he met, the things he saw, the sun itself seemed to lack reality.

PART THREE
SADNESS AND SORROW

CHRISTMAS DAY

ONE day in the last year of the course, a little before Christmas, when Andrés returned from the hospital, Margarita told him that Luisito was spitting blood. A coldness of death crept over Andrés when he heard it. He went to see the child; he had no fever, no pain in the side, and was breathing easily. But one cheek was tinged with pink while the other was pale.

It was not a case of serious illness at present, but the thought that the boy might be consumptive made Andrés tremble. Luisito, as a mere infant not realizing anything, allowed himself to be examined, smiling.

Andrés took a handkerchief stained with blood to be analysed at the hospital. He asked the doctor to see that it was analysed carefully.

Days of constant anxiety for Andrés followed, but the report of the laboratory was reassuring; the handkerchief had shown no signs of Koch's bacillus. Nevertheless Hurtado's mind was not completely at ease.

The doctor, at his request, went to his house to examine the patient. By percussion he found a certain cloudiness at the top of the right lung. It might be nothing,

but taken with a slight hæmoptysis it very probably meant a beginning of consumption.

The professor and Andrés discussed the proper treatment. As the child was somewhat lymphatic and subject to colds, they considered it best to take him to a warm climate, if possible on the Mediterranean; there they could feed him up, give him sun-baths, make him live in the open air, and in the house, in air disinfected with creosote, surround him with every favourable condition to strengthen and develop him.

The family did not realize the danger, and Andrés was obliged to insist. His father, Don Pedro, had some cousins at Valencia; these cousins were unmarried and owned several houses in villages near the city.

They were written to and replied immediately; all their houses were let with the exception of one in a small village close to Valencia.

Andrés decided to go and see it.

Margarita warned him that there was no money in the house, and the Christmas rents had not yet been paid.

"I will borrow some money at the hospital and travel third," said Andrés.

"With this cold! And on Christmas Eve!"

"It makes no difference."

"Well, you must go and see our relatives," Margarita told him.

“No, why should I?” he answered. “I will go to see the house in the village and if it seems right to me I will send you a telegram: ‘Taken.’”

“But that will be very rude, and if they find out——”

“How should they find out? Besides I have no wish to stand on ceremony and nonsense of that kind; I will get out at Valencia, go to the village, send you the telegram, and return immediately.”

It was impossible to convince him. After supper he took a cab and went to the station. The air froze on the window-panes and the icy wind crept through the cracks in the door.

Andrés wrapped himself up to the eyes in his cloak, turned up the collar of his coat and put his hands into his trousers pockets. The thought of Luisito’s illness greatly upset him.

Tuberculosis was a disease which filled him with panic; it became an obsession to him.

Some months ago it had been said that Robert Koch had discovered an effective remedy, tuberculin.

A professor at the hospital of San Carlos went to Germany and brought back some tuberculin.

A few patients were injected with it. At first the feverish reaction they experienced inspired some hope; but soon it became evident that not only did they not improve but their death was hastened.

If the child was really consumptive there was no hope. Such were the unpleasant thoughts of Andrés as he travelled half asleep in his third-class carriage.

At dawn he awoke, with his feet and hands frozen.

The train was passing through the plains of Castille, and dawn was beginning to appear on the horizon. The only other person in his carriage was a Manchegan peasant, harsh and vigorous-looking.

This peasant said to him:

“What, you are cold, my friend?”

“Yes, a little.”

“Take my blanket.”

“And you?”

“I do not need it. You young gentlemen are so delicate.”

Despite the peasant's rough words, Andrés was truly thankful for his offer.

The sky was growing lighter; a fringe of red framed the countryside.

The scenery was beginning to change, and instead of flat country, hills and trees passed before the window.

After cold, desolate La Mancha, the air grew warmer. Near Játiba the sun rose, a yellow sun lighting up the countryside and warming the air.

The scenery was now wholly different.

Alcira appeared among orange-trees laden with fruit, near the deep, slow-flowing river Júcar. The sun rose

higher and it began to get warm. After passing from the Castilian upland to the Mediterranean zone, both nature and people were changed.

In the stations men and women, in light-coloured costumes, were shouting, running about, and gesticulating.

“Eh, you there!” one heard them cry.

A plain of rice-fields and orange groves now came in sight, with white, dark-roofed cottages, and here and there a palm-tree, which seemed to touch the sky as it went past rapidly. A few stations before Valencia the Albufera lake came into sight; and soon afterward Andrés found himself out in the Plaza de San Francisco, in front of a large building.

He went up to the driver of a carriage and asked what the fare would be to the village; and after prolonged bargaining they agreed on a dollar to take him there, wait half an hour, and return to the station.

Andrés got in and the carriage, after passing through several streets of Valencia, turned onto a high-road.

For door it had a piece of white awning, and as the wind moved it one caught glimpses of the light, dusty road in the blinding light.

In half an hour the carriage entered the first street of the village, which lay there with its church-tower and gleaming cupola. To Andrés the position of the village seemed suited to his purpose: it was not surrounded by

gardens but by uncultivated, half-mountainous country.

At the entrance of the village, on the left, there was an old castle and several clumps of huge sunflowers.

The carriage went down the long broad street which was a continuation of the highroad, and stopped near an esplanade raised above the level of the street. The house in front of which it stopped was a low white-washed building with a very large blue door and three very small windows. Andrés got out; a notice fastened on the door informed him that the key would be found at the next house.

He went up to the door, and an old woman, wrinkled and darkened by the sun, gave him the key, a great piece of iron which looked like some prehistoric weapon.

Andrés opened the door, which creaked rustily on its hinges, and entered a large hall which opened through an arched doorway into the garden.

The house was a shallow one; through the hall doorway one went out onto a fine broad veranda and this veranda had a vine and a trellis painted green. It was parallel with the street and four steps descended from it to the garden along the wall of which ran a road.

This garden contained several fruit-trees and was crossed by two paths which converged in a central cross and divided the garden into four equal parts. Weeds and yellow flowers covered the earth and overran the paths.

In front of the hall archway there was a rough wooden summer-house overgrown by a wild rose, the leaves and small white flowers of which were so thick that the sunlight could not penetrate.

At the entrance to the small central square stood on brick pedestals two plaster statues representing Flora and Pomona. Andrés went into the summer-house. On the farther wall was a picture in blue and white glazed tiles with the figures of Santo Tomás de Villanueva in his bishop's frock with staff in hand, and of a negro and negress kneeling before him.

Hurtado then went over the house. It suited him exactly. He made a plan of the rooms and of the garden, and rested a little, seated on the stairs. It was so long since he had seen trees and plants that that small deserted garden seemed to him a paradise. Christmas Day, so magnificent, so bright, filled him with melancholy and peace.

The village, the fields, the air were steeped in silence, only broken by the distant crowing of cocks. Large flies and wasps gleamed in the sun.

How gladly would he have lain on the ground hour after hour gazing at that wonderfully pure blue sky.

A few moments later a shrill bell began ringing. Andrés returned the key, woke up the driver who was half asleep in the carriage, and set out for Valencia.

At the station he sent a telegram to his family, bought something to eat, and a few hours later returned to Madrid wrapped in his cloak, worn out, in his third-class carriage.

A CHILD'S LIFE

ON arriving at Madrid Andrés told Margarita about the house, and a few weeks later Don Pedro, Margarita, and Luisito took the train to Valencia.

Andrés and his two other brothers remained in Madrid.

Andrés had to go over the subjects for his degree of Licentiate.

To escape from the obsession of the child's illness he set himself to study as he had never studied before.

Occasionally he went to visit Lulu and lay his fears before her.

"If the boy would only get well," he murmured.

"You are very fond of him?" asked Lulu.

"Yes, just as if he were my son. I was grown up when he was born, so you may imagine."

In June Andrés successfully passed his examinations.

"What are you going to do?" Lulu asked him.

"I don't know. I must wait to see if the boy gets well, and then I will see."

His second journey to Valencia was pleasanter than that of the previous December. He had some money, and

took a first-class ticket. His father met him at the station.

"How is the child?" asked Andrés.

"Better."

They gave the luggage-check to the porter and took a carriage which took them rapidly to the village. At the sound of its wheels Margarita, Luisito, and an old servant came to the door. The child was well; sometimes he had a touch of fever, but he was improving evidently.

Margarita for her part was completely transformed: the sun and air had given her a look of health and beauty.

Andrés went to see the garden, the pear-trees and apricots, the pomegranates covered with leaves and flowers.

The first night Andrés could not sleep owing to the fresh, earthy smell of the soil.

Next day with the help of Luisito, he began to root up and burn all the weeds in the yard. They then planted melons, pumpkins, leeks, in and out of season. The only thing that came up was the leeks. They, with some geraniums and jalap-flowers, provided a little green; all the rest was killed by the burning sun and lack of water.

Andrés spent hour after hour drawing buckets of water from the well. It was impossible to keep any part of the garden green; as soon as it was watered the soil began to crack and the plants wilted sadly on their stems.

On the other hand the older plants, passion-flowers, ivy, and other creepers, flourished and flowered in spite

of the dryness of the soil; the grapes began to grow dark, the pomegranate trees were covered with scarlet flowers and the oranges were beginning to swell.

Luisito led a healthy life, slept with the window open in a room which every evening Andrés sprinkled with creosote. When he got up in the morning he had a cold douche in Flora and Pomona's summer-house.

At first he did not like it but soon grew accustomed.

Andrés had hung a huge watering-can from the roof of the summer-house and attached to it a cord which passed through a pulley and ended round a stone on a bench. The stone had only to fall to the ground for the watering-can to bend forward and send down a rain of cold water.

In the mornings Andrés and Luisito used to go to a pine wood near the village, and were often there till midday; they then had luncheon and went to sleep.

In the afternoons also they had plenty of amusement: they chased lizards and salamanders, went up to the orchard and watered the plants. The roof was honey-combed with wasps' nests, and they resolved to declare war on this formidable foe and take away the nests.

A series of skirmishes ensued, which excited Luisito to many a tale and fable.

Towards sunset Andrés would continue his struggle against the drought and draw water from the deep well. In the suffocating heat bees hummed, wasps came to

drink the water on the ground, and butterflies fluttered from flower to flower. Sometimes the ground was covered with a swarm of winged ants, or the plants were coated with insects.

Luisito was more inclined to read and talk than to violent games. His precocious intelligence troubled Andrés. He did not allow him to touch a book and sent him to play with the children in the street.

Andrés meanwhile, book in hand, sat on the doorstep and watched the carts pass up the street thick with dust. The sunburnt carters, their faces gleaming with sweat, sang as they lay on great skins of oil or wine, and the mules went along sleepily.

At nightfall girls used to pass from a factory, and they greeted Andrés formally without turning their heads. One of them, called Clavariesa, was very pretty and neat; she usually held a silk handkerchief fluttering in her hand and dressed in rather loud colours which suited that clear and bright atmosphere.

Luisito, blackened by the sun, played with the children in the street and had soon caught their Valencian accent.

He did not become so wild and savage as Andrés would have wished, but he was well and strong. He talked a great deal. He was always telling stories, giving proof of an excited imagination.

"Where does he get these stories from?" Andrés asked Margarita.

"I don't know; he invents them."

Luisito had an old cat which followed him and which, he insisted, was a wizard.

The child used to caricature people who went to the house.

An old woman from the neighbouring village of Borbotó was one of his best subjects. This old woman sold eggs and vegetables and used to say: "Ous figues." A shiny fat man with a handkerchief bound round his head who kept on saying: "Sap?" (You know?), was another of Luisito's models.

Some of the children of the street also interested him greatly. One of these, Roch, was the son of a quack doctor who lived in some neighbouring caves.

This Roch was a bold little fair-haired, sickly child, toothless and blear-eyed. He used to tell of his father's mysterious cures of persons and horses, and how he had found out his power to cure.

Roch himself knew of many ways and enchantments to cure sunstrokes and to heal those under the evil eye, methods that he had learnt at home.

Roch helped to support his family and was always on the move, basket on arm.

"You see these snails?" he would say to Luisito. "Well,

these and a little rice will provide a meal for the whole family.”

“Where did you get them?” Luisito asked.

“In a place I know,” answered Roch, who was not inclined to communicate his secrets.

Other marauders of the kind lived in the same caves, boys of fourteen or fifteen, friends of Luisito’s—Choriset and Chitano.

Choriset was a real troglodyte, with the mind of a primitive man. His head, type, and expression were those of a Berber.

Andrés used to question him about his life and ideas.

“For a real I would kill a man,” Choriset used to say, showing his white and pointed teeth.

“But they would catch you and take you to prison.”

“Not they! I would hide in a cave near mine.”

“And what would you live on?”

“I would go out at night and buy bread.”

“But a real would not last many days.”

“I would kill another man,” answered Choriset, laughing.

Chitano’s thoughts did not rise above theft; he was always on the watch to steal something.

Andrés, although he had no object in making friends there, learnt to know the people.

The life lived in the village was in many ways absurd; the women went out for walks apart from the

men; and there was the same segregation of the sexes in almost everything.

Margarita did not like to see her brother constantly in the house and encouraged him to go out. Some afternoons Andrés would go to the café in the square and hear of the feud between the band of the Republican Casino and the band of the Carlist Casino; and a Republican workman, called El Mercaer, would give him picturesque information about the French Revolution and the tortures of the Inquisition.

THE OLD HOUSE

DON PEDRO went back and forth several times between Valencia and Madrid. Luisito seemed well; he had no fever nor cough. But he continued to talk and imagine things in a fashion unsuited to his age.

“I do not think you need to continue here,” said Don Pedro.

“Why not?” asked Andrés.

“Margarita cannot always live in a nook. It may make no difference to you, but it does to her.”

“Then let her return to Madrid for a time.”

“But do you think that Luis is not well yet?”

“I can’t say, but I think it will be better for him to remain here.”

“Very well; we shall see.”

Margarita explained to her brother that his father said that he could not afford to keep up two houses.

“He can’t afford that, but has plenty of money to spend at the Casino,” Andrés answered.

“That’s none of your business,” answered Margarita sharply.

“Good; I will see whether I can become appointed

doctor in a village, and take the child with me. I will keep him a few years in the country and then he may do what he likes."

While they were thus uncertain whether to go away or to remain, they received the visit of a lady from Valencia, another cousin of Don Pedro's. She was one of those decided and despotic ladies who wish to manage everything. Doña Julia decided that Margarita, Andrés, and Luisito should spend some time at the house of their relations. They would be very welcome. Don Pedro considered this an excellent plan.

"What do you say?" he asked Margarita and Andrés.

"Whatever you think best," answered Margarita.

"I do not think it is a good plan," said Andrés.

"Why not?"

"Because it won't suit the child."

"But it's the same climate," answered his father.

"Yes, but it's not the same thing to live in a city, in narrow streets, and to live in the country. Besides, those relatives of ours, being unmarried, will have their crotchets and will dislike children."

"No, they are very amiable, and their house is large enough for there to be complete liberty."

"Well then, we will try."

One day they all went to visit these relations. The mere fact of having to wear a starched shirt put Andrés in the worst of tempers.

Their cousins lived in a large ill-proportioned house in the old part of the city. It was painted blue and had four balconies some distance apart, with square windows above them. The entrance was spacious and communicated with a flagged court, like a small square with a lantern in the centre.

From this court an outside staircase of white stone ascended in a broad flight to the first floor, where it entered the house under a low arch.

Don Pedro knocked and a maid in black led them into a large drawing-room, dark and gloomy.

It contained a tall grandfather's clock in an inlaid case, old furniture of the Empire style, several chandeliers, and a plan of Valencia at the beginning of the Eighteenth Century.

Presently appeared Don Juan, the cousin of Hurtado's father, a gentleman of between forty and fifty, who greeted them amiably and took them into another room, where an old man reclining in an armchair was reading a newspaper.

The family consisted of two brothers and a sister, all unmarried. The eldest, Don Vicente, suffered from gout and scarcely left the house; the second, Don Juan, liked to be considered a young man and was very stylishly and smartly dressed; the sister, Doña Isabel, was white-faced, with black hair and a tearful voice.

The three seemed to have been preserved under glass,

in the shadow of these rooms of monastic appearance. The question of Margarita's and her brothers' coming to stay was spoken of and eagerly welcomed.

The younger brother, Don Juan, showed Andrés over the house which was very large. A glass veranda ran all round the central court. The rooms were paved with gleaming, slippery, glazed tiles and were on different levels, with steps up and down and innumerable doors of different sizes. At the back of the house, on a level with the first floor on the street side, a very tall orange-tree stood in a small, gloomy garden.

All the rooms had the same silent half-Moorish aspect, discreetly darkened.

The room which Andrés and Luisito were to have was a very large one and looked onto the blue tiles of a church-tower.

A few days after this visit Margarita, Andrés, and Luis came to stay.

Andrés had made up his mind to apply for a post as doctor. He read in *El Siglo Médico* the advertisements of vacant posts in the country, inquired about each village, and wrote to the secretary of the local council for information.

Margarita and Luisito were happy in their new house. Not so Andrés; he felt no sympathy for these bachelors, sheltered by their money and their home from the mischances of life. He would have ruined their life with

pleasure; a rather base desire, no doubt, but it was sincere.

Luisito, finding himself pampered by these relatives, soon ceased to lead the healthy life recommended by Andrés, and was unwilling to go into the sun or play with the children in the street. He became more difficult and fastidious.

Andrés's scientific dictatorship over him was not admitted in that house.

Many a time he told the old servant who swept out the room to leave the windows open and let the sun come in, but the servant never obeyed him.

"Why do you shut up the room?" he once asked her. "I want to have it open. Do you hear?"

The servant scarcely understood Spanish, and after much mixed-up conversation, she told him that she closed the room so as not to let the sun in.

"But that's precisely what I want," said Andrés. "Have you never heard of microbes?"

"No, sir, I have not."

"Haven't you heard that there are certain germs, a kind of living things in the air which bring disease?"

"Living things in the air? You must mean flies."

"Yes, they are like the flies; but they are not flies."

"Well, I haven't seen them."

"One can't see them, but they exist. These living things exist in the air, in the dust, in the furniture; and these

injurious living things are killed by light. Have you understood?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is why you must leave the windows open, so as to let in the sun."

Next day the windows were duly closed, and the old woman told the other servants that the young gentleman was mad, for he said that there were flies in the air which could not be seen and were killed by the sun.

BOREDOM

THE attempts to obtain the post of village doctor were not so rapidly successful as Andrés would have wished, and to pass the time he determined to study the subjects for his doctor's degree. Afterwards he would go to Madrid and from there to some post in the country.

Luisito got through the winter well and was apparently cured.

Andrés scarcely went out of doors, he felt intensely unsociable. He was tired at the thought of making new acquaintances.

"Come, aren't you going out?" Margarita would ask.

"No. Why should I? Nothing that goes on outside has any interest for me."

To walk in the streets bored him, and the country round Valencia, fertile enough, did not attract him. The perpetually green Huerta, divided by channels of muddy water, with its dark green, luxuriant vegetation, proved no incitement.

He preferred to remain in the house, spending the time in study and in taking notes on a question of psycho-

physics which he intended to use for his doctoral thesis.

Below his room was a dark mossy terrace on which the sun never shone, bordered by some large urns of cactus and aloe. Facing it was another terrace on which an old priest paced to and fro, praying. Andrés and he used to greet each other very amiably.

At nightfall Andrés went up from this terrace to a small flat roof, very high, built over the stairs of the house.

There he would sit till it was quite dark, while Luisito and Margarita went for a drive with their cousins.

Andrés considered the city lying asleep in the light of the sun or in the splendours of the sunset.

Far off one could see the sea, a long belt of pale green, clearly separated from the milky blue of the horizon.

In that old part of the city the houses were very large; the plaster had fallen from the walls, the tiles of the roofs were covered with green and red mosses, with yellow flowering plants growing on the eaves.

One could see houses washed in white, blue, and pink, with their terraces and flat house-tops; on the terraces were tubs full of earth in which plants of cactus and aloe stretched forth their stiff broad spines; on some of the house-tops one could see heaps of fretted big-bellied pumpkins, and others round and smooth.

The dovescotes stood out like great cages. On the roof

of the house next door, evidently deserted, were rolls of mats and piles of cord, and broken pots on the floor; on another house-top a peacock wandered at will, uttering its harsh, unpleasant cry.

Above the terraces and tiles appeared the city towers, that of the Miguelete, short and strong; the cupola of the cathedral, delicate and airy; and beyond, smaller towers here and there, mostly covered with white and blue tiles which gleamed and shone.

Andrés considered the city, almost unknown to him, and imagined many fanciful things about the life of its inhabitants. Beneath him lay a street, a mere winding crack between two rows of tall houses. The sun which at midday cut this street into two lines of light and shadow, as the afternoon advanced, crept up the houses opposite until it shone on the windows of the attics, and on the skylights, and vanished.

In spring the swallows and swifts flew erratically through the air with their shrill cries. Andrés used to watch their flight. At nightfall they disappeared and were replaced by a few owls and sparrowhawks. Venus began to shine with stronger ray and Jupiter appeared in the heavens. In the street a gas-lamp blinked sadly and sleepily.

Andrés went down to supper and often he used to return to the roof-top at night to gaze at the stars.

This nightly contemplation filled him with disquiet-

ing thoughts. His imagination galloped unchecked through the fields of fancy. Often the idea of the forces of Nature, the seeds of earth and air and water developing in the heart of the night made his brain dizzy.

FROM AFAR

WHEN May was near Andrés told his sister that he was going to Madrid for his doctor's examination.

"Will you come back?" asked Margarita.

"I don't know; I think not."

"I can't understand why you dislike this house and the town."

"I never feel at ease here."

"Of course you don't. You do everything to prevent it!"

Andrés was unwilling to discuss the matter, and went to Madrid; he reviewed for his examination and read the doctoral thesis that he had written at Valencia.

He felt uncomfortable at Madrid; his father and he were as hostile as ever. Alejandro had married, and with his wife, a poor creature, had meals with them. Pedro was leading the life of a man of the world.

Andrés, if he had had money, would have liked to travel; but he had not a penny. One day he read in a paper that the doctor in a village of the province of Burgos required a *locum tenens* for two months. He wrote and was accepted. He told them at the house that he had

been invited by a friend to spend a few weeks in a village.

Andrés bought a return ticket and set out. The doctor whom he came to replace was a rich widower devoted to numismatics. His knowledge of medicine was scanty and his only interest was in the history and the questions of coins.

“You won’t have much scope for your medical science here,” he said to Andrés mockingly. “Here, especially in summer, there are scarcely any illnesses: a few cases of colic and enteritis and more rarely of typhoid fever, that’s all.”

He turned quickly from this professional matter, which did not interest him, to his coins and showed Andrés his collection, the second finest in the province. In saying this he sighed and betrayed how much he felt having to admit the existence of a superior collection.

They became great friends and the numismatist suggested that he should live in his house, so Andrés remained there with an aged servant.

That summer was delightful; he had the whole day free to roam about and read. Near the village was a treeless hill formed of rock, in the cracks of which grew cistus, rosemary, and lavender. At nightfall it was a deliciously cool and scented place.

There Andrés realized that pessimism and optimism are matters as physical as a good or bad digestion. That

village suited him admirably and he felt an exhilaration and serenity unknown to him; the hours sped only too quickly.

He had been a month and a half in this oasis when one day the postman handed him a crumpled envelope addressed in his father's handwriting. The letter had evidently gone from village to village in search of him. What could be its contents?

Andrés opened the letter, read it, and stood paralysed. Luisito had just died at Valencia. Margarita had twice written to him telling him to come, as the child frequently asked for him; but as his father did not know Andrés's address the letters could not be forwarded.

Andrés's first thought was to set out immediately, but on rereading the letter he saw that the child had died a week ago and was buried. He was stunned by the news. Distance and the fact that he had left Luisito strong and well prevented him from feeling it so keenly as he would have by his bedside.

This indifference and absence of sorrow seemed to him wicked; but the child was dead. And if he was not filled with despair, why excite in himself useless suffering? He debated this point alone for hours.

Andrés wrote to his father and to Margarita. His sister's letter enabled him to follow the course of the illness. Luisito had died of tubercular meningitis, two or three days' illness and then a high fever which ren-

dered him unconscious; for a week he was delirious and then died in his sleep.

Margarita's letter showed that she was overcome with grief. Andrés remembered having seen a child of six or seven with meningitis at the hospital. He remembered that in a few days it had become so thin as to seem transparent, with enormous head and projecting forehead, its lobules appearing rent by the fever; one eye squinting, white lips, sunken temples, and a wandering smile. This child twittered like a bird, and his perspiration had a peculiar odor, like a rat.

Although Andrés tried to think of Luisito in his illness, he could never imagine him the subject of this terrible affliction, but always thought of him gay and smiling as when he had last seen him.

PART FOUR
INQUIRIES

A PHILOSOPHICAL PLAN

AFTER the end of the two months Andrés returned to Madrid; he had saved sixty dollars, and as he had no use for them he sent them to his sister Margarita. He was endeavouring to obtain a post and meanwhile frequented the National Library.

He was ready to go to any village if he found nothing in Madrid. One day in the reading-room he met Fermín Ibarra, his sick comrade, who had now recovered, although he walked lamely and had to support himself with a heavy stick.

Fermín came up to Hurtado and greeted him effusively.

He said that he was studying at Liége to be an engineer, and returned to Madrid in the vacations.

Andrés had always looked on Ibarra as a child. Fermín took him to his house and showed him his inventions, for he was now an inventor; he was making a toy electric street-car and other mechanical objects.

Fermín explained to him how they worked and said that he intended to take out several patents, among others one for a tire for motor-cars with pieces of steel in it.

Andrés thought he was mad, but was unwilling to rob him of his illusions. Some time afterwards, however, when he saw automobiles with tires of a similar type, he thought Ibarra must have real inventive talent.

In the afternoons he used to visit his Uncle Iturrioz. He nearly always found him on the house-top, reading or watching the artifices of a solitary bee or spider.

"This is the house-top of Epicurus," Andrés would say laughing.

They had many long discussions, chiefly as to Andrés's future plans.

One day especially they dealt at length with this subject.

"What do you propose to do?" asked Iturrioz.

"I shall probably have to become a village doctor."

"I see that you do not find it a pleasing prospect."

"I don't. Some things in a doctor's life are to my liking, but not a doctor's practice. If I could find a post in a physiological laboratory I think I would work with enthusiasm."

"A physiological laboratory! They would have to exist in Spain first."

"Of course there are none. Besides, I have no scientific training. I'm a poor student."

"In my time it was the same," said Iturrioz. "The professors only know how to add systematically to the

stupidity of the students. You see, the Spanish have not learnt to teach; they are too fanatical, too vague, and almost always lacking in seriousness. The professors' one object is to draw their salary and obtain additional grants for the vacations."

"Besides, there is no discipline."

"There are many other things wanting. But now, what are you going to do? You are not keen on visiting patients?"

"No."

"Then what is your plan?"

"Plan for myself? None."

"What, no plans?"

"Yes, one I have: to live in the greatest possible independence. In Spain as a rule one is not paid for work but for loss of liberty. I should like to live by my work, not by favour."

"You'll find it difficult. And as to a philosophical plan, are you still feeling your way?"

"Yes. The philosophy I seek must be in the first place a cosmogony, explaining the creation of the world, and secondly a biological explanation of the origin of life and man."

"I scarcely think you will find one. You seek a synthesis of cosmology and biology, an explanation at once of the moral and of the physical universe. Is it not so?"

"Yes."

"And where are you to find such a synthesis?"

"Well, in Kant, and especially in Schopenhauer."

"A poor prospect," answered Iturrioz. "Read the English philosophers; their science is practical. Don't read those German metaphysicians; their philosophy is like alcohol which inebriates without nourishing. Do you know Hobbes's Leviathan? I will lend it to you if you like."

"No, what's the use? After reading Kant and Schopenhauer those French and English philosophers give the impression of heavy carts creaking along and raising dust."

"They may be less supple of thought than the Germans, but they do not lead you away from life."

"And what of that?" answered Andrés. "One is in despair, not knowing what to do with his life, without a plan, lost, without guide or light. What is one to do with one's life, what direction give it? If life were strong enough to carry one away, thought would be marvelous; it would be like sitting down to rest in the shade of a tree, like entering a peaceful oasis. But life is a stupid affair, without emotions or incidents, at least here, and I believe everywhere; and the thoughts of men grow full of terror as a compensation for the emotional barrenness of existence."

"You are done for," murmured Iturrioz. "This intellectualism can lead to no good."

“It will lead me to knowledge. Is there any greater pleasure? Ancient philosophy presented us with a palatial front, but behind this magnificence were no splendid halls or luxurious places, but only gloomy dungeons. That is the chief merit of Kant, he saw that all the marvels described by the philosophers were purely imaginary, that the magnificent galleries led nowhere.”

“A strange merit,” murmured Iturrioz.

“An immense one. Kant proves that the two most transcendental postulates of religious and philosophical systems, God and Liberty, cannot be demonstrated. And the most terrible part is that he does so against his will.”

“Well?”

“Well, the consequences are terrible: the Universe ceases to have any beginning in time or limit in space; everything is subjected to the chain of cause and effect. There is no longer a first cause; the idea of it, as Schopenhauer remarks, is the idea of a piece of wood made of iron.”

“Well, I am not overwhelmed.”

“I am. It seems to me as if we were to watch a giant advancing apparently with a definite aim and were then to discover that he was blind. Since Kant the world has been blind; there can be no freedom or justice, nothing but forces working by a principle of cause and effect in the realms of space and time. And this, serious as it

it, is not all; another consequence springs up for the first time out of Kant's philosophy, that the world lacks reality, that this space, this time, this principle have no existence outside our minds and may be different or may not exist at all."

"Bah, that's absurd," murmured Iturrioz. "It may be very ingenious, but it is certainly nothing more."

"No, not only is it not absurd, but it is practical. I used to consider the infinity of space with sorrow; the idea of an endless universe overwhelmed me; the thought that the day after my death space and time would continue to exist saddened me, even though I was far from considering my life an enviable one. But when I realized that space and time are necessities of our spirit and are without reality; when I became convinced by Kant that space and time have no meaning, or at least that our idea of them may have no objective existence, I grew calm. For me it is a consolation to realize that as our retina produces colours, our brain creates the ideas of time and space and causation. The world ends with our brain; no more time, no more space or chain of causation; the play is definitively at an end. We may suppose that a time and space continue to exist for other people; but what does that matter since it is not our space and time, the only real ones?"

"Bah, these are mere fancies," said Iturrioz.

THE REALITY OF THINGS

“No, they are realities,” answered Andrés. “There can be no doubt that the world which we know is the result of the reflection of the cosmos on the senses in our brain. This reflection, united to and contrasted with the reflected images in the brains of other persons, alive and dead, represents our knowledge of the world, is our world. Has it any objective existence? We do not know, and never shall.”

“I do not understand. That seems all a kind of poetry to me.”

“No, it is not poetry. You judge by your senses, don’t you?”

“Certainly.”

“And from a child you have compared these sensations and images of yours with those of other persons. But are you sure that the external world exists as you see it? Are you even sure that it exists?”

“Yes, I am.”

“In a practical sense, of course; but nothing more.”

“And that is sufficient.”

“No, it is not sufficient. It is sufficient only for one

who has no desire for knowledge; otherwise why should certain theories as to heat and light be invented? Why not merely say: 'There are hot and cold objects, there is a green colour and a blue; we do not need to know what they are.' "

"It might be as well if we did; since otherwise doubt attacks and destroys everything."

"Of course it destroys everything."

"Mathematics, even, have the ground cut from under them."

"Of course. Mathematical and logical laws are merely the laws of human intelligence; they may likewise be the laws of external Nature, but we cannot affirm this. Intelligence necessarily entails the notions of cause, space, and time, as a body implies three dimensions. These notions of cause, space, and time cannot be separated from the intellect, and when the latter states its aprioristic truths and axioms, it is only describing its own mechanism."

"So that no such thing as truth exists?"

"Yes; the general agreement of intellects is what we call truth. Outside the logical and mathematical axioms, which we cannot suppose not to be unanimous, it is essential for all truths to be unanimous."

"They are truths because they are unanimous?" asked Iturrioz.

"No; they are unanimous because they are truths."

"It comes to the same."

"No, no. If you say that gravitation is a truth because it is a unanimous idea, I answer that on the contrary gravitation is a unanimous idea because it is a truth. For me, within the relativity of all things, gravitation is an absolute truth."

"I think it may be merely relative."

"I do not agree," said Andrés. "We know that our knowledge is an imperfect relation between external objects and our self, but as this relation, albeit imperfect, is constant, it retains its value. Take for instance the centigrade thermometer: you may say that to divide into a hundred degrees the difference between water freezing and boiling is arbitrary, and so it is; but if on this house-top there is a temperature of twenty degrees and only fifteen in the cellar that is a real distinction."

"Very well; it means that you accept the possibility of initial error. Allow me to assume error in all knowledge. I wish to assume that gravitation is a mere habit, which some fact discovered tomorrow will falsify. Who is to prevent me?"

"Nobody; but you cannot sincerely accept such a possibility. The chain of cause and effect constitutes science; if that chain did not exist there would be no touchstone whatever, and anything might be true."

"So your science is merely utilitarian."

"No; it is the outcome of reason and experience."

"No, for you cannot carry reason to its extreme consequences."

"Of course not, there must be gaps. Science gives us a description of the phalange of this mammoth which we call the universe; philosophy seeks to give us a rational hypothesis of this mammoth's existence. You say that neither empirical nor rational data can be absolute? Certainly they cannot. Science gives value to the data of observation, relates the special sciences which are like explored islets in the ocean of the unknown; it constructs connecting bridges between them, so that taken together they appear to have a certain unity. Of course these bridges can only be hypotheses, theories, approximations to the truth."

"The bridges are hypotheses, and so are the islands."

"No, I do not agree. Science is humanity's one strong edifice. Against this massive scientific determinism, already affirmed by the Greeks, how many waves have not broken? Religions, moralities, Utopias, and today all those little prevarications such as pragmatism and ideas-as-forces; yet science stands unmoved and not only overcomes these obstacles but makes use of them for its own unification."

"Yes," answered Iturrioz, "science overcomes these obstacles and overcomes man as well."

"That is partly true," murmured Andrés, walking up and down the roof.

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE AND
THE TREE OF LIFE

“SCIENCE,” said Iturrioz, “is no longer an institution with a human aim; it is something more, you have converted it into an idol.”

“There is the hope,” answered Andrés, “that truth, even if it is useless today, may be useful tomorrow.”

“Bah, a mere Utopia! Do you imagine that astronomic facts will ever be of practical use?”

“Ever? They are so already.”

“In what way?”

“In our idea of the world.”

“Very good; but I meant a practical, immediate use. Really I am convinced that truth in the abstract is bad for life. This anomaly, this nature which is called life must be based on caprice, perhaps on falsehood.”

“As to that, I do not agree,” said Andrés. “Will-power, the desire to live, is as strong in animals as in men. Men have more understanding, and more understanding entails less desire. That is logical and can be proved by facts. The desire to know is awakened in individuals

that appear at the end of a process of evolution, when the instinct of life has grown languid. The man for whom knowing is a necessity, is like the butterfly breaking through the chrysalis to die. The healthy individual full of life and strength does not see things as they are because it does not suit him to do so. He is under a misapprehension. Don Quixote, intended by Cervantes in a negative sense, is a symbol of the affirmation of life. Don Quixote is more alive than all the sensible persons he meets; he lives more and more intensely than the rest. The individual or nation that wishes to live wraps itself in a cloud, as did the gods of old when they appeared to mortals. The vital instinct requires fiction in order to affirm itself; science, therefore the instinct of criticism and inquiry, has to discover a truth: the amount of falsehood that is necessary to life. You laugh?"

"Yes, I am laughing, because what you are saying in modern words is to be found in no less a book than the Bible."

"Bah."

"Yes, in Genesis. You have read that in the midst of the garden of Eden were two trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The tree of life was huge and branching, and according to some fathers of the Church, bestowed immortality. We are not told what the tree of knowledge was like; probably it

was small and miserable. And you know what God said to Adam?"

"Really I don't remember."

"Well, when Adam was in His presence He said: 'Thou shalt eat of all the fruits of the garden, but beware of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day that thou eatest of its fruit thou shalt surely die.' And God must surely have added: 'Eat of the tree of life, be animals, pigs, egoists and wallow in the mud merrily; but eat not of the tree of knowledge, for its bitter fruit will inspire you with a desire to improve and will thus destroy you.' Was it not excellent advice?"

"Yes, quite worthy of the Stock Exchange," answered Andrés.

"How evident is the practical sense of these Semitic rogues!" said Iturrioz. "How these good Jews with their curved noses smelt out the fact that scruples must be fatal to life!"

"Of course, they were optimists; both Greeks and Semites had a strong vital instinct; they invented gods for their use, a paradise for themselves alone. I think that really they understood nothing about nature."

"Because it did not suit them to understand."

"Certainly it did not suit them. On the other hand the Turanians and Arians of the North strove to see nature as it really is."

"Yet nobody paid them any heed, and they suffered

themselves to be subdued by the Semites of the South.”

“Of course! Semitism, with its three impostors, has dominated the whole world, it has had the opportunity and the strength to do so. In the age of war it gave to the world a God of Battles, for women and the weak a source of tears, lamentation, and complaint. Today, after centuries of Semitism, the world is returning to common sense and Truth appears like a pale dawn after the terrors of the night.”

“I do not believe in the existence of this common sense,” said Iturriz, “nor do I believe Semitism to be ruined. Jewish, Christian, and Mussulman Semitism will continue to master the world, in extraordinary new manifestations. Is there anything more interesting than the Inquisition, Semitic in origin, its aim to clear Jews and Moors from off the face of the earth? Is there anything more curious than the Inquisitor Torquemada, who was by descent a Jew?”

“Yes, confidence, optimism, opportunism: those are the characteristics of the Semite, and they will have to disappear; the scientific bent of the men of Northern Europe will sweep them away.”

“But where are these men to be found? Where are these forerunners?”

“They are to be found in science and philosophy, more especially in Kant. Kant is the great destroyer of the Greco-Semitic lie. He found those two trees that you

mentioned and drew aside the branches of the tree of life which were stifling the tree of knowledge. After Kant there is but one path in the world of ideas, a narrow and difficult one, that of science. After him, although perhaps without his strength and greatness, comes another destroyer, another Northern bear, Schopenhauer, who cut away the pretences which the master had lovingly maintained through lack of courage to destroy them. Kant begs that the mighty tree of life, which is called liberty and responsibility and right, should be allowed to stand next to the tree of knowledge in order to delight man's eyes. Schopenhauer, more austere and honest in his thought, cuts away those branches, and life appears dark and blind, full of strength and substance, without justice, without goodness, without aim; a current borne along by an unknown force, which he calls will, and which from time to time, in the midst of organic matter, produces a secondary phenomenon, a phosphorescence of the brain, a reflection, which is intelligence. One can now see these two principles clearly, life and truth, will and intelligence."

∴ "There must be philosophers and biophilists," said Iturriz.

∴ "Why not? Lovers of wisdom and lovers of life. Under these conditions the vital instinct, all activity and confidence, feels itself attacked, and has to react and does react. Some persons, mostly literary men, make their

optimism centre in life and brutal instinct and exalt cruel, base, infamous life without aim or object, principles or morality, like a panther in a forest. Others make their optimism centre in science itself. Against the agnostic tendency of a Du Boie-Reymond, who held that man's intelligence would never understand the mechanism of the universe, stands the tendencies of Berthelot, of Metchnikoff, Ramón y Cajal, in Spain, who believes that we may end by ascertaining man's object on earth. Finally there are those who wish to return to the old ideas, the old myths, because they are useful to life. Such are professors of rhetoric whose lofty mission is to inform us how men sneezed in the Eighteenth Century, after taking snuff; they tell us that science is overthrown, that materialism, determinism, the chain of cause and effect are in bad taste, while a spiritual outlook is refined and sublime. How amusing! How admirable a commonplace to enable bishops and generals to receive their salaries and merchants to sell rotten codfish with impunity. To believe in the idol and fetish is a mark of superiority, to believe, like Democritus and Epicurus, in atoms, is a mark of stupidity. A Moor who breaks his head with an ax and swallows glass, in honour of his god, or a naked nigger are refined and cultured beings, while a man of science who studies nature is a common, vulgar person. What an admirable paradox for the ornate and nasal eloquence of a French academician! One

can only laugh when it is said that science is overthrown. What is overthrown is falsehood; science marches ahead, overcoming everything."

Q "Yes, we are in agreement; as we said before, it overcomes everything. From a purely scientific point of view I cannot accept this double theory of life, intelligence on one hand, will on the other."

A "I do not say that," Andrés replied, "but that intelligence or will must predominate. A worm has will and intelligence; it has as much will to live as a man and resists death as best it may; man likewise has will and intelligence, but in different proportions.

Q "What I mean to say is that I do not believe that will is merely a machine of desire and intelligence the machine reflection. What it is in itself, I cannot say; but that is what it rationally appears to us. If every reflection had some finality for us we might suspect that our intelligence was not simply a reflecting mechanism, a moon accepting indifferently whatever appears on the horizon of its senses; but consciousness reflects without interest whatever it can perceive; it does so automatically and in so doing produces images. These images, unprovided by contingency, leave a symbol, a figure, which must be the idea."

Q "I do not believe in this automatic indifference which you attribute to the intelligence. We are not a pure intelligence nor a machine of desires; we are men who at

one and the same time think, work, desire, act. I believe there are ideas which are forces."

✧ "I do not. Force is something different. The same idea which impels a romantic anarchist to compose ridiculous humanitarian verse impels the dynamiter to throw a bomb. Bonaparte shares the same imperial illusion as Lebaudy, Emperor of the Sahara. What differentiates them is something organic."

☪ "What confusion! What a labyrinth we are getting into!" murmured Iturrioz.

✧ "Let us make a summary of our discussion and our different points of view."

☪ "In part, we are agreed. You, starting from the relativity of all things, wish to give an absolute value to the relations between things."

✧ "Yes, as I said: abstract measurement, the 360 degrees of a circle, that is arbitrary; but the results obtained by their means are exact."

☪ "Oh yes, we agree; it would be impossible for us not to in all that concerns mathematics and logic; but when we begin to leave those simple sciences and enter the sphere of life we find ourselves in a labyrinth, in the midst of the greatest confusion and disorder. In this masquerade ball, a dance of millions of variegated figures, you say: 'Let us approach truth.' But where is truth? Who is that masked figure passing before us? What does he hide beneath his grey cloak? Is he a king

or a beggar? Is he a graceful youth or an old man covered with sores? Truth is a broken compass which fails to act in this chaos of unknowns."

◁ "Yes; apart from mathematical truth and the empirical truth that we are gradually acquiring, science does not mean very much. One must have the courage to confess it, and still hope."

◊ "And meanwhile abstain from living or affirming? Meanwhile we may not know whether Monarchy is better than a Republic, Protestantism better or worse than Roman Catholicism, whether individual property is right or wrong; until science reaches these matters, not a word."

◊ "For an intelligent person how can it be otherwise?"

◊ "But, you admit that outside the realm of mathematical and empirical sciences there is a huge field which science has not yet reached. Is it not so?"

"Yes."

"And in this field why not judge by utility?"

◊ "I consider it dangerous," said Andrés. "This idea of utility, which at first sight seems simple and harmless, may justify the greatest enormities and exalt every kind of prejudice."

◊ "Yes, and if one takes truth as the touchstone one may reach the most barbarous fanaticism; truth may be used as a war-cry."

⌚ “If it is falsified and no longer truth. There is no fanaticism in mathematics nor in natural sciences. Who can boast that he defends the truth in political or moral questions? He who does is as fanatical as he who defends any other political or religious question. Science has nothing to do with all that; it is not Christian nor atheist nor revolutionary nor reactionary.”

⌚ “But this agnosticism in all matters not scientifically known is absurd because it is hostile to life. One must live. You are aware that physiologists have shown that in the use of our senses we perceive not in the most exact but in the most economical, advantageous, and useful way. What better rule for life than usefulness and enrichment?”

⌚ “But that would entail the greatest absurdity both in theory and in practice; we should have to accept logical fictions, free-will, responsibility, merit; we should end by accepting everything, even the worst extravagances of religion.”

⌚ “No, we should only accept what was useful.”

⌚ “But there is no means to prove what is useful as there is in the case of truth. For a Catholic, religious faith is both true and useful, for an irreligious man it may be false and useful or it may be false and useless.”

⌚ “Well, on one point we may all agree: for instance, as to the usefulness of faith in a given case. Faith, keeping within what is natural, is undoubtedly a great force.

If I believe I can jump a yard, I shall be able to do so; if I believe I can jump two or three, perhaps it will enable me to do so."

"But if you believe you can jump fifty yards you will not be able to do it, however great your faith."

"Of course not; but that does not prevent faith from being of use within the sphere of what is possible. Therefore faith is useful, friendly to life and must be maintained."

"No, no. What you call faith is but the consciousness of our strength. That exists always, whether we will or not. The other faith must be destroyed—to allow it to exist is dangerous; through that door opened into the arbitrary by a philosophy based on utility and advantageous results, all human madneses may enter."

"On the other hand, if we close that door and leave nothing but truth, life droops and becomes pale, anæmic and gloomy. It has been said that legality kills us, and similarly one might say that reason and science crush us. Very evident becomes the wisdom of the Jew in insisting on having the tree of knowledge on one hand, the tree of life on the other."

"One will have to believe that the tree of knowledge is like the famous poison tree which kills those who rest in its shade," said Andrés mockingly.

"Oh, you may laugh."

"No, I am not laughing."

DISSOCIATION

“I SCARCELY know,” murmured Iturrioz. “I think this intellectualism of yours will lead you nowhere. What is the use of understanding and explaining things? One may be a great artist or a great poet, even a great mathematician or man of science, and really understand nothing. Intellectualism is barren. Even Germany, which flourished the banner of intellectualism, now seems to be repudiating it. In Germany today there are scarcely any philosophers; everybody is keenly practical. Intellectualism, criticism, anarchism are at a discount.”

“And what of that? They have had so many ups and downs,” answered Andrés.

“Can one possibly hope for anything from such methodical and vindictive destruction?”

“It is neither methodical nor vindictive. It destroys what cannot stand by itself; it applies analysis to everything; it dissociates traditional ideas to see what they are made of and of what new aspects they are capable. Through electrolytic disintegration of atoms the scarcely known electrons and ions begin to appear. You know too that some histologists have claimed to find in the proto-

plasm of cells certain grains which they consider elemental organic unities and call bioblasts. Why should not what is being done at the present time in physics by the Roentgens and Becquerels and in biology by the Haeckels and Hertwigs be done likewise in philosophy and morals? Of course no political or moral system is built on the claims of chemistry and histology, and if tomorrow some means were discovered of decomposing and transmuting simple bodies there would be no Pope of existing science to excommunicate the daring investigators."

♯ "In morals it would not be a Pope but the conservative instinct of society that would protest against this dissociation of yours. That instinct has always protested and will continue to protest against everything new; what does it matter? Analytical dissociation will be a work of purification, a disinfection of life."

♯ "A disinfection which may kill the patient."

♯ "There is no fear of that. The instinct of preservation on the part of society is strong enough to reject whatever it is unable to digest. However many seeds one may sow, the decomposition of society will be biological."

♯ "But why break up society? Do you expect to construct a world better than that which exists?"

♯ "Yes, that is my belief."

♯ "I have my doubts. That which makes society evil is man's selfishness, and man's selfishness is a natural

fact, a necessity of life. You are mistaken if you imagine that the man of today is less selfish and less cruel than the man of yesterday. The opportunity is lacking. If he could, the man who now hunts the fox and the hare would hunt men. And as one feeds ducks to fatten their liver we would keep women in pickle to make them softer. Civilized men make jockeys as the ancients made monsters and would gladly cut out a porter's brains to make him stronger, as formerly the Church used to mutilate its singers in the Sistine Chapel in order to improve their voices. Do you think egoism is going to disappear? That would mean the disappearance of mankind itself. Do you suppose, like some English sociologists and like the anarchists, that love of self and love of others will become identical?"

✧ "No; but I believe that there are better and worse ways of grouping society and that one must cast off the bad ways and choose the good."

∨ "That appears to me very vague. A mass of people will never be moved by being told that there may be better forms of society. It is as if one were to say to a woman: 'If we marry our life together will perhaps be tolerable.' No; a collectivity, like a woman, must be promised paradise; and that shows how vain is your analytic and dissociation idea. The Semites invented a materialistic paradise (in the bad sense) at the beginning of man's history; Christianity, another form of Semitism, has

placed a paradise at the end and outside man's life; and the anarchists, who are really neo-Christians, that is to say neo-Semites, place their paradise in life and on this earth. Everywhere and in every age the leaders of men have promised paradises."

☆ "Perhaps so; but we must end by ceasing to be mere children and look round us serenely. How many terrors has not analysis taken from us! The night is no longer full of monsters watching us. By our own strength we are making ourselves masters of the world."

THE COMPANY OF MAN

“**Y**ES, it has removed terrors,” exclaimed Iturriz, “but it has also deprived us of life. It is this clearness of vision that makes life today so commonplace. To simplify problems is very pleasant, but nothing remains. A youth today will read a novel of the thirties, and the cries of despair of a Larra or Espronceda, and laugh; he is ready to prove that no mysteries exist. Life has become intelligible; the value of money increases, and bourgeoisism keeps pace with democracy. It is no longer possible to find poetical haunts at the end of a winding passage; surprises have ceased to exist.”

✧ “You are romantic.”

◊ “So are you. But I am practically romantic. I think one must continue to affirm the mixture of truths and falsehoods until one can transform it into a living thing. I think one must live with one’s mad ideas, taking care of them and even making use of them.”

✧ “That seems to me much as if a sufferer from diabetes were to use the sugar in his body to sweeten his cup of coffee.”

“You caricature my idea, but it is of no matter.”

“The other day,” added Andrés mockingly, “I read in a book of a traveller who relates that the natives of a remote country assured him that they were not men but parrots with red tails. Do you hold that one must go on affirming one’s ideas until one begins to see the tail and feathers?”

“Yes; if one believes in something finer and more useful than that one is a parrot, one must affirm one’s belief strongly. In order to give men a common rule, a discipline, an organization, it is necessary to have faith, illusions, something which, although it may be a subjective invention, appears to be an objective truth. If I had the energy, do you know what I would do?”

“What?”

“I would form a soldiery such as that invented by Loyola, but with an exclusively human character. The Company of Man.”

“Ah, you are a Basque.”

“Possibly.”

“And what would be your aim in establishing this Company?”

“Its object would be to teach courage, serenity, and calm; to do away with every tendency to humility, renunciation, sadness, deceit, rapacity, and sentimentalism.”

“A school of gentlemen.”

“Exactly.”

“Of Iberian gentlemen, of course. No Semitism.”

“Yes, a gentleman free from all taint of Semitism, that is, of Christianity, would be for me the perfect type.”

“When you found your Company remember me. Write to me in my village.”

“Are you really thinking of going away?”

“Yes, if I find nothing in Madrid, I shall go away.”

“Soon?”

“Yes, very soon.”

“Well, you must let me hear how the experiment turns out. I do not think you are well prepared for it.”

“You have not yet founded your Company.”

“Oh, it would be most useful.”

They were tired of talking and said no more. It was beginning to grow dark. The swallows were flying in circles, twittering in the air. Venus had come out in the west shining with orange light and presently the blue light of Jupiter was gleaming. The windows of the houses began to light up, and rows of street-lamps running parallel along the Extremadura road. Wafts of scented air came from the plants on the house-top, from the pots of mint and bergamot.

PART FIVE
A PROVINCIAL EXPERIMENT

ON THE WAY

A FEW days later Hurtado was appointed doctor at Alcolea del Campo.

It was in the centre of Spain, in that intermediate zone where Castilla ends and Andalucía begins; an important town of eight or ten thousand inhabitants. One reached it by the Córdoba railway, getting out at a station in La Mancha and proceeding to Alcolea by coach.

As soon as he received the appointment Andrés packed up and went to the Southern station. It was a summer afternoon of heavy suffocating heat and dry air, dust-laden.

Although he was travelling by night Andrés considered that a journey third-class would be very uncomfortable and took a first-class ticket.

He went onto the platform and along the train and was about to get into a carriage marked non-smoking when a little shaven man dressed in black and wearing spectacles said in a soft voice and with a South American accent:

“Sir, this is a non-smoking carriage.”

Andrés took no notice and sat down in a corner seat.

Presently another traveller arrived, a tall fair-haired, muscular youth, with the ends of his moustache twirled up to his eyes.

The little man in black repeated his remark about no smoking.

“Yes, I can see it written here,” said the traveller with some annoyance and got in.

All three sat in the carriage without speaking; Andrés was looking abstractedly out of the window, wondering what surprises the town to which he was going would have in store for him.

The train started.

The little man in black took out a kind of yellow tunic, wrapped himself in it, placed a handkerchief on his head and lay down to sleep. The monotonous beat of the train accompanied Andrés’s thoughts; the lights of Madrid appeared once or twice in the open plain; three or four deserted stations passed and the conductor appeared. Andrés showed his ticket; the tall youth did the same; and the little man, after taking off his light coat and fumbling in his pockets, presented a ticket and a piece of paper.

The conductor observed to him that it was a second-class ticket.

The little man in black at once lost his temper and said that it was an insult; he had given notice at the

station that he wished to change into a first-class carriage; he was a foreigner, a person of means, with much money, sir; he had travelled all over Europe and America, and such things could only happen in Spain, in uncivilized, uncultivated Spain, where there was no consideration for foreigners.

The little man went on in this strain and ended by making insulting remarks about Spaniards. He would be glad to leave this wretched, backward country; fortunately next day he would be at Gibraltar, on the way to America.

The ticket-collector made no answer. Andrés was looking at the little man as he gesticulated and shouted in his honeyed repulsive accent, when the fair-haired youth jumped up and said in a violent tone:

“I will not allow you to speak in that way about Spain. If you are a foreigner and do not wish to live here, go back to your own country quickly and in silence; otherwise you run the danger of being thrown out of the window, and by me, and now.”

“But, sir,” exclaimed the foreigner, “this is an insult.”

“That is not true. The insult is yours. A traveller should have good manners and when travelling with Spaniards he must not speak ill of Spain.”

“But I like Spain and the Spanish character,” ex-

claimed the little man. "All my family is Spanish. I came to Spain to make the acquaintance of the mother country."

"I desire no explanations, I need none," answered the other drily, and he lay down at full length as if to show how utterly he despised his fellow traveller.

Andrés was astonished; really the young man had been splendid.

He, in his intellectual way, wondered to what class the little man dressed in black could belong; the other by his conduct had clearly defined his race and country. The little man began to explain, talking to himself. Hurtado pretended to be asleep.

A little after midnight they reached a station crowded with people. A company of actors was changing there, leaving the line of Valencia from which they had come for that of Andalucia. The actresses in grey dustcoats, the actors in caps and straw-hats sauntered along as persons who knew how to travel and considered the whole world theirs. They got into the train, and one heard shouts from carriage to carriage:

"Eh, Fernández, where's the bottle?"

"Molina, the first lady wants to speak to you."

"The prompter's lost."

The actors settled down, and the train went on.

At dawn, in the first pale light of morning, one could see vineyards and rows of olive-trees.

Andrés's station was near. He got his things together and when the train stopped stepped onto a deserted platform. He went towards the exit and walked round the station. In front of it was a broad street of large white houses and two rows of faint electric lamps. The waning moon lit up the sky; a soft smell of dry straw was in the air.

A man passed in the direction of the station, and Andrés asked him at what hour the coach for Alcolea left.

"At five. It goes from the end of this very street."

Andrés went down the street, passed the lit-up octroi station, set his portmanteau down on the ground, and sat down on it to wait for the coach.

ARRIVAL

THE morning was fairly advanced when the coach left for Alcolea. It gave promise of a hot day. The sky was blue and cloudless; the sun shone fiercely; the road went between vineyards and a few olive groves with their twisted old olive-trees. The diligence raised clouds of dust as it passed.

The only other passenger was an old woman dressed in black, with a basket on her arm.

Andrés attempted to converse with her, but she was a woman of few words and evidently not then inclined to talk.

The scenery did not change, the road going up and down between gentle hills covered with vines. After three hours the town appeared in a hollow. It seemed immense.

The stage-coach entered a wide street of low houses and after crossing several other streets stopped in a square in front of a large white house, on one of whose balconies was the inscription: "Fonda de la Palma."

"You get out here?" asked the driver.

"Yes."

Andrés got down and entered the doorway. Through the door screen appeared an Andalusian patio with arches and columns of stone.

The door screen swung back and the master of the house came out to receive the traveller.

Andrés told him that he would probably stay some time and would like a large room.

“Then we shall put you on the ground floor.” And he showed him a fair-sized room with a window looking onto the street. Andrés had a wash and again went into the court. Luncheon was at one o’clock. He sat down in one of the rocking-chairs. A canary in a cage hung from the ceiling began to sing gaily.

The solitude and coolness and the song of the canary caused Andrés’s eyes to close and he slept a little.

He was wakened by the voice of the waiter telling him that luncheon was ready. He went into the dining-room. There were three commercial travellers at the table. One of them was a Catalán travelling for Sabadell factories; another was of Rioja and sold tartrate for wine; the third was an Andalusian who lived at Madrid and in the electrical apparatus business. The Catalán was not presumptuous like most Catalán commercial travellers; the Riojan did not make a point of being frank or coarse; the Andalusian did not pretend to be witty.

These three rare birds were all very anti-clerical. The luncheon astonished Andrés because it consisted entirely

of game and meat. This, with the wine, which was strong, would naturally set one in a glow.

After their meal the three commercial travellers and Andrés went to have their coffee at the casino. In the street the heat was frightful; it came in dry gusts, as from an oven. One dared not look to right or left; the houses, completely whitewashed and gleaming like snow, reflected a fierce and blinding light.

They went into the café; the commercial travellers called for coffee, and they began to play at dominoes. A swarm of flies flew about through the room. After their game of dominoes they returned to the fonda for their siesta.

In the street the same gusts of heat surprised Andrés. At the inn each went to his room, and Andrés lay down on his bed drowsily. Through the cracks of the shutters entered a glowing brightness like a leaf of gold; from the black beams of the ceiling, the spaces between them painted blue, hung silvery spider-webs. In the patio the canary went on singing in shrill notes, and continually one heard the sound of churchbells ringing, slow and sad.

The porter of the inn had told Hurtado that if he wished to talk with anyone in the town, he would not be able to do so until at least six o'clock. As six struck, Andrés went out to pay a visit to the secretary of the town-council and the doctor.

The secretary was a rather presumptuous man with curled black hair and quick eyes. He considered himself a superior man placed in a sphere beneath him.

He at once offered his protection to Andrés.

"If you like," he said, "we shall go at once and visit your colleague Dr. Sánchez."

"Very well."

Dr. Sánchez lived close by, in a mean-looking house. He was stout, fair-haired, with blue eyes without expression and the stupid face of a sheep.

Dr. Sánchez turned the conversation to the money question and warned Andrés not to expect to make much at Alcolea.

Don Tomás, the aristocratic doctor of the town, had all the rich patients. Don Tomás Solana was a native of Alcolea; he had a fine house, modern implements, and many friends.

"Here the official doctor can only make just enough to live on," said Dr. Sánchez.

"It can't be helped," murmured Andrés. "We can but try."

The secretary, the doctor, and Andrés went out for a short walk.

The heat was still oppressive, the air dry and fiery. They passed through the central square and the church, a building of many alterations and additions, with sheds round it in which were sold articles of hemp and iron.

They went along a broad street of large white houses, with their central balconies full of geraniums and their filigree iron screens surmounted by a Cross of Calatrava.

From the doorways one could see the porches with their blue tiles along the wall and pavement of mosaics. Some of the less central streets, with their great walls the colour of earth, their huge doors and tiny windows, seemed to belong to a Moorish town. In one of these courts Andrés saw many men and women in black praying.

“What is this?” he asked.

“Here they call it a praying,” said the secretary, and explained that it was the custom to go to the house where someone had died in order to say the rosary.

They went out of the town along a dusty road; four-wheeled carts were coming in, laden with sheaves of corn.

“I should like to see the town as a whole,” said Andrés. “I can form no idea of its size.”

“Then we will go up to the top of yonder hill,” said the secretary.

“I will leave you, for I have a visit to make,” said the doctor.

After parting from him the secretary and Andrés began to ascend a red hill with an ancient half-ruined tower at its tops.

The heat was terrible; the whole country seemed burnt to ashes; the sky, of the colour of lead, with copper reflections, lit up the dusty vineyards, and the sun was setting behind a thick veil of haze, so that it was converted into a pale, dull disc.

From the top of the hill appeared the plain bounded by grey hills, parched by the sun; in the hollow, the town, of immense size, stretched away with its white walls, ashen-hued roofs, and a golden tower in their midst. Not a wood or tree was anywhere to be seen; only vines and more vines as far as eye could see; but between the walls of the courts of some of the houses appeared the broad dark leaves of fig-trees.

In the twilight the town appeared unreal; one might imagine that a breath of wind was about to carry it away and scatter it like a cloud of dust on the burnt dry earth.

A pleasant, sweet smell of burning was in the air.

“They are burning refuse in an olive-mill,” said the secretary.

They went down to the road, on which the wind was raising clouds of dust; the church-bells had again begun to ring.

Andrés went to the inn for supper, and at night went out again. It was cooler now, and the town seemed even more unreal. On either side of the streets the electric lamps glimmered faintly.

The moon came out, and the vast city slept in silence; on the central balconies above the blue doorways the geraniums gleamed; the iron gratings with their crosses gave the impression of romanticism and of mystery, of veiled women and flight from a nunnery. Over some of the walls, bright, with the whiteness of a snowdrift, fell a great shock of black ivy; and the whole city, immense, silent, deserted, bathed by the soft light of the moon, seemed one great tomb.

FIRST DIFFICULTIES

ANDRÉS HURTADO had a long talk with Dr. Sánchez as to his professional duties. They agreed to divide Alcolea into two sections, separated by its Calle Ancha.

Hurtado was to pay visits on the left and right sides in alternate months; they would thus avoid having both of them to visit the whole of the town.

Dr. Sánchez made it an indispensable condition that if a family in the section visited by Andrés were to ask for Dr. Sánchez, or vice versa, these wishes were to be observed.

Hurtado agreed; he knew well that no one was likely to ask for him, but he did not care.

He began to make his visits. The number of his patients was usually not more than six or seven.

He made his calls in the morning, and in the afternoon rarely had to go out.

The first summer he lived at the hotel. It was a sleepy life; he listened to the talk of the commercial travellers at meals and occasionally went to the theatre, a shed erected in the court of a house.

His visits did not as a rule give him much trouble;

he had for some reason expected that the first days would be very disagreeable; he thought that the Manchegans would be aggressive, violent and proud, but he found the greater part of them simple, affable, and unassuming.

Although he liked the inn at first he soon grew tired of it. The conversation of the commercial travellers began to bore him; the meals of meat and spices made digestion difficult.

“Are there no vegetables here?” he asked the servant one day.

“Oh, yes.”

“Well, I would like some legumes—beans or lentils.”

The servant was amazed at this request, and a few days later told him that it was quite impossible; he would have to have a dinner specially for himself, the others refusing to eat vegetables, and the owner of the hotel considered that it would be a disgrace to his house to serve a dish of French beans or lentils.

As to fish it could not be kept fresh in summer; the only fresh fish were the frogs, which seemed a strange kind of food.

Another difficulty was a bath: one could not have one. Water at Alcolea was a luxury and an expensive one. It was brought in carts from four leagues away, and cost ten centimos a pitcher. The wells were very deep, and to draw sufficient water for a bath took at least an

hour's work. With the meat diet and the heat Andrés was in a constantly excited state.

He went out for lonely walks at night through the deserted streets. A little after nightfall groups of women and children came out in their doorways to breathe the cool air. Andrés often sat on a doorstep in the Calle Ancha and watched the two rows of electric lights dimly burning in the dark air. What a melancholy and disagreeable place it was!

In the beginning of September Andrés decided to leave the inn. Sánchez found a house for him. It did not suit Sánchez that his rival should live in the best hotel of the town, in a central position in touch with travellers; he might deprive him of patients. Sánchez took him to a place in the Marrubial suburb.

It was a farm-house, large, old, and white, with a front painted blue and a walled-up gallery on the first floor.

Over the entrance door was a broad balcony and a grating of wrought iron looked onto a side street.

The owner came from the same town as Dr. Sánchez; his name was José, but the whole town had laughingly nicknamed him Pepinito. Andrés and Sánchez went to see the house, and the owner's wife showed them a small narrow room full of ornaments with an inner bedroom separated by a red curtain.

"I should like a room on the ground floor," said Andrés, "and if possible a large one."

"On the ground floor," she said, "there is only one large room, but it is unfurnished."

"Perhaps you would show it to me."

"All right."

The woman opened a large unfurnished room with a window-screen of iron filigree looking onto the Callejuela de los Carretones.

"And this room is to let?"

"Yes."

"Then I will take it."

"As you please. It shall be whitewashed and swept, and a bed will be brought."

Sánchez went away, and Andrés had a talk with his new landlady.

"Have you a tub you do not use?" he asked.

"What for?"

"To have my bath in."

"There is one in the yard."

"We will go and have a look at it."

The house had at the back an adobe wall, with thick branches along its top, which divided off several courts and yards, besides the stable, the shed for the cart, another for wine-prunings, the winepress, cellar, and olive-mill.

In a room which had served as an oven and looked

onto a small yard was a large jar cut in two and sunk in the ground.

“Could you let me have that?” asked Andrés.

“Yes, sir; why not?”

“I would be glad to know of someone who would fill the jar daily with water and I will pay him his own price.”

“Very good. The servant of the house can do it. And as for food—what do you wish to eat? what we ourselves have?”

“Yes, just that.”

“You would not like something extra, game or cold meat?”

“No, no. At most, if it is no trouble, I would like a plate of vegetables at each meal.”

At this, his landlady was persuaded that her new lodger, if not quite mad, was very nearly so.

Andrés found life in this house pleasanter than that in the hotel.

In the afternoons, after the worst heat was over, he sat in the patio talking with the people of the house. Its mistress had a fair complexion and almost perfect features, a face like that of the Mater Dolorosa, with very black eyes and hair of gleaming jet.

Her husband, Pepinito, a man of degenerate air and mottled face, had projecting ears and a hanging lip. Their daughter, Consuelo, twelve or thirteen years old,

was not so unpleasant as her father but less pretty than her mother.

An incident early in his stay caused Andrés to define his likes and dislikes in that house.

One Sunday afternoon the servant caught a young sparrow on the roof and brought it down to the patio.

“Take the poor little thing into the yard and let it go,” said her mistress.

“It can’t fly,” answered the servant, and left it on the ground.

Pepinito then came in, and when he saw the sparrow, went to the door and called the cat. The cat, a black cat with golden eyes came into the patio. Pepinito then frightened the bird with his foot and when it fluttered the cat leapt on it and with a cry from the sparrow, made off with eyes gleaming and the bird in its mouth.

“I don’t like to see that,” said the mistress of the house.

Pepinito began to laugh with the superior air of one who is far above all such sentimental ideas.

WAR BETWEEN DOCTORS

DON JUAN SÁNCHEZ had come to Alcolea over thirty years ago as a surgeon, later, after passing some examinations, he took his doctor's degree. For many years he occupied an inferior position to the older doctor, and when the latter died, he began to give himself airs; he considered it logical that since he had had to put up with the slights of the old doctor he should inflict similar slights on the new-comer.

Don Juan was a gloomy, apathetic Manchegan, very stiff and serious, very fond of bullfights. He never missed an important bullfight and even went to see them in the province of the lower Mancha and Andalucia.

This taste was enough for Andrés to consider him a brute.

Their first quarrel arose through Sánchez's having gone to a bullfight at Baeza.

One night Andrés was summoned to the Estrella mill, a flour mill situated a quarter of an hour from the town. He was called for in a small carriage. The daughter of the miller was ill, her body being all swollen, with various complications.

She was Sánchez's patient, but that morning when they had sent for him, they were told that he was not at home. He had gone to the bullfight at Baeza. Don Tomás likewise was away.

The coachman told Andrés this as he whipped up his horse. It was a glorious night; thousands of stars shone magnificently, and from time to time a shooting star moved across the sky. Soon, after bumping along the badly kept road, they arrived at the mill.

When the carriage stopped, the miller looked out to see who was in it and exclaimed:

"What, was Don Tomás not at home?"

"No."

"Whom have you brought then?"

"The new doctor."

The miller angrily began to pour out insults against doctors. He was a rich, proud man who considered nothing too good for him.

"They came for me to see a patient," said Andrés coolly. "Am I to see her or not? If not, I shall go back."

"There is no help for it. Come in."

Andrés went up the stairs to the first floor and followed the miller into a room in which a girl lay on a bed, watched over by her mother.

Andrés went up to the bed. The miller was still swearing.

"Come, be quiet," said Andrés to him, "if you wish me to examine the patient."

The man held his peace. The girl was dropsical and suffered from nausea, asthma, and slight convulsions. Andrés looked at the patient, her stomach was swollen and resembled that of a frog. One had only to touch it to feel the flow of water in the peritoneum.

"Well? What do you find?" asked the mother.

"It is a disease of the liver, serious and chronic," said Andrés, going away from the bed so that the girl should not hear. "And now there is a complication of dropsy."

"And what is to be done? Or is there no remedy?"

"If one dared delay it would be best to wait for Dr. Sánchez. He is more familiar with the patient."

"But can one delay?" said the father in an angry voice.

Andrés again examined the patient. The pulse was very weak; the difficulty of breathing, probably caused by the water in the body, was increasing; and the convulsions were becoming more violent. Andrés took her temperature. It was below normal.

"No, we cannot wait," he said, addressing himself to the mother.

"What is to be done?" said the miller. "You must do it."

“There should be an abdominal puncture,” said Andrés, still speaking to the mother. “If you do not wish me to perform the operation——”

“Yes, yes, you must.”

“Very well; I will go home to get my case and return.”

The miller himself drove the carriage. It was evident that Andrés’s disdainful coolness irritated him, and they spoke not a word on the way. On arriving at his house Andrés got out, fetched his case, a little cotton-wool, and a bichloride of mercury tablet. They returned to the mill.

Andrés encouraged the patient, soaped and rubbed the skin at the spot he had chosen and plunged his lancet into the girl’s swollen abdomen. When he drew it out, leaving the tube in, the water flowed out thick and greenish, like a jet of water through an auger-hole in the side of a ship.

He was then able to relieve the bladder and the patient’s breathing became easier. Her temperature at once went up to above normal, and the symptoms of uremia began to disappear. Andrés ordered her to be given some milk, and left her comfortable.

There was great rejoicing in the house.

“I do not think it is over yet,” said Andrés to the mother. “Probably it will recur.”

“And what do you think we ought to do?” she asked humbly.

“If I were you, I would go to Madrid and consult a specialist.”

Hurtado took leave of mother and daughter. The miller climbed on to the box of the carriage to drive him back to Alcolea. Morning began to smile in the heavens; the sun shone on vineyards and olives; teams of mules going out to plough, and some peasants, dressed in black, riding on the rumps of their asses, followed them. Great flights of crows passed.

The miller spoke never a word; he was torn between pride and gratitude. Perhaps he was waiting for Andrés to speak, but the latter did not open his lips. On reaching home, he got out and murmured:

“Good-day.”

“Good-bye.”

And the two men parted as enemies. Next day Sánchez, more gloomy and apathetic than ever, came up to Andrés.

“You wish to injure me,” he said.

“I know why you say that,” answered Andrés; “but I am not to blame. I went to see the girl because they came for me; and I operated because it was absolutely necessary. She was dying.”

“Yes, but you told her mother to go to Madrid to

consult a specialist, and that is not to your advantage nor to mine."

Sánchez could not understand that Andrés might have given this advice through his honesty, and supposed that he had done so in order to injure him. He also considered that he had a right to levy a kind of tax on every illness in Alcolea. If so and so caught a bad cold, that meant six visits; if he had rheumatism it might mean as many as twenty.

The case of the miller's small daughter was much talked of and the idea gained ground that Andrés was a doctor acquainted with the most modern science.

When Sánchez saw this inclination to believe in the new doctor's skill, he began a campaign against him. He let it be known that Andrés was a man of books without experience, and moreover a mysterious person who was not to be trusted.

Seeing war thus openly declared against him, Andrés kept on his guard. He was too sceptical in medical matters to be imprudent. When there was need of an operation, he sent the patient to Sánchez who, being of an elastic conscience, was not alarmed at the prospect of leaving a patient blind or lame.

Andrés nearly always ordered very small doses of medicine, and often they had no effect at all; at least he avoided fatal mistakes. He had his successes too, al-

though he ingenuously admitted to himself that he scarcely ever diagnosed a case right.

During the first days he would prudently omit making any assertion; but the illness as a rule gave him a surprise. What he had supposed to be pleurisy turned out a hepatic lesion; typhoid fever became a case of grippe.

When it was an obvious case of congestion of the lungs or smallpox he recognized it, as indeed did every old woman of the neighbourhood.

He did not say that his successes were due to chance; that would have been absurd. But neither did he boast that they were the result of scientific skill. Strange things occurred in his daily practice. A man who took some simple syrup was completely cured of a chronic disease; another who took the same syrup complained that it nearly killed him.

Andrés was convinced that in most cases a hurried application of medicine could only be beneficial with a good clinical doctor, and to be a good doctor required not only special capacity but long experience. He therefore played a waiting game, giving his patients much water and syrup. He had told the chemist in confidence to "charge for it as if it were quinine."

This scepticism as to his skill and his profession increased his prestige.

He gave hygienic precepts to some of his patients, but nobody paid any attention.

One of them, owner of wine stores, an old man who suffered from arthritis and spent his days reading feuilletons, was advised by Andrés not to eat meat and to go for walks.

“But I am dying of debility, doctor,” he answered. “And I only eat a small piece of meat with a glass of sherry and a cup of coffee.”

“Nothing could be worse,” said Andrés.

This demagogue who denied that it was good to eat meat angered the well-to-do and the butchers.

There is a sentence of a French writer which purports to be tragic and is intensely comic. It runs thus: “For the last thirty years there has been no pleasure in being French.” The arthritic wine-merchant should have said: “Since the arrival of this doctor there has been no pleasure in being rich.”

The wife of the secretary of the town-council, a very vain, affected woman, wanted to persuade Hurtado to marry and settle down at Alcolea.

“We shall see,” answered Andrés.

ALCOLEA DEL CAMPO

THE ways of Alcolea were purely Spanish, that is to say, utterly absurd.

There was no idea of social life. The families lived in their houses like troglodytes. The idea of union and of the strength of association was completely unknown. The men went out to work, and, sometimes, to the casino; the women only went out on Sundays, to mass.

The town had been ruined by this lack of collective instinct.

At the time of the wine treaty with France everyone, without consulting with his neighbour, converted his land from wheat and cereals into vineyards; and soon Alcolea's river of wine became a river of gold. In this moment of prosperity the town grew in size, the streets were cleaned and given side-walks; electric light was installed. Then the treaty terminated, and as no one spoke for the town as a whole, no one said: "Let us change back again, using the wealth produced by the wine to turn the earth to the needs of today."

The town accepted ruin resignedly.

"Formerly we were rich," every inhabitant would re-

mark. "Now we shall be poor. It comes to the same; we shall have less to live on, we must limit our wants."

And this stoicism completed the town's ruin. It was natural that it should be so. To every inhabitant of the town his neighbour was as remote as a foreigner; they had no culture in common—they had no culture at all; they had no common enthusiasms. Custom and routine alone united them and all were essentially strangers to one another.

Hurtado often thought of Alcolea as a besieged city. Catholic morality was the besieger. There everything was stored and separated, the women in their houses, the money in the money-bags, the wine in the great jars.

Andrés used to ask himself: "What do these women do? What do they think about? How do they pass the weary hours?" It was not easy to find out.

With this system of keeping everything close, the order in Alcolea was admirable: only a well-kept cemetery could have surpassed it.

This perfection was secured by an inverted selection of those who held office. The grain was winnowed from the chaff: the chaff was kept, and the grain wasted.

A cynic might possibly have observed that this choice of the chaff was no rare thing in Spain. By such inverted choice the most unfitted were the fittest.

At Alcolea there were few thefts or crimes of violence, although at one time they had been frequent among gam-

blers and roughs; the poor people remained quiet, languidly passive; the rich were active enough, and usury devoured the life of the city.

The small farmer who had long had but four or five pairs of mules suddenly had ten, had twenty; his land grew in proportion; he became one of the rich.

Politics at Alcolea were admirably adapted to the indolence and mistrust of the people. It was a feud between two parties of caciques or local bosses, known as the Rats and the Owls; the Rats were Liberals, the Owls were Conservatives.

At that-time the Owls were in the ascendant. The chiefs of the Owls was mayor, a thin man of pronounced clerical opinions, dressed in black, a suave-mannered political leader who was quietly taking possession of all he could lay hands on. The Liberal cacique who led the party of the Rats was a barbarous, despotic man of great size and strength, with the hands of a giant, who when his turn came, treated the town like a conquered province. He was not a hypocrite like the leader of the Owls; he simply swept the board without being at pains to cast a decorous veil over his thefts.

Alcolea had grown accustomed to the Owls and the Rats and considered them necessary. Those brigands were the props of society; they divided the spoils and had for one another a special taboo, like that of the Polynesians.

Andrés was able to study at Alcolea various manifes-

tations of the Tree of Life, of rough Manchegan life, egoism, envy, cruelty, and pride.

Sometimes he considered it all necessary; he even thought that with the indifference of an intellectual, one might actually enjoy contemplating these violent forms of life.

“Why should one be annoyed if everything is determined by destiny and cannot be otherwise?” he asked himself. From a scientific point of view was not his fury at the injustice he saw practised there somewhat absurd? On the other hand had not fate perhaps ordained that he should feel this irritation and violently protest against this state of affairs?

He had many discussions with his landlady. She could not understand how Hurtado could declare that it was a greater crime to rob the community, the town, the state than to rob a private person.

“No, no,” she said, “it cannot be so bad to defraud the community as to defraud a person.”

At Alcolea nearly all the rich defrauded the Treasury and were not considered thieves.

Andrés tried to convince her that the harm done by robbing the community was greater than that done by robbing a private person; but Dorotea was not to be convinced.

“What a fine thing a revolution would be,” said Andrés to his landlady; “not a revolution of orators and

charlatans but a real revolution. Owls and Rats would be hanged from the street lamps, since there would be no trees; and then all that had been stored away by Catholic morality would be brought out from the hidden corners into the street, men, women, money, wine, everything."

Dorotea used to laugh at these ideas expressed by her lodger; they seemed to her absurd.

Like a good epicurean Andrés was inclined to proselytize.

The members of the Republican Club urged him to give some lectures on hygiene, but he was convinced that it would be entirely useless and unfruitful. What was the use of occupying himself with what was certain to yield no result?

When they spoke to him about politics, he said to the young Republicans:

"Do not form a party of protest; what would be the use? At best it would be a party of rhetoricians and charlatans; at worst it might become another such party as that of the Owls and Rats."

"But Don Andrés, one must do something."

"What can you do! Impossible! The only thing for you to do is to go away."

Time hung heavy on his hands at Alcolea. In the morning he visited a patient and went home and had his bath.

As he crossed the yard he would meet the landlady, superintending some work in the house; the servant was usually washing clothes in a large jar cut in half longitudinally like a canoe, and the child was running about at play.

There was a shed in this yard piled with bundles of vine-prunings and heaps of old vinestocks.

Andrés went into the former bake-oven and had his bath. Then he went in to luncheon.

The autumn was a continuation of summer, and it was still the custom to sleep the siesta. These siesta hours were horribly wearisome to Hurtado.

In his room he threw a mat on the floor and lay down on it in the dark. A sword of light came in through the crack of the shutter. The town lay wrapped in silence, all asleep in the heat of the sun; a few bluebottles buzzed on the window-pane; the stifling afternoons seemed endless.

After the heat of the day Andrés went into the patio and sat under the vine-trellis to read.

The mistress of the house, her mother, and the servant sat sewing near the well; the daughter made lace, sticking pins in a cushion on her knees; at nightfall they watered the geraniums, sweet basil, and carnations. Often street-sellers—men and women—came to offer fruit, vegetables, or game.

“Ave María Purísima!” they said on entering.

Dorotea had a look at their wares.

"Do you like this, Don Andrés?" she would ask Hurtado.

"Yes, but don't mind about me," he would answer.

At nightfall the master returned. He was employed at a winestore till then. Pepinito was presumptuous and ignorant, pedantic as a professor. When he explained anything he would lower his eyelashes with such an air of wisdom that Andrés felt inclined to strangle him.

He behaved very badly to his wife and daughter, constantly called them stupid, idiotic, and clumsy, and thought that he alone could do a thing properly.

"That such a brute should have so pretty and attractive a wife is really disagreeable," thought Andrés.

One of Pepinito's manias was to pose as a man to be greatly feared; he liked to tell stories of quarrels ending in death. To listen to him one would have thought that there was constant fighting at Alcolea; he would tell of a crime five years old and add so many variations that the crime grew and multiplied.

He was a native of Tomelloso, and this was his favourite subject. Tomelloso he held up as the antithesis of Alcolea which he said was as commonplace as Tomelloso was extraordinary. Whatever the subject of the conversation he would say to Andrés:

"You ought to go to Tomelloso. It hasn't a single tree."

"Nor has Alcolea," Andrés answered laughing.

"Yes, here there are a few; there the whole town is honeycombed with wine-cellars, and, mind you, they are not new, but old. There one sees huge wine jars sunk in the earth. There all the wine is natural; it is often bad, as they do not know how to make it, but it is natural."

"And here?"

"Here they add chemical substances—tartrate, log-wood, fuchsine, Heaven knows what!" For Pepinito, Alcolea was a thoroughly degenerate place.

At the end of September, a few days before the vintage, his mistress said to Andrés:

"You have not seen our wine-cellar?"

"No."

"Well, we are just going to prepare it."

The servants, man and girl, were carrying out the wood and vine-prunings which had lain all winter in the winepress, and two masons were scraping the walls. Dorotea and her daughter showed Hurtado the old-fashioned winepress with its central beam and the clogs of wood and hemp which the men tie to their feet when they tread out the grapes. They showed him the tubs into which the juice fell and the new cellar, large enough to contain two vintages, with its barrels and vats.

"If you are not afraid we will now show you the old cellar," said Dorotea.

“Afraid, why?”

“They say it is haunted.”

“Then we must go and pay our respects to the ghosts.”

The servant lit a lamp and opened the door onto the yard. Dorotea, the daughter, and Andrés followed. They went down to the cellar by a crumbling staircase. The roof was oozing damp. At the foot of the staircase an arch opened onto a veritable catacomb, damp, cold, and very long and winding.

In the first part was a row of great jars fitted into the wall; in the second part, where the roof was lower, were the jars of Colmenar, tall and huge, in one row, and beside them those made at Toboso, small and stained, and resembling fantastic stout old women.

The light of the lamp, as it shone through this cavern, seemed to make the great bellies of the jars alternately larger and smaller. It was but natural that imagination should have converted the wine-jars into ghosts. The pot-bellied jars of Toboso looked like dwarfs; and the tall graceful jars of Colmenar had the air of giants. At the extreme end of the cellar there was further space for twelve great jars; and this was called the Hall of the Apostles.

The servant assured them that human remains had been found in this cellar, and pointed out finger-marks on the wall which were blood.

“If Don Andrés cared for wine,” said Dorotea, “we

would give him a glass of the old wine we keep here on the stone shelf.”

“No, no; keep it for special occasions.”

A few days later the vintage began. Andrés went to see the winepress at work, and the sight of those men sweating and leaping in the corner under the low roof gave him a disagreeable impression. He had not expected the work to be so hard.

He thought of Iturrioz and his claim that only what is artificial is good. Yes, he was right. These exalted rural tasks, so often sung by the poets, seemed to him stupid and brutal. How much more beautiful, albeit running counter to the traditional idea of beauty, was the working of an electric engine, than this rough uneconomical and barbarous labour of the muscles!

CASINO CHARACTERS

WHEN the winter came, the long cold nights made Hurtado seek a refuge outside where he might amuse himself and pass the time. He began to frequent the casino of Alcolea.

This casino, called Fraternity, was a remnant of the former splendour of the town. It had huge rooms badly decorated, great mirrors, several billiard tables, and a library containing a few books.

Among the mass of commonplace, indeterminate characters who went to the casino to read the newspapers and talk about politics there were two persons who were truly picturesque.

One of these was the Casino pianist; the other, a certain Don Blas Carreño, was a well-to-do gentleman of the town.

Andrés became fairly intimate with both of them.

The pianist was a thin, clean-shaven old man with a long, narrow face and thick spectacles. He dressed in black and gesticulated in a rather effeminate way; he was also organist of the parish church, and this gave him a half-ecclesiastical air.

The other man was also thin, but taller, with an aquiline nose, grey hair, a sallow complexion, and martial air.

This good hidalgo had become a part of the life of centuries ago and had succeeded in convincing himself that people spoke and acted like the characters in the classics of Spanish literature; his language had gradually grown archaic and, half in fun, half in earnest, he spoke in the fantastic style of the characters in Feliciano de Silva which so enchanted Don Quixote.

The pianist took Carreño for his model and imitated his style. On making the acquaintance of Andrés he said:

“My dear friend Don Blas has introduced me to you as a favoured child of Euterpe; but unfortunately I am but a poor and humble follower of the Muses, as the fine myrtle of your intelligence will have perceived, and I am forced to use my unskilful hands to render agreeable evening entertainment at the club these icy winter nights.”

Don Blas listened smilingly to his disciple. Andrés at first thought that he must be a lunatic, but presently found that, on the contrary, the pianist was a man of good sense. It was merely that both Don Blas and he had taken to speaking in this emphatic, high-sounding way until it had become a habit. They had certain ready-made phrases which they were always using, such as the force of the intelligence, the arrow of wisdom, the pearl

necklace of wise sayings, the garden of good style—

Don Blas invited Hurtado to his house, and showed him his library with several book-cases full of Spanish and Latin books. He put these at the disposal of the new doctor.

“If any one of these books interests you, take it away with you,” he said.

“I will certainly avail myself of your offer.”

To Andrés Don Blas was an interesting case; although he was intelligent he noticed nothing of what went on around him; the cruelty of existence in Alcolea, the wicked exploitation of the poor by the rich, the lack of social instinct; nothing of all this existed for him, and if it did, it took on a bookish atmosphere, and served to introduce such remarks as “Scaliger says” or “Huarte states in his *Speculations on Talent*—”

Don Blas was an extraordinary man and he had no nerves; for him heat and cold, pleasure and pain had no existence. Once two members of the club, for a practical joke, took him to supper at a wayside tavern and set before him a horrible mash like sand, saying that it was the characteristic dish of the country. He found it so good and gave it such extravagant praise that he ended by convincing his friends of its excellence. The most insipid food, if he were told that it was made from an ancient recipe and was to be found in *The Luxury of Andalusia*, seemed to him exquisite.

In his own house he took much pleasure in offering his friends special delicacies: "biscuits brought expressly from Yepes; water, such as one cannot drink everywhere, from the spring of Maillo."

His scheme of life was perfectly arbitrary; he considered that some people had no right to anything and some people had a right to everything. Why? Probably because he chose to think so.

He said that he hated women, and that they had always betrayed him, although this was not the case; really he adopted this attitude in order to quote passages from Martial, Juvenal, and Quevedo.

Don Blas used to call his servants and workmen knaves, rogues, and scoundrels, usually without any reason and simply to employ words used in *Don Quixote*.

Another of his manias was to give towns their ancient names: "We were once at Alcazar de San Juan, the former Alce; at Baeza, the Biatra of Ptolemy," and so on.

Andrés and Don Blas were a continual source of astonishment to each other. Andrés used to say to himself:

"It is really amazing that this man and many others like him can live this false existence, poisoned by the remains of a literature and an empty wordiness filled with mannerisms."

On the other hand, Don Blas would look smilingly at Andrés and think: "What a strange man!"

They had several discussions on the subject of re-

ligion, politics, and the theory of evolution. Darwinism to Don Blas seemed a mere game; for him proved facts had no significance. He believed really that authors wrote in order to show how clever they were, not to set forth ideas clearly, and that learned investigations could be overthrown by a witty phrase.

Although they differed, Hurtado did not dislike Don Blas.

On the other hand there was a young person, the son of a money-lender, whom he found unbearable; this youth, who was considered a prodigy at Alcolea, often went to the Casino. He was a lawyer and having read a few reactionary French reviews, considered himself the centre of the universe.

He affected to view everything with a smile of pity and irony. He thought that one could discuss philosophy in the familiar commonplaces of the Spanish classics and that Balmes was a great philosopher.

Several times the young man, who contemplated everything with a smile of pity and irony, attempted to draw Hurtado into argument, but Andrés avoided discussion with one whom, despite his superficial culture, he considered essentially foolish.

A sentence of Democritus, which he had read in Lange's *History of Materialism*, seemed to him very true: "He who is fond of controversy and wordiness is incapable of learning anything serious."

SEX AND PORNOGRAPHY

THE stationer's in the town was at the same time a bookshop and lending library. Andrés used to go there to buy paper and a few newspapers. One day he noticed with surprise that there were some score of novels with a nude woman on the cover. They were pornographic novels in the French manner, with a slight varnish of psychology, for the use of officers, students, and weak-minded persons.

"Do you sell these?" asked Andrés of the bookseller.

"It's the only thing I do sell," was his answer. It seemed paradoxical, but was natural enough. Andrés had heard Iturrioz say that in England, where manners were extraordinarily free, books were so closely watched that novels which French and Spanish girls read in the presence of their mothers were absolutely forbidden.

The exact opposite happened in Alcolea; morality in daily life was terribly severe; one might as well think of running off with the Giralda of Seville's cathedral at midday as of running away with a woman; but on the other hand books were read which were grotesquely and absurdly pornographic.

It was indeed logical. In London liberty in sexual matters diminished pornography, and at Alcolea it was precisely the other way round.

“What a paradox is this question of sex,” thought Andrés as he went home. In countries where life is intensely sexual, lewdness does not exist; and in towns such as Alcolea, where sexual life is cramped and poor, there were erotic allusions to sex everywhere.

It was, really, a case of the natural law of compensation.

THE DILEMMA

GRADUALLY, without his knowing why, Andrés was given a bad name; he was considered violent, proud, and malicious, a man to be universally disliked.

He was a wicked, ferocious demagogue who hated the rich and did not care for the poor.

Andrés began to notice the ill-will of the people at the Casino and stopped going there.

At first he was bored. Day followed day and each one filled him with the same despair, the certainty of not having anything to do, the certainty of disliking and being disliked, without reason, through misunderstanding.

He had made up his mind to perform his duty as doctor scrupulously; and as to the petty social life of Alcolea absolute forbearance seemed to him to be ideal. He was not one of those men who consider reading subsidiary to life; he only read because he could not live. Rather than associate with the stupid, malicious people of the Casino he preferred to spend the time in his room, a whitewashed silent tomb.

Yet how willingly would he have set his books aside

if he had had anything important to do, as for instance to burn down the town and rebuild it.

Inaction nettled him.

Had there been any big game he would have gone into the country, but when it was only a question of shooting rabbits he preferred to stay at home.

Having nothing to do, he strode up and down his room like a wolf. Often he resolved to give up reading those books of philosophy. He thought that perhaps they were irritating him and tried a change of subject. Don Blas lent him some books of history. Andrés became convinced that history was an insubstantial thing. He believed with Schopenhauer that if one reads *The Nine Books of Herodotus* one has all the possible combinations of crimes, revolutions, heroisms, injustices, good deeds, and vice that history is able to furnish.

He then turned to a study lacking human interest and got from Madrid and began to read a book on astronomy, Klein's *Guide to the Heavens*; but he had not the necessary foundation of mathematics and came to the conclusion that his brain was too weak to understand the subject. All that he learnt was the map of the stars. To be able to find his way about that infinity of luminous dots where shine the gods Arcturus and Vega, Aldebaran and Altair, was for him a gloomy delight; to traverse in thought the craters of the Moon and that calm sea; to read hypotheses about the Milky Way and its movement

about a supposititious central sun called Alcion, in the group of the Pleiades, made his mind dizzy.

He also thought of writing, but he did not know where to begin, and had not sufficient mastery of style to express his thoughts clearly.

All the plans devised to order his life ended in chasms which proved that there was an initial error in the plan.

He began to feel profoundly irritated against the whole world.

After eight or nine months of this life, in a state of both excitement and depression, he began to suffer from articular pain, and his hair began to fall out abundantly.

“This comes of continence,” he said to himself.

It was natural; he was neuro-gouty. As a boy it had taken the form of headaches and a tendency to hypochondria. His arthritis now grew worse; the accumulation of waste matter in his system gave imperfectly oxidized results, especially uric acid.

This seemed to him the correct diagnosis of his case; how to treat it was a more difficult matter.

He was faced by this dilemma. If he wished to live with a woman he must marry and subject himself. He would have to give up all spiritual independence, resign himself to fulfilling obligations and social duties; as well as to being on friendly terms with his father-in-law, his mother-in-law, and his brother-in-law; all of which he considered a terrible fate.

No doubt among those girls of Alcolea who only went out on a Sunday to church, dressed up like parrots, in extravagantly bad taste, there must be some, perhaps many, who were pleasant and attractive. But who knew of them? It was almost impossible to speak to them. Only their husbands would be able to know who and what they were.

Andrés would have married any simple girl, but he did not know where to find her. The only two girls he ever met were the daughter of Dr. Sánchez and the daughter of the secretary.

The daughter of Sánchez was set on being a nun; the daughter of the secretary was poisonously uninteresting; she played the piano execrably, cut out and coloured illustrations from a weekly paper, and had the most false and ridiculous ideas. If he did not marry he might behave like the dissolute youth of Alcolea and frequent such and such houses in the two streets where the women lived in brothels which were really medieval; but to do so was offensive to his pride. What greater triumph for the local bourgeois than to be able to tell of his doings? At the thought of such a come-down he preferred to remain ill.

He resolved to eat less and limit himself to vegetables, without ever touching meat, wine, or coffee. Several hours after luncheon and dinner he drank large quantities of water. His hatred of the spirit of the town sus-

tained him in his secret struggle; it was one of those profound hatreds which make one serene; a lofty epic contempt. He was impervious to mockery; it glanced off harmlessly from the armour of his indifference.

Sometimes it occurred to him that such an attitude was not logical; for him who claimed to be a man of science to feel angry because things were not as he wished was surely absurd. The soil was dry, there were no trees; the climate was harsh, the inhabitants were naturally hard.

The wife of the secretary, who was president of the Society of Everlasting Aid, said to him one day:

“You, Hurtado, wish to show that one can be without religion and be better than those who are religious.”

“Better?” replied Andrés. “Really that doesn’t seem to me very difficult.”

At the end of a month of his new way of life Andrés felt better. His frugal and vegetable diet, his bath and exercise in the open air were converting him into a man without nerves. His asceticism made him feel free and godlike; he began to have a glimpse of *ataraxia* sung by the Epicureans and Pyrrhonians.

He no longer felt anger at either things or persons. He would have liked to communicate his impressions to somebody, and he thought of writing to Iturrioz; but then it occurred to him that his spiritual position was stronger if he were the only witness of his victory.

He even began to be no longer aggressive. He rose very early, at dawn, and went for walks through those flat plains and vineyards to an olive-yard which he thought had a tragic look. Those aged, twisted olive-trees seemed to him like persons suffering from tetanus; among them stood an isolated low house with a hedge of box-thorn; and on the hill-top was a windmill so extraordinary and absurd, with its squat body and arms shrilly turning, that it overawed him completely.

Often he went out when it was still dark and watched the morning star twinkle and melt like a pearl in the glowing furnace of the dawn.

In the evening he took refuge in the kitchen; Dorotea, her aged mother, and her daughter worked by the fire, and Andrés talked to them or in silence watched the vine-twigs burn.

THE WIFE OF OLD GARROTA

ONE winter night a boy came for Andrés; a woman had fallen into the street and was dying.

Hurtado wrapped himself in his cloak and with the boy quickly came to a distant street near an inn frequented by carters and called the Inn of the Cross. The woman was unconscious and was being attended to by some neighbours who formed a group round her.

She was the wife of a pawnbroker called Old Garrota. Her head was covered with blood and she had lost consciousness.

Andrés had her carried into the shop and bade them bring a light. The old woman was suffering from concussion of the brain.

Hurtado bled her in the arm; at first the thick black blood did not flow at all from the open vein, then it began to flow a little and then a little more, and the woman was able to breathe with relative ease.

At this moment the judge, with the clerk of the court and two policemen, put in an appearance and began to question first the neighbours and then Hurtado.

“How is she?” he said.

“Very bad.”

“Will it be possible to question her?”

“Not at present; we will see if she recovers consciousness.”

“If she does let me know at once; I am going to the spot where she fell to question her husband.”

The store was a pawnshop full of old articles, in every corner and hanging from the ceiling; its walls were covered with rifles and guns of ancient make, swords, and hatchets.

Andrés attended to the woman until she opened her eyes and seemed to realize things.

“Call the judge,” he said to the neighbours.

The judge came immediately.

“The case is becoming complicated,” he murmured, and then asked Andrés: “Well, can she understand?”

“Yes, it looks so.”

The woman certainly had an intelligent look.

“Did you throw yourself down, or did someone throw you out of the window?” asked the judge.

“Oh!” said she.

“Who threw you out?”

“Oh!”

“Who threw you out?”

“Garro . . . Garro . . .” murmured the old woman, with an effort.

The judge, the clerk, and the policemen were astonished.

"She is trying to say Garrota," said someone.

"Yes, it is an accusation against him," said the judge.

"Don't you think so, doctor?"

"It looks like it."

"Why did he throw you out?"

"Garro . . . Garro . . ." repeated the old woman.

"She is only trying to say that he is her husband," spoke up one of the policemen.

"No, it isn't so," said Andrés. "The lesion is on the left side."

"And what difference does that make?" asked the policeman.

"Be quiet," said the judge. "What is your conjecture, doctor?"

"I presume that she is in a state of aphasia. The lesion is on the left side of the brain, probably in the exact spot which is considered the centre of speech. She seems to understand, but can only speak this one word. Ask her some other question."

"Are you better?" said the judge.

"Eh!"

"I ask if you are better."

"Garro . . . Garro . . ." came the answer.

"She has the same answer for everything," remarked the judge.

“It is a case of aphasia or verbal deafness,” added Andrés.

“Yet there is a weight of suspicion against the husband,” replied the clerk.

The priest had been summoned to perform the last rites for the dying woman.

Andrés left them alone and went upstairs with the judge. A winding staircase led from Old Garrota’s pawnshop to the first floor.

This floor consisted of a hall, a kitchen, two bedrooms, and the room from which the old woman had fallen. In the centre of this room there was a brazier, a stained shovel, and a line of blood-stains ending at the window.

“It all has the look of a crime,” said the judge.

“You think so?” Andrés asked.

“No, I don’t think anything; one must admit that the signs are like those of a detective story, most misleading. The woman, asked who threw her out, gives the name of her husband; the shovel covered with blood; the blood-stains on the floor to the window. Everything seems to confirm the gossip of the neighbours.”

“What is that?”

“They accuse Old Garrota, her husband. They suppose that Old Garrota and his wife had a quarrel, that he hit her on the head with the shovel, that she ran to the window to cry for help, and that he then seized her by the waist and threw her out into the street.”

"Perhaps so."

"And perhaps not."

This version was supported by the ill repute of Old Garrota and by his notorious complicity in the death of two gamblers, Cañamero and Pollo, which had occurred some ten years ago, near Daimiel.

"I must keep this shovel," said the judge.

"Nobody ought to touch it," replied Andrés. "The stains on it may give us valuable proof."

The judge placed the shovel in a cupboard which he closed and ordered the clerk to seal. The room was also shut up and the key taken away.

When Hurtado and the judge went down to the pawnshop Old Garrota's wife was dead.

The judge ordered her husband to be brought before him. The police had tied his hands.

Old Garrota was a man, already aged, stout and ill-looking, squint-eyed, and with a ferocious face pitted with black marks where he had received the small bird-shot of a gun some years ago.

His examination made it clear that he was a drunkard who often spoke of killing this or that person.

He did not deny that he used to beat his wife, but denied that he would have killed her. He always ended by saying:

"Señor judge, I did not kill my wife. It is true that I often said that I would kill her; but I did not kill her."

The judge ordered him placed in a separate cell of the prison.

“What do you think?” he asked Andrés.

“To me it seems clear enough: the man is innocent.”

After a visit to Old Garrota in the prison that afternoon the judge said that he began to think that the pawnbroker had not killed his wife. Popular opinion considered him a criminal. That evening Dr. Sánchez in the Casino said that it was quite certain that Old Garrota had thrown his wife out of the window and that the judge and Hurtado were anxious to let him off, for some reason best known to themselves; but that the truth would appear at the autopsy.

When he heard this, Andrés went to the judge and requested him to appoint the other doctor, Don Tomás Solana, umpire at the autopsy, in case he and Sánchez chanced to disagree.

The autopsy was held on the afternoon of the following day; a photograph was taken of the wounds made on the head with the shovel, and note was taken of some bruises on the neck.

The autopsy revealed an extensive fracture of the skull, which had been the cause of death. In the lungs and brain there were small round blood-stains.

As to the facts revealed, the three doctors were agreed; as to the causes of death they differed.

Sánchez agreed with the popular version. He held that

the dead woman, after being wounded with the shovel on the head, ran to the window to call for help, and at the window a powerful hand seized her by the neck, bruising and half strangling her, as was shown by the stains in the lungs and brain; and she had then been thrown into the street and had suffered concussion of the brain and fracture of the skull, which was the cause of death. The woman herself at point of death had repeated her husband's name, indicating who had killed her.

Hurtado began by stating that the injuries to the head were so slight that they must have been caused not by a strong hand but by a weak, convulsive one; that the bruises on the neck were received the day before; and that the blood-stains in the lungs and brain were not due to strangling but to the woman's poisoning by alcoholic excess. On these facts Hurtado argued that the woman, being drunk, as was shown by the amount of alcohol found in the stomach, had in a suicidal mania begun to wound herself on the head with the shovel, a fact which explained the superficial character of these wounds; and not being able to kill herself that way she had opened the window and leaped head foremost into the street. As to her last words, there was no doubt that they were due to a state of aphasia.

Don Tomás, the aristocratic doctor of the town, tried to balance both views and really said nothing at all.

The matter excited the greatest public interest; various measures were employed to discover the truth. The fresh blood-stains on the shovel were examined and found not to tally with the pawnbroker's finger-marks. A warder in the prison, a friend of the accused, was told to give him wine and get him to talk. Old Garrota confessed that he had had a share in the death of Pollo and Cañamero but repeatedly asserted, between great oaths, that he had had nothing to do with his wife's death; they might find him guilty for saying so and acquit him if he confessed, and he would still say what was the truth: that he had not done it.

After questioning him many times the judge came to the conclusion that he was innocent and acquitted him.

The people considered that they had been cheated. By evidence and by instinct it was generally understood that Old Garrota, although quite capable of killing his wife, had not done so; yet the honesty of Andrés and the judge was not recognized. The newspaper of the Owls published an article entitled "Crime or Suicide?" in which it was presumed that the wife of Old Garrota had committed suicide; but the organ of the Rats stated that it was a case of crime and that the pawnbroker had been let off through political influence.

"The doctor and the judge must have received a fine sum of money," people said.

Sánchez, on the other hand, was generally praised.

“He showed honesty,” it was said; and if it were objected that he was in the wrong the answer was:

“Yes, but he was straightforward.” And it was impossible to convince most people that this was not so.

DEPARTURE

ANDRÉS perceived that the poor people, who had hitherto been friendly, were becoming hostile; and in the Spring he decided to resign his appointment and leave the town.

A day in May was fixed for his departure; he said good-bye to Don Blas Carreño and to the judge, and had a violent dispute with Sánchez who, despite the fact that the enemy was put to flight, was base enough to follow up his victory with recriminations. Andrés roughly answered his colleague, with some rather explosive truths.

In the afternoon he packed up and then went for a walk. It was a stormy day, with lightning playing among the clouds. At nightfall it began to rain, and he went home.

That afternoon Pepinito, his daughter, and mother-in-law had gone to Maillo, a small watering-place near Alcolea.

Andrés put the last touches to his packing. At the supper hour his landlady came into his room.

“Are you really going tomorrow, Don Andrés?”

“Yes.”

"We are alone, and when you are ready we can have supper."

"I shall be ready in an instant."

"I am sorry you are going. You have become one of the family."

"There is no help for it. I am not liked in the town."

"You will not include us, at least."

"No, I do not mean you. I mean you yourself. You are my only regret in leaving."

"Nonsense, Don Andrés."

"Believe it or not, I have a great regard for you; I consider you a very agreeable woman, very clever——"

"Stop, Don Andrés, you will make me blush," she said laughing.

"Blush away, Dorotea, but it is true. The worst about you——"

"Ah! Let us hear the worst," she said with assumed seriousness.

"The worst thing about you," Andrés went on, "is that you are married to a man who is an idiot, a presumptuous fool, who makes you suffer; if I were you I would betray him at the first opportunity."

"Heavens! What things you say!"

"They are parting truths. Really I have been a fool not to make love to you."

"You think of that now, Don Andrés?"

"Yes, I think of it now. You must not think that it

has not occurred to me several times, but I have lacked decision. Today we are alone in the house, I think?"

"Yes, we are alone. Good-bye, Don Andrés, I must be going."

"Do not go; I have something to say to you."

Dorotea, surprised at his tone of command, remained in the room.

"What is it you want?" she asked.

"I want you to stay here with me."

"But I am an honest woman, Don Andrés," replied Dorotea in a stifled voice.

"I know you are, an honest woman and a good woman, married to an idiot. We are alone, and nobody will know. Tonight for you and me would be a strange night, extravagant——"

"Yes, and what about remorse?"

"Remorse?" Andrés perceived clearly that he must not discuss this point.

"A minute ago I had no idea that I was going to speak to you in this way. Why do I do so? I cannot say. My heart is beating like a forge hammer." He leaned, pale and trembling, against the iron bedstead.

"Are you ill?" whispered Dorotea hoarsely.

"No, it's nothing."

She also was confused and trembling. Andrés blew out the light and approached her. She made no resistance. He scarcely knew what he was doing.

Next morning when the first light shone through the cracks in the shutters, Dorotea rose. Andrés would have held her in his arms.

"No, no," she murmured in dismay, and got up quickly and ran out of the room.

Andrés sat up in the bed, amazed and astonished at himself.

He was in a state of complete indecision; he felt as if something were holding down the nerves in his back and was afraid to put his feet on the ground.

Sitting there, depressed, his forehead resting in his hands, he heard the coach arrive to fetch him. He got up, dressed, and opened the door before they knocked; the very thought of the sound of knocking upset him. A man came in and took his trunk and portmanteau. Andrés put on his overcoat, and got into the *diligencia*, which set out along the dusty road.

"How absurd! How absurd it all is," he presently exclaimed, thinking of his life and that last so unexpected and overwhelming night.

In the train the state of his nerves became worse. He felt sick and dizzy. At Aranjuez he decided to get off the train. The three days that he spent there calmed and quieted his nerves.

PART SIX
EXPERIENCES AT MADRID

I

A COMMENTARY ON THE PAST

A FEW days after his arrival at Madrid, Andrés had the unpleasant surprise of the imminent declaration of war against the United States. There were disturbances, demonstrations in the streets, and music exclusively patriotic.

Andrés had not followed the question of the colonial wars in the newspapers and had no certain information; his information was indeed derived exclusively from a song which Dorotea's old servant used to sing at the top of her voice when she was washing clothes:

*Most strange that for a few mulattoes we
Should be reduced to such adversity:
Cuba has Spain of her best youth bereft
Only the refuse and the dregs are left.*

All his opinions about the war were to be found in this song of the old servant.

When he saw the new turn of events and the intervention of the United States, he was amazed.

The talk everywhere was of the chances of success

or failure. Hurtado's father believed in a victory for Spain, an effortless victory; the Yankees, who were all sellers of sausages, at sight of the first Spanish soldiers would throw down their arms and run away. Andrés's brother Pedro was living the life of a sportsman, and the war left him unconcerned; with Alejandro it was the same; Margarita was still at Valencia.

Andrés found employment by substituting for a specialist in diseases of the stomach who had gone abroad for three months.

In the afternoon he went to the consulting room and remained there till nightfall; he then went home to supper and went out at night to learn the latest news.

The newspapers were full of foolish boasts; the Yankees were not prepared for war, they had no uniforms for their soldiers. In the country of sewing-machines the making of a few uniforms was a most serious affair, so it was thought at Madrid.

Even more ridiculous was a message from Castelar to the Yankees. It was as grotesquely grandiloquent as that of Victor Hugo to the Germans bidding them spare Paris, but it was sufficient to make sensible Spaniards appreciate the hollowness of their great men.

Andrés followed the preparations for war with intense emotion.

The newspapers printed accounts which were entirely

false. Andrés was half convinced that there must be some reason for all this optimism.

A few days before defeat he met Iturriz in the street.

"What is your opinion?" he asked him.

"We are done for."

"But they say we are prepared."

"Yes, prepared for defeat. Only a Chinaman whom the Spanish look upon as the crown of simplicity could swallow the things told us by the press."

"I cannot say I see that."

"You will if you have eyes in your head and compare the strength of the two fleets. Now listen: we have at Santiago de Cuba six old ships, in bad condition and slow; the enemy has twenty-one, nearly all new, modern and faster than ours. Our six have a total tonnage of about twenty-eight thousand; their best six have a tonnage of sixty thousand. With two of their ships they can sink our entire fleet; most of the twenty-one will have nothing to fight."

"So you think we will be defeated?"

"Not defeated, annihilated. If one of our ships escapes it will be a wonder."

Andrés thought Iturriz might be mistaken, but events soon showed that he was right. The disaster was a mere walk-over for the Americans.

The general indifference at the news enraged Andrés.

He had always believed that the Spaniard, unfitted for science and for culture, was devotedly patriotic, and apparently he was not; after the defeat of the two small Spanish fleets in Cuba and the Philippines everyone went to the theatre and the bullfight quite happily; those noisy demonstrations had been nothing but froth and smoke.

When Andrés's first impression of the disaster had passed he went to see Iturriz and they had a discussion.

"Let us leave that subject alone, since we have been so fortunate as to lose the colonies; let us talk about something else. How did you fare at Alcolea?"

"Not well."

"What happened? Did you commit some professional atrocity?"

"No, I was lucky. As a doctor I succeeded, but personally I was less fortunate."

"Let us hear your odyssey in the land of Don Quixote."

Andrés related his impressions of Alcolea, and Iturriz listened attentively.

"So you did not become less virulent and more adaptable?"

"Neither. I was like bacteria in carbolic acid."

"Did you find the Manchegans pleasant?"

“Yes, pleasant enough, but their morality is quite impossible.”

“It may be only a defence of people living in a poor and barren soil.”

“Possibly; but if so they do not realize it.”

“Of course. How can a peasant people be self-conscious? In England, in France, in Germany it is the same; man in his natural state is vile, selfish, and idiotic. If there at Alcolea it is not so, one must consider its inhabitants a superior people.”

“Well, towns like Alcolea are ruined because self-love and wealth are not fairly distributed and belong exclusively to a few rich persons; on the other hand the poor have no individual significance. When each inhabitant of Alcolea feels himself to be an individual person and says: ‘I will not allow this,’ there will be progress there.”

“Of course, but to be selfish, knowledge is necessary; in order to protest, one must be able to reason. I consider that civilization owes more to egoism than to all the religions and philanthropic Utopias. Egoism has built the path, the road, the street, the railway, the ship, everything.”

“Yes, I agree. That is why it makes one so angry to see these people, who have nothing to gain from the machinery of society, given hunger and poverty in their

old age in return for sending their sons to war, and who are nevertheless ready to defend society."

"That may be individually grievous but not socially. There has never been a society which has even attempted a system of distributive justice; the world, nevertheless, marches or at least creeps on, and women are willing to bear children."

"It's idiotic."

"My friend, Nature is very wise. Not content with dividing men into happy and unhappy, rich and poor, it gives to the rich the spirit of riches and to the poor the spirit of poverty. You know how working bees are produced: the larva is shut in a small cell and insufficiently fed; it develops incompletely and becomes a proletarian labourer, with the spirit of toil and submission. So it is with men; there are the workmen and the soldiers, the poor and the rich."

"It enrages me," exclaimed Andrés.

"A few years ago," went on Iturrioz, "I was in Cuba, at a sugar-mill. Chinese and negroes were bringing in armfuls of sugar-cane to be crushed in a machine with great cylinders. We were watching the working of the machine when we suddenly saw one of the Chinese struggling desperately. The white foreman called out for the machine to be stopped. The mechanic paid no heed and the Chinaman disappeared, to come out immediately a flat mess of blood and crushed bones. We whites who

saw this were horrified, whereas the Chinese and negroes simply laughed. They had the spirit of slaves."

"It is dreadful."

"Possibly; but as these are the facts one must accept them and adapt oneself. To act otherwise is folly. To attempt to behave as a superior being among men, as you did at Alcolea, is absurd."

"I did not try to pose as a superior person," said Andrés sharply. "I went there as an independent person. I did my work and took my pay, and that's all."

"Impossible; each man is not an independent star."

"I think he can be if he chooses."

"Well, he will have to take the consequences."

"Of course he will; I am quite ready to accept the consequences. If one has no money one buys one's freedom with physical toil; one has to give one's ounce of blood; it may be taken from one's arm or from one's heart. A man who is a man seeks above all things to make himself independent; one must be a poor thing or have the spirit of a dog to find liberty a bad thing. You say it is impossible? That a man cannot be independent of other men as star from star? Unfortunately it is only too true."

"I see you have come back in a lyrical mood."

"It must be the result of the Manchegan fried bread-crumbs."

"Or the Manchegan wine."

"No, I did not touch it."

"And you expected them to like you when you despised their foremost product! Well, what do you intend to do?"

"To see if I can get some work."

"In Madrid?"

"Yes."

"Another trial?"

"Yes, another trial."

"Good. Let's now go up to the roof."

FRIENDS

AUTUMN came and Andrés was still without work. Don Pedro had promised to speak to influential friends to see if they could find a post for his son.

Hurtado spent the mornings at the National Library and in the afternoons and evenings went for walks. One night, passing in front of the Apollo Theatre, he met Montaner.

“What a time since we met!” said his former fellow student coming towards him.

“Yes, it is some years since we saw each other.”

Together they went up the Calle de Alcalá and on reaching the corner of the Calle de Peligros, Montaner insisted that they should go into the Fornos Café.

“Very well,” said Andrés.

It was a Saturday and the place was full; the tables were all occupied; the theatre-goers had come in for supper; and a few painted adventuresses were casting their glances round the room.

Montaner greedily drank the chocolate brought him and then asked Andrés:

“What are you doing now?”

"Nothing at present. I have been in the provinces. And you, have you taken your degree yet?"

"Yes, a year ago. What prevented me was that sweetheart of mine; but her parents took her away to Santander and married her there. After that I went to Salamanca and was able to take my degree."

"So that your sweetheart being married to someone else just suited you?"

"Yes, in a way; though of what use it is to be a full-blown doctor, is not clear."

"You cannot find work?"

"Nothing. I was with Julio Aracil."

"With Julio?"

"Yes."

"In what capacity?"

"As his assistant."

"Does Julio need an assistant?"

"Yes, he has just set up a clinic. Last year he promised me his protection. He had a post in a railway company and promised to pass it on to me."

"And he failed to do so?"

"Yes; and the fact is that he needs all he can get for his household expenses."

"Does he spend a great deal?"

"Yes."

"He used to be very tight."

“He is still.”

“He makes little progress then?”

“Not as a doctor; but he has various sources of revenue: the railway, some convents that he visits, and shares in one of those companies which unite the services of doctor, chemist, and undertaker, called “Hope”; he also has shares in a funeral establishment.”

“So he is devoting himself to the exploitation of benevolence?”

“Yes; but now, as I told you, he has set up a clinic with his father-in-law’s money. I acted as his assistant; the truth was, he simply treated me as though I were a fool. For over a month I was mason, carpenter, porter, and even nurse; then I was taken into the consulting-room to attend to the poorer patients; and just when things were going better he tells me that he is obliged to take into partnership a young Valencian named Nebot who has offered him money, and that when he requires my services, he will send for me.”

“In fact he turned you out.”

“Exactly.”

“And what are you going to do?”

“Look for a job.”

“As doctor?”

“As doctor or not; it’s all the same to me.”

“You would not go into the provinces?”

"No, never; I refuse to leave Madrid."

"And what has become of the others?" asked Andrés.

"Where is Lamela now?"

"In Galicia. I do not think he practises, but he lives well. I do not know whether you remember Cañizo."

"No."

"A student who failed in anatomy."

"No, I don't remember him."

"If you saw him you would recognize him at once," replied Montaner. "Well, this Cañizo runs a butchers' newspaper. I think he is a great glutton, the other day he said to me: 'Old boy, I am very fortunate, the butchers send me chops and steaks; my wife gives me excellent dinners; some Sundays she even gives me lobster.'"

"What a brute!"

"Ortega at least you will remember."

"Short, fair-haired?"

"Yes."

"I remember."

"He went out to Cuba as an army doctor and got into the habit of drinking terribly. I occasionally meet him; he has told me that he aims at alcoholic cirrhosis and the rank of general."

"So that none of the students of our time have turned out well."

“Scarcely anyone, with the exception of Cañizo, editor of a butchers’ sheet, whose wife gives him lobster of a Sunday.”

“It is all very sad. There is always the same chronic inaction and distress here at Madrid, the same lifeless life.”

“Yes, it’s like a slough,” murmured Montaner.

“It’s more like a field of ashes. And Julio Aracil, does he live well?”

“That depends on what you mean by living well.”

“What is his wife like?”

“She’s a smart girl, but he is ruining her.”

“How so?”

“He is giving her the air of a cocotte. He makes her dress extravagantly and takes her everywhere. I believe it is he who encourages her to paint her face. He is now preparing the final blow. He is taking this Nebot, a rich young man, into his house and is going to enlarge the clinic. I believe his real object is that Nebot should make love to his wife.”

“No!”

“Yes. He has given Nebot a room in the best part of the house, near his wife’s bedroom.”

“But is he not fond of her?”

“He is fond of nobody. He married her for her money. He has a mistress who is old and wealthy.”

"So that he is really prosperous?"

"I'm not sure. He may become rich, he may ruin himself."

It had grown late, and Montaner and Andrés left the café and went home.

A few days later Andrés met Julio Aracil as he was getting into his carriage.

"Come for a drive with me," he said. "I am going to pay a visit in the Salamanca quarter."

"All right."

They both got into the carriage.

"I saw Montaner the other day," said Andrés.

"And he spoke ill of me? Naturally, as a friend."

"Yes; he does not appear to be on good terms with you."

"I am not surprised. People are so stupid," said Aracil in an angry voice. "I would like to have to do exclusively with perfect egoists and not with sentimental people who say to one with tears in their eyes: 'Take this stone-hard crust and in return invite me to dinner every day at the best hotel.'"

Andrés began to laugh.

"My wife's family also has an idiotic view of life," went on Aracil. "They are constantly putting difficulties in my way."

"How so?"

"Well, their latest is to say that my partner is making

love to my wife and that he should not remain in the house. It's ridiculous. Am I to be an Othello? No, I prefer to allow my wife freedom; Concha will not betray me, I can trust her."

"Quite right."

"I don't know what idea they have of things," went on Julio, "these people who claim to be old-fashioned. A puritan like you is quite within my comprehension, but those others are entirely beyond me! Were I to say to them that I had refused to receive a fee for visits in which I had not been successful the whole family would call me a fool to my face."

"Oh, certainly."

"And that being so, what is the point of their ridiculous morality?"

"Why do you need a partner? Are your expenses very high?"

"Yes, but all absolutely necessary. Modern life demands it. One's wife must be well and fashionably dressed; dresses, jewels. A great deal of money is required for household expenses, for food, the dress-maker, the tailor, the theatre, the keeping of a carriage. I make the money as best I can."

"Would it not be better to moderate your expenses?" asked Andrés.

"What for? In order to live well when one is old? No, no, this is the best time, when one is young."

"That's an excellent philosophy of its kind. But your household will become immoral."

"I am not greatly concerned with morality," answered Julio. "Between ourselves I may say that to me an honest woman seems one of the stupidest and bitterest of things in Nature."

"How amusing!"

"Yes; a woman who is not something of a coquette does not appeal to me. I like her to spend, and adorn herself, and shine. A patient of mine, a marquis, is in the habit of saying that a stylish woman should have more than one husband. The remark makes everyone laugh."

"Why?"

"Because his own wife may have only one husband, but she has three lovers."

"At one and the same time?"

"Yes; she is a very liberal lady."

"Both liberal and conservative, if her lovers maintain her."

"You're right; she may be called a Liberal-Conservative."

They arrived at the patient's house.

"Where do you wish to go?" asked Julio.

"Anywhere. I have nothing to do."

"Would you like to be put down at the Cibeles fountain?"

“All right.”

“Drive to the Cibeles fountain and then come back,” said Julio to the coachman.

The two old fellow students took leave of each other, and Andrés thought that however successful his friend might become, he was not to be envied.

FERMÍN IBARRA

A FEW days later Hurtado met Fermín Ibarra in the street. He was completely changed—tall, strong and able to walk without a stick.

“I am soon going away,” said Fermín.

“Where?”

“First to Belgium, and after that I have not made up my mind. I shall not remain here; probably I shall not come back.”

“You won’t?”

“No; it’s impossible to accomplish anything here. I have one or two patents to dispose of. I had offers in Belgium, but I wished to try Spain first; and I am going back completely discouraged: it is impossible to do anything here.”

“I am not surprised,” said Andrés. “There is no proper atmosphere here for your projects.”

“Oh, clearly! An invention implies the summary and synthesis of a process of discovery; an invention is often so easy an outcome of antecedent facts that one may almost say that it drops from the tree. But where in Spain is one to study the evolution of a discovery? With

what means? Where are the workshops, the laboratories?"

"They don't exist."

"But that isn't what makes me angry," added Ibarra, "but the suspicion, malice, and presumption of people here. Nothing but rascality and dissipation; the rascal is the dominating factor from the Pyrenees to Cádiz. Politicians, officers, professors, priests, are all rascals, with an exaggerated personality."

"Yes, it is true."

"When I am abroad," went on Ibarra, "I am willing to believe that our country is not dead to civilization, that there is no lack of thought and reasoning; but when I take up a Spanish newspaper and read of nothing but politics and bullfights I am disgusted; it's a disgrace."

Fermín Ibarra described his negotiations at Madrid, Barcelona, and Bilbao. A millionaire had told him that he could not risk his money without guarantee, but if the invention proved successful he saw no objection to lending money for it at an interest of fifty per cent.

"Spanish capital is in the hands of the vilest creatures," said Fermín.

A few months later Ibarra wrote that he had been appointed director of a workshop and that his ventures were prospering.

ENCOUNTERING LULU

A FRIEND of Hurtado's father, a high Government official, had promised to find a post for Andrés. He lived in the Calle de San Bernardo and Andrés went there several times, always to receive the same discouraging answer. One day he was told:

"The only thing we can get for you is a post as sanitary doctor which will soon fall vacant. Say whether it suits you, and if it does we will keep you in mind."

"It suits me."

"Well, then, I will let you know."

That same day, after leaving the official's house, in the Calle Ancha, at the corner of the Calle de la Pez, Hurtado met Lulu. She had not changed at all. Lulu was embarrassed at the sight of him, a rare thing with her.

Andrés was glad to see her. She was pleasant to look on, so slender and graceful in her mantilla. She looked at him smiling and blushing a little.

"We have a great deal to say," said Lulu. "I would gladly stay and talk to you but I have a message to deliver. My mother and I usually go to the Café de la

Luna on Saturday nights. Will you meet us there?"

"Yes, I'll be there."

"Then come tomorrow, as it is Saturday. From nine to half-past ten. You won't fail?"

"No, I shan't forget."

They parted, and on the evening of the next day Andrés went to the Café de la Luna. Doña Leonarda and Lulu were with a young gentleman in spectacles. Andrés greeted Doña Leonarda, who received him coldly, and he took a chair far away from Lulu.

"Come and sit here," she said, making room for him on the sofa.

Andrés sat down at the girl's side.

"I am very glad you have come," she said. "I was afraid you wouldn't."

"Why shouldn't I come?"

"As you are so strange."

"What I don't understand is your choice of this café. But perhaps you don't still live in the Calle del Fúcar?"

"No, no; we live here in the Calle del Pez. Do you know who settled our mode of life for us?"

"Who was it?"

"Julio."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"You see he is not so bad as you thought."

"Oh, he is as bad or worse! I will tell you the whole story later. And what have you been doing? What have you done for a living?"

Andrés briefly related his life and difficulties at Alcolea.

"What an impossible person you are!" exclaimed Lulu. "What a bear!"

The man in spectacles, who was talking to Doña Leonarda, when he saw Lulu engrossed in conversation with Andrés, got up and went away.

"If you care at all for Lulu, you may be satisfied," said Doña Leonarda in an acid, disdainful tone.

"Why do you say that?" asked Andrés.

"Because she is really very fond of you."

"And I don't know why."

"I don't think one likes people for any reason," replied Lulu sharply. "One likes them or one doesn't; nothing more."

Doña Leonarda with a contemptuous expression on her face took up the evening paper and began to read it. Lulu went on talking to Andrés.

"Now let me tell you how Julio settled things for us," she said in a low voice. "I told you he was a knave who would never marry Nini; and in fact no sooner had he taken his degree than he began to make himself scarce and cease to visit us. I made inquiries and learnt that he was paying court to a young lady of good family. I

sent for him, and he told me without beating about the bush that it was not his intention to marry Nini."

"He told you straight out?"

"Yes, he said it was not to his interest, that it would seriously hamper him to have a poor wife. I remained calm and said: 'Well, I would ask you to go in person to Don Prudencio and inform him of this.'

"'What do you wish me to tell him?'" Julio asked me.

"'Merely what you have told me: that you are not going to marry Nini because you can't afford to.'"

"He must have been astonished," said Andrés, "for he expected his announcement to create a perfect uproar."

"He was petrified with astonishment. 'All right, all right,' he said. 'I will go and see him and will tell him.'

"I then told my mother, who thought of some foolish idea, but refrained; and Nini, who wept and was anxious to revenge herself. When they were calmer I told Nini that Don Prudencio would come to see her, that I knew Don Prudencio was fond of her, and that Don Prudencio was the only person who could save the situation. Sure enough, a few days afterwards Don Prudencio made a diplomatic call; he spoke of Julio, asked if he could not get an appointment, perhaps in the provinces. Nini was splendid; from that hour I have ceased to believe in women."

“That is an amusing thing for you to say,” said Andrés.

“But it is true,” answered Lulu, “for men may be liars, but women are much greater liars. A few days later Don Prudencio called again and spoke to Nini and Mamma. Result: a wedding. You ought to have seen Julio a day or so afterwards when he came to return Nini’s letters and with a forced smile listened to Mamma complacently detailing the extent of Don Prudencio’s dollars and property.”

“Yes, I know that sad look of his when he thinks of other people’s money.”

“He was furious. After the honeymoon Don Prudencio asked me if I preferred to live with my sister and him or with my mother. I told him: ‘I have no thought of marrying, and I do not care to live without any work. What I would like would be to have a small shop for hand-made linen things and take up business.’”

“‘Very well; tell me how much money you require,’ he said. So I set up shop.”

“And do you still keep it?”

“Yes; here in the Calle del Pez. At first my mother objected—the absurd objection about my father’s former position. Everyone must live as he may, don’t you think so?”

“Of course. And what can be nobler than to live by one’s work?”

They continued to talk for a long while. Her life was so much taken up with the house in the Calle del Fúcar that all her interest centred in that district. They referred to all the lodgers there.

“Do you remember little old Don Cleto?” asked Lulu.

“Yes; what happened to him?”

“He died; I was so sorry.”

“What did he die of?”

“Of hunger. One evening Venancia and I went into his room and found him at the point of death. He said to us in that faint voice of his: ‘It is nothing, do not bother; it’s only a little weakness.’ And he was dying.”

At half past one Doña Leonarda and Lulu left the café, and Andrés went with them as far as the Calle del Pez.

“You will come to see us?” said Lulu.

“Of course I will.”

“Julio sometimes comes.”

“Don’t you hate him?”

“Hate? I rather despise than hate him; but he amuses me, I like to see him, like an obnoxious insect under a glass case.”

A SANITARY DOCTOR

ONLY a few days after receiving his appointment and entering on his duties Andrés realized that it did not suit him.

His antisocial instinct was developing; he began to hate the rich, without feeling any sympathy for the poor.

"I who despise society," he said to himself, "have to examine and license prostitutes! I who would be only too glad if each one of them were to infect two hundred sons of rich families!"

He did not resign, partly out of curiosity, partly in order that the official who had got him the appointment should not think him a fool.

His new life did him harm; there was nothing attractive or pleasant about it; he felt like a naked man walking through brambles. His state of mind alternated between bitterness and cold harshness and depression and gloom.

This irritation made him violent and brutal in what he said.

Often he would ask a woman coming for a license: "Are you affected?"

“Yes.”

“Do you prefer to go to the hospital or remain at liberty?”

“I prefer to remain at liberty.”

“Very well. Do as you please; so far as I am concerned you may poison half the world.”

Sometimes when he saw these adventuresses arrive laughing, with a policeman, he upbraided them:

“You do not even hate. You should at least hate; that would make your lives easier.”

The women looked at him in amazement. Why should they hate? they must have asked themselves. As Iturriz said: Nature is very wise; she makes the slave and gives him a slave's spirit; she makes the prostitute and gives her the spirit of a prostitute.

These women, the dregs of society, had their feelings of pride; perhaps it is so in their dim intelligence with the working bees and the insects which serve as milch kine for the ants.

From his conversation with these women Andrés learnt strange things.

The owners of these houses included people of standing: a priest owned two and exploited them with really evangelic skill. What more Catholic, what more Conservative than to run a brothel!

Perfection no doubt would consist in combining this with a bullfight arena and a pawnshop.

Of these women those who were free went to the Registry; others had to be examined at home. Andrés had several times to pay such visits.

In the better kind of houses he met youths of the upper classes, and it was an interesting contrast between the women with their tired, painted, powdered faces, and forced cheerfulness and the fashionable youths, red-faced, strong and muscular from the healthy life of a sportsman.

As an observer of social iniquity, Andrés pondered on the causes which produced these ills: prisons, poverty, prostitution.

"Really," he thought, "if the people realized, they would attempt a social revolution at any cost, although it would be no more than a Utopia, a dream.

Andrés thought he saw two lines of progress at Madrid, that of the rich becoming finer, stronger, and converting themselves into a caste, and that of the poor becoming ever weaker and more degenerate.

These two parallel lines of evolution were no doubt biological, and the common people, far from attempting to hamstring the well-to-do, were incapable of putting up a fight, and fell into the abyss.

There were signs everywhere of their defeat. At Madrid the height of poor, badly nourished youths who lived in hovels was manifestly less than that of the rich who lived in comfortable houses.

Men of the people had likewise less intelligence and less physical strength than the moneyed class. The well-to-do were finally about to subject the poor and make them their slaves.

A HAND-WORK SHOP

IT was more than a month before Andrés went to see Lulu, and her shop surprised him. It was large, with a broad counter showing children's clothes, small plaited caps, and beribboned chemises.

"You have come at last," said Lulu.

"I couldn't come before. But is the whole of this place yours?"

"Yes."

"Then you are a capitalist, an infamous bourgeoisie."

Lulu laughed complacently; she then showed Andrés over the shop, the room at the back, and the house. She had a girl to attend to customers and a boy to run messages. Everything was kept in admirable order. Andrés sat down for a minute or two. There were a good many customers.

"The other day Julio came," said Lulu, "and we spoke ill of you."

"Really?"

"Yes; and he told me something you had said which made me angry."

"What was it he told you?"

"He said that once in your student days you said that to marry me would be much the same as marrying an orang-outang. Did you really say that? Tell me."

"I don't remember, but I may have."

"You may have said it?"

"Yes."

"And what ought I to do to a man who thus repays my esteem?"

"I don't know."

"If, instead of orang-outang, you had only said little monkey!"

"I will remember next time."

Two days later Andrés paid another visit to the shop, and on Saturday evenings he joined Lulu and her mother at the Café de la Luna. He soon realized that the man in spectacles was courting Lulu. He was a chemist, with a shop in the Calle del Pez, an attractive, well-educated man. He and Andrés had a conversation about Lulu.

"What is your opinion of that girl?" asked the chemist.

"Who, Lulu?"

"Yes."

"A girl for whom I have a great esteem," said Andrés.

"So have I."

"But I do not think she is a woman one should marry."

"Why not?"

"That's what I think; she seems to me an intellectual

woman, without organic strength, in whom all impressions are due to the intellect, not to the senses.”

“Well, I hardly agree there.”

That very evening Andrés noticed that Lulu treated the chemist too contemptuously.

When they were alone he said to Lulu:

“You behave very badly to the chemist. It is unworthy of you with your sense of justice.”

“Why?”

“Because it is. Because a man falls in love with you, is that any reason to despise him? It is brutal.”

“I choose to be brutal.”

“One ought to wish that you should yourself love in vain, to see what it feels like.”

“How do you know I don’t?”

“I don’t know, but I think not. I think too ill of women to believe it.”

“Of women in general, or of me in particular?”

“Of all women.”

“How ill-tempered you are getting, Don Andrés; when you are old you will be unbearable.”

“I am old. The fact is that these women’s whims annoy me. What is there in the chemist for you to despise him? He is cultured, amiable, pleasant, and he earns his living.”

“Very well, but enough of that subject. The chemist bores me.”

PLAGUE SPOTS

ANDRÉS used to sit close to the counter, wrapped in a gloomy thought.

“Come, what’s the matter with you?” said Lulu one day when he was more than usually unsociable.

“Really,” murmured Andrés, “the world is a pleasant place: hospitals, operating rooms, prisons, brothels; everything of a dangerous character has its antidote; love and prostitution, freedom and prisons. Each subversive instinct, and what is natural is always subversive, is accompanied by its policeman. Into every clear spring men must put their feet and soil it. That is Nature.”

“What do you mean by that? What has been happening to you?” asked Lulu.

“Only that this disgusting appointment of mine irritates me. Today I received a letter from the inmates of a house in the Calle de la Paz, and what a letter!”

“What was in it?”

“It is signed ‘Some Unfortunates’ and says that they are brutally treated. They tell me dreadful things. The house they live in communicates with an adjoining house, and when the doctor or the authorities come to pay it a

visit the women who have no license are hidden away in the third floor of that house.”

“Why?”

“So that they may not be examined by the authorities, who may be arbitrary and unjust, but can make themselves unpleasant to the owner of the establishment.”

“And these women live a hard life?”

“Very hard; they sleep in a heap in any odd corner and have scarcely anything to eat; they are brutally beaten, and when they are too old, they are secretly taken away elsewhere.”

“What a life! Horrible!” murmured Lulu.

“Besides,” went on Andrés, “the women who manage these houses are all inclined to torture the women under their charge. Some of them carry a cane with which they keep order. Only today I visited a house in the Calle de Barcelona run by an effeminate man nicknamed the Magpie and a bawd who, with his assistance, succeeds in sequestering women. He dresses up as a woman, with rings in his ears and goes out in search of girls.”

“What a brute!”

“He is a kind of hawk. This eunuch, the women of the house inform me, is terribly cruel to them and imposes himself by terror.”

“‘Here,’ said the Magpie to me, ‘no women are found unfit!’

“‘Why not?’ I asked.

“‘Because they are not,’ and he showed me a five-dollar note. I went on with my examination and sent four of the women to the hospital.”

“But have they no means of defence?”

“None whatever; neither name nor legal standing nor anything. They are all given names which are not theirs: Blanca, Marina, Estrella, Africa. On the other hand the bawds and pimps are protected by the police, which consists of rascals and former servants of politicians.”

“They soon die, I expect,” said Lulu.

“Very soon; the mortality is terrible; every owner of such an establishment sees many generations of these women pass; disease, prisons, hospitals, drink constantly reduce their numbers; the bawd lives on: the white slaves, weak-brained and nerveless, rot and die away.”

“But why don’t they run away?”

“Because they are in debt. The brothel enmeshes these unfortunate women like a cuttlefish; and if they run away they are denounced to the police as thieves, and all the vile officers of justice find them guilty. Besides there are other ways. A few days ago, I was told by the women in the Calle de Barcelona, a girl was formally claimed by her parents in Seville, so a different girl was sent who slightly resembled her and who told the judge that she was content with her present life and did not wish to go home.”

“What brutes!”

“It is the remnants of the Moor and Jew in the Spanish: the tendency to consider women as a prey and to deceive and lie. It is the result of the Semitic lie, for we have a Semitic religion and Semitic blood in our veins. From this infected source, with the complication of our poverty, our ignorance, our vanity, all our ills spring.”

“And are all these women betrayed?” asked Lulu, who was more interested in the individual than in the social side of the case.

“No, generally it is not so; they are women who are unwilling, or rather who are unable to work. They do not know what they are doing; and it all goes on without any of the sentimental or tragic aspect that people imagine. It is a brutal, stupid affair, a question of money with nothing romantic about it. The only great, formidably imposing thing about it is that all these women retain the idea of honour as something terrible hanging over them. In other countries a light woman, in thinking of her youth, will say: ‘I was young then, healthy, pretty.’ In Spain they say: ‘I was not then dishonoured.’ We are a race of fanatics, and the fanaticism of honour is for the strong. We have made idols that now turn and rend us.”

“And couldn’t all that be done away with?”

“What?”

“These houses.”

“How is one to prevent it? Put your question to the Lord Bishop of Trebisond or the President of the Academy of Moral and Political Science or the President of the White Slave Traffic Society and they will say: ‘My daughter, it is a necessary evil. We must be humble; we must not presume to be wiser than the ancients.’ My Uncle Iturrioz is really right when he says laughingly that the fact that spiders devour flies shows how perfect Nature is.”

Lulu was sorry to hear Andrés speak so bitterly. “You should resign your appointment,” she said.

“Yes, that is what it will come to.”

THE DEATH OF VILLASÚS

ON THE plea of illness Andrés gave up his post, and through the influence of Julio Aracil he was appointed doctor at the Society of Hope which medically attended the poor.

His new appointment gave him less scope for moral indignation, but it was terribly tiring; one had to pay thirty or forty visits a day in outlying districts, go up flight after flight of stairs and enter horrible hovels.

In summer especially he was tired out. These dwellers in lodging-houses, wretched, dirty, irritated by the great heat, were ever ready to fly into a temper. The father or mother who saw their child dying had to express their grief somehow, and the doctor was ready to their hand. Andrés sometimes listened calmly to their reproaches; but sometimes he got angry and told them the truth: that they were dirty wretches who through their indifference and neglect would never improve their lot.

Iturriz was right: Nature not only made the slave but gave him the spirit of a slave.

Andrés had noticed both at Alcolea and at Madrid,

that in proportion as the individual rises in the social scale his means of defrauding and eluding the law increased. The strength of the law, he found, diminished in proportion as the individual grew. The law is always hardest on the weak; it weighs automatically on the penniless, and it is but natural that the penniless should hate the law.

These wretched people were as yet unaware that if they associated they could make an end of the rich; they could only fruitlessly bewail their lot.

Andrés became chronically angry and irritable; the heat and having to be out in the sun made him constantly thirsty, so that he drank beer and ate ices, and spoilt his digestion.

Absurd thoughts of suicide passed through his mind. On Sundays, especially when he met the crowd returning from the bullfight, it occurred to him what a pleasure it would be to place half a dozen machine guns at the entrance of every street and not leave alive a single one of those who came from the stupid bloody entertainment.

It was this wretched canaille who, in the cafés before the war, had shouted, full of braggadocio, and had received the defeat with indifference. It was the morality of the spectators at the bullfight, demanding courage from others, of the soldier, the actor, the fighter in the arena. Andrés would gladly have imposed by force,

respect for the sufferings of others, on these cruel, sanguinary, stupid, and presumptuous brutes.

Andrés's refuge was Lulu's shop. He used to sit there in the cool darkness and talk while Lulu sewed or attended to a customer.

Occasionally in the evening he accompanied her and her mother to the Paseo de Rosales. Andrés and Lulu sat together looking at the darkness of the night.

Lulu gazed at the irregular lines of lights of the suburbs and highroads and imagined that it was a sea with its islands and that one might pass in a boat across those vague shadows.

After much conversation they returned in the tram-car, and parted with shaking of hands in the Glorieta de San Bernardo.

Except for these hours of peace and quiet all the rest were for Andrés full of distress and annoyance.

One day, when he was paying a visit to a garret in a poor district and was passing along the passage of the house, an old woman with a child in her arms came up to him and asked him to come and see someone who was sick.

Andrés never refused such a request, and went into the wretched room. A starved, emaciated man sitting on the bed, was singing and reciting verses. Every now and then he would get up in his shirt and stumble about among the boxes on the floor.

“What’s the matter with him?” asked Andrés.

“He’s blind, and now he seems to have lost his reason.”

“Has he no family?”

“My sister and I: we are his daughters.”

“Well, one can do nothing for him,” said Andrés. “It’s a choice between the hospital and lunatic asylum. I will send a note to the director of the hospital. What is his name?”

“Villasús. Rafael Villasús.”

“The man who wrote plays?”

“Yes.”

Andrés remembered. In ten or twelve years the man had aged terribly; but the daughter had aged even more. She had that air of stupefied indifference which only a torrent of misfortunes can give to a human being.

Andrés went home, deep in thought.

“Poor man! Poor devil! How strange his resolute challenge to wealth! Heroic and comical! And perhaps if he could reason now he would say that he had been right, that his present state is the crowning glory of his Bohemianism. Poor fool!”

About a week later, when paying another visit to his child patient, who had had a relapse, he was told that the neighbour in the other garret had died.

The lodgers in several of the rooms told him that the mad poet, as he was called there, had passed three days

and nights shouting, defying his literary rivals and roaring with laughter.

Andrés went in to see the corpse. He was lying on the floor wrapped in a sheet. The daughter, indifferent, crouched in a corner.

Several men in rags, one of them with long hair, sat around the corpse.

“Are you the doctor?” one of them asked Andrés with an air of impertinence.

“Yes, I am a doctor.”

“Well, examine the body; we think that Villasús is not dead. It is a case of catalepsy.”

“Don’t talk nonsense,” said Andrés. All those ragged men, who must have been Bohemian friends of Villasús, had treated the corpse in the most horrible manner; they had burnt the fingers with matches to see if he could feel. Even when dead they refused to leave the poor man alone.

Andrés, convinced as he was that it was not a case of catalepsy, took out his stethoscope and examined the heart.

“He is dead,” he said.

An old man with white locks and white beard now came in; he was lame and walked with a stick. He was completely drunk, and going up to the corpse shouted in a melodramatic voice:

“Farewell, Rafael! You were a poet! You were a

genius! Even thus will I die. A pauper, because I am a Bohemian and will never sell my conscience."

The ragged men looked at one another in evident pleasure at this scene.

The old man of the flowing locks was still raving when the undertaker's man appeared, top-hat on the side of his head, whip in his right hand, and a cigarette end between his lips.

"Come," he said cynically, showing his black teeth, "is the corpse coming down or not? I can't wait for I have other dead to take to the cemetery."

One of the men in rags, who wore a dirty false collar sticking out of his coat, and spectacles went up to Hurtado and said in a ridiculously affected manner:

"When one sees such things one feels inclined to blow one's brains out with dynamite."

The despair of this Bohemian seemed to Andrés too far-fetched to be sincere, and leaving the ragged crowd in the garret, he went home.

LOVE: THEORY AND PRACTICE

ANDRÉS's chief pleasure were his discussions in Lulu's shop. She would listen to him smiling and from time to time put in some objection. She always addressed him mockingly as Don Andrés.

"I have a little theory of my own about love," he said to her one day.

"About love your theory should be a great one," answered Lulu mockingly.

"Mine isn't. I believe that in love, as in medicine of eighty years ago, there are two methods, the allopathic and the homœopathic."

"Explain what you mean, Don Andrés," said she severely.

"I will explain. Allopathy in love is due to a process of neutralization. Opposite cures opposite; on this principle a small man courts a tall woman, a fair-haired man falls in love with a dark woman, and the other way round. This method is that of the timid and diffident. The other——"

"Yes, let us have the other."

"The other method is homœopathic. Like cures like.

This is the method of the self-confident and vain. Dark courts dark, and vice versa. If my theory is correct it helps to know people's character."

"It does?"

"Yes; you see a man and wife who are both stout, dark, and snub-nosed, and you know that the man is presumptuous and self-confident; but if such a man has a wife who is thin, fair-haired, and long-nosed, evidently he is diffident about his own figure and features."

"So that I who am dark and rather snub-nosed——"

"You are not snub-nosed."

"Not even a little?"

"No."

"Thank you, Don Andrés. Well then, I who am dark and, I must still believe, somewhat snub-nosed, if I were presumptuous, would fall in love with the hairdresser at the corner shop, and if I were humble, with the chemist, whose nose is long enough."

"You are not a normal case."

"I am not?"

"No."

"What am I then?"

"A case to be studied."

"I may be a case to be studied, but nobody cares to study me."

"Shall I study you, Lulu?"

She gazed at Andrés for a moment with an enigmatic look and then laughed.

“Tell me, Don Andrés, you who are so wise and have devised these theories about love, what is love?”

“Love?”

“Yes.”

“Love, and you will think me a great pedant, is the confluence of the fetichist instinct and the sexual instinct.”

“I do not understand.”

“I will explain. The sexual instinct drives men to women and women to men without distinction; but man, with his imaginative capacity, chooses a certain woman, and woman chooses a certain man. This is where the fetichist instinct comes in: the person so chosen is arbitrarily adorned and embellished until the idol of the imagination becomes fact. A man in love with a woman sees her differently, even as a man changes in the eyes of the woman who loves him. They see each other through an unreal and gleaming film, while the old devil of the species laughs in the darkness.”

“The species? What has that to do with it?”

“The instinct of the species is the desire to have children, to have descendants. The woman’s chief thought is for her child; she instinctively wishes to have a child; but Nature has to clothe this desire in a more poetical,

stimulative dress and invents these false veils which are love."

"So that love is really an illusion?"

"Yes, an illusion like life itself. That is why it has been said that one woman is as good as another, and sometimes better; and in the same way one may say that one man is as good as another, and some better."

"That will be when one is not in love."

"When one is not under a false illusion. That is why marriages of love are more productive of griefs and disillusionments than *marriages de convenance*."

"You really think so?"

"Yes."

"And which do you think preferable: to be deceived and suffer, or never to be deceived?"

"I don't know. It is difficult to say. I do not think one can lay down a general rule."

Such were the conversations with which they passed the time.

One morning Andrés found a young soldier in the shop talking to Lulu, and he saw him on several subsequent occasions. He did not ask who this soldier was and only after he had gone away learnt that he was Lulu's cousin.

Andrés began to believe that Lulu had taken a dislike to him; perhaps she was thinking of the soldier. Andrés

wanted to give up the habit of going to the shop, but he found this impossible. It was the only place that he found pleasant and comfortable.

One autumn morning he went out to Moncloa; he felt the sadness that rather absurdly besets the bachelor and a vague sentimentalism crept over him as he contemplated the country and clear cloudless sky; the Guadarrama mountains were blue as a turquoise.

His thoughts turned to Lulu and he made up his mind to go and see her. She was his only friend. He returned to Madrid, to the Calle del Pez and entered the shop.

Lulu was alone, dusting the cases. Andrés sat down in his usual place.

"You are looking very well today, very pretty," he said suddenly.

"What magic has made you so amiable today, Don Andrés?"

"You really are looking very well. Your life here has made you more human. You used to have a satirical, mocking air, but it has gone; your expression is becoming gentler. The mothers who come in to buy these small caps must have given you this maternal expression."

"It is sad enough to make caps for other people's children."

"You would rather make them for your own?"

"Perhaps so. Why not? But I shall never have any children. Who is going to fall in love with me?"

"The chemist, the young lieutenant—with all your modesty you are making conquests."

"Who, I?"

"Yes, you."

Lulu continued to dust the shelves.

"Do you hate me, Lulu?" said Hurtado.

"Yes, for talking such nonsense."

"Give me your hand."

"My hand?"

"Yes. Now sit down by my side."

"By your side?"

"Yes. Now look at me full in the eyes and frankly."

"I am looking. Is there anything else?"

"You think I do not like you, Lulu?"

"You may think me a good sort of girl but nothing more."

"And if there were something more? If I liked you, if I loved you, what would be your answer?"

"No, it is not true. You do not love me. Don't talk in that way."

"It is, it is true," and he bent his head and kissed her on the lips.

Lulu became first very red, then very pale and hid her face in her hands.

"Lulu, Lulu," said Andrés, "have I hurt you?"

Lulu got up and walked about the shop a little, smiling.

"Listen, Andrés; that madness and illusion which you say is love, I have felt for you ever since we first met."

"Truly?"

"Yes."

"And I was blind?"

"Yes, blind, completely blind."

Andrés took Lulu's hand and pressed it to his lips. They talked a long while, until they heard the voice of Doña Leonarda.

"I'm off," said Andrés getting up.

"Good-bye," she exclaimed, pressing him against her. "And you must never leave me, Andrés. You must take me with you always."

PART SEVEN

A SON

THE RIGHT TO HAVE
CHILDREN

A FEW days later Andrés paid a visit to his uncle. He gradually brought the conversation round to the subject of marriage and then said:

“I have a matter on my conscience.”

“Really?”

“Yes. Imagine that one of my patients, a man who is still young but is nervous and has gout, wishes to marry an old friend who is weak and rather hysterical. He asks me if he ought to marry, and I am at a loss for an answer.”

“I should tell him he ought not,” answered Iturrioz. “And then let him do as he likes.”

“But one must give a reason.”

“What better reason than that he is almost an invalid and so is she. Enough that he is in doubt: he should not marry.”

“No it is not enough.”

“I think it is. I am thinking of the children. I do not consider with Calderón that man’s greatest crime is to have been born. That seems to me a poetical absurdity. Man’s worst crime is to beget children.”

“Always? Without exception?”

“No, I judge as follows: if the case of healthy children with a home, protection, education, and every care, the parents may be acquitted; but if the children are weak, tubercular, neurasthenic, syphilitic, we must look on the parents as criminals.”

“But it can't be known beforehand.”

“I think it can.”

“It does not seem to me so easy.”

“It is not easy. But the mere danger, the bare possibility of having weak children should be enough to deter a man. To propagate suffering seems to me a crime.”

“But can anyone know what his children will be like? An invalid friend of mine has just had a daughter who is very strong and healthy.”

“Possibly. It frequently happens that a robust man has weak children and the other way round; but that does not matter: the one guarantee is the health of the parents.”

“I am surprised at finding an anti-intellectual like you adopt so intellectual an attitude.”

“I am not less surprised to find an intellectual like you adopt the attitude of a man of the world. I confess nothing seems to me so repulsive as a drunken brute who goes on begetting children who die or end in prisons and brothels. I have a genuine hatred for these unscrupulous

people who fill the world with disease. I remember a servant of mine, married to a drunken idiot unable to work or support himself. They had a lot of sickly children living in dirt and misery, and the idiot used to come and ask me for money, thinking it a real merit to have begotten his numerous and disgusting offspring. His wife, toothless and prolific, showed the greatest indifference as to the birth and death of her children. 'If one is dead we can replace him,' she used to say cynically. No, it cannot be right to beget children for a life of suffering."

"I agree with you."

"Fecundity cannot be a social ideal. Quality, not quantity, is what is wanted. Patriots and revolutionaries may exalt prolific brutes but to me they will always be odious animals."

"That is quite right," murmured Andrés, "but it does not solve my problem. What answer am I to give my man?"

"I should say to him: 'Marry if you wish, but sterilize your marriage.'"

"So that our morality ends by being immoral. If Tolstoi were to hear you he would denounce you as a vile doctor."

"Bah, Tolstoi is an apostle, and apostles announce their own truths, which are usually absurdities for other people. If I were you I should speak frankly to your

friend. I should say: 'If you are selfish, rather cruel, strong, healthy, able to support suffering, and indifferent to the sufferings of other people, then marry and have children; you will be an excellent father of a family. If you are impressionable, nervous, and excessively sensitive to suffering, then do not marry, or if you marry, do not have children.'

Andrés was quite overwhelmed when he left the house-top. That afternoon he wrote a letter to Iturrioz informing him that the man with gout who was going to marry was himself.

A NEW LIFE

HURTADO was not much troubled by questions of mere form and proved quite willing to meet the wishes of Doña Leonarda and be married in a church. Before his marriage he took Lulu to see his Uncle Iturrioz and they became friends.

She said to Iturrioz:

“See if you can find Andrés some work which will keep him at home, as when he has to visit patients, he is always in the worst of tempers.”

Iturrioz found work of the kind required: it consisted of translating articles and books for a medical review which also published original works on special subjects.

“For the present,” said Iturrioz, “they will give you two or three French books to translate; but you must learn English, as in a few months they will give you a work to translate from that language, in which I will help you if necessary.”

“Agreed. Thank you very much.”

Andrés gave up his post in the Society of Hope, to his great satisfaction; he took a house in the Pozas district, not very far from Lulu’s shop.

Andrés asked the landlord to convert the three rooms looking onto the street into one and not to paper but paint the walls.

That would be their bed-room, dining-room and living room.

"Most people would have made of this their drawing-room," said Andrés, "and would have slept in the worst part of the home."

Lulu considered these questions of hygiene extravagant fancies; she had a special designation for her husband's extravagances.

"He is so ideatic," she would say.

Andrés borrowed some money from Iturrioz, to furnish the rooms.

"How much do you want?"

"Not much. I want the rooms to be furnished poorly. I do not expect any visits."

At first Doña Leonarda proposed to go and live with Lulu and Andrés, but the latter refused.

"No, no, she had better live with your sister and Don Prudencio; she will be more comfortable there."

"What a hypocrite you are. Your real objection is that you do not like her."

"Of course. Our house is to have a different atmosphere from that of the street. A mother-in-law would be a current of cold air; let us keep all our relations away."

“Poor mother!” said Lulu laughing. “You have such a strange opinion of her!”

“It is not that, but our ideas of life differ; she takes a superficial view of life, and I do not.”

After some hesitation Lulu came to an agreement with her old friend and neighbour Venancia and engaged her services. She was a very faithful old woman and was fond of both Andrés and Lulu.

“If anyone inquires for me always say that I am not at home,” said Andrés.

“Very well, sir.”

Andrés took his duties as translator seriously.

That airy, bright, sunny room with his books and papers made him wish to work.

He no longer felt the impression of being an animal at bay. Every morning after his bath he set to work. When Lulu came back from the shop Venancia brought in the luncheon.

“Have your meals with us,” said Andrés.

“No, no.”

It would have been impossible to convince the old woman that she could sit down at the same table with her master and mistress.

After luncheon Andrés went with Lulu to the shop and then returned to his room to work.

Several times he told Lulu that with what he earned

they had enough to live on and might give up the shop, but she refused.

“Who knows what may happen?” said Lulu. “We must save up for a rainy day.”

In the evenings she would have done some sewing at home if Andrés had permitted.

He became more and more charmed with his wife, his life, and his home. Andrés was astonished that he had not noticed before Lulu’s talent for management, order, and economy.

His enjoyment in his work increased. This large room gave him the impression of being in the country, far away from lodging-houses and tedious people.

He worked very carefully and calmly. At the office of the review they had lent him several modern scientific dictionaries and Iturriz gave him two or three for idioms which proved very useful.

After some time he was not only entrusted with translations but with original work, almost always on data and experiences obtained by foreign investigators.

He often remembered what Fermín Ibarra had said about discoveries following easily from previous facts. Why were there no experimenters in Spain when experiments were necessarily fruitful?

No doubt there were no laboratories, no workshops in which to follow the process of evolution in any branch of science. There were also a little too much sun and ig-

norance, and a great deal too much protection on the part of his Holiness, which is very good for the soul but very bad for science and industry.

These ideas, which a little while ago would have made him bitterly angry, now failed to vex him.

Andrés was so happy, that he became afraid. Could so quiet a life last? Was it possible that after many attempts he had at least reached not only a tolerable but a sensible and pleasant way of life?

In his pessimism he believed that it could not last.

"Something is sure to happen," he thought, "to upset so fair a balance."

Often he imagined that in his life there was a window opening onto an abyss; if he looked out horror and dizziness overcame him. He now feared that for some reason or other this abyss would again open before his feet.

He regarded all his acquaintances as enemies, and indeed his mother-in-law, Nini, her husband, the neighbours, and the concierge considered the happiness of the newly married couple as something almost insulting to themselves.

"Pay no attention to anything they say," Andrés advised his wife. "Quiet happiness like ours is an insult to people who live in a continual tragedy of jealousy, envy, and absurdity. Look on them as wishing to poison us."

"I will remember to do so," answered Lulu, laughing

at this serious advice on the part of her husband.

Occasionally, of a Sunday, Nini invited her sister to go with her to the theatre.

"Isn't Andrés coming?" she would ask.

"No, he is working."

"He is a perfect hedgehog."

"Very well, never mind."

When she returned at night Lulu told her husband what she had seen; he made comments which seemed to her very comical; they had supper, and after supper went for a short walk.

In the summer they almost always went out at night-fall. After finishing his work Andrés went to fetch Lulu at the shop, they left the girl behind the counter and went for a walk along the Canalillo or the Dehesa de Amanuel. Sometimes they went to the moving pictures in Chamberí, and Andrés listened with amusement to Lulu's remarks which showed that acute and ingenuous wit of Madrid which is very different from the stupid affectations of those who profess it.

Lulu was always surprising Andrés; he would never have believed that a girl apparently so bold would prove essentially timid.

Lulu had an absurd opinion of her husband; she considered him a prodigy.

One night when they were coming back later than usual from the Canalillo, in a dark lane near a deserted ceme-

tery they met two sinister-looking men. It was dark and only a lamp insecurely fixed in the wall of the cemetery shed a light over the coal-black road between two walls. One of the men came up to ask alms in a rather suspicious way. Andrés said that he had no money and took from his pocket his large house-key, which gleamed like a revolver.

The two men had not the courage to attack, and Andrés and Lulu were able to reach the Calle de San Bernardo in safety.

“Were you frightened, Lulu?” asked Andrés.

“Yes, but not much. As I was with you——”

“How curious,” he thought; “my wife thinks I am a Hercules.”

All their friends were amazed at the success of the marriage.

“We have grown really fond of each other,” said Andrés, “because we had no interest in lying.”

P E A C E

TWO months passed, and their peace was untroubled. Andrés was completely changed. His new way of life, without having to be in the hot sun or go up flights of stairs and see so many wretched sights, gave him a feeling of tranquillity and peace.

He would have explained the matter like a philosopher by saying that his body as a whole was now passive, quiet, and happy. His bodily comfort gave him a state of mind akin to that perfect intellectual balance which the Greek Epicureans and Stoics named *ataraxia*, the paradise of the unbeliever.

This serenity enabled him to work in a very clear and methodical way. His studies in synthesis for the medical review were very successful, and the editor encouraged him to go on; he asked him no longer for translations but for original studies for every number of the review.

Andrés and Lulu never quarrelled, they were thoroughly at one. It was only in questions of food and hygiene that she did not take him seriously.

“Don’t eat so much salad,” he would say to her.

“Why not, if I like it?”

“Yes, but it is too acid for you; you are arthritic like me.”

“Nonsense.”

“It is not nonsense.”

Andrés handed over all the money he earned to his wife.

“Don’t buy anything for me,” he would say.

“But you must want——”

“I, no; if you must buy, buy something for the house or for yourself.”

Lulu still kept up the shop, and went to and fro sometimes in her mantilla, sometimes wearing a small hat.

She had improved in looks since her marriage; and as she was more often in the open air she had a healthier colour. Her satiric look too was softened and her expression had grown gentler.

Several times from the balcony Andrés saw that a young or an old man had followed Lulu home.

“Have a care, Lulu,” he said, “they are following you.”

“Really?”

“Yes; the truth is you are getting very pretty and will make me jealous.”

“Jealous? You know too well how I love you. When I am at the shop I am always wondering what you are doing.”

“Give up the shop.”

“No, no. We may have a son; we must save up.”

A son! Andrés was unwilling to allude in any way to this delicate matter of having a child, which disquieted him.

“The old religion and morality weigh on one,” he thought. “The superstition of sin is not to be shaken off.” In thinking of the future he often felt terrified, as if that window onto the abyss might open.

They paid many visits to Iturrioz, and he often came to Andrés’s room. About a year after they were married Lulu had a slight attack of illness and became absent-minded, gloomy, and preoccupied.

“What is the matter with her?” Andrés would ask himself anxiously.

The fit of melancholy passed but returned soon afterwards with greater force: there was a cloud over her eyes and her cheeks showed signs of weeping.

Andrés anxiously pretended not to notice, but there came a time when it was impossible to pretend not to see his wife’s condition.

One night he asked her what was the matter. Throwing her arms about his neck, she confessed timidly.

It was as Andrés had feared. The fact that she had no child, and that she suspected it was her husband’s wish, was the cause of her sadness and tears.

What to do in the face of this sorrow? How tell her

that he considered himself a poisonous and rotten member of society who had no right to have children.

He attempted to comfort her and to explain; but it proved impossible. She wept and embraced him amid her tears.

“Let the consequences be what they may,” murmured Andrés.

Next day he lacked his customary calm.

Two months later Lulu told him with shining eyes that she must be with child. There could be no doubt of it. Andrés lived in continuous anguish; the dizzy window onto the abyss was again wide open.

Lulu was completely changed; she who had been so jestingly gay was now sad and sentimental.

Andrés noticed that her love for him had altered; it was no longer that charming, mocking, and affectionate sympathy but a jealous, irritable love, a kind of animal love. Nature was recovering its rights. In her eyes Andrés, instead of being a man of talent and ideas, had become a man. Andrés began to see in this the beginning of a tragedy. She insisted on his accompanying her and giving her his arm and jealously supposed that he was casting glances at other women.

As time went on her state became more hysterical. She knew that nervous disorders of the kind were common in that state and gave the matter little thought; but he trembled. Lulu’s mother began to come frequently to

the house and as she had no liking for Andrés, she gave everything a poisonous aspect.

One of the doctors who collaborated in the review, a young man, came to see Lulu.

He said that she was well and that her hysterical state was common and of no importance. It was Andrés who became ill; his mind was too strained and emotions which would have been normal for anyone else unbalanced him.

"Go out for walks," said the doctor. But he no longer found anything to do out of doors.

He could not sleep, and after trying several opiates, decided to take morphine. This anxiety was killing him.

His only pleasant hours were when he was at work. He was engaged on a synthetic study of a subject at which he worked with his whole mind so as to forget his troubles and try to clarify his ideas.

A FORERUNNER

WHEN the time came for Lulu's confinement she laughingly said, looking at herself:

"Perhaps it will be twins."

"Don't talk like that," said Andrés, gloomy and annoyed.

When Lulu thought the time was come, Hurtado went to fetch a young doctor, a friend of his and of Iturrioz's, a specialist.

Lulu was very brave and spirited. The doctor had told her to walk about, and she kept on walking around the room, even when the pain forced her to lean for support against the furniture.

The whole day passed in this way. The doctor had said that the first childbirth was always difficult, but Andrés began to suspect that it was not a normal case.

In the evening Lulu's strength began to fail. Andrés looked at her with tears in his eyes:

"My poor Lulu, how you suffer," he said.

"I do not mind the pain," she answered, "if only the child lives."

"You need not be afraid," said the doctor. "It will live."

"No, no; I have a presentiment that it will not."

That was a terrible night. Lulu was worn out. Andrés, sitting on a chair, gazed at her stupidly. Sometimes she drew closer to him:

"You too are suffering," she said, stroking his forehead and face. Andrés, mortally impatient, kept consulting the doctor; it could not be a normal case; there must be something wrong, congestion of the pelvis, something——

"If towards morning there is no change for the better we shall see," said the doctor.

Suddenly he called Hurtado.

"What's the matter?"

"Get ready the forceps immediately."

"What is it?"

"There is a compression of the umbilical cord."

Rapidly as the doctor introduced the forceps, the child was still-born.

"Is it alive?" asked Lulu anxiously.

When there was no answer she realized that it was dead and fainted. She soon recovered consciousness. Her condition was serious, for the placenta clung to the exhausted matrix. The doctor told her to rest.

She wished to see the dead child. Andrés, taking up the small body in a sheet felt a sharp stab of sorrow and his eyes filled with tears.

Lulu began to weep bitterly.

“Come, come,” said the doctor, “you must have courage.”

He attempted in vain to force out the clinging placenta and was obliged to draw it out with his hand. He at once gave the patient an injection of ergotine but was unable to prevent a violent hæmorrhage.

Lulu was in a very weak state and failed to react. For two days she remained thus; she was certain that she was going to die.

“I am only sorry on your account,” she said to Andrés. “What will happen to you without me?” And she stroked his face.

At other times she would think of her child:

“My poor son, such a strong child. Why should he have died?”

Andrés kept looking at her with tearless eyes.

On the morning of the third day Lulu died. Andrés, exhausted, left the bedroom. Doña Leonarda and Nini and her husband were in the house. Nini had grown stout, and her husband had a rakish air, with all his finery. Andrés went to his own room, took some morphine and fell into a deep sleep.

He awoke at midnight and jumped out of bed. He went to Lulu’s body and spent a long time looking at his dead wife, and kissed her several times on the forehead.

She was white as marble, with an air of calmness and indifference that surprised him.

He was still gazing at her when he heard voices in the next room. He recognized the voice of Iturrioz and that of the doctor; a third voice he did not know. The three were talking confidentially.

"In my opinion," said the unknown voice, "constant attention in these cases is harmful. This particular case is unknown to me, but I think it possible that this woman, in the country and unattended, might have been saved. Nature has resources which are unknown to us."

"You may be right," answered the doctor who had attended Lulu. "It is very possible."

"It is sad," exclaimed Iturrioz. "And her husband was going on so well."

Andrés felt overcome with grief as he listened. Quickly he went back to his room and locked the door.

Next morning when the hour of the funeral arrived inquiries were made in the house for Andrés.

"I am not surprised that he is not up," said the doctor, "as he takes morphine."

"Is that so?" asked Iturrioz.

"Yes."

"Then we will go and wake him," said Iturrioz. They went into the room. Andrés was lying on the bed, very pale, with white lips.

"He is dead!" exclaimed Iturrioz.

On the small table by the bed were a glass and a bot-

tle containing crystallized aconitine. Andrés had taken poison. The poison had acted rapidly, without convulsions or sickness, and death was due to instantaneous paralysis of the heart's action.

"It was a painless death," murmured Iturrioz. "He had not the strength to live. He was an Epicurean, an aristocrat, although he did not think so."

"But in a way he was also a forerunner," answered the other doctor.

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PÍO BAROJA

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PÍO BAROJA

once remarked, in summing up the gains of his life: "I am glad that I was born near the sea, because it suggests freedom and change." Freedom and change, change incurred in the interest of freedom—such is the briefest possible summary of a life which included, before its literary phase began, professional practice as a physician and management of a Viennese bakery in Madrid. And the beginning of literature was by no means the end of variety. As a writer, Baroja has retained his freedom by standing midway of the field between all opposed camps, political and religious; and this freedom has included complete liberty of change. For he is not of those authors who have annually rewritten their successes, and in the course of the years he has so thoroughly explored the intellectual topography of Spain that a great fellow craftsman, Jacinto Benavente, has been able to call his work "the most illuminating introduction to the psychology of the Spanish people." Publication of The Tree of Knowledge is one more step toward completion of the pious task of making the full canon of his work available to readers of English. (See the bibliography preceding this page).



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