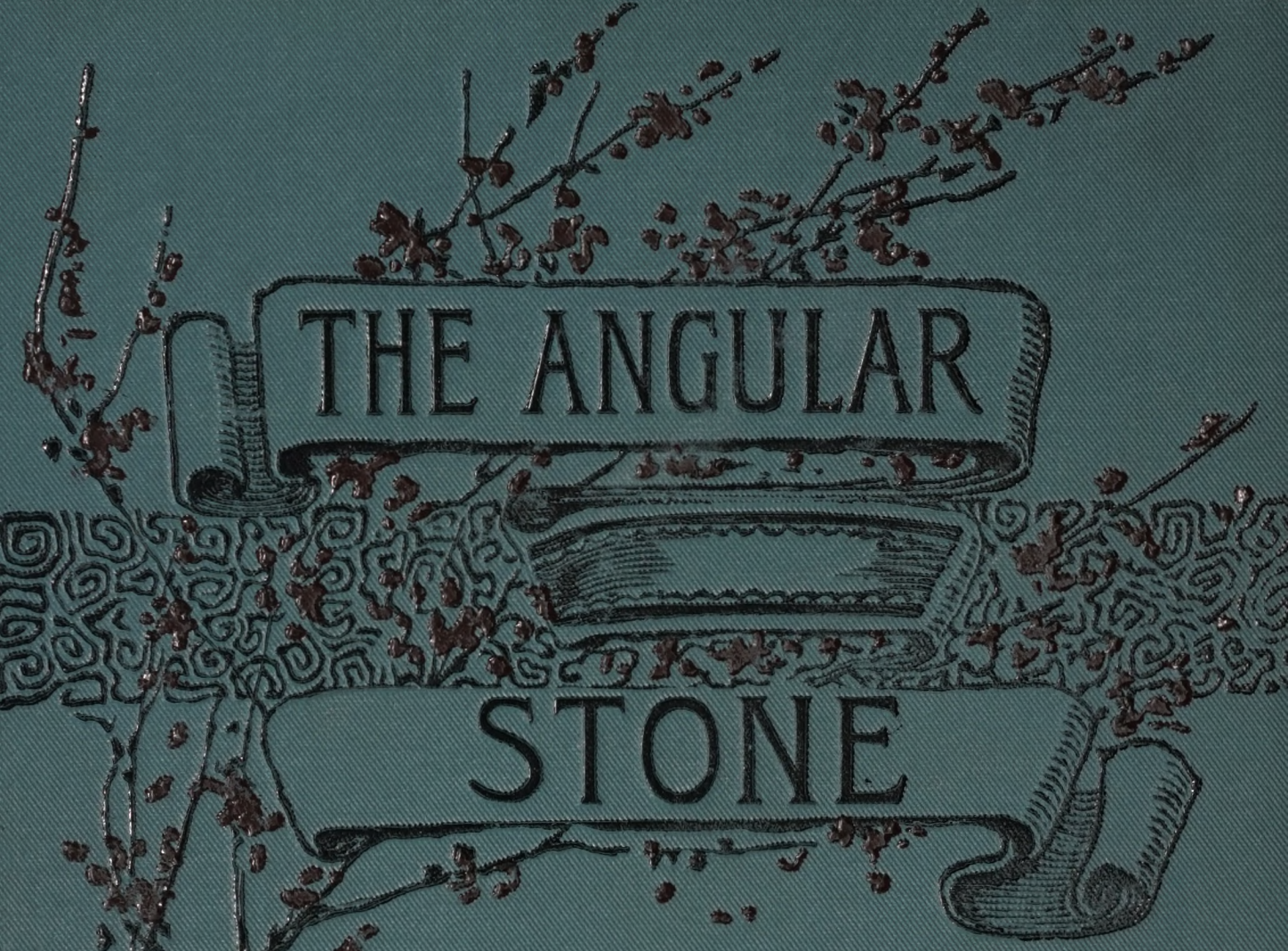

THE ANGULAR STONE

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I.

WEARIED by the unusual prolongation of his consultations on the gray and melancholy March afternoon on which our story opens, Dr. Moragas threw himself back in his armchair, drew a deep breath of relief, smoothed his curly white hair with one hand, and reached the other mechanically toward the latest number of the *Revue de Psychiatrie*, that lay, with its leaves yet uncut, on the table beside unopened letters and newspapers still in their wrappers.

But before he could slip the ivory paper knife between the first pages of the magazine, the door opposite his writing table opened noisily, and a child, between three and four years old, brimming over with laughter, bounded into the room, clapping her hands joyously, and did not pause in her giddy career until she had clasped her arms round the doctor's knee.

"Nené," he cried, taking her up in his arms, "it is not two o'clock yet. Come, you must run away again. Who told you to come here when I am busy?"

The child laughed more merrily than before. Her face was a poem of joy. Her black and sparkling eyes, dancing with bewitching mischievousness, contrasted with the somewhat chlorotic delicacy of her complexion. Between her fresh lips peeped the pink tip of her tongue. Her straight fair hair hung down over her forehead and fell like a mass of spun silk over her shoulders. As the doctor lifted her up she tried to pull his hair and beard, provoking the pretended scolding which always followed similar attempts.

From the moment of the child's entrance the room, lighted by two windows which admitted the mild light of a Marinedan sun, seemed to lose something of its severe aspect. Nené was familiar with every corner of this austere region, and knew well in what direction to turn her glance and point her imperious little forefinger, as children are wont to do when they wish to signify the form their caprice has taken. It was not to the thick curtains, not to the high book-

case, through whose glass doors could be caught here and there the red gleam of some resplendent binding; still less to the lower shelves of this bookcase where, brilliantly clean and carefully arranged, shone the sets of surgical instruments—trocars, bistouris, forceps, and scissors of mysterious form, in their shagreen and velvet cases.

Nor was the child attracted by the dreadful figures, illustrating the nervous and venous systems, which looked at her with sinister glance from their white eyes, fleshless and destitute of eyelids nor by the curious chair, which could be disjointed and made to take any desired position; nor by the large basin surrounded with sponges and vessels of phenic acid, nor by the shapeless-looking objects of india rubber or of oilcloth; nor by anything, in short, which, properly speaking, belonged to the healing science. No; the moment she crossed the threshold of the room her glance had darted to a corner to the left of the doctor's chair, where, suspended from the wall by silken cords, hung a light basket lined with satin. It was the famous baby-weighing machine, which affords the best method discovered of ascertaining whether the milk of the nurse contains cer-

tain elements, nourishes the infant or the contrary, and in its padded hollow, as an image or symbol of the living child, was a chromo, a naked pasteboard baby, in the attitude of stooping forward, with its hands resting on the bottom of the basket, its chubby cheeks raised and its enormous blue eyes wide open. This chromo was the idol of Nené, who would stretch her hands up toward it crying: "Child heaven! child heaven!" "Come, let us hear," the doctor would say in answer, "what is it you want the child of heaven to bring you to-day?" There would be a few moments of doubt, of hesitation, of struggle between various temptations, all equally powerful. "Tandies, tates, amonds—no, no, bittits—A suck-suck." The suck-suck would finally gain the day and the doctor, rising quickly, by a dexterous feat of juggling would convey from the pocket of his dressing-gown to the bottom of the basket a piece of pine-nut paste. Then he would lift the child up in his arms, and à series of joyful cries and bursts of laughter on both sides would follow the discovery of the desired dainty.

Some comedy of this kind was no doubt in course of preparation, for Nené was already

directing her steps toward the weighing machine, when a servant-man appeared at a side door which led to the waiting room, but, seeing the doctor with the child in his arms he stopped hesitatingly. Moragas, annoyed at the interruption, frowned and said:

"What do you want?"

"A man who has just come—— He says if you would see him he would take it as a great favor; that he came before, but there were so many people——"

The physician raised his eyes and glanced at the clock. It still wanted five minutes to two. A slave to his duty Moragas said resignedly:

"Very well, let him come in. Nené, run and play with your nurse. The child of heaven will give you nothing now. You know that when there are patients——"

Nené obeyed very much against her will. Even before he had turned round after closing the door behind the child, the doctor guessed that his tardy patient was at the door. An indefinable sort of gasp, a perceptible difficulty in breathing, betrayed his presence; and the physician, facing about, saw the man standing before him, bending forward and pressing his greasy

broad-brimmed green hat with both hands against his stomach.

Moragas muttered a "Sit down," and walked to a chair, settling his gold eyeglasses nervously on his nose, and growing suddenly grave. His eyes fell upon the sick man with the weight of a hammer, and the cords of memory vibrated suddenly and swiftly to the thought: "Where have I seen that face?

The man gave no salutation. Without laying aside the hat he sat down awkwardly in the chair to which the doctor had motioned him. Even after he had seated himself his breathing still continued to produce the same hoarse, broken murmur, like a sort of simmering in the lungs. To the doctor's first questions—routine questions clearly and directly put—he answered in a confused and reticent manner, dominated, perhaps, by that vague fear and desire to dissimulate, which is characteristic of the lower classes when consulting a physician, while at the same time he expressed himself in choicer language than, from his appearance, one would have expected him to use. Moragas urged his questions, now completely absorbed in his task. "Is it long since you began to have those bilious attacks? Are the

attacks of sleeplessness frequent? Do you have them every night? or only occasionally? Do you work in an office; are you obliged to sit for hours at a time?"

"No, Señor," answered the patient, in a slow, dull voice. "I do very little work; I lead an easy enough life; I mean, I am not obliged to work every day." There seemed nothing strange in these words and yet they sounded strangely to Moragas, reawakening his curiosity and his desire to remember where and when he had seen this man. He fixed his eyes again, more searchingly than before, on the patient's face. In reality his appearance accorded ill with the aristocratic affirmation of leading an easy life which he had just made. His attire was the cheap and somber attire of the humblest rank of the middle class, where it blends into the lowest rank of the people—a soiled and worn felt hat, a suit of dingy black, composed of an ill-fitting shooting-jacket and tight trousers, a cravat of shiny black silk, carelessly knotted, a shirt of three or four days' wear, a silver watch-chain, calf-skin boots broken and unpolished, and in his hands absolutely nothing —neither umbrella nor cane. Wealthy people for whom, by the Divine favor, manna rains

down from heaven, do not generally go about clad in this style.

"According to that you take no exercise at all?" said Moragas, fancying he was conducting the medical examination, but in reality following the lead of his excited curiosity.

"As exercise, yes," responded the man, in a non-committal voice. "I walk a great deal. At times I walk two or three leagues, without feeling tired. I do some work, too, in the house. I am no idler."

"I have not said that you were an idler," replied the physician, in a severe voice. "I must know your way of life if I am to tell what is wrong with you inside. Come, lie down there," he added, pointing to the broad divan standing between the two windows of the office.

The patient obeyed, and Moragas approached him and, unbuttoning the last few buttons of his waistcoat, laid the open palm of his left hand on the region of the hypochondrium. Then, with the knuckles of the right he quickly performed the operation of percussion, for the purpose of ascertaining how far the dull sound peculiar to the liver extended. While he was engaged in this task, his mobile face assumed an earnest

and intelligent expression, while that of the patient revealed anxiety, anguish, almost. "You can rise now," Moragas at last said, returning to his chair, humming a tune, a mechanical act with him.

He fixed his glance again on the patient, this time he auscultated and felt, so to say, his physiognomy. Moragas, although he held vitalism in supreme contempt, was not the materialist physician who looks at the outside only. Without paying any attention to that scholastic imp called *vital force*, no one conceded greater importance than he to the mysterious psycho-physical activities, unexplainable by the merely physiological processes. "In the brain or in the soul (we will not dispute about terms), is the human pendulum," he would say. In many physical ailments he saw what a learned and sagacious observer must see—the reflex of secret and familiar moral states which are not always considered, because not even he who suffers from them has always the courage to reveal them. At the same time Moragas admitted the converse of this view, and sometimes cured melancholy and anger with aloe pills or doses of bromide. He knew that we form a totality, a harmonious whole, and

that scarcely any physical or mental ailment exists by itself. In the patient before him his instinct showed him a case in point, a man whose disposition was profoundly affected by the condition of his internal organs.

"Do you drink?" he asked him, with some severity.

"Sometimes—a drop of rum."

"Only a drop? You have not reflected, my friend. You wish to deceive me, and we are not here to deceive ourselves."

"I am not deceiving you, no, Señor; for that a man should take a glass or two, or three, even, if the occasion offers seems to me a matter of no account. There are times when one can't help it, and I defy anyone to say that I take a drink——"

"And you ought not to take one," said the physician in a milder voice, for he observed that in the voice of his patient there was a tone of great bitterness. "I forbid you to touch liquor until Christmas, at the very soonest."

But where the deuce had Moragas seen this man? When had this tall, thin, bent figure, this silhouette that had something furtive, something that inspired an undefinable repulsion and suspi-

cion, crossed his field of vision? Momently he put together with greater precision the square broad forehead, the gray hair, streaming behind, as if blown back by a gust of wind, the deepset eyes that seemed to look within, the irregular features, the high cheek bones, the marked asymmetry of the face, a frequent sign of a want of equilibrium or of disturbance in the mental faculties. If the physician had had a mirror before him, and could have compared his own countenance with that of the individual he was examining, he could better have understood the feeling of repulsion he experienced, and would have attributed it to the markedness of the contrast between them. Moragas' attitude was easy, or rather it expressed that petulant frankness that inspires sympathy; it might be said that he was always ready to advance, his chest expanded, his head erect, the dilated nostrils of his large nose eagerly inhaling the air. The patient, on the contrary, always seemed ready, as if obeying the instinct of certain repulsive insects, to retreat, to withdraw from observation, to hide himself, in some dark corner. Observing the feeling of repugnance with which his patient inspired him, the physician mentally reproved himself, and

urged by a kindly impulse, while with one hand he took up a sheet of paper to write down certain directions for the guidance of the sick man, with the other he took a cigar from a mahogany cigar box and held it out to him, saying, "Smoke that."

At the same instant in which the tips of his fingers came in contact with those of his patient the vague reminiscence which floated in his memory gave a sharp throb and almost took definite shape. Moragas thought he was on the point of remembering, but he did not remember yet. He saw a cloud and struggling through it a ray of pallid light; but everything vanished at the scratching of the pen on the white paper. While he wrote he noticed, without looking at him, that the patient had not ventured either to light the cigar or to put it into the pocket of his coat. Moragas signed his name with a flourish to the prescription, read it, and handed the paper to the patient.

The latter stood for a moment in embarrassed hesitation, the sheet of paper in his hand, his glance wandering over the carpet. At last he came to a decision, and speaking shyly, calling the physician by his baptismal name, he said:

"And—excuse me—and how much do I owe you, Don Pelayo?"

"For that?" responded Moragas. "According. If you are really poor, give me the least you can afford—or better still, give me nothing. If you have means—then, two dollars."

The man put his hand slowly into the pocket of his waistcoat, searched its depths with three fingers and drew out two shining dollars, of the new coinage of the baby king, which he deposited reverentially in a bronze ash-tray.

"Many thanks, then, Señor de Moragas," he said, with a certain ease of manner, as if the act of paying had given him rights he did not before possess. "I won't trouble you any longer. I will come back, with your permission, to tell you what effect the medicines produce."

"Yes, come back. Follow the directions, and don't neglect the disease. It is not a fatal one, unless complications should arise, but—it ought to be attended to."

"If one had no children," answered the man, encouraged by these few slightly friendly words, "it would be the same thing to die a little sooner as a little later. For in the end one must die, mustn't one? And a year more or a year less

matters little. I mean, it appears so to me. But one's children, that's what hurts, to leave them in want. Well—your servant, Don Pelayo."

The portière had scarcely fallen, the steps of the patient still resounded in the waiting-room when Moragas rose from his chair, nervous and disturbed, saying:

"Yes, I know that fellow, and I know him in connection with something strange; there is not a doubt of it. It is odd, too, that I cannot remember, so many people of all sorts as one comes in contact with here in Marineda. And he is not a stranger, for—no; he said he would return from time to time to tell me how the prescribed treatment agreed with him. No; of course he is not a stranger. Moraguitas [the doctor was accustomed to apostrophize himself in this fashion], why didn't you ask that fellow his name? Why didn't you find out where he lived? Bah! There's time enough; I'll ask him when he returns. At all events, it is curious that I cannot make out just what rank of life the man belongs to."

"Nené!" he cried, approaching the door by which the child had left the room.

But Nené did not show her mischievous little face, and the doctor, obeying another capricious impulse, returned to the table, took up the paper knife and once more began to cut the leaves of the *Revue*. There was an article there on the morphine habit that must be very fine, deeply interesting. While his hands were employed in mechanically cutting the leaves the silent struggle of memory went on in his absent mind—the effort of the idea to push its way through an infinity of other ideas, deposited, as on a phonographic plate, in that mysterious archive of our consciousness. Doubtless a wave of blood refreshed the corner in which the recollection slept, for suddenly it stood forth, clear and triumphant. Moragas felt the sensation of satisfaction which the mind feels when relieved from obsession by an idea, but no sooner had the rapid impression, almost physical, of freedom and ease vanished, than the physician felt a shudder run through him; he turned red to the very roots of his silvery hair; his lips trembled, his eyes flashed, his nostrils dilated, and striking the table with his clenched hand, he exclaimed in a loud and resonant voice:

"Now I know—the executioner!" (A furious

and round oath.) "The executioner!" (Another, more angry still.)

On the instant he pulled his handkerchief from his pocket, wrapped it around the tips of his fingers, and then lifting up the two shining coins, opened wide the window, and dropped them on the flags of the street below, where they rebounded with a silvery sound.

At that moment Nené pushed open the door.

She came in babbling, but on seeing her father, who was now closing the shutters and coruscating, so to say, rage and horror, she stood still on the threshold with that instinct peculiar to children, who take in a psychic situation better than anyone else, and murmured in a low voice:

"Papa scold—papa scold!"

II.

TELMO, on awakening, dug his fists into his eyes, lamenting his lost dream, which was so lovely. For he had dreamed of reviews, parades, and sham battles, and he had seen himself converted into the Captain General of Marineda, gorgeous in a uniform more magnificent even than his holiday dress, gay with plumes, galloons, cords, and stars, riding a fiery sorrel steed, and carrying a real sword, not of wood, but of shining steel.

The waking could not have been in greater contrast than it was to the dream. The boy saw around him what he saw every day, an ugly and dismal scene—the sordid, untidy, filthy apartment, that exhaled slovenliness and neglect from every pore. What melancholy breathed from the dirty whitewashed walls, the uneven and dusty tiled floor, ill covered by a few worn-out rugs, the clumsy articles of clothing, ill-shaped and of coarse material, soiled rather than worn, hanging from nails, the two iron bedsteads like

prison beds, painted a cold blue, with their dull-colored faded quilts and their sheets full of holes, and long unacquainted with soap and water!

Telmo remembered, as one remembers some beautiful dream, that when he was very small he had had, if not precisely silken coverlets and a palace for a dwelling, at least a clean, orderly, and attractive home; he imagined it must have been so, for there had remained with him from that shadowy period a sensation of pleasant warmth, as of a nest lined with down, which enfolded and sheltered him. Then his garments were clean and covered his limbs:; the food was savory and appetizing; in winter a brazier warmed the room, in summer there was an impression of brightness and coolness, as of freshly ironed curtains softening the light that came through the windows. All this the boy did not perceive very clearly, his recollections were confused, and the only object that stood out distinctly in the full light was a woman's face which, if we were to take Telmo's judgment in the matter of beauty, we should say was supremely beautiful. Fair or dark? Youthful or in early maturity? This Telmo did not know; all he knew was that she was lovely, and that she diffused comfort and contentment

around her, mingled with the perfume of lavender flowers. But on the day we speak of he did not see her by his bedside. The figure he saw standing there was that of his father, who was taking his hat down from a nail to put it on his head, without a preliminary brushing or any other the like ceremony. And Telmo received an admonition to which he was already habituated.

"Come, get up. Don't idle any longer. Your soup is there waiting for you in the kitchen. At two o'clock or so go down by the Calle del Arroyal. I'll be coming out of the house of Don Pelayo Moragas—you know it, eh? Well, wait for me there, and I'll take you to Rufino's."

These last words he said just as he was leaving the house, and as he ended the latch of the door fell with a sharp click.

The boy did not pay much heed to the advice not to idle. He knew well that the gain was the same whether he got up then or staid in bed a little longer. Precisely the problem that presented itself daily for his solution was how to pass away a day when one has neither obligation nor diversion of any kind. For him there was neither school, nor college, nor study; nor had he friends with whom he could spend the time in play, for

that great charm of childhood, the first manifestation of the affectional needs and the first outlet of the social instincts, was unknown to him. The resource remained to him to wander about the streets like a lost soul, seeking some corner where he should not be known.

He remained in bed for some half hour longer, closing his eyes to dream again, if possible, more lovely things, of the same martial nature. As for him, though Satan himself should interfere to prevent it, he would be a soldier. Not a private soldier, no; an officer, and one of the highest rank. A colonel at the very least! And with a horse! What pleasure could there be like that of managing a fine, fiery horse! That must be heavenly!

He at last summoned up resolution to put one foot out of bed, and, after the foot, his whole body. He drew on his trousers, that, truth to say, had more than one rent and a border of mud around the edges, he fastened them on as well as he could with listing suspenders; put on his best jacket and settled on his head an old brown cap, but it did not occur to him either to approach the iron basin where he might remedy, to some extent, the filthy condition of his hands and face,

or to plow with the comb his matted shock of hair. The neglect with which he had been brought up had rooted itself in his youthful nature and, like a true idealist, he dreamed of brilliant galloons and white plumes while his person, his dwelling, and his garments inspired disgust. With his five fingers he dispatched the pot of cold, lumpy soup, and then he was ready for the street.

When he issued from the hut it could be seen that Telmo was not handsome. But neither could it be denied that he had a certain grace and prettiness, something of that attractiveness that belongs to all street urchins, however dirty and neglected they may be. His turned-up nose had a peculiar charm, as had also his thick red lips, disfigured by the form of the gums, which caused them to project unduly. His rounded forehead receded slightly, and his head was one of those heads, flat on the occiput, that look as if a slice had been cut off with a hatchet—heads indicating vanity, heads of dreamers—this pronounced conformation being disguised, in some measure, by the fine black hair, curly and thick as a lamb's fleece, that covered it. The eyes, infinitely expressive, with a bluish, liquid, and

brilliant cornea, were two mirrors of the boy's soul; in them pleasure and pain, haughtiness and humility, enthusiasm and shame were imaged faithfully and instantaneously, reflecting a frank and impetuous nature. Those eyes demanded fellowship, asked for companionship and sympathy. Altogether the boy's head reminded one of that of a white negro, if the expression be allowable. Not only the shape of the features, but also the ingenuous expression of comical dignity which is seen in the faces of civilized and free negroes, contributed to bear out Telmo's resemblance to the African type; and his countenance wore at times that fleeting look of sadness and suspicious shyness characteristic of the black race that still bears the stigma of slavery.

As he crossed the threshold Telmo's first sensation was a familiar one of relief on feeling the outer air blow upon him. He abhorred the confinement of a house, and no captive bird released from its cage, no wild animal escaped from behind iron bars, no gas uncorked from its flask, ever aspired with more energy the free air of heaven. If the tranquil and the beautiful pleased him, the grandiose, the vast, enchanted him.

His second sensation was a different one; he observed that the sun, veiled in clouds, was beginning to descend in the heavens, a sign that he, Telmo, had been forgetful and would probably be too late to meet his father at the door of Señor Moragas' house. This thought spurred him on. From his father he had acquired the notion, sometimes salutary, sometimes fatal in its results, of blind obedience to the constituted authorities, and he practiced it, he obeyed without reverence or fear, and he regretted committing a fault on account of the fault itself, not on account of its consequences, for his father was not, in reality, severe. He darted off, then; the distance, although regarded as considerable in Marineda, was nothing for the active limbs of the boy. Besides, it was all down-hill and with places where one could run at the top of one's speed, like the Campo de Belona and the Paramo de Solares, that for many years past has been striving to be the Plaza de Mariperez, the appellation of the popular heroine of the beautiful Marinedan capital.

Precisely on the steep slope that leads from the high terrace on which stands the infantry barracks to the Paramo de Solares, Telmo en-

countered a temptation which caused him to lose some minutes. At this slope terminates the dingy street where, in a large, rambling house no less dingy, the Institute of Higher Instruction accommodated itself as best it could, and the boys, between classes, would spread themselves in a noisy band over the Campo de Belona, executing, in their manner, military evolutions and fighting sham battles, not always bloodless, in which, for the deadly weapons that we owe to the progress of science, were substituted those with which nature or the quarry furnishes youth. With what envy did Telmo regard that phalanx! How his eyes followed them! If he were only *allowed* to join the band and take part in their enterprises, who could doubt but that at the first exchange of hostilities he would win his epaulets or even the laureled cross! His expressive countenance darkened and he had one of those momentary fits of sadness habitual to him, that were like transitory eclipses of all hope in the future. He stood still and listened to the uproarious shouts, the excited cries of those little imps, and at last, making up his mind, like one who says to some coveted dainty: There you stay because I cannot get a bite of you; he went

on toward the Paramo de Solares, skirted the new arcade and paused at the Calle de Vergara, known to all Marinedans as the Arroyal. He knew Moragas' house very well, and he stationed himself before the door to wait until his father should come out. He looked up and down the street, however, and in one of his reconnoitering glances he saw the paternal silhouette disappearing in the distance under the arches which form the vestibule of the theater. His father had already left the house and he had not been there! What would he say? The boy was about to run after him when a noise, a curious occurrence, made him pause. A window in Moragas' house opened, as if at the impulse of a furious hand, an arm appeared, then a white cuff, then a long bony hand, and two shining silver coins fell with a ringing noise on the flags of the sidewalk. It was all instantaneous. Telmo rushed instinctively to pick them up. It was only when he held them close in the hollow of his hand that certain scruples assailed him.

Should he go into the house and return the coins? Let us say, without beating about the bush, that his hesitation lasted but a very short time. Telmo would not assuredly take a penny

belonging to another without its owner's consent; on the other hand, with the direct logic of childhood, he thought that whoever threw money out of the window ought not to blame another for picking it up. If for an instant the idea occurred to him of running upstairs and restoring his booty he at once rejected it, calling himself, mentally, a fool. And with a resolute gesture he put the two dollars in the deep pocket of his jacket. Now he no longer thought of going to meet his father. The treasure in his possession impelled him in another direction. It suggested to him at once that he was now in a position to associate with the other boys. It was not the result of reflection; it was rather an instinctive calculation that told him that money, in this vile world, excuses and facilitates many things. He could not appreciate justly the smallness of the amount; he had never seen at any one time in his whole life so large an amount of money, nor anything approaching it. even, and the forty reals which danced in his pocket seemed to him an Asiatic treasure. With two dollars anything might be attempted, anything might be attained. Telmo, the possessor of forty reals, could not be the same Telmo who

could find no boy to play with him, who met everywhere with insults and rebuffs.

His heart swelling with hope, so exuberant in youth, Telmo, without even remembering his father's existence, ran across the Paramo de Solares and soon reached the slope. With what haste he climbed it! From the summit he commanded a view of the Campo de Belona. There, at the further end, close to the parapet, surged the band which he dreamed of joining. He ran on again. The party took no notice of the boy, who sped on so fast that the soles of his shoes, from a distance, seemed to turn in a circle. The pupils of the provincial Institute of Marineda were deliberating, marvelous to relate, and their deliberations occupied their whole attention. For the discussion in which they were engaged was nothing less than a council of war!

Since the commencement of the term they had cherished the heroic project of fighting a memorable battle—the greatest and most Homeric battle ever fought with stones since time began. They were tired now of foolish plays, harmless pine-cones thrown to right and left. What was the use of such skirmishes? No; give me a real, genuine battle in which the two chiefs, Restituto

Taconer (*alias* Cartucho) and Froilan Neira (otherwise Edison), might win imperishable renown. On the day in question the time and the occasion were in their favor; Señor Roncesvalles, professor of history, had had the happy thought of remaining in bed with a fit of indigestion, or some such ailment, and the boys had the whole afternoon at their disposal for their pranks; an afternoon, too, which, from its beautiful serenity, the sun having broken through the curtain of clouds, invited to diversion.

The only difficulty now was to find a spot where the municipal guards should not scent out the affair. This was the point on which their deliberations turned. The majority were in favor of the cliff called *del Parrochal*, and also called the Emperor's Cliff, from a tradition—proved by weighty arguments to be authentic in a pamphlet written by Señor Roncesvalles—that at that part of the Marinedan wall and at the foot of its ancient postern the launch or boat had landed which carried the Emperor Charles V. when he came to the city of Marineda to hold Cortes and to ask for subsidies. The site, strategically considered, was an excellent one, as the wall was ruined in places, having abundant gaps and

breaches through which the attacks of the most active assailants might be evaded. On the other hand, unfortunately, the spot was open to inspection from the windows of the Court, the prison, the Captain General's office and many private houses; and, at the first pebble which should whizz through the air, there would not be wanting some ill-natured person to inform the chief of the patrol and bring the policemen down upon them. There was another beautiful spot, an unequaled spot, than which a better could not be imagined—with the scenery and the argument all prepared beforehand for the feat of arms which those valiant warriors meant to perform—the castle of San Wintila.

There, there, indeed, the action could be adorned with all the requirements of a tragedy—which they had learned in the rhetoric class—*peripecia*, *protasis*, *epitasis*, and *catastrophe*. There, indeed, hardly ever, never, it might be said, did a policeman come with uplifted stick and abusive and insulting speech. There, indeed—— But alas! What did all this avail? The attack on the castle of San Wintila could not be made unless a hero could be found willing to sacrifice himself for the pleasure and enjoyment of the

rest; a defender was wanting, and this no one wished to be; they all aspired to the glory of belonging to the attacking party. There was some talk of drawing lots, but no one was willing to trust his fate to chance. Chance? cheating, more likely. No, no, not one of the party was to be trusted. On this there arose a great outcry, a hot discussion. "You are blockheads, you are good-for-nothings——" "Yes, yes, go you, then, and defend the castle; let's see if you will be the one to stand as a target for the stones——" "Well, then, let us draw lots—the chance will be the same for everyone——" "I don't trust to chance, there will always be trickery and cheating——" "To the Parrochal, boys, to the Parrochal; there won't be any of those difficulties there." "Yes, but how if, when we get there, the general should suddenly show his mustaches, and order the police to pounce down upon us?"

Out of breath, covered with perspiration and with his heart in his mouth, which he had opened, as far as it would stretch, to keep from suffocating in his rapid career, Telmo arrived at this moment, purposing to join the band. "What does that fellow want?" said Cartucho gruffly, looking askance at him out of his small, squinting, mali-

cious eyes. "Who is he?" asked a newcomer among the scholars. And the son of the armorer answered mysteriously, "Who is he, eh? the hangman's whelp." "I swear I'm not going to play with him!" "Let him stay, I tell you! Now we'll have a defender," replied the chief, with the decision and foresight of the able strategist who knows how to avail himself in warfare of every resource.

Telmo had paused, overcome by unconquerable timidity, a few steps away from the band. All the promptings of his vanity, all the childish self-confidence with which the possession of the two shining coins had inspired him, changed to a horrible shyness when he found himself in the presence of a class which was for him what the severe aristocratic circle is for the woman who has erred, more impregnable than a wall of iron beyond which she cannot penetrate. Telmo felt, materially, the weight of his torn, neglected, and soiled clothing in the presence of those boys who, even in the midst of the disorder of play, revealed in their dress, more or less costly, but clean and whole, the care of feminine fingers, the attention of a mother, the possession of a home. How happy they with their note-books in their

pockets, emblem of the fraternity of school-life with its gay comradeship, its hours of play, its studies, which would win them a position in the world, and how unhappy he whom they had the right to kick from among them, like a mangy dog!

He remained rooted to the spot without courage to utter a word, breathing quickly, his cheeks pale, his heart palpitating. The two silver pieces on which he had based all his happy hopes seemed to him now of less value than two pieces of lead. He felt tempted to take them out of his pocket and dash them away from him, in imitation of the person whom he had seen put his arm out of Moragas' window. What folly to suppose that with those coins he could buy the right to associate with the boys of the Institute. They did not even give him the necessary courage to pronounce the customary formula: Will you let me play with you?

The entreaty was uttered only by his eyes, which were fixed anxiously on the two chiefs, who, on their sides, looked at him with a certain disdain, or indulgent haughtiness. At last Edison, with a mixture of magnanimity and contempt, deigned to address him.

"We are going to the beach of San Wintila. Do you want to come with us?"

Telmo thought he saw the heavens open before him and heard the songs of the seraphim. Paralyzed with emotion he nodded in the affirmative.

"You must obey like a recruit."

Another nod.

"You must do whatever you are ordered—and look out that you don't show the white feather."

A gesture of resolution.

"March, then. To the attack!"

At this war-cry the whole troop started off at a run.

III.

THE castle of San Wintila is one of the many small forts with which the engineers *à la* Vauban of the past century strengthened the entrance to the bay of Marineda, in order to protect the place from fresh attacks by the English. The better to fulfill its purpose it had annexed a park of artillery supplied by a powder magazine situated at a convenient distance. In the days of Nelson when, although a punctilious sense of honor and the sublime notion of military duty were at their height, engines and machines of war like those of the present day had not yet been invented and improved and perfected, the castle of San Wintila was an excellent bulwark, capable of holding and protecting the mouth of the river by attacking any hostile vessel which might appear at its entrance. Nevertheless, according to the custom of Spain from time immemorial, the line of forts defending the Marinedan coast had not all the improvements even of the period in which they were constructed; they still retained some-

thing of the character of mediæval fortifications, and the picturesque form of the castle on the rock formed a contrast to the exact geometric plan of the casemate. Therefore, in the evening and at night the castle of San Wintila, now fallen partially into decay, has a certain mysterious beauty, the beauty and mystery of a ruin, and looks centuries older than it can really be. The picturesqueness of its situation adds to this charm. In the wild and sylvan region where Marineda stretches to the ocean—a broad peninsula with a coast line as undulating and capricious as the edge of a silk skirt, the shore, after gently curving in a line of black rocks that border the cemetery, abruptly turns, forming a long creek which is almost shut in from the sea by a narrow neck of land, the prolongation and widening of the reef on which stands the castle. On the site opposite to that which slopes down to the narrow mouth, strait, or channel of the creek there curves a smooth, enchanting white beach of the finest sand.

Although this sandy beach presents on the land side the easiest approach to the castle, our party chose to descend the declivity fronting the chapel, a descent more rapid, perhaps, but also

attended with the risk of breaking one's neck by rolling down some precipice to the reef below or to the bottom of the cove. Turbulent youth delights in braving obstacles and encountering difficulties in order to conquer them.

More than any of the band Telmo took delight in the dangerous exercise of running, or rather of rolling down those declivities, disdaining the free and open path. He wished to prove to his companions of an hour that he possessed as much valor, resolution, agility, and skill as any of them, or even more. They, letting him rush on alone, went along in a body, exchanging bursts of laughter, insults, encouraging cries and challenges, commands and pushes. At their head marched Froilan Neira and Restituto Taconer, without deigning to cast a look at the boy who, by his presence and his abnegation, rendered possible the representation of the play.

On reaching the spring which crosses the path before, growing more precipitous, it descends abruptly to the shore, the party stopped to draw breath. A few, choking with thirst, approached the fountain to drink the famous water of San Wintila, held to be medicinal; some of them filled their caps with the water and, making a

spout of the peak, quenched their thirst in that way; others, less thirsty and more inclined for sport, accosted some poor women who were watering two or three yoke of red oxen at the basin. Then followed a shower of jokes in dialect. "Gossip, won't you give me a drink?" "What do you ask apiece for your oxen?" "Will you take two *perros chicos** for the pair?" "That one has an extra bone in his tail; wait, and I'll amputate it for you!" The women broke forth into abusive cries, as if the boys were killing them. Telmo saw an opportunity, by joining in the joke, of associating himself more intimately with the boys, and going slyly up to one of the oxen he took from his pocket a penknife which he always carried with him and, hiding it in his closed hand, plunged it into the muzzle of the animal, which sprang back infuriated, dragging with him the woman who held the rope. Here was a battle royal! Now it was not scolding or grumbling; not cries and complaints, but shouts of murder that the peasant women raised. "Help! help! Imps! Limbs of Satan! hogs, off-scouring of the earth, I'll go before the judge and have you thrown into prison!" At

* Perro chico: a coin of small value.

this moment one of the women observed Telmo, whom she knew from the circumstance of living near him, and her distorted countenance grew still more inflamed with contempt and rage. "It could be no one but you, son of a bad father, scabby cur, sprig of the gallows! Your father and you it is that ought to be garroted instead of your garroting unfortunate wretches! Pretty little gentlemen of the dunghill that associate with filth like you!"

The words were like the lash of a whip or a shower of shot falling among a flock of sparrows. The boys took to their heels, sending back a confused shout, a prolonged and mocking oh-h-h-h! an impotent attempt to disguise their shame and secret rage. Telmo, too, shouted; he, too, cried oh-h-h-h! but his cheeks were red and his eyes filled with a certain bitter moisture which he swallowed by a superhuman effort.

They had now reached the reef, and they paused at the foot of the castle walls. Here it was necessary to hold a new council. Cartucho and Edison called the band together, leaving Telmo out. Instinctively, by a feeling natural to the human soul, and especially to childhood—insensible alike to justice and to generosity—the

boys felt all the humiliation of the recent incident and threw all the blame on Telmo; on Telmo, who was to be their victim in a few short moments. In putting upon him the hardest and most dangerous part of the play, they fancied themselves to be dispensers of justice, courageous dispensers of justice. Had not that woman said that Telmo deserved the garrote? The more it was tightened the better would the law of justice be fulfilled, that law which renders its executor infamous, even beyond the fourth generation, or rather forever. I would not swear that the pupils of the Marinedan Institute employed precisely these arguments to arrive at this conclusion, but they carried the germs of them in their brains and in their blood, and they obeyed their impulse.

After conferring together for a minute or so they communicated to Telmo the orders of war. "Listen—pay strict attention—don't give us any bother. You are to be the garrison of the castle, and we are to take it by assault. You are to go into it and to defend yourself in the best way you can. But remember! it won't be of any use for you to hide. We'll see you wherever you may be, at the windows, or in the em-

brasures, or at the door, or behind the wall—in short, we'll see you. If you hide you are a sneak, a fool, a mule, a coward! Do you hear?"

Telmo raised his graceful head, that resembled a white negro's; he shook the curly fleece of his hair spiritedly, a conceited smile expanded his thick lips, and resting his hand on his hip he answered energetically: "*Contra!* I'm not a coward and I won't hide myself, you may be sure of that. Before you take the castle you'll have to kill me."

Spirit of heroism, preëminently Spanish, displayed in the heroic defenses of fortresses and castles, where a handful of men kept at bay and finally vanquished a numerous army. Morella, Numantia, Saragossa, Sagunto!—never was your impulse felt more strongly than it was felt now by the gallant Telmo, as, leaping, walking, creeping, he climbed, quick as a lizard, up the inner wall of the ruined and unroofed castle to appear, breathing valor, on the top of the rampart. In the few minutes which his ascent by the wall had lasted he had had the time to fill his pockets and his cap with round and rather thin stones—the best sort for throwing—and to improvise a sling

with the sleeve of his shirt, which he tore off at a wrench. More than in that imperfect instrument he trusted in his strong and nervous arms. He was ambidextrous and counted on using his left arm also.

The besieging army, drawn up in a compact mass at the entrance of the reef, uttered a cry on seeing the garrison appear on the rampart. It was the howl that greets the appearance of the bull when he leaves the stable. Every boy had his projectile hidden in the hollow of his hand; more than a dozen arms swung round at once and a shower of stones, overcoming the law of gravity, ascended, aimed at the head of the intrepid warrior. The chivalrous law of boys' battles with stones, to aim only at the legs, was not observed here; and what law was obligatory with such an adversary? The latter, who was on his guard, swiftly evaded the shower of stones, running like a deer to the other side of the rampart; and, without pausing in his flight, swung his arm swiftly round, sending a stone hissing along the ground like a reptile, which struck the shin of Cartucho, who uttered a cry of pain; "The deuce take that fellow, he has broken my shin-bone! Stone him, boys, stone him!"

While the others laughed Cartucho uttered suppressed groans of pain, but he did not on this account retire from the combat. On the contrary it seemed as if rage at the blow inflamed his courage. He had the reputation of being an excellent slinger; he took up a stone from the ground, a stone smooth and white and as sharp as a hatchet, and bided his time. Telmo evaded the next shower of stones hurled at him by means of a maneuver like the former one—he fled quickly to the other extreme of the rampart and took refuge in a tower. This was the opportunity Cartucho was waiting for. He calculated the distance to which Telmo would retire, and sent his stone to that spot with sure aim. The projectile struck Telmo on the shoulder. The besieged paused, paralyzed, no doubt, by the blow. Nevertheless he neither raised his hand to the wounded part nor opened his lips to utter a complaint. What he did was to evade the second stone, employing a stratagem of savage warfare. The ruined wall presented many inequalities, and the stones which had been torn out or which had fallen left projections which one could catch hold of and cling to, and behind which one could hide, and make a bulwark of, in case of necessity.

Telmo selected one of these stones suitable for his plan of defense, placing himself so that, if in order to throw the stones he was obliged to expose his body above the rampart, seeing the shower coming he could lower himself down, resting his foot in the hole, and shelter himself behind the wall. His two arms rose like the arms of a windmill, above the rampart, throwing stones with so certain an aim that he had already lamed three of the besiegers; his chivalry was manifested by the fact that, pressed closely as he was, besieged by numerous enemies, defending himself against an army, he respected the law of the code of honor—he aimed only at the legs.

The besiegers comprehended, however, that it was only a question of time, and this very fact excited all the more their rage and valor. Out of a shower of thirteen or fourteen stones must not some one strike the defender? Must they not strike that head which appeared and disappeared incessantly like a Jack-in-the-box? In so unequal a struggle Telmo must succumb. Froilan Neira, otherwise Edison, the cleverest of the band, the only one in the party of any strategic ability, had a brilliant idea.

"We shall be able to do nothing, boys, while

we are here in a lump. In that way he knows where the stone comes from and dodges it. Let us scatter, Callobre, Augusto, and Montenegro, there; Rafael and Santos to the right. The rest on that high rock. I on this other. And all aim at the head! In the breast it hurts but it does not stun. At the head, between the eyes, that would fell an ox!"

So saying the clever Edison proceeded to take his stand on the rock, the point he had selected to carry out his plan. It was a sharp, black rock, made slippery by the green seaweed which covered it, and in its center was a hollow filled with salt water, clear and tepid, a species of miniature bay, at whose bottom the crabs' claws could be seen moving about and a bottle-green polypus expanding like a sponge. The sea, the real sea, washed the foot of the cliff, and Edison was obliged to wet his boots to take up this advantageous position. He did not mind this, he planted himself firmly on the upper ledge of the rock; he waited, and when the head of the besieged appeared above the wall he took aim at the curly shock of hair, raised his arm, swung it around thrice, without pausing—ah, this time, at least, he had taken good aim!

The head disappeared below the top of the wall. The besiegers uttered a cry of indescribable triumph. But the head appeared again, the face pale and marked by a streak of blood; serene, the brows knitted, transfigured by a radiant expression of joy and heroism, and the two hands at the same time aimed two stones at Edison's legs. Both hit the mark and, without seriously wounding the chief, had the effect, owing to the position in which he stood—like that of the colossus of Rhodes—of throwing him down from his pedestal. He fell, and he fell plump into the sea, and the salt water entered his ears and his lungs, confusing his senses. But as he was not beyond his depth the boy, urged by the instinct of self-preservation, struck out for the shore, and succeeded in reaching the beach. The incident had diverted the attention of his companions and had even given them a fright: they all abandoned their positions and ran to the sands with the vague apprehension of some tragic event. Edison emerged, dripping water, and puffing and blowing with rage and mortification, and shaking his fist at the garrison of the impregnable castle. As if at a preconcerted signal each member of the band hurled at Telmo, in default of unavail-

ing stones, some insult. "Coward, poltroon, big mouth, let us see now if you will show yourself above the wall! You hide yourself, and then you throw your stones! That isn't fair, coward, treachery!"

Owing to the stillness of the afternoon, the placidity of the sea and the silence of this solitary region, the insults reached the defender of San Wintila loud and clear, and before the sounds had ceased he had climbed up the wall and stood unprotected on the rampart, his hands empty, his arms disdainfully folded across his breast, his face bloody, his clothes torn. His attitude was one of provocation and defiance, the proud defiance of a conqueror and a hero.

The boys, without consulting together, stooped down, picked each one his stone, and without concert, at unequal intervals, each swung his arm around and threw his projectile. Telmo, motionless, without unfolding his arms, without attempting to put in practice any of his former methods of defense, without running along the rampart, or letting himself down behind the protecting wall, waited. Which of those stones was the one that first struck him? Regard for historical truth obliges us to confess that this is not known.

Probably two struck him simultaneously, one in the left arm, the other full in the face, near the tempel. And neither is it known in consequence of which of the two it was that he opened his arms like a bird about to take flight and fell backward into space.

The boys remained dazed in presence of their victory. They did not celebrate it with joyful cries or triumphal shouts. Let us do them justice—their consciences reproached them; their fresh, young minds, their souls, not yet accustomed by the experiences of life to compromise with justice, clamored to them that their laurels were stained with base mud. Profound silence reigned among them. They looked at one another. The gentle murmur of the water washing the beach, the plashing of the waves against the rocks of the channel, seemed to them accusing voices.

"*Contra!*" Cartucho, the most cruel of the warriors, ventured to say. "He's got what he deserved for mocking us."

"Yes, but what if he should be dead? We have gone too far," said Edison, the most prudent of the band, speaking in a low voice, as if he feared to be overheard by the judge.

"Dead? Nonsense! A scratch or two on

the head. A bruise more or less," opined Augusto, a boy two lustrums and some months old, and already a bold cigarette smoker.

"Let's go take a look at him," exclaimed Montenegro, bounding up the road to the fortress.

The rest followed him. The reef was slippery and dangerous, but the boys flew along over it like sea gulls. The fortress had no door; only a heap of stones obstructed the entrance, and large blocks of masonry, fallen from arch or wall, formed a sort of barricade which brambles and nettles rendered still more formidable. This obstacle surmounted, the besiegers had yet to pass through a small postern and enter what must have been the guardroom of the ancient defenders of the fortress, for the wall was blackened with smoke from what might have been an open fireplace or a kitchen fire. There, on the heap of rubbish on which he had fallen from the top of the rampart, lay Telmo, covered with blood, white as chalk, without movement or other sign of life. The conquerors were horrified and amazed.

"He seems to be dead," said Montenegro, in a terrified voice.

"Dead! Nonsense! he is pretending so as to frighten us," declared Cartucho.

"Don't be a brute," responded Edison, always ready to put himself in opposition to the armorer's son, who surpassed him in strength and whom he surpassed in brains. "Don't be a Kaffir. He is badly hurt. We have done for him, boys."

"Well, then—there is nothing to be done now but to make off with ourselves as fast as we can!"

"And that fellow? Are we going to leave him there like a cat that's fallen out of a garret window?"

"How can we help it? Do you want to stay to take care of him?"

"His father lives close by, near the cemetery. We might let him know."

"Hold your tongue, hold your tongue, pumpkin. Don't try any of your hypocritical airs with me. Let his father know? I'll not go to his father's, you may be sure of that!"

"Nor I!"

"Nor I!"

"Nor I! not if I were to be offered a hundred dollars——"

"Let us be off, then, for the moment we least expect it the police will be down upon us. Everyone for himself. Run!"

IV.

THE man who had consulted Moragas was not surprised at not meeting his son on leaving the doctor's house. He knew that the boy was fond of sleeping late, or rather of remaining in bed and dreaming with his eyes wide open, and he attributed his want of punctuality to laziness. He would turn up at Rufino's or wherever else God willed.

The sick man walked up the street. As he passed in front of the building containing the city hall and the theater, instinct or habit impelled him to seek the shade of the arches; and when he came in sight of the Calle Mayor, which was full of people and enlivened by its handsome shops, he turned to the left and plunged under another row of arches, forming the arcade of the wharf.

This was the obverse side of the medal; the shops of the Calle Mayor, well furnished, spacious, with tall and handsome glass cases, and at night brilliantly lighted with gas, formed a con-

trast to the shabby little shops and eating-houses and the suspicious-looking taverns of the Marine Arcade, which were frequented by carriers, fishermen, Havanese just landed, dressed in linen and with complexions the color of mahogany, soldiers and carters from Olmeda, who, before goading their oxen to compel them to draw the monstrous load of hogsheads that tested the strength of the cart, stimulated their own brutality with a dose of alcohol.

The man—to whom we shall give the name of Juan Rojo—stopped at the door of one of the taverns, the filthiest, the darkest, that frequented by the worst class of people, whence issued the drunkenest cries and the vilest words. He hesitated for an instant before entering. Señor de Moragas had expressly forbidden him to drink or even to taste liquor. In Rojo the acquired habit struggled with the instinct of self-preservation, the desire to live, which, strange to say, does not abandon even the suicide at the very instant in which he attempts his own life. "When the doctor says so——" After a minute he compounded with his conscience for a glass, a small glass, a thimbleful. "A little poison doesn't kill," he said to himself, shrugging his shoulders. And

reaching toward the glass an ill-shaped, large, strong hand with clumsy fingers, he took it up and threw its contents down his throat.

The stimulant gave him resolution. When he left the tavern his step was less furtive and oblique; his face wore an expression of arrogant and aggressive gravity, as if he was determined to hold his own in the face of every expression of hostility. "I mean to walk up the Calle Mayor," he said to himself. "The street is free to all, and I should like to see who will prevent me from walking where I choose." He settled his hat on his head, thrust his hands into his trousers' pockets, and, threading the narrow Calle del Arancel, emerged in the middle of the Calle Mayor—the emporium of Marineda.

The people of Marineda, in every season except summer, prefer to take their promenade before nightfall, and shunning the sharp temperature and the damp north wind that blows in the Ensanche, gather in the Calle Mayor, which is sheltered by its very narrowness. It was full of gayly dressed people, desirous of amusing themselves and of seeing all that was to be seen, when Juan Rojo entered it. He did not produce the effect he had anticipated. The crowd walked up

and down, engaged either in exchanging telegraphic signs, or in criticising one another, or in casting furtive glances at one another's clothes, and had no reason for noticing this man who, however he might interest the student of human nature, would necessarily pass unobserved among a throng as brilliant as it was numerous. None of all the ladies who were showing off their best dresses, and who stopped to salute one another and to look at the shop windows, knew Juan Rojo. If any man remembered his face and his figure, it may be imagined that he gave no sign of the recognition. Juan looked to the right and to the left without meeting in any face he saw a look of interest or of recognition. At the door of the Casino de la Amistad, however, seated in chairs placed outside the vestibule, Juan observed a group of notables. It was composed of the President of the Committee, the rich manufacturer and councilor Castro Quintás, the Brigadier Cartoné, the new lawyer and occasional journalist Arturito Cáñamo, the magistrate Palmares, and the Señor Alcalde of Marineda in person. Rojo, as he drew near the Casino, slackened his pace until he came face to face with the group; he looked at them fixedly and, as none of them

appeared to recognize him, he said, almost aloud: "Good afternoon, Señor de Palmares, good afternoon, Señor Alcalde." The judge and the alcalde turned away as if stung by a viper, their faces darkened, their lips exhaled an indistinct murmur, that might be either an answer or an insult. Rojo, without removing his eyes from them, resumed his way.

At the end of the street where it widens, sloping gently down to the theater, and where there were fewer passers-by, Rojo met a poor woman and a child, modestly attired, who stood still to look at him. The child hid herself in the woman's skirts with eyes dilated with terror, and cried in a low, trembling voice:

"Oh, mother, the executioner!"

Rojo felt the little girl's exclamation as if he had received a blow in the face from a cold hand. He turned round and, approaching the child, who clung, not now to the skirts, but, convulsed with terror and sobbing loudly, to the knees of her mother, said to her sententiously, raising his bony right hand:

"Provided you keep safe from the law you are safe enough from me."

And he continued to walk on, or rather to run,

for he had lost all the bravado, due to the liquor he had drunk, which he had displayed in walking through the main street, and once more the impulse conquered to seek the darkest corners, the most deserted spots, of the city, the impulse that urged him to slip through the most out-of-the-way and suspicious streets and to choose for his goings-out the hours in which twilight spreads her misty veil. Keeping close to the houses, sheltered by the arches, he reached the ascent leading to the infantry barracks, and once on the esplanade of the Campo de Belona felt a sense of relief. He was now in his own region.

There he was, if not among his equals—for Rojo had no equals—at least among the people who forgive all that is done to *earn bread.* The sensation of relief experienced by Rojo increased as he crossed Rufino's threshold.

Rufino's house was one of those small shops, formerly called oil-and-vinegar shops, but in which at the present day are to be found spices, kerosene oil and provisions, together with matches, playing-cards, religious pictures, shoes, and various other articles, as, for instance, cakes of pink and green soap, and bottles of beer. All the liquors sold there, however, were not so Saxon,

for in Rufino's back shop, around a grimy table, the *brisca* party met in the afternoons to play for glasses of excellent brandy. The party was composed of Rufino, the shop-keeper, Antiojos, a cobbler, Marcos Leira, a tinsmith and lamp maker, and Juan Rojo. Perhaps some over-curious reader may desire to learn how it was that the cobbler and the artist in tin were able to devote their afternoons to the worship of *brisca* and *tute*, abandoning the awl and the soldering iron. To any such I would say that the families of Antiojos and Marcos Leira were organized on the following pattern: The wives wearing themselves to death working, while the drunken husbands cultivated ease with dignity—and with *brisca*.

The wife of Antiojos was an operative in the Peninsular workroom in the cigar factory; her active fingers and those of her eldest daughter earned the support of the family. The youngest daughter, a sickly girl who had not yet obtained the longed-for admittance into the *Granera*, dedicated herself to preparing the work for her respectable papa, whose shop, at the foot of the Campillo de la Horca, now the Rastro, was one of those hovels which spring up like red

mushrooms in the shadow of the infantry barracks. There Antiojos' unhappy younger daughter spent the day, waiting for the problematical arrival of some customer to run and notify the cobbler, who generally received her with bad words and worse deeds. While waiting for the customer the girl, who, unfortunate in everything, had received at the font the uneuphonious name of Orosia, did not assuredly remain with her hands folded. She wet the sole, she beat it on the flat stone, bruising her knees; she marked with the punch the distance between the nails; she sewed the linings, she waxed the thread, and cut and pasted the inner soles; she cut the button-holes, and when Antiojos arrived, emitting sparks from his fiery nose and his inflamed eyes, she had left for him only so much to do as was indispensable for the maintenance of his dignity as master, which was centered especially in the last, that is to say, the wooden block which he inserted in the boot or shoe to be mended. "Goat, filthy cow, cursed girl!" he was accustomed to say to Orosia in his picturesque language, "if you touch the last I'll rip you open." And the luckless Orosia did everything—except touch the last, which was ap-

parently the mysterious key to the art of shoemaking.

On Marcos Leira, the tinsmith, wine had an opposite effect, inclining him to good-humor and cajolery. If, in the early morning, he was generally dejected and morose, the instant he had put into his stomach the first glass of sweet red wine, that excellent wine which is sold in the poorest Marinedan tavern, the honest Marcos was as merry as a cricket, and as soft as velvet with his wife and little ones. Concha, the tinsmith's wife, a handsome brunette with large brilliant eyes, vowed and declared that she did not know why women complained of their husbands taking a drop of drink. On this point the cigar-maker, Antiojos' wife, and the wife of Marcos were always at odds. The latter, praised be God! was never happier than when her spouse had a little "drop in." Then he was not only talkative, affectionate, gallant, but he would lie down on the bench, leaving in peace Concha and the journeyman, who accomplished a deal more work when left to themselves. Evil tongues interpreted in their own way the fancy of the tinsmith's beautiful wife for sending her husband to Rufino's; but perhaps it was an excess of malice to think

ill of the drunkard's wife on this account, since his shop and his work, under her management, were in the most flourishing condition, while she herself, always neat and carefully combed, looked like a queen in the midst of the silvery splendor of innumerable cruets, watering-pots, strainers, lamps, lanterns, and basins. If the tinsmith's wife had been what her neighbors insinuated, her business would not be so prosperous nor her children so healthy. They talked about her of course; who is not talked about? The gossips of the neighborhood could not be reconciled to the handsome woman having her house supplied with everything, just the same as if her husband were not a confirmed idler, gambler, and drunkard, and envy it doubtless was that moved them to attribute motives so black, not only to the zeal and assiduity of the young journeyman tinsmith, but to the visits of a certain lieutenant who would stop at the shop for a little chat in coming out of the barracks.

In short the four *brisca* players were four examples of alcoholism differing completely from one another. The grocer tavern-keeper, Rufino, ought scarcely to be counted. He drank barely the quantity of wine necessary to stimulate his

companions; he drank sparingly out of his own glass while he filled up the glasses of the others. Marcos Leira was the abject being who, through drink, has lost all sense of shame or who drinks in order to forget his shame, and was still capable of uttering a jest when the lieutenant, without paying any heed to him, clasped his arms around his wife's waist. Antiojos was the brutal drunkard in whom drink arouses the dormant impulse of sanguinary frenzy. At times, returning with unsteady steps to his house, describing zigzags on the uneven pavement of the wretched lanes, a red cloud would obscure his dull brain and his trembling and uncertain hands feel a fierce tingling, the itch to crush and destroy.

As for Juan Rojo, he never reached the state of genuine alcoholic intoxication; he had a strong head, a sound stomach, a stubborn will, and although drink quickly enlivened him, it was long before it rendered him oblivious to reality. All he asked from it was forgetfulness, and forgetfulness came so slowly!

On the day we speak of, however, when he took his seat at the table in Rufino's back shop, he remembered the doctor's words and he resolved to restrain himself. The first time the

bottle was passed around he did not drink. While dealing the cards his abstinence caused him a feeling of faintness—the painful faintness familiar to every drunkard who has tried to reform. In the profound and gloomy depression which took possession of him the recollection of the group seated at the door of the Casino haunted his mind. What airishness! To respond to his salutation with that contemptuous murmur! Ah, he was tired now of drinking gall, and if he once made up his mind to speak he was going to tell some plain truths to the alcalde, the gentlemen of the Court, the president himself. Was not Rojo, too, a functionary? What did it matter what the Court ordered if he were not there to execute it?

His eyes turned to the full glass. He resisted, however—strange firmness—during the early hours of the afternoon. Until near five he sustained the struggle with heroism. Finally, when the sun was sinking in the west and the dirty panes of the shop made the scanty light still more dim, those evening shades, whose darkness fell at once on his eyes and on his soul, became accomplices in the deed. He stretched his trembling hand toward the glass, took it up and

drained it to the last drop, feeling with a secret joy that the accustomed sensations of warmth and hope came at his call, and that a sort of moral lever raised him up, drawing him out of the abyss of bitterness in which he had been sunk some moments before. A coarse jest of Marcos' made him laugh; and to an insult of Antiojos' he answered by a joke. At the same time he felt a certain vague disquiet, a disquiet which is the normal state of hypocondriacs, but which, *a posteriori*, is called foreboding. Where could the boy be?

The *brisca* party generally broke up at five or half-past, because Juan Rojo liked to go home early to take supper with his son and then go to bed.

Antiojos and Marcos did not retire at this early hour. For all they lost by not going home! They remained in the back shop until ten or eleven, and Antiojos sometimes slept under the stars, for his wife, ordinarily patient and long-suffering, had days of sudden rebelliousness in which she bolted the door, swearing that she was tired of wine-skins and at the moment least expected she would——

Rojo retired on this day later than usual. It

was quite dark but the night was beautiful, one of those peaceful nights that herald in the spring and glorify the Creator. To go from the shop to his hut he was obliged to cross the Calle del Peñascal, and walk up the Calle del Faro, passing some high walls—a double row of mud-walls forming a miserable alley that in winter was covered with mud and in summer with dust and filth. As Rojo came near one of these walls he heard a confused sound of words, muttered oaths, groans, and lamentations. Rojo felt a compassionate impulse, not unmixed with a feeling of self-complacency, thinking to himself: Here there is someone in trouble; here you are needed; here there is something for you to do. At the foot of the wall stirred a shapeless mass from which the confused chant proceeded. Rojo recognized it. It was his neighbor, La Jarreta, the professional drunkard, whom the police arrested daily in different parts of the town, on the sidewalk, on the wharf among the offal of sardines, in the public promenade, at the foot of some bench, now under the arches of the Malecon, now among the stalls of the provision market, always as drunk as a fiddler, always sending forth from her pestiferous mouth the dregs and scum of the language.

Doubtless the sudden paralysis which accompanies a certain stage of drunkenness had surprised the wretched woman a short distance from her hovel, and to the unavailing struggle she made to stand upon her legs, that refused her their support, were due her complaints, her moans, and her furious imprecations. Rojo drew near, saying solicitously;

"Come, Señora Hilaria, get up—I'll help you—you'll see that I'll soon have you on your way home—at your very door."

The drunken woman groaned more loudly than ever; she half opened her glassy eyes, and looked at her interlocutor, first vaguely, then with surprise. When, in the fading light of the evening, assisted by the light of the lantern, La Jarreta was able to distinguish the features of her savior, her eyes darted forth angry flames, the sink of her mouth sent forth a whiff of pestiferous rage, recovering the use of her speech, she cried hoarsely:

"Get away, hangman; if you touch me I'll spit in your face! I haven't stabbed anyone, do you hear? I haven't stolen a few filthy *cuartos*, do you understand, that you should put your hands

on me! I'd sooner go with Satan from hell than with you. If you come near me I'll call the neighbors and the guard of the Artillery Park! Get away from here; the woman you touch is contaminated!"

V.

ROJO staggered. This was worse than what had happened when he saluted the magistrate. A magistrate, after all, although *in the same line of business*, was a superior functionary, a respectable person, and he might look down upon—— But that this miserable woman, a disgrace to her sex, and the scoff of humanity, should disdain to receive from him, not friendship, or acquaintance, but the most casual service, what might be accepted from anyone! La Jarreta! Fancy the one to turn up her nose at him! La Jarreta, that offscouring of the earth!

He did not answer. The woman continued to vociferate. The object of her insults hung his head and, turning into the Calle del Faro, walked on in the direction of the Faro. As we proceed along this somewhat steep road, in the direction of the cemetery, seeing always in the distance the Phenician tower invested with a neo-Greek tunic by Charles III., the houses become meaner, lower, more irregular, until, in the neighborhood

of the cemetery, they disappear entirely from the left side of the road, and on the right is to be seen only a row of some half-dozen hovels, consisting of a ground floor and a garret, or lumber-room, as it is called in Marineda. The first five of these hovels must have been uninhabited, for a white paper, that looked like a shroud fluttering in the wind, stood out in relief against the window-panes. In the last hovel, that nearest the cemetery, lived Juan. The uniform red color of the doors and windows of the six hovels showed in the daytime like a red line of blood against the greenish or leaden background of the ocean.

Rojo arrived at his door, with bent head and shrinking form, like one who flees from a pursuing whip, raised the latch and slipped in as if he were entering the house of another with some unlawful intent. As soon as he was inside he struck a match and lighted the kerosene lamp that hung from the wall.

As if the light served to illuminate his mind with a new, and in a certain sense consoling idea, he then remembered the child. Telmo? Where could Telmo be?

It was strange that he should not have seen

him during the whole day, and it was stranger still not to have found him waiting at the door at this hour when his appetite, sharpened by running about the streets all day, ought to have brought him home to supper. When his father delayed in returning home the boy would wait for him at the house of a neighbor, the wife of a cask-maker of the wharf, and the mother of four children, who were the delight of Telmo, whom they looked up to as being their elder. To this good woman, who was called Juliana la Marinera, and who was half-blind from chronic ophthalmia, Rojo went when he required some service done, such as to put a patch on some garment of his or of Telmo's, to iron an occasional shirt, to peel the potatoes—or to scrub the floor, once in six months at the utmost. Working almost blindly La Marinera did everything very badly, her patches were maps in relief, her ironing scorching, but Rojo would not change her for a more skillful workwoman, because she received him with good-humor and did not disdain to take money from his hands. Seeing, then, that Telmo was not loitering about the house, Rojo thought that he might be at La Marinera's. He went out to inquire. No; the child was not there,

either, nor had he made his appearance there during the whole blessed day.

La Marinera, who was occupied in patching a pair of her husband's trousers, laid down her work at once and offered to inquire at the houses in the neighborhood if anyone had seen anything of the boy. Meanwhile Rojo returned to his dwelling with the vague hope of finding the boy there before him. But just as he was entering a sensation, as if the cold air of a tomb had blown over him, caused him to pause on the threshold. What was it?

At certain moments in life, under the weight of the vague and indefinite fear which overpowers the spirit when it foresees a misfortune without being able to estimate its extent, this shadowy misfortune assumes the concrete form of a previous misfortune or a series of previous misfortunes, which resuscitate and come out of the past as the corpse of the shipwrecked mariner comes out of the sea, disfigured, livid, and terrible. The silence and the solitude of Rojo's dwelling, the stewpan resting on the embers, the lighted lamp, and more than all the dread, the uncertainty, the inexplicable disappearance of his son, took Rojo's mind back, some six or seven years, to an hour

very similar to the present one, a decisive hour in his wretched existence. That hour, that moment, rather, had been hovering over him, had been preparing for a long time previously, and especially since his petition for the place of *public official* had been granted. Rojo, however, either did not see or did not wish to see how it was that the dark cloud had gathered. That his wife had seemed absent-minded, that she spent a great deal of time out of the house, that at table she scarcely answered him when he spoke to her, that at times she seemed to be sunk in a reverie, as if her thoughts were far away, that she paid scarcely any attention to Telmo, never caressing him—she who had been so fond a mother—that she performed her household duties as if through compulsion—she who had been so industrious—and that one day, because he had offered to caress her, she had almost had a convulsion that had ended in a flood of tears—she who had been so affectionate!—all this, which was in reality noteworthy, Rojo had not observed, perhaps because the change had not come suddenly, but gradually, almost imperceptibly, and because it would be less exact to say that the change in her had taken place at the time of the *petition* than that it had

been going on for a long time previous, as was indicated by a thousand incidents such as are unfailing symptoms, though seldom understood, of a change in the affections. The husband, if indeed he had noticed her coldness, did not attach to it the deep significance that it really possessed, from his tendency to take everything *literally;* a tendency which led him to regard himself as the master, not in a figurative, but in a real and positive sense, of this human being. She was his wife! She belonged to him, to him alone, to Juan Rojo! And how wretched soever the fate of Juan Rojo might be, the fate of Maria Roldan was indissolubly bound up with it. In marrying, Maria Roldan had accepted all that might come to her from her husband, whether glory or infamy. This was for Rojo an article of faith, and if the change in his wife's nature irritated him, he did not therefore imagine that from this change could result a radical alteration, a grave event, a resolution——

The blow was all the more cruel that it was unexpected. He had felt it almost physically, like a blow on his head. Now he seemed to feel the same blow again, for the external circumstances reminded him of that fatal time. On

that night, also, he had remarked, on entering the house, a strange solitude, unbroken silence; on that night, too, the stewpan, closely covered, had rested on the embers on the hearth, only, that Telmo was then sleeping tranquilly in the bedroom, in his mother's place. And Rojo recalled everything, to the minutest detail—his anxious waiting for her, his going out to inquire among the neighbors if they had seen his wife; the smiles, contemptuous or ironical, rarely compassionate, that answered the question; the first news of the flight, which he refused to believe; his obstinacy in adhering to the belief that it was all a jest of Maria's; the night spent between that anguish of doubt which preceded the certainty of a catastrophe, and which is a hundred times more cruel than certainty itself; the desperate search on the following day; the crying of the child, whom nothing would satisfy but to be washed and dressed and waited on by mamma; the information, no longer to be doubted, received at the Town Hall, that Maria had been seen in a car on the way to Lugo, accompanied by a *man*; the offers made to bring her back to the offended husband by the police; the strange form which the discovery of his dishonor took in

his mind, resulting in a total renunciation of his rights, and the obstinacy with which he had for many days persisted in regarding Maria—who was still fresh and young—as having been carried away by a mad passion, as desperately enamored of another man, and excusable by the fatality of love. But this view of the motive of his wife's desertion could not finally prevail. Friends, neighbors, policemen, officious persons of all sorts, undertook the task of undeceiving him one after another. Love! What nonsense! The *man* with whom Maria had fled she regarded almost with indifference. She had known him since yesterday, as one might say, and neither her past sadness, nor her eccentricities, nor her reveries, had anything to do with the *individual.* All the neighbors knew, besides, that Maria had resolved to be off with the first man who should present himself. She had been heard to say so many times: "And if I don't find one crazy enough to take me, no matter! I shall know what to do. There's more than one house of the Seven Tiles in the world." The house of the Seven Tiles, as Rojo knew, was a place of ill-repute, so called on account of the seven tiles which projected over its front, so narrow as to

allow space for that number only, and famous, on account of this singularity, in the sphere of Marinedan vice. It was not then a fatal passion which had broken up Rojo's house, it was another sentiment, the sentiment which urges flight from one ignominy to take refuge in another ignominy—greater or less? A difficult problem, which the gossips of the neighborhood had solved, without hesitation, in a sense unfavorable to the husband. "As an honest woman I don't yield to the queen herself," said a masculine bacon-seller of the market, "but if God and the Virgin should punish me by giving me a husband with such a trade, by the faith of Colasa I would go off with a soldier." And this the gossip had said in the presence of her own liege lord and master, who responded with equal conviction: "And you would be more than right, woman. For there are some things that bring a blush to the face. I am a butcher of hogs, by your leave, and I'm not ashamed of it, either, for I've never given anyone cause to look down upon me, but I'd rather gather up dung in the stables for a living than be a butcher of Christians." When, a few months after Maria's flight, it became known that, abandoned by her com-

panion, she had given herself up completely to a gay life in Vivero, the gossips had even more pity for her than before, more aversion for her husband. Only La Marinera said boldly, that, having a child, she would not have gone away like Maria Roldan. And this opinion, valiantly sustained, cost her many an insult for, according to the gossips, she defended Rojo because she acted as his servant, which was disgraceful.

If not precisely on these incidents, on matters connected with them Rojo's thoughts were fixed. And so intently that he was obliged to make an effort to come back to reality and concentrate all his attention on this one thought: Where was Telmo?

Two knocks at the door, given with the knuckles in quick succession, were heard, followed by the plaintive voice of La Marinera, saying breathlessly:

"Señor Rojo, Señor Rojo! Mother of Mercy! Señor Rojo, they say your boy is badly hurt, that he's not able to move! Some women, who were down at the fountain of the castle, told my daughter so."

Rojo rushed out and, seizing the woman by the arm, cried:

"Where is the boy? Where?

"In San Wintila. Stoned to death! Go there, Señor Rojo; I have no sight, if I had——"

The father no longer listened; he flew up the hill, and a few moments afterward was rushing down the steep and tortuous path to the castle. The clearness of the night, illuminated by the silvery light of the rising moon, which began to mount above the hills that framed in the bay, enabled Rojo to see his way, and saved him from slipping and falling on the rocks below.

On the tranquil beach, mysteriously beautiful in the light of the moon, which shed a shower of sickles of burnished silver over the surface of the water, only the gentle murmur of the waves breaking against one another was heard, and the stillness and calmness of the air, the blackness of the cliffs, contrasting with the phosphorescent green of the sea, the majesty of the dismantled castle, heightened by the scene and the hour, all seemed to mock the anguish of the man who had come among these precipices and rocks in search of his sole earthly possession.

Rojo dashed along the reef, heedless of the danger of a stumble. In a few bounds he reached the fort. The moon lighted up its interior

brightly; aided by its light the father crossed the rubbish that barricaded the entrance, without difficulty, and, lying on a heap of stones, he saw Telmo, bleeding and senseless; the boy neither moved nor groaned.

The father darted toward the inert body like an animal toward its prey, and felt it all over with eager hands, giving a hoarse cry of joy as he perceived the heat and flexibility of life in the bruised limbs. He gave a deep sigh; lifted the boy in his arms, laid his head on his shoulder, and began the ascent; but not with the same precipitation as before, for now he had his precious burden to take care of. The wounded boy groaned; doubtless the motion, slight as it was, had revived his pain. Rojo poured forth anxious questions, murmured words of rough tenderness, seeking to find an easy position for the boy, so that he should suffer as little as possible; resting his wounded head on his bosom, and holding him with hands soft as cotton, so to say. Telmo, indeed, was neither dead nor dying—but merciful God! was he dangerously wounded? Had he a leg or an arm broken? Might not some fatal complication arise? Would he be maimed or disfigured for life?

While Rojo was turning over these probabilities in his mind, he had already cleared the woody slope leading from the castle and entered the cart road bordered on either side by the walls of the two cemeteries—the Catholic and the Protestant—of Marineda. The little rotunda of the Catholic chapel stood sharply defined against the clear sky, and its cross suggested to Rojo the thought of praying to the Deity, of asking from One who could do all things what he did not hope from men. His prayer burst forth with tremendous energy, with savage impetus, with that strength which seems as if it must impose the will of the human creature even on the Arbiter of creation. Without any pretensions to heroism, as the most natural thing in the world, Rojo addressed his God—for he had a God—and said to him, as if he were proposing a compact: "If anyone is to die let it be I. Let the boy live, and get well." As he made this invocation, Rojo's glance passed from the cross of the cemetery to the lantern of the lighthouse, which rose in the distance majestic, solitary, sublime, and as at that very instant the revolving light reappeared, clear and brilliant, Rojo felt a voice within him saying: He will live, he will recover.

The door of the hovel had remained standing wide open ; the lamp was burning, and Juliana La Marinera, half-gropingly, as was her wont, and more nervous than usual, owing to her recent fright, went about, moving a vessel from one place to another, blowing the fire and repeating under her breath : "My God! My God! Mother of Mercy!" As Rojo entered, carrying his son, the woman uttered a cry of pity and began to question him. But the father was already laying the wounded boy on the bed as tenderly as a nurse lays an infant in its cradle. This done he turned round and cried excitedly :

"Go look for a doctor, Señora Juliana. Go, I implore you, by the soul of your father, and bring me a doctor!"

VI.

It was fully ten minutes before Moragas recovered his equanimity; he walked up and down his office oblivious of everything, even of the presence of Nené. He felt that disquiet, that profound, though vague uneasiness, that succeeds some painful nervous shock. The insults of those we despise, long discussions with dull or ill-bred people, ingratitude, the sight of a repulsive insect—a variety of moral and physical causes may produce this condition. The doctor found some alleviation to his distress in a purely accidental and external circumstance—the sun, breaking at last through the fog, danced merrily on the window-panes and Nené, as if attracted by the beneficent rays, approached and, still timid, said with an enchantingly coaxing air, in her childish accents:

"No yain, do to village?"

Accustomed to the subtle philological interpretation which Nené's speech demanded, Moragas understood perfectly, and translated without hes-

itation: "Papa, don't you see that it isn't going to rain to-day? Let us go to the village."

Moragas was accustomed, when his daily consultations were over, to order the landau or the brougham and, accompanied by Nené, to take a drive to his miniature villa, which was situated at the edge of the highroad on the heights of Erbeda, a pretty village about three miles distant, inhabited by washerwomen and bakers and dotted with country houses. Four walls, neither very high nor very thick, an iron railing, which allowed the honeysuckle arbor and the fountain in the garden to be seen from the highroad, a pigeon-house in the yard; more than fifteen laying hens; a couple of coniferous and as many as two dozen fruit trees; some cabbages and a great variety of vines served as adornment to the diminutive dwelling in which the doctor passed the happiest hours of his life. And what more could a thinker and a student desire than that cool and silent parlor, that study where the clematis and the crow-foot peeped in at the window to look inquisitively at the books, that glazed gallery which dominated the changing panorama of the highroad, that pigeon-house with its nests and its cooings, the dining room whose china-

closet contained, instead of costly porcelain, bright glass and white china, intermixed with fragrant apples of the last harvest—because there was no other fruit dish?

Besides, the doctor regarded the country as an excellent hygienic counteraction of uninterrupted city life, which might prove fatal to Nené. A widower since a few hours after the birth of the child, in whom he had centered his best affections, the doctor cared for her as a mother would have done—who was also a physiologist. The fragility and delicacy of this tender flower kept him always on the alert, only that, instead of sheltering her from the north wind and the frost within the glass walls of a hot-house, he subjected her to a treatment which permitted her to grow up in the open air, braving the inclemency of the weather. "To rusticate Nené," was the programme. This rustication was carried out so literally that when they were in Erbeda the child splashed in the basin of the fountain, covered herself with mud in the hen-yard, ran after the ducks, rolled about in the dust until her beautiful fair hair was a sight to see—all to the great delight of her father, who, if he chanced to notice her looking neat and clean, scolded

loudly: "Come, to-day they have kept this child in a glass case. Let me see you playing, let me see you looking like a little pig!"

Thus, then, when he was not overburdened with work, when there was no epidemic in Marineda and when none of his patients chanced to be in immediate need of his services, the doctor went to Erbeda after office-hours, sometimes returning at nightfall to make his visits, at other times remaining all night, which was the limit of his vacation. When he could compass so much good fortune he devoted the evening to political or scientific reading, his favorite subject being those vital questions of modern medicine which involve some metaphysical problem, some psychological mystery, some philosophical generalization. If Moragas studied therapeutic medicine from obligation, as a recreation he was always investigating the little-known operations of suggestion, the revelations of phrenology, bacteriology, and the effects of certain substances on the human organization. He took pleasure, too, in the study of what our ancestors called "mental diseases," and he was a frank admirer of the modern physicians who have begun the work of reformation in the legal field and who are in a

fair way to overturn the jurisprudence of the past. As a great deal is written on these questions, and as Moragas had everything that was published sent to him, his retreat of Erbeda was the witness and the accomplice of his orgies in reading.

Needless to say that he assented joyfully to Nené's proposition. A quarter of an hour after the appearance of the first ray of sunshine following a cloudy morning the father and the child, the latter in her nurse's arms, were driving behind the mare toward the highroad. We already know that the afternoon was one of those peaceful ones of early spring, at Easter-tide, that make one feel like saying, as in Faust, "Christ is risen." Across the clear blue of the sky, flecked with little clouds, white and soft as swans' down, flew the first swallows; and in the air there was the healthy tonic freshness of settled fair weather. Nené, very happy, babbled incessantly, admiring her socks, of which, on account of their being openwork, she was very proud. The child would not let her father remove his eyes for a moment from her splendid socks. If the doctor turned round to look at the houses, the scenery, or the passers-by, on the instant Nené, seizing

him by the lapel of his coat, would oblige him to look down again. "My tocks, my pitty tocks! And etteday" (Nené always said yesterday for to-morrow) "oo ted ood buy me ed and deen and ellow—all openwork, pitty openwork." And the child caught her father's finger and passed it from mesh to mesh, laughing; "openwork, so." "Very well, precious, I'll buy you a houseful of socks, openwork like these, but don't pull my finger off." After an interval of a few minutes Nené would return to her theme, asking in her fashion if it would be proper for her to show her socks to the hens, and to the doves, and to Bismarck, the mastiff, to see if they liked them. What with the child's chatter, the beauty of the drive, and the anticipation of a pleasant afternoon in the country, Moragas felt like a new man. The arrival at the villa and the entrance into the orchard were triumphal.

The gardener, an old man of eighty, deaf as a post, came out to receive them, respectfully taking off the straw hat that covered his head. And the doctor, directing his voice so that it should go straight to the tympanum, asked him the invariable question: "What news, Señor Jacinto?"

"News," answered the patriarch slowly; "news —that the wind broke off a branch from the flowering acacia, and that one of the panes in the gallery is smashed—and that the speckled hen is setting—and that last night a man was killed in the village."

"A man was killed?" repeated Moragas, without showing any great surprise, for he knew the bellicose and turbulent disposition of the Erbedan young men, and he took it for granted that the occurrence had been the result of some tavern-brawl.

"He was murdered during the night," continued the gardener, who supposed that his master was asking him at what time the event had happened. "It was Román, the carter, who went back and forth between Marineda and the village with loads of straw and wood and wheat. He was found this morning in the grove of Sobrás—see, there," and the old man pointed to a wood not far distant. "They smashed his skull in with a stone or God knows what! They say he looks like a *Ceomo*."

"A quarrel or a robbery; most likely a drunken quarrel," thought Moragas, going into his study, desirous of having a couple of hours of

quiet, congenial reading. But he had scarcely begun a chapter of a new book of Régis, when the nurse suddenly entered the room, pale with fright. He started from his chair, fearing that some accident had befallen Nené.

"Señorito! Señorito!" (notwithstanding his white hair, Moragas still preserved a very youthful air, and it did not seem ridiculous to hear him thus addressed). "Señorito! come out to the gallery; the authorities are passing by on their way to arrest the murderers of the man who was killed."

The girl spoke in that awestruck tone with which the common people speak of the officers of the law, of whom, perhaps, they stand in greater dread than of robbers or murderers. Moragas rose and, going out into the gallery, which commanded a view of the highroad, watched the procession with some curiosity. First, mounted on wretched nags, came the judge and the secretary; then followed on foot, two by two, four members of the civil guard, men with dark, soldierly faces, active and shapely legs, well-defined by the long gaiters they wore, and behind at what might, without metaphor, be called a respectful distance, more than a dozen

peasant women and children, a mob that grew larger as the procession advanced. Moragas knew the judge, and had even attended a brother of his on the occasion of a serious illness, and to the nod and smile with which the representative of the law saluted him, he responded promptly, calling out:

"Good-day, Priego. Won't you come in and take some refreshment? A bottle of beer?"

"Many thanks. Impossible now," answered Priego, stopping his nag, that desired nothing better. "On the way back. We are in a hurry."

"And—that?" asked the doctor with a significant gesture.

"Hum!" returned the judge in a meaning tone, that fully corresponded to the expressive interrogation of Moragas, saying in the clearest manner: "Don't imagine that this is an ordinary crime. I fancy there is some mystery involved." And touching their hats hastily the two functionaries started their beasts, not without some difficulty, on a moderate trot, the crowd following them, leaving, Moragas fancied, as they disappeared at the turn of the road, an oppressive sense of silence behind them.

The doctor tried to resume his reading, but he

found it impossible. His thoughts had taken another turn; his fancy, diverted and excited, followed the crowd and assisted at the scenes, always dramatic and sometimes grotesque, that accompany what in technical language is called "taking up the body." Every man, even the least literary and the most matter-of-fact, has something of what may be called the born novelist in him, and is capable of weaving, in a few minutes, a score of intricate and improbable plots. Moragas possessed this faculty in a high degree; he had imagination in excess, even in the sphere of his professional studies; and without precisely resembling the individual who died of grief because his neighbor's waistcoat had been cut too short for him, it is certain that he took a great interest in the affairs of others, a genuine altruistic interest, not from curiosity, as so many do, but because of his essentially expansive and communicative nature. Two minutes before the incident of the death of Román the carter had been a matter of indifference to him, but after the judge's words, his fancy busied itself with the subject of the crime, of the probable mystery it involved. Without being at once conscious of the cause of his ex-

citement, he soon comprehended that it was connected with the strange patient who, a few hours before, had come to consult him. "I to concern myself lest the executioner should suffer pain! I, who, if I thought it allowable to assassinate any fellow-creature scientifically, would consider it to be so in the case of that vermin—who is not even a fellow-creature! I, who have such an opinion of the whole business! Let him die, for what I care, of the spleen that nature gave him. But to-day is a day to be marked with a black stone. That individual in the morning, and this occurrence—about which we as yet know nothing certain—in the afternoon." To divert his thoughts Moragas went down to the garden, which was about as large as a pocket-handkerchief; took a few turns up and down its walks, informed himself as to the state of health of the vegetables and pot-herbs, ordered a peach tree to be trained against the wall, played with Bismarck, grew angry because two or three snails were eating the strawberry plants with the greatest coolness in the world, and during all this time did not cease to watch for the authorities' return.

Shortly before sunset a noise was heard in the distance, and a crowd of people was to be seen

coming down the road leading to the city. Moragas climbed up to the little mirador which, built in the angle made by the walls, commanded a full view of the road. As usual the procession was headed by the barefooted urchins who are always to be found wherever there is a noise, incident, street-drama, and whose ranks are recruited from the fields of Erbeda just as they are from the streets of Marineda. Grim and grave followed the four members of the guardians of the peace, and in their midst, her long hair falling in two braids over her gown of dark percale, walked a young woman. Just as the procession passed below the mirador of Moragas, the rays of the setting sun fell full upon the face of the prisoner. She seemed to be about twenty-six or twenty-eight years old, and was very pale; she was small, both in face and figure, with delicate and regular features, a modest air, slender of build, with a certain purity of outline in the undeveloped bosom set high above the long, flat waist. The hair, intensely black, parted in the middle brushed smoothly over the temples, and falling in two braids down her back, contributed to give her this modest, almost devout expression. Moragas experienced a profound impression of

surprise. Why was this young creature being led away by the civil guards? Could it be possible that she was a criminal?

The crowd that followed the guards and the prisoner was composed of country people. They walked along with a sad rather than a hostile air, with the faces and attitudes of people walking in a funeral procession. Only some of the men and a few old women whispered together as if indignant; some of the women raised their eyes toward heaven; others pointed to the prisoner; many turned back their heads to look at the object that closed in the procession—one of those carts of the country, of primitive form, with wheels without spokes, that moved along slowly, drawn by a yoke of red oxen, well contented to have so light a load to draw. In effect, behind the osier frame which at other times served to secure the load of sand or stone, there was to be seen only an object of slight elevation, covered with coarse cloths. Moragas did not need to look a second time to know that it was a human body, a dead body; the classic *corpus delicti.* Neither on the cloths, nor around the body, nor in any other place was there a stain or sign of blood, and yet to Moragas' eyes the

whole cart seemed to have a red hue. The sun was setting, and its oblique light threw a red glow over the crowd.

The procession had disappeared behind a bend of the road, and the voices of the multitude had died away in the distance, before Moragas moved from the mirador. The sight of that slender girl, so frail, so gentle, apparently, a prisoner in the hands of the guards, and in all probability a criminal, made him thoughtful. The aspect of the woman had already awakened in him a profound curiosity resembling genuine interest. We have, or rather persons of Moragas' disposition have, impulses of compassion that suddenly and violently take possession of the whole affectional being. Moragas was what in the time of Rousseau was called "a man of feeling," and what in our less sentimental times we call, with a certain shade of contempt, an *impressionable* person. His profession, which made him familiar with scenes of suffering, far from blunting his sensibility, rendered it every day keener. With the same impulsiveness with which he had thrown Rojo's two dollars out of the window he would now have gone down into the street—with what purpose? The ridiculous one of offering refresh-

ment, a coin, advice, anything that resembled consolation, to that woman whose face was so pale, whose gaze was so fixed, whose lips were so convulsively pressed together, who was being taken to prison.

It was some ten minutes since the dust raised by the procession had ceased to float in the atmosphere when Moragas descended quickly from his observatory, having heard from the opposite direction the trot of two nags which he did not doubt were those of the judge and the secretary returning to the city, after performing their task of instituting the preliminary proceedings. And so it was; the nags stopped before the door of the villa, and the functionaries dismounted. The doctor comprehended that they accepted the refreshment, of which they must stand in good need, and, on his way out to receive his guests, he called the nurse and gave her orders to have the beer, the currants, and the pies, which they had fortunately brought fresh from Marineda, served on the stone table of the arbor.

The judge entered, gasping for breath, as if greatly fatigued, wiping the perspiration from his forehead with his handkerchief, and looking even

more serious and preoccupied than before. He was a fair, stout man of phlegmatic and jovial disposition, and not accustomed to make a mountain out of a molehill, whence Moragas inferred that the matter that caused him to be thus preoccupied must be something really serious. When he was in the dining room, however, where there was a delightful breeze blowing, and where the jasmines shed their fragrant odors, and the beer foamed invitingly in the bright tankard, Priego's face cleared up and grew serene, and exclaiming, as anyone else would have done in the circumstances, "phew!" he threw himself down on the rustic wooden bench and answered his host's questions rather with his eyes than his tongue.

"Yes—a serious matter, a serious matter! If I'm not greatly mistaken, this crime is going to be the subject of discussion not only here but in the press of the capital. Ah, how grateful this drink is! I was completely worn out, and as it was not a case in which the judge could refresh himself with wine in the tavern—— Yes, I, too, thought when I received the telegram, that the affair was the result of a quarrel—they are the daily bread here, for I never saw people quicker to come to blows than those of these parishes.

But from the moment when I began to inquire into it I saw that this was something more. And truth to say I was not very well pleased, for if the newspapers join in the hue and cry in these cases the judge has a hard time of it. Every step he takes or doesn't take is criticised. And no one likes to be held up to public censure—— Ah, this beer is comforting!"

"And the woman who was arrested, what part does she play in the affair?" asked Moragas with interest.

"An insignificant one! Did you see her so—so—so mild-looking, as if she wouldn't break a plate? Well, if I am not greatly mistaken, she is either the perpetrator or the instigator and accomplice of the crime. She is the wife, or rather the widow of the murdered man," added Priego jestingly, beginning to eat a tart.

Moragas looked thoughtful.

"You say that this woman——"

"Just as you see her! For the present, strictly speaking, all this is premature, and yet I would wager my gown that it was she."

"She alone? Do you think that she alone could have assassinated her husband?"

"Alone, no. The lover must have been her accomplice."

"Is there a lover?"

"Of course! In the country, if you scratch deep enough, toads and snakes will come out just as in the town. We are of the same clay here as there. There is a lover, and the best of the matter is that he seems to be a brother-in-law, that he was married to the sister of the dead man. I have not yet taken the testimony of anyone except the woman who was arrested, who, so far, has given only very unsatisfactory answers; neither did I insist very much; all in good time; but the guards have been chatting with the peasant women and from the moment they told me that she and the brother-in-law—[Priego joined the tips of his forefingers together] I said to myself: Ha, ha! here we have the end of the ball!"

"And have you taken the brother-in-law into custody?"

"They are looking for him; he will be caught. The fellow, to turn aside suspicion, gave out yesterday that he was going away from the parish, that he was going to Marineda on some business or other, but instead of going last night it was

this morning, after the deed was done, that he went away. The crime," continued the judge, comprehending from Moragas' expression that he was listening with interest to the details, "must have been committed last night, when Román, the carter, came back after leaving a load of sand at Chouzas, a village two leagues away. By all accounts he was in the habit of coming home a little tipsy. I don't know how the pair contrived to get him out of the house and to persuade him to go into the wood, where they smashed in his skull with a hatchet."

"Yes, it's a horrible sight," said the secretary. "It looks like a watermelon. What seems to me strange is that there should be so little blood around when the place ought to be flooded."

"That is singular," said Moragas. "There is something curious and perplexing in that. Of course, though, for the present——"

"We are beginning, Señor Moragas, we are beginning," answered the judge, who was not beginning, but who had finished emptying his second tankard of beer. "And it is your place now to express some opinion. There goes the victim, in his own cart, to Marineda, where the body will be examined and the autopsy performed. And,

with good management, the birds will be got to sing and everything will come to light. Observe that it is not six hours since I learned of the occurrence," added the judge, who was, in truth, in this instance not greatly dissatisfied with himself and with his penetration and sagacity in following up the scent.

"And—she?" asked Moragas, who did not lose sight of the accused.

"She? She, gentle and demure as she seems, must have the resolution of a thousand devils. There she sat as tranquil as you are, without shedding a tear, in the midst of some neighbors who had staid with her from the time of the discovery of the body. Nor did she shed a tear either when I questioned her closely, or when I ordered her detention. She answered my questions without bravado, without fear, without precipitation, with astounding calmness; saying that her husband had returned home last night at the usual hour, that they had quietly taken their supper, that he had told her to go to bed and leave the door ajar, as he was obliged to go out, which she did, and knowing that he often delayed at the tavern, she went to sleep, and it was only when she awoke in the morning that she learned

that he had been found dead in the pine wood. I tell you that that woman——"

"Had they any children?"

"One, a girl of three. Her grandmother has taken charge of her."

"And you think that she and the brother-in-law—— But what would they do it for?"

"Bah! what should they do it for?" exclaimed the functionary, laughing. "It doesn't seem possible that you should be so innocent at your time in life. So that there might be no one to interfere with them, so that they might be free to do as they pleased."

The doctor shook his head. The motive of the tragic deed seemed to him vulgar and commonplace, but not so the heroine, in whom he fancied he saw something unusual, something worthy of the strange interest which she had awakened in him as a close and interested observer of psychological phenomena. Perhaps his peculiar interest in the case was owing, in no slight degree, to the coincidence of his having that very morning seen and talked with the man who would probably bring this drama to a dénouement by squeezing the throat and crushing the vertebræ of this woman, so young and ap-

parently so gentle, a thought which had the effect of making Moragas start as if he had received an electric shock. The mere idea of seeing a scaffold erected, and for a woman, offended him like a personal outrage. And he brought himself to formulate the question that had been hovering on his lips:

"And this woman—will she go to the scaffold?"

"I don't think so," responded the judge, with a certain fatuity of expression. "As for being the perpetrator, I don't think she's that. The deed itself was probably committed by the lover. She will get the second degree. And confess that she deserves it."

Moragas, who had many thoughts on the subject, was about to make some answer when his guests cut short his words by suddenly rising as if in haste to go. The doctor perceived through the railing that his carriage was ready and he proposed to the functionaries to drive them to Marineda. At all events they would be more comfortable than riding a hired nag, and would save time; in any case he had still a visit or two to make before supper. They accepted his offer, gave their beasts to a servant, got into the car-

riage, and the majestic peace of the afternoon, the beauty of the river, which could be seen in the distance reddened by the last rays of the setting sun; the stillness of the atmosphere; the freshness of the vernal air and the tender foliage of the gardens; the early vines, already beginning to blossom, which hung over the walls of the country seats—all contributed to prevent Moragas or his companions from again mentioning the crime, as if to do so would be a profanation of the supreme beauty of the scene.

Tired out by an afternoon in the country, covered with dust, her frock and her pretty socks stained with mud, Nené had fallen asleep in her nurse's arms.

VII.

La Marinera left the room with all the haste which her almost sightless eyes permitted while the father proceeded to undress the wounded boy. He took off his outer garments with the utmost care and gentleness, leaving on him only his ragged shirt, and then, with handkerchiefs and pieces of underclothing, which he tore up for the purpose, he stanched as best he could the blood which stained the forehead and neck of the vanquished warrior, having first cleansed them thoroughly. During these operations, Telmo moaned feebly. But when Rojo tried to draw off the boy's right boot he uttered so sharp and piteous a cry that the father stopped, unable to bring himself to conclude the operation.

"Does it hurt you much, my boy? Does it hurt you much?" he asked him.

The boy, who had relapsed into his feverish stupor, did not answer. Assuredly his head was in no condition for thinking, nor his tongue for making explanations. Only, after a few weary

moments, he stammered out the cry of all the vanquished, of all the wounded, of every victim:

"Water! water! I am thirsty."

The father filled a glass and put it to the lips of the boy, who drank eagerly and then let his head fall back upon the pillow. The father placed his hand upon the boy's forehead. The temperature was very high, the skin harsh and dry, a proof that fever had already set in. Rojo brought a chair to the bedside and seated himself in it, frowning and gloomy. He was filled with a tenderness, a wild and dolorous affection that suffocated him, but the manifestation of the deep emotion, so natural in a father, was characterized by the harshness and reserve which were habitual to him.

Champing the bit of that impatience which seizes everyone who waits at the bedside of a beloved being for the arrival of the doctor, and with him relief from suspense, and, perhaps, salvation, Rojo meditated on the event that had just taken place, and saw in it a fresh humiliation, added to the already long catalogue of those which had ulcerated his soul. Only that this was more painful because it touched to the quick, because it wounded the feeling which, strong and

supreme even in the wild beast, is in man stronger than death—because it is love.

Why had they stoned his son? Was it just to vent on Telmo the hatred inspired by Juan Rojo? Why had they left the boy, bathed in his blood, dying, in a deserted spot? What harm had the child done anyone? Would there never be for him pardon, forgetfulness, indulgence? Was not Telmo a human being like everyone else? Why had they outlawed him to the extent of stoning him almost to death?

These reflections were interrupted by the hollow sound of carriage-wheels rolling over the dry highroad and the voice of La Marinera was heard crying joyfully and hastily:

"Señor Rojo, the Virgin be praised! Ah, what a piece of good fortune! That I should have turned into the Calle del Peñascal, passed the chapel of La Augustia—and heard Señor de Moragas' coach rolling past! What a scream I gave! I clutched the coach door, I told him what had happened, and Señor de Moragas, as he is so kind-hearted, at once ordered the coachman to turn back. Praised be the Virgin! This very day I will go to offer up thanks to her."

Meantime Moragas had sprung lightly from

his landau and, entering the hovel without even looking at Rojo, he went straight toward the bed on which Telmo lay, saying with the clear, animated, and friendly voice of the physician who, when he enters the house of the poor, knows that he must, before everything else, console the afflicted:

"What's the matter? Who has been breaking his bones? A boy? Playing pranks, eh? In a moment we'll have this broken head all right."

He was already leaning over the patient when the light of the lamp, which Rojo had taken down from the wall and was holding close to the bed, fell full upon the father's face. It would be impossible to describe the astonishment depicted on the countenance of Moragas as he recognized his patient of the morning, the man of the two dollars which he had thrown into the street. Anger, amazement, scorn, were expressed in his wide open eyes that flashed with fury under the finely lined forehead, on the parted lips, in the hands instantaneously clinched. "You! you!" he repeated, expressing by his tone the various feelings which agitated him. And suddenly calmed by the very force of his anger, he looked from the boy, who was moaning

faintly, to the father who stood before him with downcast eyes, and said in grave and incisive accents:

"Is the child yours?"

"Yes, he is mine. He is my son," declared Rojo, in a dull and expressionless voice.

"Well, that is the worst disease he could have, and one of which neither I nor anyone else can cure him," replied the doctor, turning on his heel and walking toward the door.

He had not taken three steps when he felt a hand clutching the skirt of his coat and pulling it with violence. He turned round with repugnance, looked at Rojo from head to foot, with the repulsion with which one would look at a loathsome reptile, and said, every word vibrating like the whiz of a whip through the air:

"Don't touch me, or I will do something rash. Your assurance of this morning was enough. The money you left on my table I threw into the street, to have nothing in my possession which your hands had touched."

Rojo released his hold upon the doctor, but, turning swiftly round, faced him and fell at his feet without saying a word. Moragas stood still. The boy groaned.

"He is very bad. Wounded. I don't know what there may be broken in his body. Señor Don Pelayo, I implore you, by the soul of your mother!"

Don Pelayo made his way as far as the door, but there he met with another obstacle, La Marinera, who apostrophized him energetically:

"Have mercy, Señor. Mercy makes no distinction of persons. And the child is not to blame for anything. God, our Lord, commands us to show mercy even to the dogs."

A struggle took place in Moragas' breast, not between opposing feelings—in which case the problem would have been comparatively easy of solution—but between analogous sentiments, all tinctured with that half-Quixotic, half-philanthropic generosity which, contrary to general opinion, is not incompatible with the positive tendencies of the man of science. To abandon a sick child seemed to him, as a physician, monstrous; but to remain longer in *this* house, to attend to *this* sick child was, according to his way of thinking, a degradation, a species of stigma, which must leave its stain on his hands. Moragas had lavished his professional cares on people of degraded condition, he knew by heart the repul-

sive traces left by vice on the person of the dissolute. Although delicately fastidious in his habits and in the care of his person, he had never shrunk from any disease, however loathsome it might be, and, in assisting suffering humanity, by a marvelous anæsthesis, offspring of a firm will—that anæsthesis which made the saint say that the sores of the leper smelled to him like roses—he lost the sense of smell, he held in check the senses of touch and of sight, and he forgot fatigue in order to consecrate himself entirely to duty. For the first time he drew back from a moral sore, and his vivid imagination strengthened the impression of horror which, from its very violence, now began to appear to him ridiculous. At all events, in a man of Moragas' character, it was not possible that this struggle should continue long; since he had not gone away at once he would not now go; and La Marinera furnished him with an excuse for yielding by her persistance, saying, with a sort of respectful severity:

"Ah, Señor! can it be possible that you are going to abandon the innocent child? God does not command that. Remember that it is cruel to leave him in that way."

"Are you the child's mother?" asked Moragas.

"Oh, no, Señor, praised be God!" answered La Marinera, with quick spontaneity. "My husband is an honest man, a cask-maker of the wharf."

Moragas smiled in spite of himself; he pulled down his cuffs, hemmed, and, like one who resolves to face boldly what he cannot avoid, returned to the wounded boy's bedside. With the skill of the veteran in making these painful examinations, he soon ascertained that the boy's skull was fractured in two places, and, taking off the child's boot without paying any heed to his groans, he found that his ankle was dislocated. To contusions and bruises he paid no attention; they were numerous but not of serious importance. There did not seem to be any internal injury; but a high fever was present. La Marinera held the light and Rojo awaited the result, motionless, and seemingly dazed.

"How did this happen?" asked the doctor, pausing in his task. "Was it a stoning, or had he a fall besides?"

"That's what we don't know!" cried Rojo, in consternation. "I heard that the child was at

the castle of San Wintila, badly hurt. I went there, took him up, and carried him here in my arms, and I haven't been able to get anything out of him about the matter."

"It must have been a stoning," said La Marinera.

"Yes, but there are contusions over the whole body. He has fallen from a height, there is not a doubt of it," said the doctor, without pausing in his examination.

When the dressing was ended—when the bandages were placed and the dislocation reduced—Moragas straightened himself, drawing a breath of relief; then and then only Rojo approached the doctor, and with deep anxiety said to him;

"Will the boy be lame? Will his chest remain weak?"

Moragas turned and, for the first time since he had become aware of the social condition of his client, looked him in the face, as human beings look at each other.

Chance showed him the man excluded from human fellowship under the aspect best calculated to move the fibers of his soul, were it only through sympathy with him as a father. Moragas, the most indulgent father in Marineda, the

lover of childhood, the dispenser of toys and candies, the man who, after performing the operation of tracheotomy, had mingled his tears with those of the family of his little patient!

This was the first moment in which the sentiments of Moragas, sentiments that were destined to exercise so powerful an influence on the fate of Juan Rojo, underwent a change, turned on their pivot, so to say; and to the indignation and scorn of a few hours before succeeded a sort of strange interest, that fascination which repulsion itself produces, and which resembles, in a certain manner, the call of the apostle who enters a house of ill-repute to convert its degraded inmates; for supreme piety directs itself to supreme wickedness. This was not the first time that Moragas had noted in himself this propensity, which he humorously called *redemptorist mania*. This same propensity had indeed caused him serious annoyance—instances of black ingratitude, gratuitous entanglements, endless disappointments, and innumerable vexations. Nevertheless, like all those propensities which are rooted in our nature, this propensity awoke once more in Moragas; and his perpetual illusion of redemption presented itself to him

again with all the attractiveness with which our illusions usually present themselves to us. "If I," thought the doctor, "had been born in the Middle Ages, in that epoch in which the deficiences of the state of society and of jurisprudence left so wide a field for individual effort, God only knows what I might not have accomplished. But, in the present state of society, there is no doubt that this folly of making everyone's suffering one's own, of intermeddling in what does not concern one, greatly resembles the occupation of righting wrongs and redressing grievances ridiculed by Cervantes." When he observed that the condition and state of Rojo—of Rojo!—provoked in him the first symptoms of the habitual and well-known disease the *redeemer* laughed at himself. "Moraguitas, beyond this you cannot go. Now you have taken it into your head to pity that *individual.* Now you have reached the extreme limit of the benevolent craze, my son. No, here I will not let you have your head. This man it is not allowable to regard as a man. If you wish to interest yourself in something extravagant and eccentric, interest yourself, if you choose, in the murderess whom you saw walking between the civil guards along the high-

road. She may be a criminal—let us suppose that she is one—but a criminal in *hot blood*, a passional criminal, who, in sinning, obeyed, no doubt, an irresistible impulse, not caring that at the other side of the ditch she was about to jump was the expiation of a shameful death. That is a disease, Moragas; that woman is sick, as much as any of the sick women you attend every day. There, compassion is comprehensible and justifiable. But as for this fellow, who, in cold blood and without danger to himself, has adopted killing as a trade, his head should be crushed under one's heel like a viper's."

While these thoughts were passing through Moragas' mind Rojo repeated his question:

"Will he be lame? Will he be crippled?"

"No," answered the doctor in a severe voice; "he will neither be lame nor crippled. His general condition concerns me more than his injuries. I am going to leave you some prescriptions."

A writing desk was found, neither so shabby nor so ill-furnished as might have been expected in this hovel, and Moragas wrote his prescriptions. The only sounds to be heard in the room were the painful breathing of the father and the dull moans of the wounded boy, whom the doctor approached,

surprised at seeing that, instead of quieting him, the dressing of the wounds seemed to have made him more restless and uneasy.

"It is important that he should not move, on account of the dislocation," said Moragas. "But who will be able to keep him quiet, with that violent fever? Stay, he is delirious already."

Telmo, in fact, was tossing about restlessly on the bed, and his inarticulate moans had given place to words articulated with difficulty, although clear and intelligent. The doctor listened.

"I am brave!" affirmed Telmo. "Who calls me a coward? Liars, you shall see if—Throw, I am waiting! You despise me because—Stones, more stones, as many as you like! I am ready for you all. It's you who are the cowards! Come on!—Throw your stones!—I am alone——"

"What is he saying?" asked the father.

"Bah!" responded Moragas. "It would seem that a crowd of boys got together to stone him—what was to be expected? Don't be so astounded, man!" he added ironically, yielding again to his former feeling of aversion. "Why, don't you think it very natural that humanity should stone you in the person of your son?"

"It is a wicked act!" cried Rojo, in a sup-

pressed voice, leaning against the wall and hiding his altered face in his hands. "That they should stone me—well and good—that is to say—not that either; but, in short, if they wanted to stone—— But the child, Señor de Moragas—it was a dirty action! and—you will forgive me for speaking so frankly—a vile deed!"

"Well, you see, you thought you had no responsibility in bringing children into the world. You have only yourself to blame."

"But, Señor," interrupted La Marinera impetuously, "why should the innocent child have to pay for it?"

"Eh, stop talking nonsense," said the physician, with disgust. "Give him what is written there, it will take down the fever. Get some lemons or oranges and let him drink, drink without stint. Moisten the bandages with diluted arnica. Nothing to eat, you understand, not even broth, nothing. Take care."

Rojo, going up to the physician, said humbly and with bent head:

"Señor de Moragas, I cannot pay you. That is to say that I have no way—for, if I had the money—you wouldn't want—well, to take the trifle that I could give you. Don't get angry;

by your father's soul I entreat you, don't get angry. All I ask you is not to abandon the boy on me. If I only knew that you'd come back to-morrow."

Moragas hesitated for an instant. At last the impulse prevailed.

"I will come back," he answered firmly. "I will come back to-morrow, I promise you."

As he leaned back in the corner of his landau, before the driver had touched the mare with the whip, Moragas heard a woman's voice saying fervently, as if in prayer:

"God and the Virgin preserve your little girl to you. You have earned heaven to-day, Don Pelayo. Our Lord be with you. For our Lord, too, despised no one!"

It was La Marinera who spoke thus. Moragas thrust his head out of the window and, in order to put a stop to the poor woman's blessings, answered jokingly:

"Good-by, my little beauty."

VIII.

THE Marinedan capital awoke to discuss, to ruminate upon, to distort—I was about to say *to enjoy*, the news of the crime of Erbeda; but this would be a calumny, for in reality the Marinedans are not so avid of emotions as the Parisians, and the morbid taste for horrors and scandals is repugnant to them. They are to some extent contaminated, however, by the example of the press of Madrid, which records at the present day, with a zeal and minuteness worthy of a nobler cause, the most trivial and commonplace sayings and doings of the criminal who has fallen into the hands of the law, from the moment of his arrest until that in which the Sisters of Peace and Charity lay his remains in the grave.

The common people of Marineda, like the common people everywhere, had become gradually accustomed, thanks to the press, to legal and criminal terminology and to a certain sharp criticism of the law and of its representatives and interpreters which, if it was not always just, was

at least an indication of the social discontent which clamors for innovation, demanding fresh water from new springs. In this movement of Marinedan public opinion, as in every movement of opinion, there was something mechanical and puerile and also something fruitful and inspired; a combination which, transformed into instinct, helps, unconsciously, the true conscious precursors of human progress.

Certain it is that on the morning in question, with the first gleam of daylight; with the first pious women who rose before dawn to hear the masses of the Jesuits; with the first street-sweepers, who, scarcely half-awake, were beginning to clean the streets and to drive away vagrant cats and dogs; with the first countrywomen carrying their baskets on their heads, who wakened the inspectors of provisions to pay them the toll; with the first servants and industrious housekeepers, who went out early to have the best of the market; with the first *lulos* that pushed off from shore to disturb the sardines and the hakes; with the first cigar-makers who entered the factory; with the matutinal activity of a town which counts its inhabitants by tens of thousands, which has twelve or fourteen newspapers,

six or eight factories, large and small, a court of justice, a Captain General's office, a collegiate church, an Institute, a harbor, the stir and bustle of a custom house, and with all the other etceteras which might be mentioned to the honor and praise of the pretty capital of Cantabria, the account of the horrible and memorable crime of Erbeda spead, rolled, grew, gave a thousand turns, assumed more forms than Proteus, and had more versions than the Bible.

According to some, it was a drunken and brutal husband who beat and abused his wife constantly, and whom the latter, in a fit of frenzy, exasperated by ill-treatment, hacked to pieces with a hatchet. According to those who seemed best informed there was a little of all of this: the husband ill-treated his wife, the brother-in-law loved her, she had an understanding with the brother-in-law, and between the two they had plotted the murder, which was perpetrated, not in the pine wood, but in the very home of the husband and wife, when the former was sleeping unsuspectingly in bed, with their innocent child, a little girl of three years old, by his side. This horrible version of the crime was the one that prevailed, the one which, as the sun mounted in

the heavens, spread, sinister and categorical, through the indignant city; the morning newspapers which were distributed between nine and half-past confirmed it fully, and about eleven o'clock an extra was called out, a sort of supplement, badly blurred, which announced the capture of the accomplice and his incarceration.

Nor, even when the two criminals were safe in prison, did the excited discussion of the crime subside; it increased rather at the breakfast hour. In the afternoon, instead of growing calmer, the popular mind grew still more agitated, this being precisely the time in which assemble in Marineda, as everywhere else, but especially in towns where any sort of traffic or business is carried on, the groups who stand at the street corners, the *coteries* of the shops—social rocks on which reputations are wrecked, the areopaguses of the benches of the promenade, with other forms of human sociability. The matutinal opinion of a town is always democratic; it is formed by the classes who rise early, work-people, the poor; and these condemn *crime* less severely, as if they comprehended that it is an acute disease to which those who already suffer the two horrible chronic diseases, *want* and *ignorance*, are

predisposed. The evening opinion—which is the one that in the end prevails—is formed by the *bourgeois* class, always more severe, less lenient to wrong-doing, and more zealous for external moral order. In the afternoon, then, when the tide of discussion and comment was rising and breaking in foam against the rocks of the two principal societies—each in its own style and on its own ground—which were called respectively, La Pecera and the Casino de la Amistad, it was when the editor of a Marinedan daily, commissioned to telegraph to an important periodical of the capital, was enabled to send by the wire these words: "Profound indignation reigns among all social classes. Excited people discuss horrible details."

We, who are desirous, as is our duty, to enlighten the reader's judgment, will take good care not to carry him to the Pecera, a frivolous *coterie* of *chickens* and *cocks* (these terms are still used in Marineda), without occupation and averse to heating their brains by attempting to solve scientific problems. For them the drama of Erbeda was a subject of profane, witty, and spicy conversation. For the Casino de la Amistad, especially for a certain senate (we use

the word, not in its etymological sense of age, but in the symbolic sense of respectability and wisdom), the drama of Erbeda was something very different; it gave occasion for a display of profound legal knowledge and the discussion and elucidation of many intricate and difficult points of criminal law.

For here congregated, drawn together by congeniality of tastes and professions, Celso Palmares, Judge of the Criminal Hall in the Marinedan court; Carmelo Nozales, attorney-general of the same; the never-enough-to-be-lauded jurisconsult, Arturito Cañamo, *alias* Siete Patibulos*; Don Dario Cortés, delegate of the Treasury, a very learned man; the Brigadier Cartoné, who was not without his suspicion of chicanery, and sometimes—take notice! the young lawyer, Lucio Febrero, nephew of a venerable president of the court who had died in Madrid. Lucio Febrero had the reputation of being a man of great talent—an eccentric, dangerous, revolutionary sort of talent, such as is spoken of in the provinces, and even outside of them, in the same tone in which one would speak of a box filled with fulminate of mercury—what do I say—of *panclastita!*

* Seven Scaffolds.

There also mingled in this circle composed of personages so learned, others, extremely ignorant, who did not know Justinian, even by name, but who (if it may be said without too much irreverence) took a part in the bull-fight from inclination. For, considering the matter well, on what pipe did even the Brigadier Cartoné play in certain discussions? What did the editor of the *Horizonte Galaico* know of laws? What the good Castro Quintas, enriched by the honest industry of manufacturing stearine candles? What Ciriaco de la Luna, the model of honorable rural proprietors, cream and mirror of wretched poets? What Mauro Pareja, temporary deserter from the Pecera,* an incorrigible old bachelor? What Primo Cova, the sempiternal jester? What so many others whom we might name, who formed the nucleus of the assembly, renewed in some of its elements by the inevitable entrance and departure of soldiers and employees, but stationary enough in the main for one to be able to calculate beforehand what sort of opinion and what form of discussion would preponderate in it.

The Casino de la Amistad numbers among its chief attractions a glazed vestibule, from whence the observant eye can watch at its ease all that

goes on in the principal artery of the town, or the street called Mayor* by antonomasia, although it is not such in size, but only in importance and activity. This vestibule does not pretend to compare itself with La Pecera, which owes its name to the high windows that, surrounding it on three sides, convert it into a species of transparent box; but, such as it is, it would be difficult for a rat to escape the notice of the frequenters of La Amistad, and the vestibule is sufficiently well patronized, especially when the cold season is over, and one can take a cup of coffee there. On the days when the tide of news is at the flood the vestibule overflows and the chairs overrun its narrow limits, invading even the gutter, for sidewalks, to speak the truth, the Calle Mayor does not possess.

On the afternoon of the day succeeding that of the crime there could not have been fewer than thirty persons there. This was the *grand complet*. The various versions were discussed and sifted, and the definitive, that which is not discussed, was slowly crystallizing. Mauro Pareja—*alias* the Abbot—noted for his want of discretion—had information of the most authentic nature, for he had just had a long chat with

* Main.

Priego, the judge, who had gone to Erbeda to take up the body and to institute proceedings. Pareja uttered these words in a meaning tone, adding that it was not his intention to betray anything of what he had heard, and least of all, the secrets of a case as yet so tender, in its infancy, so to say; but that without doubt, when the time required by the law should have elapsed, the wife and the brother-in-law of the murdered man would be removed from the house of detention to the prison, and both would be indicted, since they had together done the deed. Pareja added another interesting piece of news. Priego was resting from his "laborious duties" in the villa of Don Pelayo Moragas, and Priego thought that Moragas was enamored or little less of the murderess, so encomiastic was he of her modest and winning air, the decorum of her manners, and the sweetness of her face.

Less than this would have been sufficient to awaken the suspicions of his hearers. "But does Moragas know her?" "I wager she washed for Moragas." "Of course, both of them from Erbeda." "An idyl!" All these jests, for the most part sour-sweet, and only occasionally bitter, ceased as if by enchantment the moment the

countenance, at once refined and genial, the white head and the youthful and slender form of Don Pelayo appeared against the background of the venerable drug shop which stands at the head of the Calle Mayor. He was even more carefully attired than usual, in a gray overcoat and white waistcoat of smooth, fine piqué, the hat carefully set a little to one side, the gloves well-fitting, and was walking toward them, chatting, smilingly, with a patient of his, the Marchioness of Veniales, whom he had no doubt just met. When they were near the Casino the lady left him and entered a shop, and Moragas, now serious, like a man who, left alone, returns to some thought which preoccupies him, walked on, his eyes fixed on the flags. Then Cartoné, who was frank and unceremonious, called to him:

"Moragas! friend Moragas!"

Moragas seldom entered either the Casino or the Pecera, or any other of the clubs or circles of Marineda. He had no leisure time. His life was as full as an egg, and he had scarcely an idea of the impelling force of idleness that drew together, at the same hour every day, the same persons around the same table. He hastened, however, to respond to Cartoné's invitation, and

accepted, instead of a cup of coffee which, taken between meals, would affect his nerves, an ice, which was brought from the nearest café, as they did not keep ices at the Casino. And questions and jests began to be showered upon Moragas. "They are talking of arresting you as an accomplice in the crime of Erbeda." "Wasn't it your laundress who killed her husband? Come, let the witness, Don Pelayo Moragas, state what he knows."

"Halt!" said Moragas gayly. "Not even as a witness can I be involved in that muddle. This morning when I was reading the papers I thought to myself: Is it not strange that, living as she does in the same place in which I have my little garden, I should not know that woman? She must be one of the few people of the place that I have never happened to see. And she is not ill-looking——"

"Hello!"

"Come! come!"

"So she is handsome, eh?"

"Handsome, no. What she has is an air of modesty, of decorum, that please and surprise from the contrast they present to the deed of which she is accused. And I say of which she is

accused, for in reality, so far, nothing is known with certainty."

"Come, man, let us into the secret. You have your information on good authority. Yesterday you had a conference with Priego."

"A conference!" And Moragas laughed, as he cut off the point of the pyramid of ice cream with the mouth of his cornucopia. "The fact is that I chanced to be in the balcony, and Priego, who was passing by fatigued and disgusted with his task, came in to refresh himself with a glass of German beer. And he himself did not know much. It was just after the arrest."

"Let us respect the secrets of the law!" said Primo Cova.

"You can make light of it," observed the magistrate Don Celso Palmares, in a melancholy voice, shaking his head, whose thin, cobweb-colored locks lent an added sadness to his sallow, parchment-like face, "but we—we must carry the cross. I had hoped that in this court no such case would ever present itself."

"As for this one," remarked Carmelo Nozales, the attorney-general, "I suspect that Señor Don Celso will not be able to keep his resolve of retiring without having signed a death-warrant."

The magistrate's countenance grew still more gloomy and his brows contracted in a frown, as if he highly disapproved of the conversation. Mauro Pareja perceived the indiscretion of their remarks, and turned the conversation, bringing it into the region of fact.

"The truth is," he said, "that crimes of this caliber are not seen every day, if the latest version—which seems to be the true one—is confirmed."

"What version?" asked Lucio Febrero, who arrived at this moment and joined the circle without even taking the trouble to say good-afternoon.

His arrival created a sensation. Every head was turned toward him, every eye sought his.

"Is that all you know about it?" exclaimed Moragas. "Devoted as you are to the study of *criminology*, so fond of poring over French, Italian, and Russian authorities, and yet you despise the experimental part? For the study of a crime is to you what a pathological case is to me, notwithstanding the opinion of our friend Señor Cañamo, who flies into a passion at everything you say or do."

"I?" said the jurisconsult alluded to, with a

smile which tried to be honey, but which was really realgar highly charged with arsenic. "Not at all. Señor Febrero has convinced me. He has brought forward such arguments that I acknowledge myself beaten; there is no difference whatever between the criminal and the upright man, and the court should sentence criminals —to eat a pound of sweetmeats."

Lucio Febrero, a young man of a good figure and a handsome face, the worthy nephew of the fine-looking old man whose acquaintance we made in Morriña, smiled with ironical good-humor and looked tranquilly at Arturito Cañamo, who, on his side, avoided the glance of the young lawyer, whom he hated with a deadly hatred. It is to be observed that Cañamo, who had recently established himself in Marineda with the inward determination to sweep away all the other important offices, and persuaded that in order to carry out this object he must philosophize in speech and in print, Arturito Cañamo, as I say, was an implacable penalist and had already written two pamphlets advocating capital punishment—for which reason Marinedans, who are not wanting in humor, had given him the nicknames of *Siete Patibulos*, and although less felicitously,

Una horca en cada Esquina,* just as they called the attorney-general, Nozales, Grotius and Puffendorf, from his fondness for quoting these two authorities as if they were one single person. When Lucio Febrero made his appearance in Marineda, with his aureole of brilliant learning, with the prestige of his handsome face and his energetic diction, and with the overwhelming force of his "dissolvent" ideas, Cañamo foresaw, scented in him, the rival who could close to him forever the path of fame and glory. True, Febrero always declared that he did not intend to establish himself in Marineda, that he was there only temporarily, to attend to certain matters connected with his mother's will; but might not this be artful dissimulation? Might he not have the Macchiavellian purpose of gradually insinuating himself into public favor and undermining the ground on which he, Cañamo, was beginning to obtain a footing? Had not Cañamo in Febrero the natural enemy that pursues every being? And even if this were not so, could there be the least possible doubt that Febrero would eclipse and obscure the merit of Cañamo, and that he was the innovator, the nihilist, the abolisher of penal laws who, with his wild but fascinating

* A gallows at every street corner.

theories, would destroy the prospects of Cañamo —and ultimately the social structure?

Siete Patibulos, whose gaze wandered around the table, avoiding, however, the frank, smiling, and disdainful glance of Febrero, continued, with a forced smile full of bitterness and gall:

"Gentlemen, it is as I have said. Señor Febrero has carried conviction to my mind. You have me now converted—to blasphemy, judicial atheism, materialism, unbridled and radical Darwinism. There is no more to be said. I have become a disciple of Señor Febrero; we must adapt ourselves to the times and float with the stream. Here you have me ready to declare myself the protector and defender of every assassin. Assassin, do I say? There are no assassins. Señor Febrero has done away with the distinction between the assassin and the man of irreproachable conduct. For him the man who strangles the mother who bore him is the same as the man who dutifully and affectionately cares for her."

Febrero looked again fixedly at Cañamo, this time with more contempt than good-humor, and feeling in his pocket for his cigar-case, responded with a shrug of his shoulders to his adversary's

attack. Febrero was quick and passionate, and his nervo-sanguineous temperament impelled him to discussion, as his iron muscles impel the athlete to combat. He had resolved, however—and he was a man who kept the promises he made to himself—not to allow himself to be led into the polemical arena by Siete Patibulos. Two or three crushing or ironical phrases—these were all that was required. This system drove Cañamo to the verge of frenzy.

"To say truth," declared Palmares, "the theories of friend Febrero are—a little strong, a little strong. They would do away with the administration of justice."

"If they were applied to the army," observed Cañamo, "we should have it disbanded in a week. Discipline would be destroyed, and insubordination would spread through the ranks. I repeat that it would be impossible to maintain an army."

"Or public government," declared the delegate of the Treasury. "It is necessary to punish severely all crimes against property, whether public or private. The idea of crime is the basis of administrative responsibility. It appears to me, however, that, in attacking friend Febrero

(who has given us up as hopeless cases and does not think it worth while to defend his opinions) you credit him with theories which he does not profess, or at least you interpret those he does profess in a very violent manner, pushing them to extremes and giving them a range which they do not possess. Am I mistaken, Febrero?"

"You have stated the case exactly, Señor Delegate," responded Febrero, drawing his first puff from his cigarette and arching his eyebrows, a gesture which caused two or three lines to appear on his smooth forehead surmounted with abundant black hair.

"Why, it is quite clear," assented Moragas, a great admirer of and sympathizer with Febrero. "To hear Cañamo one would suppose that Lucio had undertaken to convert society into a set of prisoners at large, and that he was going to found a prize for the man who should beat the life out of his mother-in-law or lunch off the rib of a newborn babe. What Febrero does is to examine those questions from a scientific point of view, nothing more."

"Ah!" vociferated Arturito, whose prominent staring eyes, that Primo Cova compared to two hard-boiled eggs, had become bloodshot and yel-

low. "Ah! that is precisely your mistake, a mistake fatal in itself and productive of terrible consequences. The standpoint from which we are to examine questions of so transcendent importance must not be scientific, but ethical, ethica-al, ethica-a-al. That is to say that this difficult, most difficult problem belongs of right to the sphere of the moral and political sciences. No, gentlemen, it is not by the criterion of inert and blind matter, of the absurd fatalism and determinism of Epicurus and Busnér, of the stone that falls, nor with the scalpel of the anatomist in the hand, that certain things are to be decided. Only, that in these melancholy days the partisans of revolution and natural selection, atavism and heredity, the blind slaves of philogeny and embryogeny, persist — lowering our dignity, dragging it through the mire—in depriving us of the character of rational beings and comparing us to the orang-outang, or, as they say, to the anthropomorphous monkey."

Listening to this erudite outburst, Palmares, the magistrate, grew still more gloomy, as if he saw standing before him, in visible shape, the orang-outang, or as if he were being shown in a

mirror the blubber lips of the anthropomorphous ape from whom he had descended. Moragas slyly made a motion under the table as if he were winding up a clock, and Pareja, nudging Cartoné, said aloud:

"Let us hear, let us hear what answer Febrero has to make to that. It appears to me that there is no escape from the argument. Will you be able to crush Cañamo?"

"Cañamo knows very well that I will not crush him," responded the young lawyer, making up his mind to speak, and throwing away his cigarette. "How do you suppose one could venture to dispute with a person of learning so vast? Half the things Arturito has mentioned I do not even know the meaning of, or whether they are to be eaten with a spoon or not. So that——"

"So that, if you take those questions as a joke —then——" began Cañamo angrily.

"Not that, by Heaven!" replied Febrero, whose dark face flushed and whose eyes flashed, "not that! So seriously do I take them that I will not discuss them with you."

"Señor, that remark—especially if taken literally——"

"Señor, you are at perfect liberty to take it in whatever way you choose—and to continue to enlighten us."

"Enlighten you!" responded Siete Patibulos, livid with rage. "Why, it is you who ought to enlighten us. From you we shall acquire the rare and curious information that crime begins in the vegetable kingdom. What! did you not know that? Well, Señor Palmares, Señor Nozales, the day you least expect it, you will have to try and to condemn to imprisonment for life some handful of lucern or capsicum—for, according to Señor Febrero (I wager that he will not dare now to repeat the eccentricity), there are delinquent plants, plants that steal and plants that murder; that murder, but don't imagine that they murder in an ordinary way, no, but with premeditation, treachery, cruelty—all the aggravating circumstances."

"And whoever should say so would say the truth," remarked Moragas, remembering something he had read in his *Revue de Psychiatrie*. "They are the insectivorous plants. You may well say they murder——"

His hearers' shouts of laughter did not allow Moragas to explain the phenomenon. Arturito

had gained considerable ground by convicting his adversary of upholding doctrines so extravagant. Febrero made signs to Moragas to be silent, but Moragas persisted.

"According to that you will laugh at the idea of the criminality of animals? Well, there is such a thing, and such a thing, also, as the punishment of animals. Do you not remember that in the Bible the Mosaic law condemns to death the ox that causes the death of a man? Did we not read lately in the papers that a bull had been indicted by I don't now remember what bold analogist?"

"Yes, all that is very logical," hissed Arturito, turning to Moragas; "let us admit that egg-plants and crickets are criminals, provided we can prove that man is not one! You wish to abolish the idea of crime, and in abolishing the idea of crime, to abolish also the idea of responsibility, and with the idea of responsibility that of free-will, and abolishing the idea of free-will down with punishment, and with punishment down with the idea of public vengeance—in other words the social conscience—and with another idea, still more exalted, if possible, the idea of——"

"Go on with your ideas," interrupted Febrero,

"and as soon as you have finished do me the favor to allow me to hear the latest version of the crime. I learned yesterday that a murder had been committed in Erbeda; but you say that there are later developments, and I have been so busy all the morning, looking over some books I received by mail, that I have not looked at a newspaper."

IX.

"WELL, there are developments that would make your hair stand on end," answered Nozales. "So ferocious, so inconceivably repulsive as to be worthy of savages."

"Are you stating the case now?" asked Primo Cova maliciously.

"It is the same thing as if I were," replied the attorney-general, not without impatience. "I prejudge nothing, nor are these gentlemen" (pointing to Palmares), "nor I, nor anyone else, going to form an opinion from what we may say here to-day, but from the evidence given on the trail; let us, however, admit provisionally what most of the newspapers say to be true, and acknowledge that the crime is one so patent that it needs no proof. In the evening an honest laborer, a poor cartman, returns to his home and takes his supper peacefully with his wife and his little child. He goes to bed, to rest from the toils of the day. Scarcely does the wicked woman, his wife, see him asleep, and, horrors of horrors! the

child lying in the same bed with him asleep also, then she goes out in search of her lover, who is, in fact, the brother-in-law of the future victim. And they return, and she gives the lover the knife, and places a tub under the husband's head, and takes down the light and holds it while they bleed him as they would a hog; there, there where his daughter is asleep, the little girl that does not even open her eyes. And presently they empty the blood caught in the tub into the river, and they dress the corpse, and the brother-in-law throws it over the back of an ass and they leave it in a pinewood, having first smashed in the head with a hatchet, so that it may be thought he was killed there, either in a quarrel or God knows how. All in order to indulge at their ease an impure and brutal passion!"

The assemblage listened with interest to this dramatic narration. When Don Carmelo had ended, Cartoné, who swore like the lovers of the old comedies, exclaimed:

"God's life! By all the devils!"

And Moragas interposed with vivacity:

"Señor Nozales, it is of no use. We are not dramatizing an accusation here, *à la* Meléndez Valdés. The honest carter was an idle and

brutal drunkard who beat his wife. On the night of the murder he was stupefied with drink; only in this way can it be explained that he should allow himself to be killed without making the least attempt to defend himself. And as for its being in order to indulge an impure passion—they say they did that without needing to kill him, and that he knew all about the affair. So that there must be some mystery in it, some psychological or physiological problem, or the two things combined, which it is your part, gentlemen, to solve."

"I have already said that I do not prejudge," declared Nozales, biting his lips.

"You do not prejudge, but you accuse."

"No; do you know what you must tell these gentlemen, to satisfy them?" interposed Siete Patibulos. "You must tell them that every criminal is insane, and that it is because he was insane that he committed the crime. I have a little nephew who beats his sisters, and when his mother scolds him do you know the excuse the boy makes? He says he couldn't help it, that there came up from his stomach something—something that when it reached his hand turned into a blow. Those of the *irresistible impulse* are

like the boy, and if we cure him with a whipping, those——"

"You would give us a flogging?" interrupted Febrero, looking at Cañamo with a smile of insolent mockery. "I had suspected as much, Señor de Cañamo. I already supposed that, if you had your wish, you would re-establish in all its splendor the use of the cord, the weights, the rack, the wedges, the three gallons of water poured through a funnel, with the other modes of questioning employed by our illustrious ancestors. And we should also return to the cutting off of the hands and feet, the perforating the tongue with a hot iron, the lash, the anointing women with oil and then covering them with feathers, the quartering of men, the red mark on the shoulder—all the infamous and cruel punishments whose relics you so zealously preserve. And woe to him who touches these relics! Am I not right, Señor de Cañamo? That is the *Sanctum Sanctorum*."

Cañamo's sallow features contracted, and his prominent cheek bones grew pale with anger; his voice trembled with passion, as he answered:

"Yes, yes, I know that everything will end in that; I know that that is the object of the pretended reforms and the end to which those infa-

mous theories lead. They desire to establish irresponsibility in order that, under its protection, they may pull down the pillars of the edifice, already everywhere undermined, by attacking society at its very foundations. They desire to reach with the pickax the base, the inmost center on which rest peace, order, justice, the harmonious progress of the whole social organism. They desire, I shudder to say it, to loosen the cornerstone, to abolish capital punishment!"

A scene of confusion followed the utterance of the words capital punishment; everyone wished to give expression to his views, to object, to affirm, to deny, to argue. But above the flood of opinions that were to throw light on the subject rose the voice of Primo Cova, who screamed in sharp falsetto:

"Take care how you touch that point when Cañamo is present! Capital punishment! Why that is his sore spot. Didn't you know that? He has published articles on the subject in every newspaper in the town, in Madrid, and in America, and it is estimated that the number of articles he has already published would weight, if they were put together, at least thirty quintals. The undertakers have all joined to present him with a crown

of jet beads. He has made the profoundest investigations on the subject; he has Becaria, Filangieri, and Silvela at his fingers' ends. Only he has left us a doubt, a horrible uncertainty. He has not been able to tell us positively what is the first person of the indicative mood, present tense, of the verb *abolir*.* He has not decided whether we are to say: *yo abuelo*, or *yo abolo*. Unable to determine which to give the preference to he accepted both, and wrote the following verse:

Mi abuela quiera que *abuela* †
Yo la pena capital;
Yo no soy bolo y no *abolo*
La garantía social!

Shouts of laughter greeted Primo Cova's impertinent squib. The conversation lost its serious character, the somber tinge imparted to it by the narration of the crime disappeared, and, in the midst of jests and epigrams, stimulated by the evident annoyance of the exasperated Arturito,

* To abolish.

† An untranslatable play upon words, the signification of the lines being, more or less, as follows:

My grandmother wishes me to abolish,
To please her, the death-penalty!
But I'm not foolish, and I won't abolish
The safeguard of society!

a discussion, purely grammatical, in which everyone took part, was started, as to whether one should say *abuelo* or *abolo;* much indignation and the fiercest protests being caused by the opinion of Don Darío Cortés, who affirmed that one should say neither *abuelo* nor *abolo*, but *abulo*, quoting authorities and weighty arguments in support of his opinion. This petty dispute was maintained with incredible heat. The questions which had originated the discussion—the degree of responsibility which should attach to criminals and the expediency of capital punishment—were forgotten. And this assemblage of comparatively sensible, enlightened, and serious men, suddenly becoming more agitated than a sea in a storm, burst into bitter and defiant expressions, exchanged bets, vociferated loudly enough to bring down the Casino, causing the waiter to request them not to scream, "that they could be heard plainly from the street," and finally some of the disputants declared themselves ready to stake their lives in support of their opinions—all this for an insignificant disagreement, like those Greeks of Byzantium who killed one another on account of a difference of opinion as to the way in which they should cross themselves, while the

sound of the hoofs of the invaders' horses drew nearer and nearer.

Febrero did not care to take part in this discussion, either. His example was followed by Moragas (who, on any other occasion, would not have failed to raise his voice like anyone else). Shortly afterward the lawyer and the doctor left the Casino together, and, without a word, as if by a common impulse, the moment they turned the corner of the street which leads to the promenade of the Terraplen, they linked their arms together, like persons disposed for a long chat, to which the serenity of the evening and the mildness of the spring air, freshened by an occasional salty breath from the sea, invited. The light skiff of the new moon was already sailing in the sky, and the evening star glistened like a fixed and loving gaze that seems about to melt into tears.

Neither of the two men—who, without being united by either a very old or a very strong friendship, were united at that moment by affinity of thought and feeling—uttered a word until they found themselves beyond the region of umbrageous, symmetrical, and carefully-trimmed trees which forms the broad and magnificent promenade of the Terraplen. For there

were not only trees but human beings also, idle promenaders. Having passed the last row of plane trees and acacias they found themselves at the Malecon, always solitary, which has for horizon the waters, at this time peaceful and gently ruffled by the breeze, of the bay. Moragas was the first to burst forth. (Febrero, although vehement, was more reserved, and had already acquired the habit of self-repression acquired in the end by all genuine reformers.)

"Did you ever see the like? What a crew! A fine areopagus! That is why I never set foot there."

"I go there occasionally," responded Febrero. "I let them talk, I listen to them, and I learn, strange as it may seem. And that, although now, when I am present, they are very reserved. I don't know where they got the notion that I laugh at what they say. What I do not do is to take part in their disputes. Nothing in the world would induce me to do that. Although I believe that I was born for the propaganda, I consider that for this oral propaganda the minds of the people here are not yet ripe, nor is the ground prepared. I will not say that this oral propaganda would be altogether bad, provided

always one could have a select audience, capable of receiving the idea with some clearness and of disseminating it in their turn without altering it greatly. To throw it there in the Casino de la Amistad or in any other Casino, to be sullied, distorted, and trampled upon, that is what I will not do. That would be to profane it, and to profane it in vain. Do not imagine that it has not cost me something to learn to restrain myself; to smile and to be silent when I hear them give utterance to all sorts of atrocities and absurdities; never to lose my calmness; to evade the attacks of malicious fools, like that Cañamo, who are always trying to provoke me to some discussion in order to have it to say that they have defeated me, and to make myself felt through my very quietness and reserve which, sooner or later, produce an effect upon the multitude. So that I restrain myself, and I will continue to restrain myself, and they shall not draw me into any ridiculous position. You saw what the conversation was today—a string of incoherencies and extravagances, and at the end one of those grammatical disputes so Byzantine and so tiresome, from which they will derive as much profit as the negro did from the sermon. No, the only propaganda is that of the

press (without including newspaper polemics, however, unless with enlightened men, men of weight and importance, and it is needless to say that I refer to the press of Madrid), that of books, and a certain influence over the minds of a few intelligent, earnest persons, duly prepared, and who believe in a God and in the progress of humanity—as you believe."

"Firmly," declared Moragas, standing still for a moment and looking out over the bay, a scene whose charm impressed him more deeply than ever at that instant. "As to the first I imagine I have never had any doubts; as to the second I feel disquieted and uneasy only when I find myself in the midst of a crowd like that which we have just left. Cañamo, especially, is a type. It is appalling to think that that man aspires to the magistracy. Do you suppose he would not be capable of re-establishing the torture? Only let him have the chance!"

"And what would there be strange in that? The times when torture was practiced are comparatively recent, they are of yesterday—of yesterday, do I say? of to-day; those punishments are still in force, in many places, and, if we look into the question closely, we shall find that the

portion of humanity which accepts torture is larger than the portion which rejects it. The world has at the present day only a veneering of civilization that may be lifted with a pin, revealing the primitive barbarism beneath. We must not be impatient; we must keep calm—and do what we can, which sometimes seems to me very little and again a great deal—according to the humor I am in, and the point of view I take."

While thus conversing they had crossed the slope of the Malecon which skirts the promenade, and they were approaching a part of the shore where a number of small, empty boats, lying motionless, with sails lowered and oars crossed over their edges, cast their shadows on the surface of the bay. A strong and penetrating odor of iodine and sea-weed rose from the water, and in the distance the lanterns of Olmeda cast broken rings of light upon its surface. Unconsciously our promenaders turned their steps toward the wooden wharf, or Espolon, which tempted them by its solitude at this hour, not comparative, merely, but absolute. They walked along the swaying platform, always trembling with the action of the waves, even on days of complete serenity, such as the present. And

they walked on and on, as if, in proceeding along this road, that, seeming to lead toward the ocean, led only to a red light, they were advancing along the progress of which they had been speaking. Nothing was to be seen on either hand but the sea. Through the loosely joined boards of the wharf they could see below their feet the dark water. In the distance they saw the vast bulk of a German frigate which had entered the harbor some hour and a half before, and at the extremity of the long Espolon the mast of a dredge rising toward heaven, as if to affirm what Moragas had just so explicitly acknowledged his belief in—the existence of a God and the progress of humanity.

At the extremity of the Espolon the two interlocutors paused, and, invited by the mildness of the temperature, seated themselves on a large log, their faces turned toward the open sea, from which came that fresh and invigorating air that seems to dispose the soul to combat and to danger. The sheet of water, shut in on the right by a graceful curve of rounded mountains, stretched away into the distance on the left and, notwithstanding its perfect serenity, kept up its incessant plaint, that plaint which reminds one of the dis-

tant hum of a human multitude or the soughing of the wind rushing through the trees.

Moragas turned toward Febrero, and in a low voice (although no one was within hearing) said:

"For me crime is a disease, and the criminal a sick man. And this disease can be combated and often cured. Punish him—why? Do you punish the man who has a cancer, who is suffer- from an ulcer?"

"There we begin to differ," responded Febrero. You are, from what I see, a *correctionalist*. I, either go further, or not so far, I don't quite know which. I believe there is a type of humanity that, from its organization, is disposed to crime. Don't imagine that I suppose the individual in these cases comes into the world differing from other individuals, as an anomaly of the species. On the contrary; humanity it is that was in the beginning altogether criminal; the farther back you go, aided by the scanty scientific data which we now possess, the more you will see the man of the primitive epochs committing, as the most natural thing in the world, homicide, robbery, rape, and cannibalism—the acts that to-day excite most horror. There still remain on the globe examples of what the primitive hordes may have

been—the savages of certain races. How do the survivors of the age of stone employ themselves? In eating one another and abandoning themselves without restraint to the most brutal passions. And that which is general among the savages appears in the countries which we call civilized as isolated cases—but it appears; and to a case of this kind we give the name *criminal*, when in reality it should be called an *apparition*, a specter from another age, a resuscitation or, as it is called in scientific language, a case of *atavism;* not because every family has had criminals among its ancestors, but because all the ancestry of man is criminal. These ideas, which Cañamo would call infamous theories, are only an application to the science of anthropology of two fundamental Christian dogmas—the dogma of the *fall*, or *original sin*, and that of the *redemption.* Therefore, in the work of redemption we can all, great and little, co-operate, even if only in infinitesimal degree."

"That has always been my opinion," assented Moragas, with delighted enthusiasm. "In my sphere I have put it largely in practice, if only as a compensation for those occasions on which we are all apt to betray something of primitive humanity."

"You see then," resumed Febrero, "that, thinking as I do, there can be no more evident calumny than to accuse me of being the defender and friend of criminals. To hear and read certain criticisms on those of us who wish to make the study and rational investigation of crime a science, one would suppose that our aim was to sanctify the handcuffs and to elevate murderers to the category of martyrs. I am a hundred leagues away from any such sentimentalism. But try to make Cañamo and company understand that, if you can!"

"Something of the same kind happens with me," said Moragas. "Although I do not exactly regard criminals as martyrs I confess that I have an indulgence for them, a peculiar pity——"

"Ah!" exclaimed the young lawyer, "I knew it; you had no need to tell it to me. You, who believe in repentance, in correction, and in reformation act on the impulse of feeling; steeped in certain profoundly Christian ideas you are *redeemers;* for you the phenomenon of relapse into sin, which to us affords so much food for thought, has no meaning. Well, popular wisdom proves you to be in the wrong: The wolf loses

his teeth but not his nature.' 'Bad habits are seldom got rid of.' 'Features and temper never change.' Sentiment! Notwithstanding that you are a man of science, accustomed by your profession to apply the experimental and positive method to the study of crime, you are actuated by sentiment, as much as Cañamo is. Don't be frightened; that fool Cañamo acts on the impulse of feeling, but of base, unworthy feeling, of hatred, fear, and revenge. The criminal for him is a personal enemy; the executioner an ally and a defender; the gallows the corner-stone. Who can doubt that Cañamo takes his ideas from the primitive law of humanity, which was the *lex talionis*—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. And just as there are still among us examples of primitive humanity, so does this spirit of personal revenge survive in the codes. The origin of the idea of justice is selfish; it begins by the sentiment of personal defense; as for the pure, disinterested, ethical idea of justice, that is still in the state of what the Germans call *werden.* Humanity is a collective individual that, with the ages, improves and conforms to law, and who will end, perhaps, by becoming the perfect being! In this way, you

see that I, too, am a *correctionalist*, not of the *individual*, however, but of the *species*."

"So that you do not absolutely condemn capital punishment, which to me appears a blot upon society?" asked the doctor, alarmed.

"I do not condemn it absolutely; not at all," returned the lawyer, with a certain solemnity. "What I condemn unreservedly and boldly are capital punishment, as a reprisal, and the idea of public vengeance. This seems to me so odious and so repulsive that—I will confess my weakness to you—notwithstanding the interest which I ought to take in that class of studies and the obligation which, in a certain sense, I have contracted to pursue them, on the days just preceding an execution, when the newspapers begin to herald it, a feeling of disturbance takes possession of me, a sort of quartan fever, and I become so restless that I am obliged to go away to the country. It is an absurdity and I should like to cure myself of it, for in reality I need, we reformers all need, here and everywhere a great deal of coolness, the impassibility with which you physicians amputate a limb or examine a tissue. Yes, believe me, the enemy we most need to combat are the feelings—the metaphysi-

cal entities that block up the path of reason. We need to be like an iceberg—an iceberg that thinks."

"I believe, friend Lucio," objected Moragas, "that there you are wrong. For everything impetus, heat, and enthusiasm are required. Reason enlightens, but only the will moves. The present generation of the young is cold, is too self-controlled, sees too plainly the inconvenience of the propaganda, the ridicule, the calumny, the annoyances of all sorts which those must suffer who try to couch, in any land, the cataracts of the mind. Only those of us who are growing old—for I am much nearer fifty than forty—preserve the sacred fire. Here am I, who need chiefly to restrain a certain quixotism, what you call *redemptorism*, which springs up within me constantly and which would lead me I know not whither, if I did not keep it within bounds. Well, that, that and not the perennial ice of reason, is what is needed to aid in the work—to aid the grain of sand—you are wanting in passion."

"It may be so. Don't imagine that this has not occurred to me," returned Febrero. "Our aim is purely scientific. We desire to abolish the ethical conceptions by which we are hampered.

We wish to substitute for the abstract study of the thing *crime* the concrete study of the subject *criminal.* We say, as you say, that we know nothing of *diseases*, but only of the *sick.* Away with metaphysics. The man whom the vulgar call a *guilty man* we call only a *dangerous man.* Let us abolish the idea of *punishment* and substitute in its stead that of *curative treatment.* When we eliminate, our action will be analogous to yours when you bleed a man suffering from hydrophobia. And if we see a means of avoiding this blood-letting, be sure that we shall avoid it."

"I should hope so!" responded Moragas hotly. "Search, find out the means—for there must be some means—of removing from the civilization of our age the stain of that grotesque horror called the scaffold, and abolishing that social enigma called the executioner!"

As he uttered this word, Moragas fancied he could hear, in the plashing of the water against the stanchions and piles that supported the Espolon, the hoarse voice of Juan Rojo and the low moan of Telmo.

"You know well that the scaffold is not in the odor of sanctity with us," responded the young lawyer. "There are a thousand reasons why we

should *despise*, literally despise, that apparatus of the law, as it is employed at the present day. Observe the movement of opinion, study it, and you will perceive that one of the few mediæval sentiments which have survived to our times, and one which even gains strength every day, is the hatred of the executioner. The executioner is more a pariah to-day than he was in the Middle Ages. The conviction, vague but strong, exists that he is no more than *a murderer hired by society*. And, speaking logically, what is the difference between saying 'We decide that the prisoner deserves death and we condemn him to death,' and turning a crank? But the magistrate is regarded with respect, the executioner with hatred. Observe that in some of the most advanced nations, the United States, for instance, they attempt to abolish the executioner while retaining the death penalty. Either they lynch—which shows an anarchical but frank and youthful state of society, in which all judge and execute—or they kill by electricity, in which method the executioner does not exist. At any rate a real executioner scarcely inspires me with more horror than such props of the scaffold as Cañamo."

"According to that you would not object to

hold intercourse with the public official?" asked Moragas, with animation, "in order to study him, to know him?"

"I should not object to do so in a broader sphere. Here, yes, because—my kingdom is not of Marineda. For the rest I believe that the study of the executioner, which is yet to be made, would complete that of the criminal. Every executioner is necessarily a *case*, a retrogressive anomaly, a psychological monstrosity. His position is much more extraordinary than that of the criminal. But here—well, here it is better not to see such a beast of prey. The persons we ought to see, and whom we shall go together to see, if you wish, are the murderess and her accomplice; not now, while the excitement and discussion are at their height, but afterward, when the trial has been concluded; in short, at some future time, when the public shall have forgotten the criminals in their prison. You say the woman has a mild expression?"

"She has," affirmed Moragas, "so mild that you would be astonished if you saw her. I cannot forget her expression. I am obliged to make an effort of self-control to avoid constituting myself her protector. Happy you, friend Febrero, for

whom sensible objects take the form of an equation or of an algorithm. Here am I, with the weight of half a century on my shoulders, and with all the disillusions I have had, still capable, because I saw a young and modest woman led along a prisoner by the civil guards, of making myself utterly ridiculous."

"Take care, then!" responded Febrero. "Remember that that is what the Cañamos want!"

X.

WHEN he parted from Febrero, Moragas returned to his house, and, five minutes afterward, left it again, completely transformed—without frock coat or gloves, enveloped in a cloak, his head covered by a low broad-brimmed hat tipped slightly to one side. One might have thought he was going to some clandestine meeting or an assembly of conspirators. This time he was far from deafening the neighborhood with the noise of his carriage-wheels. He proceeded with a step cautious and stealthy as that of the wolf until, crossing the Paramo de Solares and walking up the Campo de Belona, he turned into the Calle del Peñascal which led to the Calle del Faro.

Once here, and sure that no one followed or was watching him, he looked around him and surveyed the place, significant and melancholy enough. The neighborhood in which a man lives, and the house he chooses for his habitation, always reveal to the observer something of his

character and condition. Not without reason had Rojo chosen for his dwelling this hovel, precisely the last house of the town, beyond which rose only the cold, white walls of the cemetery.

This man had to be the neighbor of death, and to live as he did in this gloomy hut with its red doors and windows that had the effect of a dirty cloth stained with large splashes of blood. Not without reason, too, were the five houses which connected that of Rojo with the other houses of the town always uninhabited; doubtless no one had wished to occupy these sinister looking barracks, contaminated by the near neighborhood of this ignominy incarnate. Not without reason, too, did the fields of the suburbs—which thus far had been animated by some attractive note of an agricultural character—a barn or a stack of corn husks, an unyoked cart, some budding shrub, some potato-field beginning to flower—assume, near the infamous hovel, so rugged and arid a character, producing only brambles or stretching away in waste, barren lands. And finally, not without reason did the sea serve as the background to the hovel and the cemetery; not the sea of the placid bay, with its lulling

murmur, that at the extremity of the Espolon had accompanied with harmonious accents a dialogue between thinkers—but the broad, free, thundering Cantabrian sea that, with swell now hoarse, now sonorous, now plaintive and mournful, now angry and fierce, lashes the cliffs, writhes upon and eats away the beach, and scales the rocks that crown the little promontory of the Faro, garlanding them with a snowy flood of angry foam dissolved as soon as formed.

"The place tells the story," thought Moragas. "This man, the opprobrium of society, could live nowhere but here, in a sort of wild beast's lair. But in all law and justice, if this man lives here, Cañamo and those who think like him ought to congregate in a special quarter, the quarter where the court, the prison, the penitentiary, the gallows field, and Rojo's house itself, should stand. Then, they who have created this outcast should do no less than raise the interdict placed upon him, and cause what they call justice to be respected in his person. Yes, propose it to them. Rather than go near him they would be capable of letting the boy die, a victim to his father's social condition."

Reflecting thus, and forgetting that, on the

previous day, he himself had not wished to attend the boy (which proves that Moragas had made great progress in twenty-four hours), he resolved to make what he called in his own mind a *descent into the infernal regions*, and turning his head he cast his eyes around to ascertain if anyone was in sight, who might observe him entering the hut. Having assured himself that no prying eyes were near he put his hand on the latch—and this movement reawakened the aversion and repugnance of the preceding day—something that might be called a cold dread, a dread unaccompanied by any real or positive fear. He overcame this sensation; he overcame also the impression it produced upon him to see, leaning against the wall in the hall, a ladder—which brought to his mind the ladder formerly worn in their hats, as a symbol of the gallows, by executioners, and, as he had once plunged into a fetid pool to rescue a child who was drowning, he now plunged into the interior of the sordid dwelling.

La Marinera was not there. Only the father was watching by Telmo's bedside. For the first few moments the doctor and Rojo did not interchange a word. The latter rose to his feet, the

former laid his hand on the bandaged head, and then placed the thermometer under the arm of the patient. When he removed it, shook it, and examined it by the light, he saw that it marked forty degrees, the temperature of a burning fever.

"Has he eaten anything?" he asked.

"Not an atom, Señor. Orangeades only."

"Have you given him the antipyrine?"

"Yes, Señor, everything you ordered. This morning he looked brighter, although he moaned a great deal. Toward the afternoon the fever increased."

"Well, to-morrow or to-night, if he is better, give him some nourishing broth. It is possible that the fever is kept up by debility."

"It must be so, because he wanders; that is to say, he is one moment in a stupor, and suddenly he begins to talk and say—dreadful things."

"Dreadful things?" repeated Moragas, laying his cloak on a chair, preparatory to making his examination of the boy's injuries. "And what are the dreadful things your son says?"

"He is always saying that he is brave and that he can fight with anyone; and that they may throw all the stones they like at him, that he won't surrender for that. It is all: 'You may

kill me, you may kill me, but you won't have it to say that I was conquered. I am General H—— or General R——. I have no army, but I don't need one, I can defend the castle alone. Throw all the stones you want.' I suspect, Don Pelayo, that the boys of the Institute have treated this poor child vilely. I almost think they have stoned him to death."

"If that be the case it is indeed dreadful, although natural and explicable."

Rojo did not answer; he suppressed a groan, and took up his post as before by the bedside of the wounded boy. Moragas, meanwhile, gently lifted the bandage to examine the condition of the wounds in the head, and then, raising the sheet, looked at the dislocated foot. Desirous of probing other wounds, rather than of examining these physical ones, he turned to Rojo and said:

"I suppose you will attend strictly to the orders I am going to give you about the boy and will follow all my instructions carefully. For no doubt you are very fond of this child."

Rojo shrugged his shoulders.

"He is all I have," he answered dully.

His professional duty fulfilled, having carefully examined the patient and given his instructions,

verbally and in writing, Moragas might have retired, but certain it is that, instead of doing so, he took a chair and sat down in it as if he had no urgent business to call him away. On the morning of the day before he would have angrily and indignantly contradicted anyone who had predicted that he would sit down in such a house. Assuming an indifferent air and mechanically smoothing his whiskers, he turned his bright gray eyes on Rojo and asked him carelessly:

"Had you never any other children?'

"Yes, Señor,—I lost another, a little girl, with the measles, when she was very young."

"Happy she!" commented Moragas in expressive accents. "Believe me when I say," he continued, with the same solemnity, "that if I were called to attend that child and knew that her life depended on a dose of a certain medicine or on the cut of a lancet, I, who, to save a child's life, would go into a hot oven—I believe that I would put my hands into my pockets and allow your daughter to die without a scruple."

Rojo neither protested nor showed in any other way that these cruel words had roused his indignation. His furtive glance wandered over the painted floor, and his pallid lips moved as if

trying in vain to form some connected answer. At last he stammered:

"You are—you are quite right. The greatest favor you could have done the—the little angel would be—to let her die. She, at least, is well off. Happy she!"

Moragas was rejoiced to hear these words, for he took them as an indication that his proposed interrogatory was taking a satisfactory direction.

"According to that," he said, "you understand perfectly what your own position, and that of your children, as a consequence, is?"

"How could I help understanding it?"

"But," insisted the doctor, "do you understand it thoroughly? Are you fully conscious of the fate reserved for the poor boy who is raving on that bed? Can you form to yourself an idea of his present and his future? Of the ignominious legacy of hatred and humiliation which you will leave him? Of what he is to-day, and of what he will be to-morrow? Are you aware that that boy, if he were capable of reasoning, as we mature men reason, instead of praying to God to preserve him to his father would pray to him to take him from him?"

Rojo made no immediate answer to these

uncompromising words with which the doctor went straight to the heart of his subject, boldly cutting to the quick. Only his trepidation betrayed that Moragas had laid his finger on the tenderest part of the sore.

At last he burst out in broken phrases:

"I know it all only too well. I am neither blind nor a fool. But it's better not to talk or think of those things; for, when there is no remedy——"

"On the contrary!" interrupted Moragas, with energy, "you must think of those things, you must talk of those things, and a great deal. Since you have come into contact with Moragas you must not have it to say that the meeting was useless and profitless. You came to consult me about a bodily ailment—but although you have the disease and badly, that is the least of your sickness. What you are sick of is the conscience, and you have contaminated that innocent child who, through your fault, is outlawed and on the road to prison. Does not the fact which you yourself tell me, that all the pupils of the Institute banded together to stone your son, give you food for reflection? Do you not in that fact foresee clearly the future of the boy? To be

stoned you destine him, and stoned he will be all his life. Why do you not strangle him, you whose business it is to strangle?"

Moragas pronounced these words with so much vehemence, urged by an irresistible impulse, that Rojo turned livid, rather than pale, his soul writhed as if lashed by thongs of steel, and it was with some roughness that he answered:

"In other things anyone can beat me, but not in loving my son, who, if it depended upon me, would be king of Spain. If he isn't so it isn't my fault. It is one thing to talk and another thing to find yourself placed in the various circumstances of a man's life. With my own hands I'm not going to kill my son, but if God should take him the child would be the gainer, and I too."

These last words were accompanied by a sort of hoarse groan, and Juan Rojo, forgetting now all conventionalities, threw himself on a bench and hid his face in his hands, giving evidence of deep distress or rather sullen grief.

Moragas rose. His desire to learn Rojo's story grew stronger every moment. If he knew this he would very well be able to judge whether or not Rojo were redeemable. Moragas began

to feel the generous ardor, the eagerness to descend into the depths of hell to draw thence a soul—and something, too, of the pleasure of showing Febrero that in every dunghill, in the vilest and filthiest, there is a pearl, which, by force of goodness and abnegation, may be found if it is earnestly sought for. He approached Rojo and, with a shudder, touched him on the shoulder. Rojo did not move.

"There is no use in grieving or being disheartened," he said. "I have already told you that our meeting will not have been in vain. Something I shall do for that boy that will be of more benefit to him than applying bandages or reducing a dislocation."

Rojo rose to his feet. His face, inexpressive, angular, dark, lighted up, as much as it was possible for it to light up, with a species of dull smile, an operation to which his features were not accustomed, and, like one who tries to grasp some strong pillar to save himself from drowning, he stretched out his arms toward Moragas—who, redeemer and all, drew back quickly. What Rojo did not do was to speak. What for? His attitude was sufficient.

"Come," ordered Moragas, comprehending

that he had this man henceforth at his disposal to do with him as he would. "Sit down again—there, away from the bed, so that we may not disturb the patient. What is his name? What is your son's name?"

"Telmo, Señor."

"Well, then, in order not to disturb Telmo, sit down there. I will bring my chair, too. Good. Now, you are going to tell me your story, point for point, and how you came to adopt—so dirty and vile a trade."

"Don Pelayo," responded Rojo, in a voice that was still hoarse, and slowly twining and untwining his hands, "you must excuse me, but—from ignorant or prejudiced people—well—it does not surprise me to hear certain things. But from a man of education I am a little surprised. Don't take anything I may say ill—because when one doesn't know how to express one's self, I mean to say, well, that all that about being a dirty and vile trade—I know of course that the women of the plaza say that; only yesterday, that drunkard, La Jarreta, thrust it in my teeth; fancy the princess to scorn anyone! But you, who have had different teaching, who have different knowledge, I thought, to speak the truth, that you would not

sanction those — prejudices. I am tired, yes, very tired of hearing at every step, 'infamy, infamy, vileness, vileness.' Why infamy? Why vileness? What do I do that everyone should sing the same song of vileness and infamy?" continued Rojo, his tongue now ready and his utterance warmed by indignation, until he was almost eloquent. "Do I rob the bread from anyone? Am I a criminal? Am I a forger? Do I break the law in the slightest degree? No one respects it more than I do—or obeys it better. Let us hear, Señor Moragas, if you, with your intelligence, can explain this enigma to me."

Moragas listened, restraining himself with an effort. Although, seeing Rojo humbled, he had felt a certain compassion for him, when Rojo rose up in revolt against society, if he had followed his impulse he would have spat upon him and insulted him. His silence encouraged Rojo, who continued:

"Yes, Señor, I am as honest a man, if not honester, than many of those who turn their backs on me and treat me like a dog. No one can prove against me that I have ever committed the slightest crime. Crime! Guilt! It is I who suppress them; if it wasn't for me—the law

might take a holiday. I am not an ordinary official. I am the principal, the most necessary one. Sometimes I walk along the Calle Mayor and there are the gentlemen of the court, the attorney-general, the president himself, very stiff and very haughty. One salutes them and they don't answer; they turn their faces away and pretend not to see one. It makes me laugh! How I laugh—to myself!" (Rojo laughed convulsively.) "Let them sentence—and let me not carry out the sentence, and you'll see in what all the talk about the law will end! Suppose that I rebel, that we, the public officials, declare ourselves on strike; and you'll see the magistrates obliged to carry out their sentences themselves. The magistrates! And am I not as much a magistrate as they are? I am the supreme magistrate—the one from whose sentence there is no possible appeal! Law without me—a fine farce! I am the law."

Moragas did not think it expedient to attempt to refute these desperate sophisms, at least just now. Rojo's words and arguments increased his desire to learn the man's history, and to go back to the turbid sources of his life. He thought it better to allow the executioner's outburst of

indignation to pass first, however, and only answered sarcastically:

"All that you say may be very true, you may be more than right in affirming that you are the supreme magistrate, and yet it is not three minutes since you told me that you were glad to have lost a girl in her infancy, and that if Telmo were to die he would be the gainer and you too."

"That is another matter," answered Rojo. "If you attack me on that side, I am hemmed in by prejudices and follies, and I can bear them all very well, provided they don't touch the boy. As for me, I am perfectly contented and I wouldn't change with anyone," he declared with a boastfulness to which his trembling lips gave the lie. "But one's children—that's what hurts, that's what hurts sorely. If one worries unceasingly, if one spends night after night without closing an eye, it is on account of them, of them. One can bear anything one's self. And if one rebels against all that talk about infamy and vileness it is because that brands the brow of the child—who is innocent as the very angels of heaven!"

Moragas drew his chair nearer to that of Rojo, smiled, bit the end of his silky mustache, wiped

his gold-rimmed glasses, set them on his nose, drew down his glossy white cuffs, and lowering his eyelids a little, as if he wished to concentrate his vision, he said to Rojo:

"Tell me, did you study anything when you were young? Did you follow any career?"

And Rojo, as if he were saying the most natural thing in the world, answered:

"Yes, Señor, I studied for the priesthood."

XI.

THE countenance of Moragas, which from its excessive mobility and flexibility seemed at times to be made of india rubber, expanded with a look of surprise, and then, by a strange blending of the humorous element in this dismal and cruel conversation the doctor gave vent to the loudest and frankest burst of laughter that had ever resounded within the walls of Rojo's hovel.

"For the priesthood, eh? Good! Excellent! If you had not told me so I should have guessed it. For the priesthood! Now, then, if you have no objection, will you please tell me how you took the leap from the hyssop to——"

An expressive gesture completed the sentence. Rojo, docilely, with that emphatic tone which common people employ in narrating the events of their own life, answered:

"I studied Latin for two years in the Seminary of Badajoz. And I was quick at learning——"

"Are you from Estremadura?"

"No, Señor, I was born in Galicia. My father

was from this place and my mother was a Portuguese. But the profession of my father, who was a soldier—and of high rank, too—obliged us to travel through Spain. Several of my brothers and sisters—for I had eleven of them—were born in Badajoz; and we were left orphans, and each of us went his own way, to make a living as he could."

"So that you had a vocation for an ecclesiastical life?"

"Yes, Señor; or at least I thought so then. At that age one hardly knows what one is fit for. Pish! If one knew when one is older, even! In the Seminary they were satisfied with me. But the Bishop, who had half promised me a chaplaincy, afterward refused it to me, and I saw no prospect of advancing in the profession."

"And what did you do?"

"I determined to study for a normal school teacher. As soon as I had finished the course a friend took me as assistant in a school he directed. The school fluttered and stumbled along for a while. Unfortunately it failed shortly afterward. And then I was thrown again on the street."

"Hard fate!"

"Then I was drawn as a conscript."

"Well, and did you carry the gun?"

"What help was there for it? Unless they would be willing to take *cuartos* painted on the wall for my ransom. And I can say boldly that my superiors were satisfied with my conduct. I did not receive a single reprimand, for I obeyed like a machine. Our superiors are our superiors, and it is their place to command and ours to obey in silence. Well, as I knew more than my companions, and obeyed like a recruit, I was promoted first to the rank of corporal, then to that of sergeant. And when my time was out I obtained a place as master of a school in Lugo."

"I see that you had a vocation for teaching," observed Moragas.

"I did not dislike the profession," returned Rojo; "only I was bitterly poor. I had very hard times then—then and afterward. The worst of all was that I fell in love with a Galician."

The words, almost comical in their simplicity, were uttered in so singular a tone that Moragas did not smile. It seemed to him as if in the moral auscultation which he was conducting, a special sound that betrayed the true seat of the disease had presented itself. "Here is the seat of the trouble," his medical in-

stinct, applied now to the pathology of the mind, said to him. "Here you have the key. Up to this you did not know what you were dealing with; the malady appeared to you disguised, secret, latent, not amenable to investigation. Now you hold the end of the thread. Draw it, and you will be able to unwind the ball of this soul!"

"You say that you fell in love with a Galician," he observed. "But what had that to do with the matter? You must have fallen in love with a great many women! After all, you were young."

"No, Señor, I did not fall in love with many women. I always behaved well, and no one could ever find anything to censure in my conduct. You see, I left the Seminary and—it was the same as if I had not left it. The youthful follies and vices I saw others indulge in never had any attraction for me——"

"But at any rate," interrupted Moragas, "this time you fell in love in earnest."

"So much so that I got married, Señor."

"Ah!" exclaimed Moragas expressively.

"And, as you know, the situation of a married man is very different from that of a bachelor.

Until then I had never had any anxiety for the morrow; I lived by the day, and, as far as myself alone was concerned, with a cup of broth I had all I wanted, and more. But a wife and children came, and I saw the world under a different aspect. My school did not give me enough to keep the pot boiling. The pupils did not pay. I had continual disputes with the Town Council as to whether I could claim pay or not, as to whether I should receive a monthly stipend or not. This was no life, Señor de Moragas, and I can tell you that a thousand times I was utterly disheartened. Then I remembered that I was very well acquainted with Don Nicolas Maria Rivero, who held the pan by the handle. I went to Madrid, and I saw him and another magnate of this place, who said to me, as I remember, in these very words: 'Go back to Lugo. Before you are there our guest will have taken himself off.' The guest was King Amadeus! It was true. Before I had reached Nogales, the Republic was proclaimed. That gentleman did not forget me; he sent me to Orense with an appointment."

"An appointment? What sort of an appointment?"

"In the police," responded Rojo, in a lower and duller voice than usual.

"The city police? Green sleeves?"

"No, Señor. This was another sort of police, that existed at that time but that I fancy is perhaps not now in existence. As the civil guards were concentrated in the towns, owing to the riots, the country was given over to the rebels. In Orense and Lugo, especially, the villages were in so bad a state that a rising was expected from day to day. It was my business to search the houses of the Carlist priests, and before I went out the gentleman I speak of, shutting himself up with me in his office, would say to me: 'Go, Rojo, search, force an entrance, seize, plunder, commit atrocities. Show no mercy to those cut-throats, for those are the devils, the wild beasts who cause all the disturbance!' But I——"

"You objected?" asked Moragas, seeking for a gleam of hope and light. "You refused?"

"Of course I refused, so long as I had not a paper, a written order, clear and precise. What is ordered by word of mouth is signed in the air. They give the order, and the man who executes it, when he is most satisfied with what he has done, finds himself in trouble and obliged to shoulder

the responsibility. The law must be written or else it is no law. So that I—well, without praising myself, I was not intimidated by the Governor's loud words; I squared myself, I stood firm! 'Give me a few words from your own hand, Señor Governor, and then tell me what you want, and your orders will be executed. I won't undertake to force an entrance into any house unless I get an order to do so. With the order in my hand I am ready to face the world!' And the Governor had no recourse but to hand over the order. With that I did terrible things."

"You declare that yourself?" responded Moragas with severity.

"No, Señor. When I say terrible, it is a manner of speaking, for I did neither more nor less than I was ordered to do. I didn't go beyond orders in anything. As you can understand, it was my duty to obey instructions, to execute with vigor the orders I received, and to concern myself no further about the matter."

"That is what I blame you for," said Moragas, with a stern contraction of the brows, a gesture that traced on his mobile forehead thoughtful lines. "Do you suppose that if I were now to receive the order: 'Commit such or such a crime,'

and that I should go and commit it, that I would be free from blame?"

Rojo hesitated, unable to find an answer to Moragas' argument.

"Well, Señor," he said slowly. "I believe, begging your pardon, that in respecting the authorities and obeying the established laws no one commits a fault or does anything wrong. And the proof of it is that I was not held in the slightest degree responsible for the acts I speak of. I was given my orders and I obeyed them, and there was an end of my responsibility. There were people who said at the time: 'You'll see, you'll see. Before long this little row will be settled, and you'll have to pay for the broken glass.' But with my paper bearing the Governor's signature, as clear as the stars, in my pocket, I laughed at them all. They would have liked well to throw me into prison, but I snapped my fingers at them."

"And what did you do?" asked Moragas, more and more interested, "when that row was settled, and you lost your employment of plundering priests' houses? Did you take up—your present one?"

"Then," answered the man gloomily, search-

ing his memory for the next step of the social ladder down which he had rolled, "I became a distraining agent."

"Excellent!" said Moragas, laughing sarcastically. "A sensible and consistent step! The Revolution persecuted ideas with fire and sword; the Restoration was more practical and organized the persecution of the pocket. It assembled a pack of bloodhounds—and to the chase!"

"But, Señor," objected Rojo, "the taxes must be collected, and, of their own free will, no one would pay anything."

"Not when they are excessive and brutal," responded Moragas angrily; "not when they are so burdensome that they ruin the taxpayer. Let us suppose a well-governed state where there is prosperity and economy, and you may be sure that that state will not need distraining agents. In short, the fact is that you——"

"Señor, I had the little girl then; the boy was born afterward. And they had to be supported——"

"That is a more creditable reason," answered Moragas.

"But I would not be a distraining agent if it was wrong to be one," declared Juan Rojo, with

a curious ostentation of dignity which almost disconcerted Moragas. "Neither in that nor in any other action of my life have I done any wrong, for I knew very well what is a crime and what is not a crime, and I might lay all my actions this very moment before a judge, certain that I should have nothing to be ashamed of. As to honesty I am beyond temptation. If I found millions on the street I should return them to their lawful owner; no one respects more than I do what ought to be respected, but I had to provide food for my family, and I served the state; just as the delegate of the Treasury, for instance, serves it."

The argument must have impressed Don Pelayo, who was either unable or who did not wish to say a word in answer to it just then. Rojo, too, was silent, and there reigned in the miserable room an embarrassed silence. Suddenly it occurred to the doctor to ask a question which produced a profound agitation in his interlocutor.

"And—you and your wife—did you and she agree well together?"

Rojo trembled suddenly and visibly, and answered, still trembling and in a scarcely audible voice:

"Very well. We never had a word of dispute."

"I have touched the quick," thought Moragas. "Here is the wound; here are the tissues unaffected by the putrefaction of the *law*. Good. Here we must cut into the flesh; here we must cauterize." And aloud he said:

"And your wife—is she still living?"

"Yes, Señor," the almost inaudible voice laconically responded.

"And——" Moragas did not venture to say more, for he was impressed by Rojo's agitation at the same time that his medical instinct still said to him: "This is the living flesh; probe it without fear."

He completed his question by a look around the room, that expressed something like the following: "And if your wife is living how is it that she is not at the boy's bedside, or cleaning up this wild beasts' lair a little?"

Rojo was silent. A broken sigh burst from his breast. Then he slapped his knee two or three times and said:

"What ruined me was to have come from Orense to Marineda. If I hadn't come here—— Here they deceived me. For I was deceived—

Señor de Moragas. Listening to advice—and they did it with a good intention, probably. They persuaded me; they said to me, 'Don't be a fool; this is a godsend; a windfall.' I answered them (as true as that you are sitting there on that bench): 'But if I *won't know how?* But if I'll have to *work the machine?*' And they answered me, just as I repeat it to you: 'You'll never have to *operate* here. The twenty years pass without a cat being executed. And you pocket thirty-seven dollars every month for walking about the streets with your arms folded.' Thirty-seven dollars! You see it was a thing that might tempt anyone."

"And—who said that to you?"

"Friends——"

Moragas smiled.

"And your wife—what did she think?"

Rojo's features, at the mention of his wife's name, again contracted. At last, he said, hurriedly and as if trying to exculpate himself:

"*She* said by no means—that she had not married *for that.* But at the same time it certainly seemed as if the money must be welcome to her; because you see, nursing the child, and fond of comfort and of having the house well

supplied with everything, and of handsome linen——"

The words issued from his lips with the softness of a sigh. One might have thought that Rojo was talking with his wife, and arguing with her. Moragas began to understand the whole history of the man. He saw in imagination the wife, delicate, industrious, refined, as far as was compatible with her station, and not in material things only, since she shrank from infamy, although this infamy brought her comfort, fine clothes, and ease.

"At any rate," continued Rojo, as if desirous of getting away from this part of his story, "it was my destruction, Señor; God had willed it there. I dare say you wouldn't believe that there were at least six or seven candidates for the place, who had already sent in their petitions, and who were backed by powerful influence of all sorts while I had not one to speak for me. To say the truth I didn't myself know what I wished. Because they were urging me and pushing me on to ask the place, I wrote my petition, saying that I had been a sergeant and inclosing my certificates, and I sent it in without more ado. See what one's fate is! In a week it was decided

in my favor, and those who had so many recommendations were left out in the cold."

"And," asked Moragas, like one throwing the plummet into deep water, "and—had you had in the war—or—in any other circumstances—occasion to—to wound—or kill anyone?"

"To wound? To kill?" answered Rojo, with an indescribable expression of astonishment and protest. "To wound? To kill? In the fifty-five years that I have lived I don't remember ever to have hurt anybody with my hands. I never went into a regular battle. If my superiors had commanded me to fire against the enemy, I should have fired; what help would there be for it? But the occasion never arose; I had charge of the instruction of the conscripts for a whole year, and not one of them can say that I ever even gave him as much as a slap."

"Then how did you suppose you would be able to reconcile yourself to—the occupation you were going to follow?"

"Don't I tell you," replied Rojo, with an air of distress, "that it was something that *came of itself?* I thought in this way: Let us go on living and drawing the salary; when the occasion arises, it will be time enough to think what is

best to do. The occasion may never arise, I may die before that, and there is no use in worrying beforehand. For the present I shall draw my little salary; we will be able to live; some other situation may meantime turn up; and—patience and hope. Only that the *catastrophe* came, as always happens in this world, when I least expected it, and I found myself bound hand and foot—with the *obligation* before me."

"It seems incredible," exclaimed Moragas, "that you could resolve to——"

"And what would you have had me do? I could not resist the law. Don't you know, Don Pelayo, that that would have been impossible? Oh, it is very easy to talk. Those who command, command, and we, who are under them, obey."

"You might have refused—and I should like to see who——"

"They would compel me."

"How?"

"They would send for me to the office of the secret police and there——"

Rojo placed the outer surfaces of his thumbs close together, and made a grimace like one suffering some agonizing pain.

Moragas gave a look expressive of astonishment.

"The torture!" he exclaimed, horrified, remembering Lucio Febrero's assertions and comprehending the truth they contained.

Rojo answered only by an inclination of the head, dropping his chin upon his breast. Moragas clenched his hands and muttered an oath. The philanthropist regained his self-control after a few seconds and, letting his eyes rest on Rojo with an expression half compassionate, half ironical, he said:

"So that—at last—you were obliged to—*operate?* And how did you manage? For you *did not know how*——"

"I *didn't know how*, of course not! And I was afraid—well—that an accident might happen, and that the people might get excited and hiss or even stone us. But I got well through the difficulty, for the son of my predecessor in the town came to see me and said to me: 'Don't worry, Rojo. I'll help you. You'll get out of the matter all right, I give you my word of honor! I've never operated myself; but that doesn't matter. I know how it is done, and I even think I have a natural aptness for the business. If I

had had the recommendation of having served in the army I would have had the place instead of you. You have it now, and may you enjoy it for many a year to come. But don't be afraid; we shall acquit ourselves with credit. I will go with you on the scaffold as your assistant, lest there should be any difficulty. I'll prepare you the instruments, that have to be as smooth as silk, and show you how to use them. It is like drawing water out of a well, that's learned at the first attempt.' And so it was. He did it so well that I made him a present of three dollars. With the exception of turning the winch—I may say that it was the boy who dispatched *that one*."

Moragas controlled himself. If he had followed his first impulse he would have committed some act of violence. But underlying his indignation there was a persistent sentiment of indefinable commiseration. The abject and torpid soul of Rojo was his prey. The lay apostle was not willing to renounce the romantic work of mercy.

"And how many times did you—*operate* again?" he asked, restraining himself by an effort.

"Five."

XII.

A FUNEREAL silence followed Rojo's answer. Moragas was paralyzed. This cipher confounded him, as might a sophistical argument. The man before him had executed *five times* the movement of the arm which sends another man into eternity.

When Don Pelayo had recovered from his stupor, he asked incisively:

"And tell me—the first time, at least, had you no prickings of the conscience? Or were you perfectly calm?"

"The first time," answered the gloomy voice of Rojo, "for a week afterward, or two perhaps, I dreamed every night—of *him*."

"Ah! every night! You saw *him?*"

"I saw *him!*"

Another pause, a still more painful silence.

"And afterward?" insisted Moragas.

"Afterward—that is why a man sometimes—— Only the one who has gone through certain things—— If it wasn't that I could hardly sleep,

I should never have drunk as much as a glass of rum in my life."

"You began then to drink rum?"

Rojo kept silence. The confession he was making was torn from him in fragments, bleeding, bruised, like the intermittent moans extorted by a paroxysm of pain; and Moragas, accustomed to examine and to treat so many wounds of all kinds, comprehended that the deepest, the bitterest, the worst of all had not yet come to the surface. Moragas could not divine what sort of corpse it was that lay at the bottom, but he felt that it was there, deep down in the lowest depths of human ignominy, shame, and despair. His infallible instinct still guided him, saying: "Here, here are the innermost fibers of the heart, of that heart that beats alike in the breast of the judge and the philosopher, the executioner and the criminal, the august portion that exists in this miserable wretch, the same as in you."

"And," he asked slowly and significantly, fixing his eyes on the executioner, whose soul, so to speak, cowered under his gaze, "and—your wife—what did she say about those bad dreams of garroted criminals? Did not she dream, too?"

"Those are things that are of no importance," said Rojo sullenly. "It's better not to speak of them. Here we have been wasting time in idle talk, and now—it would be well to attend to the child."

"I'll catch you yet," thought Moragas. "You won't escape me. I know now where the hurt is. The universal fiber! That never fails to respond. Love, fatherhood. You would have to be made of bronze not to feel when those cords are touched. And I think you do feel, and keenly. Well, if you wince there, there we will attack you. From the particular concept of *husband* and *father* I may make you pass to the general one of *man*. It will cost me some trouble to make *humanity* rise to the surface, but for that very reason I will not let you go. Ah, if Father Incienso and Father Fervorin only felt the redemptorist impulses that I feel! What makes me indignant is the inconsistency that those very fathers would be capable of calmly absolving the executioner half an hour after garroting his fellow-creature, while they would refuse him absolution if he took the notion of maintaining that mass might or ought to be said in Spanish!"

Having uttered this somewhat ingenuous and unsubstantial aside, the philanthropist again looked at Rojo fixedly and searchingly. Two images were joined together in his fancy, that of the presumptive murderess of Erbeda and that of the outcast whom he wished to redeem. He beheld the woman strangled by the man at the law's command. "It will not be," he said to himself. "This man will never again take away the life of any human being. Moraguitas, either you are a rattlepate or this time you have finished with the executioner of Marineda."

The idea inspired him with singular animation and even joy. This, indeed, would be a fine achievement, a genuine redemption. To save an existence and ennoble a soul!

"Listen," he said, with irresistible force. "You are a man despised by everyone. Are you convinced of that?"

"But that is a great injustice."

"It is not. But let us say that it is. Listen to me attentively. This injustice—does your son suffer on account of it, or does he not? Why is he lying there on that bed, his body bruised by stones?"

"Because there are very barbarous people in the world!"

"I see," exclaimed Moragas, with energy, "that you will not come to reason. I see that you wish your son to continue in his present social position. Good-night, then! Look for another doctor."

Rojo uttered an indistinct groan of mingled entreaty and protest, stretching out his hands as if to detain Moragas.

"And," added the doctor, who, notwithstanding that he had taken his leave, did not move from his chair, "I was disposed to interest myself in the boy, and to be of service to him in solving the problem of his education and his future."

Rojo did not answer in words, but he repeated his former action of throwing himself at the doctor's feet. The latter turned away and, rising from his chair, as if with the purpose of going away:

"Let us speak plainly," he said, standing still in the middle of the room. "Let us see if you can understand me. I can be useful to your son and serve him—greatly. What education are you giving him? None, I wager."

"And how am I to blame for that, Señor? They turn him away everywhere! In the private schools they don't want him. In the public schools the scarecrow of an alcalde tells me he can't be admitted, because his father has means. If he goes to the Institute they will finish stoning him to death. I try to put him to learn a trade, and the proprietor of the factory takes him one day and on the next plants him in the street, because the apprentices strike work. Is that unjust or not? My son is as good as they are! As likely as not their own fathers are thieves!"

"Let them be so!" returned Moragas. "There could be nothing so bad as to be your son. And if you don't acknowledge that now you'll never catch a sight of me again in all your life."

Rojo uttered a suppressed cry, a cry that was almost inaudible, a cry that had the sound of tears.

"Well, then, I acknowledge it; yes, Señor, I acknowledge it. The devil will have it so—to be my son is the worst thing in the world!"

"And a son of yours has no other prospect than to succeed you in your *office*."

"Not that! I'd strangle him first—with my hands—without instruments!"

As he uttered these words Rojo rushed wildly away to dash himself against the board wall of the miserable hovel, and hid his face against it. Moragas approached him and murmured, almost in his ear, with a friendly familiarity inspired by his apostolic fervor:

"I can save your son and make him a man like other men; I can give him an honest trade, and even an education and a fine career, if he should be fit for it!"

Rojo turned and, looking the physician full in the face, exclaimed:

"Then you will gain heaven; for a deed of charity like that——!"

"No; I won't gain heaven, by any means, because I won't do it for nothing."

The father remained silent, not divining in what coin payment of the good deed was to be exacted from him.

"Are you willing to pay?" insisted Moragas.

Rojo looked at the bed on which Telmo lay, and without vacillating responded, with superhuman firmness:

"Yes, Señor; I'll pay."

The doctor remained silent, as if he wished Rojo's promise to register itself on the air. After a few moments he repeated:

"Will you pay?"

"I have said I would—and that's enough! Do you contrive that my son shall cease to be abhorred by everybody, and that he shall not find himself in the necessity of taking up my occupation, and I——"

"We shall see," said Moragas. "I don't trust you yet. I am afraid," he added, "that if I say to you, 'Do this or that,' you will answer me that the law—and that your obligation——"

"No, Señor. Juan Rojo will do what you command him. Do you hear? What you command him. I am an honest man; I never did harm to anyone, except by superior orders; but, as you have so many enemies—if you want to give a fright to somebody——"

"Barbarian!" responded Moragas. "I shall let that stupid remark pass unnoticed. You shall learn presently what I require from you, and if you have an atom of moral sense, you will obey me, with the full conviction that I am in the right. And if you are going to obey me, begin

now. Tell me at once why it is that you don't live with your wife?"

"But what does that matter to you?" groaned Rojo. "I want to hear nothing about her. She went away——"

"With another man?"

"Well, and what if she did go away with another man? May God forgive her! I have forgiven her freely. May God protect her; for all I know is that she is the mother of my son—and good-by to her!"

"I'll ask you nothing more, now," said Moragas, experiencing an emotion so dramatic that it seemed to him ridiculous. "To forgive always, that is the true law, not those laws which you reverence. I, too, will cause your son to be forgiven. Good-by; I will come back again. Until to-morrow. Do you hear? Until to-morrow!"

XIII.

BUT Moragas was unable to return on the following morning, because Nené was ill. It began by a slight catarrhal fever which developed into one of those fevers that in a few days exhaust a child's strength, as a current of air hastens the combustion of a taper. Nené's cheeks lost their freshness; a glassy film covered her soft black eyes; her little hands grew thin, showing the bones under the flaccid skin. The doctor forgot everything else; he shut himself up with the child; he consulted no books, for he knew the origin of the malady, but he fought with it hand to hand, and, by force of tonics and of the most exquisite care, Nené began at last to show a shadow of improvement. And the improvement went on increasing, and the longings for dainties and toys began. Moragas caught a glimpse of the possibility of taking the child to Erbeda, and there restoring completely her strength, health, and spirits. "Nené is saved!" his science told him, and hope repeated the assurance. One day

he rushed out to buy her a new American toy, some enormous mechanical butterflies, that flew by themselves; and as he sent them into the air, in the convalescent's chamber, and heard her laugh, as the big painted butterflies fluttered against the wall, he remembered, for the first time, with a feeling of vague remorse, the son of Juan Rojo.

Like all impressionable people, Moragas was apt to fall from the height of enthusiasm to the depths of despondency. In the executioner's hovel it had seemed to him an easy undertaking to rehabilitate the boy, taking him from the atmosphere of ignorance where he vegetated. He was then disposed to conquer prejudices and antipathies; to force open the doors of schools and factories; to go bail for him, and accomplish in a single day the salvation of Rojo and of Telmo. Rojo would kill no more; Telmo would become a workman or a student. And now, a month later, he thought the plan impracticable and absurd. He experienced the inertia of the will, the ice that impedes action, and all he saw were the difficulties and the dangerous and semi-grotesque side of his proposed undertaking. "Are there not other boys in the world to be protected?

But I must fix upon this one, precisely this one. Moraguitas, where in Marineda would you put the son of the executioner? Everyone will make a wry face the moment you mention him."

These fluctuations ended in his putting off the matter, so as to gain time. He made the excuse to himself that no one can undertake anything during the summer and that the summer was now close at hand. "In the summer months everything is at a standstill. Everyone is in vacation. The people go away to the country. I, too, would like to take a little trip. What a color Nené will get in Erbeda! And to commence the redemptorist campaign—the beginning of the winter is better." The sight of Telmo, cured of his bruises, contributed to cool the ardent resolution of Moragas. The boy running about the Calle del Faro, well and sound, seemed to him less an object of compassion than before. Moragas even felt, with a parent's selfish affection for his child, a species of hostility toward Telmo, seeing him robust and strong, more active, more audacious, and more warlike than ever, and two inches taller at the very least. "I only wish Nené had the health of that ragamuffin!" But Moragas was of too generous a nature to harbor

these thoughts; an almost instantaneous revulsion of feeling took place and he experienced a peculiar sensation, which might almost be characterized as anguish. He felt as if a bar of cold, hard metal transpierced his body and weighed down his soul. "One is more tranquil not to see the ideal, even a hundred leagues away, than to see it and not be able to attain it," thought the physician. Whenever the recollection of Juan Rojo crossed his mind, Don Pelayo felt the impression of humiliating powerlessness which the debtor feels at sight of his creditor—the creditor who waits in silence, without asking his debtor for what is due him. The state of mind of Don Pelayo can be understood by those who, without being just, perfect, or holy, may be called sensible and unselfish. The holy man does not suffer; he fulfills his duty fearlessly; his will is whole. The good man fulfills or does not fulfill but his wounded piety always continues to bleed.

What most contributed to prevent Moragas from forgetting Rojo was the perpetual discussion of the crime of Erbeda. Neither in the country nor the city was anything else talked about. As had been predicted by Priego, the

crime had attracted great attention, even from the press of Madrid, which devoted to it long telegrams and articles, some of them copied from the Marinedan papers. The trial was looked forward to as an event; it was known that Paco Rumores, a native of Marineda, who had obtained a position as a reporter on the newspaper having the largest circulation of any paper in Spain, would be present at it; that Don Carmelo Nozales was preparing a brilliant speech, the prelude to his transference to the court of the capital; and that, notwithstanding his reluctance and his unwillingness to exhibit himself in Marineda as a lawyer, Lucio Febrero had been obliged to undertake the defense of the murderess.

Moragas resolved to attend the trial on the day when the sentence was to be passed. But at the last moment he was prevented from doing so by the daughter of the Marchioness of Veniales, who was the wife of an engineer, and who was now for the first time about to become a mother. The case was a serious one, and Moragas was unable to leave the patient's bedside. At the same hour in which the child entered the world, the jury and the court sentenced a woman and a man to leave it—the murderers

of Erbeda, sentenced to the shameful garrote—"as was to be expected," Cáñamo said.

The press was unanimous on that evening, and on the following morning, in praising to the skies the speech of Nozales and in expressing dissatisfaction and astonishment at the defense made by Febrero. Faithful to the classic models of forensic oratory, Grotius and Puffendorf had pronounced a species of invocation to the furies of criminal law, embroidering his oration with vindictive apostrophes. The smattering of learning possessed by Nozales stood him in good stead on the occasion, and the charge of *Batilo* against the two murderers of Castillo served his turn well, nor did anyone notice the resemblance in ideas and phrases between the two discourses, a resemblance which might appear to be due to the resemblance between the crimes. Like Meléndez Valdéz in 1821, Nozales dilated on the licentiousness and corruptness of the times, the fatal dissolution of the bonds of society, the immorality that has taken root and propagates itself on all sides with the rapidity of the plague, the neglect of every duty, and noticed, as a characteristic of the epoch, the contempt in which the marriage tie is held; he spoke of the consternation of the country at so

horrid a crime, punished by the severest penalties from the remotest antiquity down to the present times; he cited a law of the *Fuero Juzgo* and another of the division of *Los Omecillos*, in the *Partidas*, and ended with an apostrophe to the jury and the court, delivered with tremendous energy and full of dramatic power, which terminated more or less like that of *Batilo;* "Let the thunderbolt of the law fall upon their guilty heads. Let them pay with their lives for the innocent life they have cut off. Make them an example—an example that will terrify evil-doers and enable virtue to sleep in peace!" The audience, who had hung upon the words of Nozales, listened also with eager attention to Lucio Febrero; only that, before the young lawyer had reached the middle of his peroration, their attention began to flag, and at its close, acknowledging that "all that might be very scientific," they were unanimously of opinion that it was strange and suspicious, and even fatal to society, from whose hands he tore the beforementioned avenging thunderbolt that Nozales, with a dramatic gesture, had pictured as about to fall on the devoted heads of the criminals. Besides, was it not an evident sophism, a want of professional loyalty, to seek to demonstrate that

the murderess, in giving herself up to her lover, and afterward in plotting with him the murder of her husband, did not obey the impulse of passion but an impulse of profound fear; one of those impulses that confuse and obfuscate the reason, the fear that her lover would stab her, and afterward the fear that her husband, carrying out threats as often repeated and as horrible as they were seriously intended, would strangle her some night in the silence of their bedroom? To what end support so singular an argument by quoting medical works that show the blindness and the moral confusion which fear produces in the human soul, and especially in the feminine soul, where education and habit both tend to develop this sentiment? Why did not Febrero quote works on criminal jurisprudence? Why did he not accept the natural and common version of the jade who, to indulge her passion, takes a lover, and in order to enjoy at her ease the society of her lover, plots the murder of her husband? No, it was plain that these lawyers of the present day would seize with their naked hands a bar of red-hot iron if by so doing they could prove the criminal irresponsible. You should have heard Cáñamo talking in

the lobbies of the court of Marineda. "I tell you that at this rate society will fall to pieces! That is to take away the corner stone, the foundation of the whole edifice!" Tranquillity was restored on learning the verdict of the jury—a guarantee that society was not yet going to fall to ruin, for very soon it would be propped up by a double scaffold!

Two or three days after the passing of the sentence, Lucio Febrero entered the office of Moragas and held out a feverish hand to the doctor.

"Do you know," he said, throwing himself on the divan, "that I have a fever every afternoon?"

Moragas felt his pulse. Yes, there was an elevation of temperature, but a very slight one.

"It may be a touch of malaria," he said, "but I imagine that what you have is called rage."

Lucio did not at once answer; he was hesitating whether to be silent or to speak frankly. At last, rising to his feet, he exclaimed, with the expansion of one who lays bare his soul:

"I am going to leave Marineda. I shall go to

hunt in the mountains for the rest of the summer, and perhaps save myself in that way from an attack of hepatitis. Happy you who do not repress yourselves, who give vent to your anger, as to your enthusiasm! You say there is a slight fever? Well, I thought I had forty degrees and several tenths."

Moragas laughed and, laying both hands affectionately on the lawyer's shoulder, said:

"How much you have taken it to heart! I had not thought so. It is true that the case has made a noise, and that Nozales put all the meat into the frying-pan."

"All the meat, yes, the putrid meat—meat a century old. But his hearers' intelligence was precisely of the same date as the arguments of Nozales. He spoke to them in the language they understood."

"And you in Chinese," answered Moragas. "That theory of committing crime though fear might be very plausible in the Assises of Paris. As for this place—— You were too clever, Señor Don Lucio."

"I was too sincere!" exclaimed the youthful advocate. "Sometimes the truth is incredible; I had forgotten this, I wished to make it shine in

all its splendor, and I succeeded only in obscuring it still further. Nozales was wise. There is a sort of religious picture, representing the good man and the bad man, for the use of the courts, which is applied to all criminals indiscriminately; it is a classic mask, like those plaster-of-Paris allegorical figures representing the virtues, or the seasons. Men differ so greatly from one another! Each soul is a world! But Nozales and the magistrates—the devil take them!"

"Come, come, you see no one is made of bronze;" said Moragas. "You have taken an interest in your client. What is there strange in that?"

"No, Moragas, that is not it," responded Febrero, making an effort to speak without impetuosity or anger. "She herself possesses scarcely any interest for me, and the lover is antipathetic to me. My interest is purely ideological. They interest me—as a conception. I see that *she* is going to die, not for being a criminal but for being a coward. Her crime is horrible, loathsome. It was attended with circumstances that make the hair stand on end; that is all true, but if we look into it, she ought not to die."

"Do you think any woman ought to die by the garrote?" asked Moragas hotly.

"You know already what are my views on that subject. I am not an abolitionist. But women, since the law regards them as *minors* in an infinity of cases, and they are denied political rights, should meet from criminal law with the protection and the leniency accorded to the minor. But go tell that to the gentlemen of the other side. The murderess of Erbeda, for instance, would not have committed the crime she did if she had not been brought up under the régime of masculine terror. She has told me her story. As a child her father beat her to make her tread furze. As a girl, the young men in the pilgrimages invited her to dance with a pinch or a stroke of a switch—*rustic* gallantry! As a married woman her husband did not beat her often (for that reason Nozales, parodying Meléndes Valdés, said that he was a man of amiable disposition); but one day when he came home drunker than usual, he wanted to put her into the oven and light the fire under it. Then comes the lover and one day, through threats and blows, he conquers her; the husband catches them almost *in flagrante delicto*, and pretends to have

seen nothing, doubtless through fear of the Cyrenæus*; but as soon as the latter turns his back he seizes his wife by the wrists, drags her in front of the oven, after a while releases her, and by words and by looks, by intuition, she comprehends that his resolution is taken; that her husband has determined to kill her the moment a favorable opportunity presents itself. In that way he kills her slowly by fear. Every night when she goes to bed he says to her: 'When you least expect it, you will waken up in eternity.' And the woman gives up sleep so that she may not be taken by surprise, that she may be able to defend herself, to cry out. Can you understand the psychic state induced by many months' loss of sleep? Naturally she confides her fears to the lover, who becomes alarmed on his own account, also, and, as a matter of course, the idea of the crime suggests itself. There you have its genesis—fear!"

"Well, no one has accepted that view of it," returned Moragas. "According to the general opinion the husband was killed because he was in the way."

* Anyone who helps another in any labor or employment. An allusion to Simon Cyrneæus, who helped Jesus to carry the cross on the way to Calvary.

"Let it be so," responded Febrero, sighing. "What difference does it make? I am going away to hunt, to fish, to rusticate, anything. I shall neither hear nor see Nozales nor Don Celso Palmares, who, after going about saying that he would die without signing a death-warrant, has signed this one. I shall rid myself of the ridiculous spectacle of the fickleness of the multitude. I shall not see the men who to-day cried out, 'Public vengeance!' telegraph to deputies and senators to obtain that other absurdity which they call pardon."

"Should you be sorry if your client were pardoned?"

"I know that she will not be pardoned—the wind indicates severity. But pardon irritates me. Let them either not condemn, or not pardon merely through caprice. Ministerial clemency (it is not even royal) is on a par with historical justice. Well, good-by, Señor Don Pelayo, unless you would like to accompany me to the prison. I am going to say good-by to that wretched woman and cheer her up by telling her a thousand falsehoods. Will you come and help me to lie? Yes? I am so glad!"

XIV.

THE doctor had not yet fully made up his mind. He was in one of those moods when the heart demands repose rather than conflict. Of how frail a fabric is the thread of human destiny! How trivial may be the psychic impulse which shall perhaps decide regarding the life or death of a human being.

Moragas looked out of the window and observed that the sun was shining brightly; it was a glorious June day, not too warm, and for this reason and because of the sympathy with which Lucio inspired him, he said to himself, "If it must be so," put on his gray overcoat and went downstairs very willingly.

The prison of Marineda stands at the lower extremity of the Barrio de Arriba; on one side it looks toward the sea, on the other—that on which its principal entrance is situated—toward a small sloping square paved with flags between which the grass grows. The aspect of the square is such as would delight the artist and disgust the

advocate of municipal reforms. To the right the Gothic mansion of a nobleman; to the left the high wall of the court; in the foreground lanes and streets, and in the distance the blue bay. Built in the latter part of the last century the prison of Marineda preserves some lugubrious memorials of our political disturbances; the dungeon is shown from which several Liberals passed to the scaffold and certain Royalists to a vessel which they were to man, and which foundered in the middle of the bay, sending to the bottom its fettered crew.

"Do you know," said Moragas, pausing before passing through the door, "that the prison presents a depressing and gloomy aspect even before setting foot in it? Those triple bars, covered with rust, look like cobwebs woven by coercion and tedium."

"And yet this is one of the best in Spain. What prisons there are in other places! In some of them the prisoners live with their feet immersed in water—or in something worse. Remember the subject of our conversation some time ago on the Espolon; the idea that it is permissible to torture the prisoner has not by any means died out yet. This prison," added Lucio,

pausing and taking the doctor familiarly by the lapel of his coat, "is a marvel of construction, in the opinion of those learned in architecture. They will tell you inside—if you have the patience to listen—that if the jailer chances to drop the keys of the building on the floor of his room the noise can be heard in the furthest cell, and that the jailor, on his side, does not lose in his room a sound of what passes in the cells of the prisoners. In spite of these acoustic marvels bottle after bottle of brandy passes in through the lower gratings, and on the last day on which I came here to see my client, a prisoner was having a couple of wounds dressed which he had received in a quarrel after a carouse. What a world, this penal world! And to say that here, instead of in worm-eaten folios, are the laws of the future, the laws which we are creating! Enter and you will see sad enough sights, although here no one complains or sheds tears; those who enter this dwelling become stoics from the moment they cross its threshold."

They went in and an attentive official—accustomed to the visits of Lucio Febrero, who went about the prison with as much freedom as if it were his own house—placed himself at their

orders. Moragas, unfamiliar with the place, looked sadly at the walls covered with the grime of years, grime that seemed the exudation of crime; he deciphered the inscriptions traced by the smoke upon them, and, as a physician, he endured the indefinable smell, a mingling of the odors emanating from unsavory food and unwashed human bodies which filled the passages and even the yards. Although the two friends had intended to go straight to the department of the women, situated in the upper story, Febrero drew Moragas toward the principal yard, where the men were taking recreation. The prisoners who, on principle, feign indifference to everything that comes from outside, neither changed their attitude nor interrupted their occupations. The greater number of them, it is to be said, were doing nothing, given up to the detestable idleness of prison life, walking in groups about the narrow yard, chatting or humming an air, and furtively casting cold or hostile glances at Febrero. Moragas felt those treacherous glances strike his face like stabs. One of the prisoners, in particular, inspired him with so sudden a repulsion that he would have liked to go up to him to reprimand and insult him.

"There's a rascal!" he whispered to Febrero, nudging him with his elbow. The rascal merited, in fact, some attention, although his was not a type peculiar to Marineda, but a variety common, perhaps, in all the penal establishments of the universe. He was the Adonis of the prison; the man who in Paris is called *pâle voyou;* in Madrid *chulapo,* but who in Cantabria has no distinctive name, being an exotic—a beardless youth of pale complexion, with a certain symmetry of form, which instead of attracting repelled, as an immodest picture repels. He wore a soiled shirt which left exposed the throat and the upper part of the breast; cream-colored trousers, belted like a public dancer's, and close-fitting new boots of a pale corn color. His head was bare, and his hair was flattened upon the temples in a shining curl. He walked with an insolent swagger, and passed, with a defiant gesture, close by Moragas and Febrero, as if saying: "Look at me, here is a man who is not afraid of you." The warden, who accompanied the two friends, nudged Febrero and, leaning toward Moragas, whispered, with a wink:

"That man is supported and clothed and provided with everything by a——"

But Moragas' attention was attracted by another spectacle; in the opposite corner of the yard he had just caught sight of two boys who might be, the one nine, and the other eleven years old, at the most.

"Look there!" he exclaimed, turning to Febrero, "I didn't suppose there were *kids* here too!"

The boys, huddled on the ground, rose at the voice of the warden, who said to them imperiously, "Come here." They obeyed; the elder haughty and serious; the younger smiling, cynical, showing in his face that roguish expression which, accompanying innocence, has something celestial, but which, withered by vice, oppresses the heart. "Tell me, why is this pair of children here?" exclaimed the doctor, slipping some small silver coins into their hands. Febrero was about to explain but the warden anticipated him: "The youngest is the boy that climbed up a chimney to open the door for the thieves when they entered San Efrén to steal the chalices and jewels. The other, who looks about eleven, but who, in reality, is over twelve, is the boy who killed an orderly, in the Campo de Belona, by a stab in the groin."

Moragas looked fixedly at the precocious homicide.

"Can this be true?" he asked, with more pity than anger. "You are no higher than my cane, and you have already killed a man?"

While he spoke he looked at the boy with some curiosity, remarking that he seemed to be a native of the Philippine Islands; his face was of an earthy color, expressionless, and with high cheek bones, his eyes were oblique, his lips pale.

"Why did you do that?" repeated Moragas with insistence.

"Because the orderly beat my brother," answered the boy, in the hoarse voice of childhood passing into adolescence.

Febrero here diverted the attention of Moragas, pointing to the door of a low cell at which a man was standing.

"There is the accomplice in the crime of Erbeda—the man under sentence of death!" he said.

The doctor turned round quickly, but Lucio, laying his hand upon his arm, stopped him.

"Let us not attract his attention. That man detests me ever since I defended his sister-in-law, for he thinks that I tried to throw all the

guilt upon him. If I speak to him he looks down and does not answer—but you can see him very well from here."

"What a sinister face!" exclaimed Moragas.

The assassin, who leaned against the jamb of the door, was looking toward the yard and the light fell full upon his face. His features and his appearance were indeed characteristic. Moragas observed his depressed head with its dark shock of hair, like the wig of a stage-villain; his furtive glare, his sinister pallor, his ill-proportioned face, more fully developed on the right side than on the left, his large knobby hands, his prominent and brutal-looking jaw. Under the blouse and trousers a robust form could be divined, and the canvas shoes outlined the large flat feet common to the peasantry. His position, as he leaned against the door, was somewhat strained, owing to the fetters which prevented him from crossing his legs.

"There is no deceit there," murmured Moragas. "What a brute! There is a protagonist for a *passional crime!*"

"And you will see that you are not mistaken," answered Febrero. "If people were observers, only to look at his face would make them laugh

at the pathetic apostrophes of Nozales and all that talk about *criminal passion* and *guilty love.* That man inspire passion? Absurd! He is a savage of the prehistoric ages; he is the bear of the caves. Let us go upstairs and observe the contrast between the Romeo and the Juliet, who can gaze at him from above if she so desires. But she will not gaze at him. If the unfortunate woman could have any alleviation to her misery it would be to find herself freed from such a brute. And, mind you, when he is questioned, he swears in a whining voice that she instigated him to the deed, that she was his ruin."

While Febrero was speaking they were mounting the damp and steep stairs, and, leaving behind the deserted stoves in which the fires had gone out, with their blackened and dirty hearths, they proceeded to the department of the female prisoners. In the passage could be heard the dismal and prolonged howling of a madwoman, confined by herself in a cell until her transfer to the madhouse could be conveniently effected. When they entered the quarters of the women the doctor could have fancied himself in a hell with an outlook into Paradise.

The walls were grimy and discolored; the ceil-

ing was low and black, the floor worm-eaten; the space too limited for the flock of prisoners who stood crowded together, leaning for support against the miserable bedsteads, on which only a thin mattress badly filled with *poma* or corn husks invited to sleep, the atmosphere mephitic, and the dusty grating that confined it triple. But through the grating, so near as almost to send streamers of turquoise through it, could be seen the blue bay, broad, majestic, sparkling in the sunlight, covered with graceful punts, hucksters' boats and heavy lighters, lorded over by a magnificent transatlantic steamer, the *Puno*, that—its boilers still quivering, the gray trail of smoke from its tall and slender smoke-stack still faintly visible in the air—had just cast anchor; and on whose deck the passengers swarmed, waiting for the longboat of the health-officers, to throw themselves into the skiffs that danced upon the waves. Indifferent, kind, without intending to be so—like nature herself—the bay sent to the prisoners the perpetual succor of salubrious and vivifying air that, mocking the bars, entered the room in aromatic gusts.

The warden informed Moragas that, with the exception of the murderess, none of the women

confined here had committed any but trivial offenses—some petty theft, some trifling misdemeanor that did not prevent many of them from still boasting of being honest women. Nevertheless, with the mysterious comradeship which reigns in prison, they all treated the woman under sentence of death with cordiality.

Warned by a nudge from Febrero, Moragas descried her seated in a corner, dressed in the deepest mourning. "The woman," said the lawyer, with his eyes rather than with his lips, and the physician went straight toward her. The prisoner had already risen through respect for her counsel and was bidding him good-day, and when Moragas heard for the first time her thin and timid voice he experienced the same sharp and intense sensation of pity which he had felt on seeing her walking along the highroad between the civil guards. Perhaps the sensation was intenser, keener, because he saw that the criminal was meager and stooped, as if her shoulders supported, not in a figurative sense, but in reality, the terrible weight of the law. Owing to her slight stature and her extreme thinness she looked like a boy disguised in female apparel. Under her black shawl, crossed over her breast,

notwithstanding the heat, the lines of a woman's form were not distinguishable, and the dotted calico handkerchief, falling over her forehead, framed in shadow a delicate, sunken, waxen-hued face. Moragas observed those small features, those eyes reddened by sleeplessness and that contracted mouth, that presented none of the characteristics signs of sensuality.

"Well, how are you? How are you getting on?" asked the advocate, approaching the criminal, in a tone that he desired to be frank and jovial.

"So-so," answered the woman sorrowfully.

"They have changed your quarters, eh? You are more comfortable here," observed Febrero.

(The room was neither better nor worse than the other one.)

"Psh— Yes, Señor, I am well everywhere," said the prisoner, in a submissive voice, emphasizing slightly the word *well.*

"And—in spirits? Remember, I won't allow you to be despondent," added Febrero, in the tone of a physician who is ordering a patient an emetic or some other disagreeable medicine.

"In spirits, very bad, Señor," responded the condemned woman, fixing her large, dark eyes

with a hard expression on the lawyer. "I have such dreams! Last night I dreamed that I was already on the scaffold."

"A pretty simpleton!" exclaimed Febrero, with a forced laugh. "If you dream such nonsense again—— I have already told you a hundred times that the Supreme Court will annul the sentence; and even if it does not do so, it makes no difference, because we will petition for a pardon. And anyway, silly woman! we have the whole summer before us. In vacation the courts do not sit. You know very well that until autumn, at least, *nothing can happen.*"

The prisoner did not answer. She lowered her eyes and a slight shudder agitated her slender frame.

"Look," added her counsel; "in order that you may see that I never forget you, I have brought you Doctor Moragas, a very respectable and very influential person. He can do a great deal for you—if—*the case* should arrive. You shall see how, among us all——"

Moragas drew nearer the prisoner, looking at her with that piercing and animating expression which he knew so well how to wear at the bedside of the patient whose life is despaired of.

The woman raised her eyes and the physician, reaching out his hand, took that of the criminal and pressed the ball of his thumb on her wrist to feel the pulse. The skin was cold and moist; the pulse feeble, almost imperceptible.

"Courage," said Moragas, in his turn, but in a tone altogether different from Febrero's, a tone that expressed faith, ardor, and persuasive sympathy. "Courage. Return thanks to God that this is a good day for you. What do you think? Do I look as if I would lie or deceive? Well, I affirm that you will not go to the scaffold."

Through the wrist that Moragas pressed rushed a living and rapid current of warm blood; the pulse quickened, and the skin acquired a soft temperature. The woman fixed her eyes, humid and brilliant, on Moragas and exclaimed:

"You look as if you would speak the truth."

"Then have courage and hope, and dream no more about the scaffold."

"Won't they kill me?"

"No, no, no!"

Don Pelayo was scarcely conscious of the exact meaning of his words; it was not his reason that spoke but his will, something that brought to his lips imprudent phrases of consola-

tion and hope. How could he prevent this woman from dying on the scaffold? How? "But she shall not die. Moraguitas, this game you must win. Shame upon you if you do not win it!"

When the physician and the lawyer had left the prison behind them, and were eagerly inhaling the sea air, Febrero paused and said to the doctor in a thoughtful tone:

"I am persuaded that the common people can be played upon like an instrument, and that we could do them a great deal of good, not by enlightening their reason, but by utilizing their credulity. You have left my client as I have never done; just like a glove. That woman has a peculiarity common, as you know, to all criminals—a deficiency of vascular reaction—and insensibility. I have never once seen her blush; I have never surprised her shedding a tear. Well, when you spoke to her to-day, she blushed and her eyes grew moist. You have done good; you have released her from the worst part of her punishment, which is the *idea* and the *fear* of it. Die—we must all die; and who knows but that we ourselves may die before she does. The only advantage we have over her is in not knowing

the exact hour. How many consumptives are you attending who will die with the fall of the first leaf? The cruelty is not to kill but to torture to death slowly by fear; the law, in this case, taking its inspiration from the judgment of Cañamo, premeditates assassination and carries it into effect with cumulative cruelty; every day that passes adds a new torture—insomnia, frightful dreams from which she awakens trembling, the last hours, when she begins to count the time by seconds. This woman committed murder, it is true, but the dead man passed, almost without suffering, from sleep to eternity, and the law, in reprisal, keeps her half a year with the garrote before her eyes. Be sure that that woman has already expiated her crime by the mental anguish she has endured in all these days. Well, you have given her some relief. There are beneficent lies."

Moragas did not answer at once. He took out a match from a silver match-box to light a cigarette. He settled his glasses on his nose, smoothed the lapels of his coat, and suddenly giving Febrero an expressive push, he said slowly:

"And what would you say if they were not lies? Come, what would you say?"

Febrero smiled with indulgent incredulity, and seizing the doctor's arm, responded slowly:

"Don't imagine that I am not aware of how the wind blows in exalted regions. Although you should enlist the sympathies of half the Congress and half the Senate and of Lagartijo and the Nuncio into the bargain, it is all lost time. That pair will go to the scaffold; and I shall take myself off in order not to see it or hear of it, or read a newspaper or open a letter for four months."

"I am neither a deputy nor a senator, nor a bull-fighter, nor a pontiff," said Moragas, standing still and sending a puff of smoke toward the sea, "but—— Enough said. I know what I mean."

"What?" said Febrero humorously, "are you going to scale the prison, or to blow it up? Think no more about the matter, Doctor. Believe me, one life more or less is of little consequence. The one thing of importance, the one thing that ought to be defended with all one's might, is the idea. When an idea succumbs, then it is that it behooves us to toll the death bells, to weep, and to put on mourning. As for the rest—pish!"

XV.

It was an afternoon toward the close of summer, or we might rather say, at the beginning of autumn, although it is to be observed that in Cantabria the autumn season surpasses the summer in serenity, beauty, and splendor. The fields, already reaped, presented the melancholy aspect of the stubble-covered ground cracked by the drought; but, in exchange, the foliage of certain idle plants, that can afford to indulge in the luxury of not dying until winter, was more luxuriant and more flourishing than ever, and the walls of the villas looking out on the highroad were crowned with a wealth of roses, virgin-vine, clematis, and bignonia. The little garden of Dr. Moragas, too, displayed its fairest ornaments. There was a magnolia, that, owing to its youth, had not sent forth a single blossom during the year, but the recent gusts of heat had doubtless stimulated its virgin buds, and an amphora, white as snow, still closed, but already beginning to betray itself by its subtle fragrance, gleamed

among its glossy leaves. Nené, who had been watching the flower for some days past, glided gently, with hesitating step, to the arbor where her father was reading a newspaper, and reading so intently that he neither heard the child's approaching footsteps nor noticed her repeated calls to him, in her childish, silvery tones. The words which held the attention of Moragas enchained were those of a paragraph conceived in the following terms, *plus minusve:* "The Supreme Court has rejected the appeal to annul the sentence in the celebrated murder case of Erbeda, with the particulars of which our readers are already fully acquainted. It is thought that the press, and the various associations of Marineda, will set on foot energetic proceedings for obtaining a pardon, in order to spare the cultured capital of Cantabria a day of gloom and mourning."

"Papa-a-a!" screamed the child, now beginning to grow angry and impatient. "Papa-a-a! Is oo deaf?"

"No, my precious. I am not deaf," responded her father, laughing involuntarily. "Let us hear; what is it? Won't you let me read?"

"Fower egg open. Div it to me. Want fower, fower, fower!"

"Very well! You shall pluck it for yourself from the branch."

The doctor lifted up the child and the latter grasped the beautiful half-open magnolia bud, crushing it, for her little fingers could not break it off. At last the father and daughter, between them, separated the coveted treasure from the tree, and Nené, the moment she succeeded in getting it into her possession, ran away as fast as the weakness left by her illness would allow her, in the direction of the house. Nené had her plans with respect to the use she was going to make of the first magnolia of the garden.

The instant the doctor found himself free from his tyrant he took up the newspaper with feverish hand and read the parargaph again, as if he had not fully understood it, clear and explicit as it was. He took his chin in his hand and frowned, as if he were revolving some perplexing question in his mind; presently he rose and, greatly agitated, began to walk up and down the one little avenue of the garden. The sunlight played upon the grass plots, gilding them and giving everything a peaceful and smiling aspect. Moragas talked to himself, uttering frequent exclamations; gesticulating, because for him reflec-

tion was action, movement, and an inward surge, impossible to repress. "Now the struggle is going to begin for you, Moraguitas. Come, my son, now it is that you will need to push home your arguments. A fine defeat you are going to suffer! Waterloo was nothing to it. You have promised to interpose yourself between that woman and the garrote. You might as well have offered the unhappy woman the moon! They will garrote her—and you will keep your patience. These are not the days of the Chevalier of Maison Rouge, who by incredible and romantic devices liberated captive damsels from their dungeons." While these thoughts were passing through his mind, in the secret recesses of his consciousness and his will he cherished a different feeling, a singular feeling of hope, which had the impetus and the energy of a presentiment, or rather of a calculation of probabilities based on secret data whose value he alone could estimate. Mechanically he leaned back in the vine-covered arbor and began to pull off the withered crimson vine leaves, that crackled between his fingers.

The garden of Moragas was so small that one could hear in it every sound from the road, and

Moragas, in the midst of his preoccupation, had been conscious for some time past of the murmur of childish voices in conversation. With whom was Nené talking? One of those little beggars who lie in wait in the ditch for passing carriages? No, for if that were the case, she would have already come to her father to ask a mite to bestow in charity. And the chatter went on and grew more animated, interrupted from time to time by bursts of laughter and joyful exclamations. With whom? Moragas finally emerged from his abstraction, moved by the spring of curiosity. He ascended the garden stairs, passed through the dining room, and went to the door of the little parlor. He stood half-paralyzed, as if he had seen the famous classic face of the Gorgon, although in truth he saw only the curly, graceful, bold head of Telmo Rojo, so close to the blond head of Nené as almost to touch it.

The two children were playing at a game which consisted in building, with stones and pebbles, which they took from a heap left by the road-makers to mend the road, nothing less than a regular fortification. Nené had no idea of what a fortification was, and she had begun by

confounding it with another public edifice, exclaiming: "House papa Heaven!" (That is to say, in her language, *church*.) But Telmo, constant to his unlucky warlike proclivities, took the pains to explain at length to the child the capital differences that exist between a church and a fortification, and the special purpose for which the latter is designed. "See, here there are neither priests nor saints, nor a Virgin of Sorrows. This house is full of soldiers, who go with their guns, don't you know? pum, pum, pum! and then they play the cornet, tarará, tarará. And then the officer gives his orders, Right about, face, arr! Then come the cannons—they are put here, they're to blow the enemy to pieces —boom! boom! Every discharge kills a hundred, or a thousand, or a great, great many more. If you could see how pretty it is! And the general comes galloping, clatter, clatter, with his staff, clatter, clatter, clatter, and the fort is in the middle of the sea—like San Anton, don't you know?—and every vessel that enters the bay gives it a salute."

Nené, wild with delight, clapped her hands and laughed aloud at every word of Telmo's. Undoubtedly she did not comprehend the profun-

dity of the teachings of her new friend, but she did comprehend their sonorousness, the spirit and pomp of all that clatter! and boom! With her velvety eyes fixed on the boy's face, with her mouth half-open, with her hands quivering with delight, and her feet dancing, Nené listened to the lecture on military architecture and took up as many of the pebbles as she could hold in her hands, wishing to contribute to the speedy termination of the fort.

The doctor, having recovered from his first surprise, took two steps forward, with the intention of seizing the boy by the arm and dashing him against the heap of stones. For the son of Juan Rojo must be, indeed, audacious and shameless to fraternize with the daughter of Moragas; innocent little angel, tenderly guarded, a bud that would one day be the white rose of the social garden, the mysterious sanctuary which is called a *marriageable young lady!* Nené playing with the son of Rojo, with that scum of society, branded on the forehead, as with a hot iron, with the shameful scars of a stoning! Nené and Telmo together! the child gay as she had not been for a long time past, animated, her cheeks rosy, her arms open to embrace, her face

stretched out to receive the kiss of the only child who could be kissed!

Moragas felt his former anger revive, the anger that had impelled him to throw the two dollars out of the window, that had prompted him to leave Rojo's hovel without dressing the wounds of Telmo, and that now tempted him to dash the boy to pieces, awakening in his soul instincts of destruction so savage that perhaps their very violence consumed them instantaneously, as the impetuous flame consumes the brand that springs from its bosom. During the space of five seconds the doctor was capable, in intention, of committing a crime, and the very fury of this blind and sanguinary impulse brought about an equally sudden and violent reaction. "Are you the man who desires to redeem, to perform miracles, to save one human being from the scaffold and another from degradation? Have you not engaged your word that this boy shall have a career and a future, and be received by society without having his origin cast in his face? A good beginning you are making in your work of mercy, to think of kicking him to death or dashing him to pieces against the stones like a venomous reptile! You propose to rehabilitate the boy. Begin by

not closing your door to him and denying him the kiss of peace of your daughter."

While he thought, or rather felt thus, the feeling clothing itself for him with sudden light and beauty, Moragas approached the door, and Telmo caught sight of him. The stones dropped from the boy's hands; his right hand sought his cap and pulled it off with respectful haste; he turned square around, and the physician, grave and resolute, as if he were entering a hospital ward full of plague-stricken patients, stretched out his hand, placed it on the boy's curly head, and said:

"I am glad to see you, Telmo. Come in, come in, and we'll give you some lunch."

The doctor's good action was repaid on the instant by seeing depicted on his protégé's countenance a vivid expression of happiness and gratitude, which transformed it. Moragas was then able to observe the natural expression of Telmo's face—that species of ingenuous vanity, of presumption, comical in one of his age, but almost tragic by force of the contrast which it offered to the habitual situation of the boy, shunned and humiliated as he was. Those who accept humiliation without protest acquire either an expression of sublime resignation—which is

rare—or one of sinister and vindictive baseness—and this last is the most common. Telmo was equally distant from both extremes; he saw that he was the victim of an injustice which he neither comprehended nor was willing to bear. He knew instinctively the worth of his own soul; he knew himself to be capable of great achievements, and he wondered more and more every day that, instead of treating him like a dog, they had not placed him at the head of the garrison of Marineda, or given him the command of one of those beautiful ships of the squadron, the Villa de Madrid, or the ironclad that was being built in the dockyard.

Leaving Nené and the stones he ascended the two little stairs, entered the parlor and, approaching the physician, said with an unembarrassed air, although not without deep inward emotion:

"My father sent me here. He says that you promised him that I should enter a school, and that by and by you would look for a situation for me, and that they will give me work anywhere, and that I am to learn a good trade. But I——"

"You don't want to work," said Moragas, who was already smiling, leaning back in the rocking-

chair in which he was sitting and examining the boy with more attention.

"Yes, Señor, but——"

"But what? Come, tell me."

"If I am to be anything," exclaimed the boy resolutely, "I want to be a soldier."

"One of these days you'll be drawn as a soldier."

"No, a soldier for life—an officer, I mean."

"Oh, that's a trifle! And why do you want to be a soldier, little tatterdemalion?" asked the doctor, with a mixture of kindness and seriousness.

"To have soldiers under my command, and to win a great many battles, and to carry a sword, and to run anyone through the body who insults me."

Moragas remained silent, reflecting; and instead of being provoked at such aspirations, he thought them laudable and appropriate. In this being who aspired to rehabilitation with all the energies of his soul, the desire to be a soldier was especially suitable and might be regarded as a true vocation. Although Moragas did not yet even know whether such a thing would be feasible or not, he already saw the boy in fancy with

his stars, his galloons, his helmet, and his sword at his side.

"You shall go to the school and to the Institute," he declared warmly. "And after that—God will dispose. Listen to me well. You are to carry this message to your father: I will take you to live in my house, with me."

"With you, here?"

The impression was so profound, so confusing, that under the bronzed skin tanned by the open air could be perceived a sudden pallor. Telmo was beside himself with joy. It was a selfish, overpowering, intense joy that almost resembled pain. The proposition of Moragas took the form, in the boy's soul, not only of liberty, of redemption from insult, but of a magic translation from the dismal and grimy hovel to the oasis of a garden of magnolia flowers, like that which Nené carried in her hand, and where they would play forever, forever, at building fortifications. What unlooked-for, what intoxicating happiness! To be out of sight of the Barrio del Faro, to get away from the cemetery, to leave the hut—and this Telmo did not define, for if he had defined it his good heart would have instantly rejected it, but *there within* it was true

—not to live with his father, not to breathe the accursed air that stifled him!

"Don't you want to come here?" asked Moragas, experiencing on his side, also, an interior satisfaction that had a very different source from Telmo's.

"Don't I want?" stammered the boy, "I? Do you mean that I am to stay here to-night?"

"To-night? You are not in a hurry, are you?" answered the doctor smilingly. "It can't be to-night, monkey; for we require your father's permission. All in good time. See, I am thinking that it will be better for you to say nothing to him. Don't be alarmed; I will tell him myself. Take him this message: That he is not to be uneasy about you, and that one of these days, as I have some visits to make in the neighborhood, I will go to see him, and that he is to expect me. See, Nené, throw away those stones and that earth, you little torment; you are getting yourself all in a mess. So, now, Nené is clean. Do you want this boy to take lunch with us now?"

The child smiled angelically, stretched out her muddy hand as if to seize hold of Telmo, and with her head, even more emphatically than

with her slender silvery voice, she said three times:

"Want, want, want."

Then, reflectively, as if solving a serious problem, she added what we here reproduce, accompanied by its translation:

"Won't dive him peserve. (We won't give him preserve, because it's all for me, and more if there could be more.) Won't dive him tate. (Neither do I wish that he should come here to eat all my cake.) Dive him fied egg. (We will give him a fried egg.) Is. (This; the beforementioned magnolia flower, in the condition which the reader can imagine.)

XVI.

THE news given by the Madrid journal has been confirmed in every particular. The appeal for an annulment of the sentence being rejected, the criminals of Erbeda are to be placed in the chapel of the condemned.

To-day, just as it was five months ago, Marineda is in a ferment, and in houses, in casinos, in cafés, at fountains and in taverns—which are the cafés and casinos of the people—nothing is talked of but a woman and a man. But how changed is the tone in which the names of the pair are uttered! How different the epithets now used to qualify them! How rapidly the weathercock of public opinion has turned! How irreconcilable the sentiments expressed then with those expressed now!

It is in the newspaper offices that the excitement is greatest. Telegrams come and go, wearing threadbare the before-mentioned formula: "To spare a cultured city a day of gloom." The first telegram is sent by the liberal press, who

choose as intercessor the famous Cantabrian *Saint*, the great jurist and erewhile omnipotent politician, protector of all the people of his province who go about hunting for windfalls and situations. And the Saint has already answered, cordially and affectionately, lamenting that he cannot do now what he might have done when Sagasta was in power, and saying that, in any case, he is ready to do what is possible—or impossible—to please his fellow-countrymen. And the Marinedans, on learning his answer, grumble discontentedly, saying that if it were Compostela, the dear little Saint would be able to manage it without any difficulty. For its part the conservative press has recourse to Don Angel Reyes, one of the chiefs of the party, and a rival of the Saint. "Let us see if, through rivalry——" But the telegram of Reyes, frank and decisive like his character, comes to throw cold water over the hopes of the press: "Will take steps, but distrust entirely result." Such was the laconic answer of the man for whom the armchair of Minister of Grace and Justice was being made soft.

This does not discourage the petitioners, however; only that their imaginations, abandoning the paths of reasonable probability, seek novel,

romantic, and unusual paths. The Cardinal Archbishop of Compostela is interested in the question, so that he may send a telegram to the Vicar of Christ, and that his Holiness, in moving words, may transmit the petition to the Regent. An eloquent exhortation is wired to the Marquis of Torre-Cores, a celebrated poet, born in Marineda and residing in the Spanish capital, in order that he may perform miracles with lyre and voice, supplicating mercy in every quarter for the unhappy criminals. And, doubtless in order to encourage Torre-Cores by his example, the local opportunist poet, Ciriaco de la Luna, becomes inspired, and publishes, in three different newspapers, no fewer than three lengthy compositions —an Ode to Clemency, a Description of the Last Moments of a Condemned Criminal, with a motto from Victor Hugo, and a Prayer to the Queen Mother, with a motto from Antonio Arnao. The ice is broken, lachrymose articles follow one another in the Marinedan papers; but already there floats in the air the conviction that for the criminals of Erbeda no generous heart will soften, that they will mount the scaffold when their hour comes, and that this hour is nearer than the authorities will confess—that it is already at hand.

"Too many pardons have been granted in these two years," says Nozales, the attorney-general, in confidence. "In this, as in everything else, a certain *loosening* and *tightening of the reins* is necessary, and now comes the *tightening*."

Dr. Moragas had a visit to make early in the afternoon to a patient ill of the jaundice, the Magistrate Don Celso Palmares—the same who had declared that he would end his professional career without signing a death-warrant, and who, notwithstanding, had signed that of the murderers of Erbeda. Moragas sprang into his landau, that stood waiting for him, and ordered the coachman to drive to the telegraph office. At the door of the office he alighted and, dismissing the coachman, quickly ascended the stairs and threaded his way through the dark and dirty passages strewn with cigar-ends. Moragas had been commissioned by Palmares to telegraph for the magistrate's brother, who resided in Cordova, for Palmares felt that he was really ill and longed to have someone dear to him at his bedside. And Moragas was in haste to fulfill the commission, in order to attend to matters of supreme importance in the Barrio de Belona.

Before the desk stood a man, with his back

turned toward him, who was just handing the telegraph operator a message—"a very urgent message"—which Moragas heard as the telegraph-operator read it aloud. "Under-Secretary Grace Justice. In the name of mercy beg interest Minister Reina pardon criminals Erbeda spare day of gloom most worthy capital." The employee had some difficulty in deciphering the signature. "Is it Arturo Cándamo?" "No, Cáñamo, Cáñamo," replied the sender of the telegram with an air of displeasure mingled with impatience at seeing that they were not familiar *here* with his name, and, as he turned round, Moragas saw that the charitable petitioner for the pardon was no other than Siete Patibulos.

"I suppose you are asking the same thing?" he exclaimed, familiarly saluting the doctor. "That message you have in your hand is for some magnate in Madrid, I suppose?"

"Nothing of the sort," declared Moragas. "I don't ask for pardons, nor do I ask for heads, either. But you—what a miracle! You, the defender of capital punishment!"

"And what has that to do with it?" asked Cáñamo with astonishment. "I demand justice, but at the same time I acknowledge the claims

of mercy. Should I not admire the spectacle of the monarch exercising the most beautiful and sublime prerogative of the crown? But you positivists and materialists are hard-hearted, have no compassion, and desire to despoil the chief of the state of the precious privilege of turning, by a word, the scale of justice to the side of mercy. Ah, not even when the chief of the state is a woman, does it touch you to see her suspend, by a gesture, the fall of the fatal knife? There you have the fruits of soulless science. Two *pesetas*, you say," he added, with a change of tone, addressing the telegraph operator. "Let me see; are there more than fifteen words? Yes, yes; very well. I am going for the stamps."

Moragas sent his message meanwhile and a smile played upon his lips, as the image presented itself to his mind, clearly and distinctly, of Lucio Febrero, who, at this hour, was climbing mountains and crossing streams, in pursuit of some covey of partridges, in the brakes of Mourante, and forgetting, in quaffing the Lethean draught which nature and solitude present to the lips, that there are in the world criminals, executioners, a press which petitions for pardons, or ministers who advise or do not advise them.

"Where science ends feeling begins, and in the domain of the sentiments the absurd is what is real," thought the doctor, as, enveloped in his cloak, he walked up the steep and rugged acclivity which, while waiting for a magnificent future road, is at present the only means of access to the Barrio de Belona. And a wild, unbounded hope, a delightful sensation of pride, in which his spirit floated, as in blue ether, impelled him to turn and gaze, from the hill on which he stood, at Marineda stretching below his feet. Never had he felt so strongly as in this decisive and supreme moment the striking resemblance that the beautiful city bore to a woman's form: the slender waist girdled by a well-turned corset, below which spread the folds of the ample and rustling skirts. The two arms of the sea, the Bay and the Varadero, which defined on either side the slender form of the city, seemed two shells full of emeralds; the white houses, with the thousands of windows of their façades, flashing back the rays of the setting sun, simulated a serpentine border of spangles, glittering in the red flame of a torch, adorning that beautiful form.

"I will spare you the spectacle, Marineda," said the doctor gallantly, as if he were making a

promise to a woman. "On the day of the crime you desired the death of the criminals and to-day you desire their life. I will give it to you." And he hurried away as if he were only twenty.

In front of one of those sheds or sentry-boxes, painted with red ocher, that huddle in the shadow of the barracks and which, from a little distance, look like a string of coral adorning the sinister Campillo de la Horca,* a crowd of people surrounded what was doubtless a human body, the only object over which the populace bend with such mute and pitying curiosity. Some-one in the crowd recognized Moragas, although he was muffled in his cloak and walked with a quiet and noiseless step; and the cries of, "Come here, come here, Don Pelayo," caused the physician to stop, although very reluctantly, for he was anxious to get away unobserved. He advanced and, making his way through the crowd, he saw, on the ground, supported in the arms of two charitable women, a girl, poorly clad, ugly, wasted and feeble-looking, with a face bluish rather than pale, eyes closed and sunken, half-open mouth, and pinched nose, who was breathing with difficulty, or rather gasping. Moragas, at the first instant, recognized the

* Gallows Field.

death-rattle. "Only an accident, Señor de Moragas!" said a patrolman, who was passing by, officiously approaching Don Pelayo. "It is Orosia, the daughter of the drunkard Antiojos, a cobbler who works in that shed there; or rather, the one that worked was the girl; the father does nothing but fill himself with drink. Yesterday morning the girl vomited blood and" [here the patrolman winked] "it must have been from some *misdirected* blow that the brute of a father gave her in the stomach with the last, as he was in the habit of doing. And they say that the neighbors heard her complaining this morning because her father wanted to force her to work when the poor thing couldn't do it to save her soul; we found her just now in this condition. What are we to do with her?"

"Get a chair or a mattress to carry her to her house," returned Don Pelayo.

"To her house!" responded a neighbor, with a sigh. 'Ah, Señor! To mine she will have to come, for her own is locked; the mother, who is a cigar-maker, carries the key in her pocket, for she is afraid that the miserable drunkard will set fire to it and burn up everything. But let them bring my mattress, for we have only one, and

we'll lay her on it. Do you, Cándido, go notify the parish priest—and God grant that he may be in time!"

"He will not be in time," said Moragas, who was feeling the dying girl's pulse. "But send for him at any rate. And let us see if we can't carry her—— The mattress!"

They had already brought it and Orosia was laid on it, without having recovered consciousness, in that death-swoon which is the prelude of resurrection to a less horrible and cruel life. Her dress, which the good women had loosened in their efforts to assist her, torn in places, disclosed the mortified flesh, and on the poor, emaciated, livid body, bruises and traces still fresh of cruel and brutal usage. The women wiped their eyes with the corners of their cotton handkerchiefs, and some of the men swore and gave vent to muttered threats. The mattress was lifted by the four corners, and the procession started toward the dwelling of its compassionate owner.

But on arriving there it was seen that Don Pelayo had not been mistaken in his opinion. Orosia needed no human help, and as for spiritual, if God had not pardoned her—God would not be what he is, pre-eminently and supremely.

XVII.

As night was falling Moragas once more entered the house of Juan Rojo. He now put his foot, without any feeling of shrinking, inside the sinister den, which on this occasion looked doubly so. The lamp burned dimly; the beds were unmade and in disorder, and no one was to be seen in the room, until Rojo came hastily from a dark corner to offer him a chair, stammering, in his joy at seeing the doctor:

"I thought you were never coming again, Don Pelayo."

"I am not in the habit of breaking my word," said Moragas, seating himself and motioning Telmo's father with an imperious gesture to the other chair, the only remaining one in the room.

"Yes, Señor; I know that; but—as you didn't come—I took the liberty—you will excuse me—of sending the boy to your house. And he brought me word—that you—would settle about him by and by. You can see very well, Don Pelayo, that the thing is urgent. The boy is

losing the best years of his life, the years he might employ in making himself a man. He must be put either to school or in a workshop, or wherever you say. Time flies, the day least expected I may die, and he must be settled before then that it may not occur to him——"

"I know what must not occur to him," interrupted Moragas. "Say no more. We need not enter into further explanations. We have discussed the whole matter already. I made you a promise; don't you remember it? I have come to fulfill it. With the aid of my credit, my position, my money, all that I am and have, I will make of your son a worthy man, who shall be received by society, and from whom no one shall have the right to turn away his face."

"Can that be?" asked Juan Rojo, trembling at the thought of so much happiness, as if an electric current had passed through him.

"It can be."

Rojo seemed beside himself with joy, and Moragas, sterner and more serious than ever, added:

"But not for nothing. You know that I exact in exchange——"

"All that you wish! All!" exclaimed Juan,

raising his arms and clasping his hands, as if calling Heaven to bear witness to his words:

"All? We shall see that presently."

Moragas drew himself together, as the wrestler throws back his elbows to collect his strength; he settled his gold-rimmed glasses on his nose, rubbed his hands together, and said slowly, measuring his words:

"In twelve hours' time, that is to say, to-morrow morning, the criminals of Erbeda will be put in the chapel of the condemned. On the next morning, at seven precisely, they are to be garroted. The pardon which has been applied for will not come. The Government does not wish the Queen to exercise her prerogative. In a day and a half, then, you are to take the lives of two fellow-creatures. Life for life. I demand their lives in exchange for the life which, morally, I shall give your son."

Rojo remained motionless, his mouth open, a look of semi-idiocy on his face. Disconnected words issued from his lips.

"I—Don—if—I don't know——"

"The lives of those two criminals!" insisted Moragas.

"I—but how do you suppose I——"

"You, and you alone, can now save them," continued the philanthropist, with superhuman energy, hypnotizing Rojo with his steely glance. "You and you only. Where the societies, the authorities, the Cardinal Archbishop, the deputies, and the Pope have failed, you are going to succeed, and by merely saying no. When you are called upon to exercise your functions—you will refuse. Let them remonstrate. 'No!' Let them command, let them try to compel you! 'No, no!' Let them demand an explanation of your conduct. 'No!' Let them carry you before the chief of police, let them tighten the thumbscrews—Suffer, if it must be so, but 'no, no, no, a thousand times no!' It will not come to this; I shall be on the watch; I will see that they do not do you the least injury—on the faith of Moragas! Sleep tranquil, and make your mind easy! for not a hair of your head will be touched. As your refusal will be given on the very morning appointed for the execution they will of necessity have to suspend it, and then you will publish in the papers a communication, which I will draw up, saying that you did not wish to exercise your functions, for your conscience tells you that it is in no case lawful to kill a fellow-creature. And I

will take charge of the rest, and trust me the criminals will not die by the garrote."

Juan Rojo remained silent, as if the world had fallen in ruins around him—the world of his beliefs, his ideas, his notions of social order.

"But, Señor," he murmured, "but, Señor—I—well, you must let me say one thing to you—and it is that—the law—the criminals——"

"Be silent!" responded Moragas, in a voice of thunder. "Who are you to talk about criminals and the law? Who? The law! There lies now in your neighborhood, stretched on a mattress, the corpse of a murdered girl, the daughter of Antiojos, the shoemaker—you know her? Her father murdered her by dint of ill-usage, persistent cruelty, blows. Not a day of imprisonment will it cost the ruffian. Or do you suppose that all crimes have their end in the twist you give the tourniquet? Let us not waste words, for I have no time to lose or to spend in discussions with you. Does the bargain suit you or not? The redemption of your son for the life of those criminals!"

"Don't get angry, for God's sake, Señor de Moragas. I—I will do what you command! It is settled! There is no more to be said. And

look for work for me too, for I shall find myself without bread. Enough; what is said is said. Cost what it may—I will do what you—I say that I will do it, Don Pelayo!"

"Very well," responded the doctor, rising, as if he did not wish to give the man's resolution time to cool. "Your son will be redeemed—and you into the bargain. All the past infamy will be washed out by this action. Telmo, from this day forth, is in my charge. Let him get his things together, and let him come to me when he pleases; to-day, a room will be made ready for him in my house."

Moragas said this walking toward the door, and consequently with his back to Juan Rojo. As he put his hand upon the latch and opened his mouth to say good-by a hoarse sound caused him to look round—a species of roar, like that of the waves dashing themselves to foam between the imprisoning walls of some narrow strait. He turned back hastily. It was Telmo's father who roared or groaned thus:

"Se—Señ—Don Pelayo, no—let us understand each other—the boy—That——"

And suddenly acquiring, on the impulse of his grief, ready and even eloquent speech, he broke

out, placing himself before Moragas, in a resolute and aggressive attitude:

"No; that is what neither you nor any other living creature will ever see. Take away my boy, take him away from me, his father, his father, his father! Remove him from my side, as if I had the cholera, or as if I was a murderer! For I am not that; no Señor, but an honest man who has always respected what ought to be respected; and I can walk abroad with my head high, a great deal higher than many of those who despise me! I don't contaminate my son and I won't part from him, I won't! He is my son, I have only him, and I have nothing but him in this dirty world!"

Moragas glanced at Rojo with a glance of ice —of ice that burned, ice that took off the skin like the stroke of a whip; almost without transition he passed, by a revulsion of feeling, from this contemptuous contemplation to an expression of the deepest pity, and, addressing Rojo in the familiar manner which he always adopted when he desired most to influence his mind, said:

"But do you not see, unhappy man, that the first condition of the good I purpose to do your son is precisely to change the atmosphere he breathes? At your side—can you not compre-

hend it?—he will always be the son of the executioner! a being who will be regarded with scorn and contempt even by those who, by force of entreaties, may allow him to fill the meanest and worst paid situation. You may be a man without fault, a being full of perfections, but your son—see what an injustice!—even those who clean the sewers would not associate with him! The question is not merely that Telmo should find instruction and work; he must also find honor, which is what we most stand in need of! Ah! if it were not for honor——"

Moragas stopped, searching his mind for an unanswerable argument. Juan remained motionless, without uttering a word, although the difficulty of his always difficult breathing was more perceptible than usual. Every now and then he moved his head from left to right, as if crying, "no, no." And the doctor, practiced in probing wounds, used the lancet fearlessly, sure of touching the right spot.

"It is necessary," he said, dwelling on every word, "that you should give up your son now in order that he may not have to follow, when he is twenty, the example of his mother, and leave you alone with your infamy!"

The cut had been well directed, and it penetrated to the marrow of the bones. Rojo trembled, and something that resembled a half-formed sigh ending in a groan of anguish died away in his throat, to which he raised both hands, as if to untie the knot of his cravat, which, in reality, did not press on it either much or little. This instinctive movement recalled that other movement which the doctor had prohibited him to execute. He thought of the criminals. If they were aware that they were to be placed in the chapel of the condemned, would they too feel this horrible constriction of the throat, this sensation as if the saliva were being converted into red-hot pins?

"Your wife," continued Moragas, with the impassibility of a surgeon, "left you because she could not endure to be called the *executioner's wife.* She preferred to go to perdition, and there are those who applaud her choice, if you will believe me. The boy, when he grows up and is able to distinguish colors, will not be resigned either to the dark blot of being your son. He will not know where to run to get far enough away from you. Ah! did you suppose that you could take for a trade to twist necks, and that

this could be compatible with love, the home, the family, and the joys of fatherhood? The greater fool you! It is less ignominious to be the son of one of those criminals whom they deliver up to you to strangle than to be your son. The children of criminals are not stoned. They kill only one fellow-creature, and you would kill a hundred, if you were ordered to do so, for thirty-seven dollars a month. Let your son go now, if you don't want him to run away from you later on. I wager he is crazy at this moment to get off away from you!" added the philanthropist, turning the steel in the wound.

Rojo uttered a cry of protest.

"No, Señor. That, if you will excuse me, is what is called talking for talk's sake. My boy is contented with me. I treat him well; I even indulge him as far as is in my power. I have never raised my hand to him in my life. A fancy of his is gratified before one of mine. Either the boy is a damned rascal—or he cannot help but love me!" Thus the father ended with a groan.

"Yes?" said Moragas, with a shade of irony, winking his eyes and cleaning his glasses. "Now we shall see. Listen, I think your boy is coming in."

Telmo's footsteps approached the door; his hand had already raised the latch, but, observing that there was a visitor in the room, the boy paused hesitatingly, undecided whether to enter or not. Moragas called to him, and Telmo, on recognizing the doctor's voice, entered, joyful and impetuous.

"Hello, my fine fellow! Where do you come from at this hour?" asked the doctor, to open the way.

"From La Marinera's," answered the urchin. "Her eyes are in a terrible state; for that reason she couldn't come here to-day. One of the children complains of his head. The house is like a hospital."

"And you staid to take care of them?" questioned the doctor. "I fancy you are a gadder, that you spend most of your time away from home."

Telmo shrugged his shoulders and the doctor continued artfully:

"Evidently, you are not here in your element. You should stay more with *papa*. It doesn't look well for you to wander about the streets all day."

"For all the good I am here!" exclaimed

Telmo. "The other boys go to the Institute. One must go somewhere."

As he said this the boy look questioningly at the doctor, as if asking him if he remembered the promise he had made him.

"Precisely in order that you might go to the Institute, or anywhere else, I have been conferring with your papa. He has agreed to my giving you the means of studying, and following a career, a military career, the one you have such a fancy for. Only he is afraid that your companions may play some mean trick upon you, like that of the castle of San Wintila. Do you believe they will do it? What do you think?"

Talmo looked at his father and then at the physician, reflected, felt his instinct become certainty, and, like one who makes up his mind to take a bold plunge, he exclaimed impetuously:

"When I'm under your protection they won't play any trick upon me. If they play any trick on me then—*they do it at their own risk.*"

"Do you wish to put yourself under my protection?"

"*Caramba!*"

Into this answer the boy put all the ardor of his spirit, all his soul, childish still, but already

enlightened by humiliation, adversity, and perpetual suffering. It was the aspiration of the captive asking to be freed from his bonds; it was the savage cry of human selfishness which longs for happiness. Rojo did not move. He was a living image of stupefaction—culminating expression of grief. But suddenly from his rude and hard countenance emotion burst forth like a torrent. His eyes rolled, showing the whites; his lips tightened, his nostrils dilated, and with the impetus of animal ferocity developed in his soul by his occupation, he rushed toward the boy, with his hands open, his fingers contracted, rigid, eager to squeeze a throat. It was a momentary impulse, for the fingers relaxed at once and, pushing Telmo gently toward the doctor, he said in a scarcely audible voice:

"Take him. But it must be now. Now! That is the only condition I make. To-night—let him not sleep here. I *will obey!* Take him, for the sake of God and the Virgin, Señor de Moragas!"

"No; reflect well, Rojo, before deciding," said Moragas severely. "You have all night and to-morrow to think of it—plenty of time. But once you decide, your decision must be final; for here

it will not do to retract, to say yes now and no by and by. Therefore reflect upon it, reflect upon it."

"I have reflected upon it," responded Rojo, with brusque firmness. "All I ask is not to have the boy another minute here. That favor, at least, I think——!"

Telmo, half-comprehending, looked alternately at his father and at the philanthropist. The latter, full of pity, began to make concessions, proposing palliations, desiring to soothe the pain of the father's heart that palpitated under the edge of the steel.

"You will see your son whenever you wish, and after a time you can even live together again," he whispered to Rojo. "Your voluntary retirement from the office, your having saved two lives by merely saying no, will restore to you the respect of honorable people. Why, man, I redeem you too, convince yourself of it. If you do not do so now, because you are stubborn, you will convince yourself before many days. Courage; let Telmo know nothing. It is better that he should not."

Juan Rojo turned round and, approaching his son, took his hand and pushed him toward the

doctor, who, accepting the gift, seized the boy's hand quickly and warmly.

"To-morrow I will send his clothes," said Rojo, in a dull and low but resolute voice. "Take him, Señor de Moragas. I am willing to let him go. Go, Telmo, and remember now that you have no father but this gentleman."

Telmo wished to say something; his heart contracted, half with joy, half with an opposite feeling, and without any effort at resistance, he allowed himself to be led away by Moragas. They emerged into the open air; behind them rose the white walls of the cemetery; before them spread the sea; to the right was the city illuminated by innumerable lights. The philanthropist smiled; unspeakable pride dilated his heart; he drank in the salty breeze; his step was firm, elastic, he seemed to tread on air. More powerful than the chief of the state, he had just granted two human beings their lives and regenerated two others; and as Telmo walked lingeringly and still turned back his head, from time to time, to look at the wretched dwelling, the doctor bent down, threw his arm around the boy's neck, and said tenderly:

"Come, my child."

EPILOGUE.

On the eve of the sinister day morning dawned in a sky covered with leaden clouds. In the afternoon they took on a copperish tinge and surged and rolled in the firmament like waves of molten metal. The surface of the bay, ruffled by a land breeze, assumed, under the gloomy canopy of scurrying clouds, metallic tones; and instead of the cold wintry winds which had been blowing for some days past, the city became suddenly enveloped in a sultry stifling atmosphere; the heavy air was stirred by hot gusts and from the soil ascended the asphyxiating vapors that precede the *solano*.*

This hot and terrible wind, which oppresses nature as it does the spirit, is of frequent occurrence in Marineda. At its deadly breath vegetation seems to wither, the sea shrinks, the light becomes livid, and man falls into a profound apathy or is seized by a mad vertigo. A dull weight oppresses the lungs, and never with greater reason than now, could the poet of sorrow

* Easterly wind.

say, with the Hebrew prophet: "My soul beheld my life with weariness."

The Marinedans observed this atmospheric condition and, although it was not unfrequent, it seemed to them to have on this occasion something of prophetic symbolism. A master-carpenter, threatened with the loss of the work of the court, the regency, and the captaincy general, if he refused to accept the horrible commission, had hired for the day, at an exorbitant price, two wretched workmen who, guarded by the police and in the midst of the hisses and abuse of the populace, had begun to raise the lugubrious framework of the scaffold. The posts being set and the steps nailed together, Heaven knows how, they put off the rest of the nameless work until it could be performed under cover of the darkness. They were afraid that the placing of the beam and the bench would cost them a stoning, or, at least, insult and abuse.

At the same moment in which the carpenters, pretending to have finished, took up their baskets of tools, and, with heads hanging and faces pale with shame, disappeared among suspicious by-ways, hoping to come soon to a tavern where brandy might give them the necessary courage to

return at midnight to finish their task; at the same moment in which the Brigadier Cartoné was entering the prison to take a bundle of cigars to the condemned man, and to the condemned woman a scapulary of the Virgin, sent her by the Brigadier's lady, at the same moment in which the clock of the Marinedan Court, or as they call it there, the Palace, sent forth a single, sonorous, solemn peal—half-past five—a man, who kept in the shadow of the wall, walked by the solitary plaza on which looks the grand façade of the before-mentioned Palace, and avoiding the proximity of the sentinels who guard the Captain General's office, slipped through the door of the court into the dark passage which gives access to the Halls of Justice.

The porter, when he saw the man, made a significant gesture, as much as to say, "I know what you have come for," and taking down from the wall a lamp, by whose light he had been reading a newspaper, preceded the newcomer into the lobby leading to the criminal court.

As they were about to enter the court, the newcomer stood still, startled by the sight of the rack where the lawyers hang their gowns and caps. In the doubtful light and in this place

the limp gowns, with their funereal folds, looked like black specters of hanged men. Between the cap and the gown there was a space which looked like a face, and the frill might be taken for a hand. Conquering his first instinctive feeling he went on. The porter opened the door of the court; applied a match to the gas, and the vivid blue-and-yellow flame flashed forth, lighting up the apartment brightly.

"Is it for *that?*" said the porter, who was a little old man, with wheezing voice and trembling hands. "It would be better for me to bring it to you here. There it is too dark for you to see anything, and with so many things there isn't room for you even to turn round. See, I'll go and bring *everything*. Wait."

The man remained alone, in the temple of the law. His gaze wandered wildly around the room, which, silent and solitary, had at this moment a strange majesty, calculated to inspire respect even in the most thoughtless mind. The walls were hung in old crimson damask—the fabric of etiquette and official authority in Spain, which harmonizes so well with the gilt moldings and affords so rich a background to the austere faces of the clergy and the magistracy. The armchairs,

on whose backs of dull gold were carved the scales and the avenging sword of Themis, were covered with the same material. The cover of the table and the tribune of the attorney-general were of the same vivid hue. Under the canopy of the President, King Alfonso XII., with sallow face, libeled by the brush of a bad portrait-painter, fixed on the spectator his sad and intelligent eyes. The proud arms of Spain, embroidered in gold, decorated the backs of the benches covered with worn garnet velvet.

Doubtless as a result of his mental condition the man seemed to himself to be wading through a pool of blood. The vivid color that surrounded him inspired him with the desire to tear, to pull down—the impulse of the baited bull, destructive, ferocious, blind. "If I could tear the Hall to pieces!" he thought, while furious voices resounded through his disordered brain. Reason returned to him, momentarily, at the entrance of the porter, who carried two oblong boxes. They were the *instruments*, which are kept in the court, hidden away in an obscure corner as if they were the evidence of a crime, until, on the eve of an execution, the execu-

tioner takes them out to arrange them according to the rules of the art.

The porter laid the boxes on the table, not without visible repugnance; and Juan Rojo, now apparently calm, serious, and intent on acting his part, approached and lifted the lid of the box with the purpose of examining its contents.

Under cloths soaked in oil, bright and clean as if they had just been polished, lay one of the two garrotes—precisely the one which had been modified according to Rojo's directions. This instrument of death, which it produces at once by strangulation and by asphyxia, has the defect that the iron axle, which the winch turns, sometimes slips, and the tourniquet, not crushing the vertebræ of the neck and reducing the throat to the thinness of paper with the necessary rapidity, the agony of the victim may be prolonged for a space of time in which may be contained an eternity of horror. Not so much from this consideration as through fear of an accident and a consequent tumult, Juan Rojo had devised an ingenious and sure means of fastening the *hook* which secures the lever or winch, and was proud of his work. This improved garrote was the first which

he examined. Then he examined the second, assuring himself that both worked well; and, closing the boxes and wrapping them up in an old piece of black serge, he hid them under his cloak without uttering a word to the porter who, on his side, too, also seemed disinclined for talk. Seeing that Rojo had taken up his instruments, the old man coughed, spat out, turned off the gas, and taking up his smoking lamp silently led the way to the door. It was not until Rojo had crossed the threshold that he said to the latter, in an ironical rather than a friendly tone:

"Well, good-by. Keep a steady hand. And much good may it do you!"

Rojo did not hear him; he heard only himself. After persistent and delirious insomnia, after having substituted drink for food, without succeeding in obtaining beneficent intoxication, after an entire day spent in revolving the same thoughts in the narrow compass of his skull, his head aching and ready to burst, Juan Rojo still struck against a wall of rock—the impossibility of disobedience. "The authorities command. I cannot refuse to obey! I am a functionary. They have the right to command me!" He remembered his promise, it is true, but what

signifies a free, voluntary promise, in comparison with the command of one's superior, with one's *obligation?*

"No, I cannot refuse. Who am I that I should refuse?" An unsolvable problem for Rojo.

I am wrong. A solution had occurred to him in the solitary and sleepless hours of despair when he saw Telmo's bed empty, the room empty, everything, even to the world, empty. And in the daytime the solution presented itself to him again, clear, simple, consoling, and tremendous. It was in the afternoon, when the first gusts of hot air, like steam from an infernal cauldron, stirred the Marinedan atmosphere. Rojo had just tied together the corners of an old shawl, a shawl which had belonged to his wife, and which was to serve Telmo as a trunk for his clothes. Juliana had undertaken to carry it to the doctor's house. The sight of those relics of the shipwreck of his life evoked in Rojo's mind the memory of anguish past and present. He saw again, as if they were actually before him, with the lucidity which is acquired in supreme moments, Maria and Telmo; but Telmo as he was in his mother's arms, not as he was now; he

saw his little chubby hands, emerging from the shawl in which he was wrapped, feeling for the maternal bosom. Mother and child, thus closely united, familiar, full of sweet communicativeness, smiled at and caressed each other, but when Juan Rojo appeared the picture dissolved, the mother cast the child away from her and fled from the house, so swiftly that it seemed as if she had vanished like smoke into the air.

"How contrive so as not to disobey and, at the same time, to keep my word?" Rojo thought again, a few hours afterward, as he walked toward his hovel, pressing under his arm the two oblong boxes. It was quite dark when he entered the room, groping his way—he did not wish to make a light—felt for something on the table, and laying his burden on it, found what he was seeking—a bottle and a glass. He took a great gulp and he seemed to comprehend more clearly his hard fate, becoming confirmed in the conviction that it had no other issue, nor was there any other alleviation to hope for. This was the only means of fulfilling the obligation which he believed himself to have contracted toward the law, social justice, and public vengeance—entities, offspring of the conscience, and which, for

that very reason, cannot rise superior to their august progenitor.

Another swallow—and courage. A cold shudder ran through the veins and made the flesh creep of the man whose trade it was to kill. He tasted the wormwood of the sudden terror, confronted it, and succeeded in reconciling himself to its bitterness. Bah! A moment, a few struggles—less even—the convulsion of a bound human body, as a screw enters the vertebræ—death is this, nothing more. He muffled himself in his cloak and left the house. The bells of a neighboring chapel were calling to the Rosary; Rojo hesitated at first, then slowly entered, and knelt down among the groups of country-women. The sacristan, in a snuffling voice, began the prayer, but Rojo took no part in it; he was not able to utter a sound and he was sorry for it, for he was a believer and he desired to pray then. A woman who lived near him recognized him and pointed him out to another woman with an expression of displeasure and reprobation. Rojo felt his blood boil with rage. "Not even here will they endure my company, by Heaven! Point at me, point at me, you old devil! You'll not have the chance to do it long."

He left the chapel and, with a tranquil step, absorbed in thought, took the road to the Tower. The light of the Faro attracted his gaze; there he imagined, rather than in the chapel, was an eye that looked on him pityingly. After he had proceeded a few yards, however, he retraced his steps, re-entered the cabin, and took up the bundle containing the boxes. Holding them firmly he again began the ascent.

The road was a winding one and, through waste fields surrounded with rugged hills, he walked toward the promontory where the Phœnician Tower rises majestically, justifying its title of sentinel of the seas. Nearer and nearer sounded the roar of the ocean dashing against the cliffs, and a breeze strong, keen, rude as the coast itself, beat against Rojo's gray hair. At the foot of the high platform which rests on the cliff Rojo stopped, and, instead of ascending the stone steps, entered the marshes that lead to the sands of Las Animas, which perhaps owes its funereal name to the many victims who, every winter, in the *percebe* fishery, lose their lives in this dangerous spot.

As Rojo was about to set his foot on the sands the gloomy and awe-inspiring roar of two huge,

hollow waves that, breaking, covered him with foam, made him pause, freezing the blood in his veins. And the day was not a stormy one, nor was the tide even the highest of the equinox; but the cove of Las Animas is so formed that the ocean, on entering it, feeling itself imprisoned, lashed, subjugated, bellows, and leaps up in a whirlpool of foam, as if it would scale the heavens.

Juan Rojo was at the same time terrified and deafened. The sea with its mysterious whiteness near, and its vast colorless expanse in the distance, dismayed his soul; and, as the mariner throws ballast overboard, he threw into the breakers the boxes which he had been holding under his arm. But the waves still kept up their hoarse clamor, like a fierce pack of hounds pursuing their prey. Telmo's father turned his back to the sea and, not seeing it, recovered courage; he laid his cloak and hat on a rock; took a handkerchief from his pocket, gazed intently for a moment at the light of the Faro, then he folded the handkerchief and bound it tightly around his eyes, so as to cover his ears also, in order not to hear the voice of the deep, which might make him draw back. And thus, blind and deaf, he walked

forward, with extended arms, until he suddenly felt himself enveloped, caught, dragged down, and the water, flowing into his lungs, drowned his last cry.

THE END.