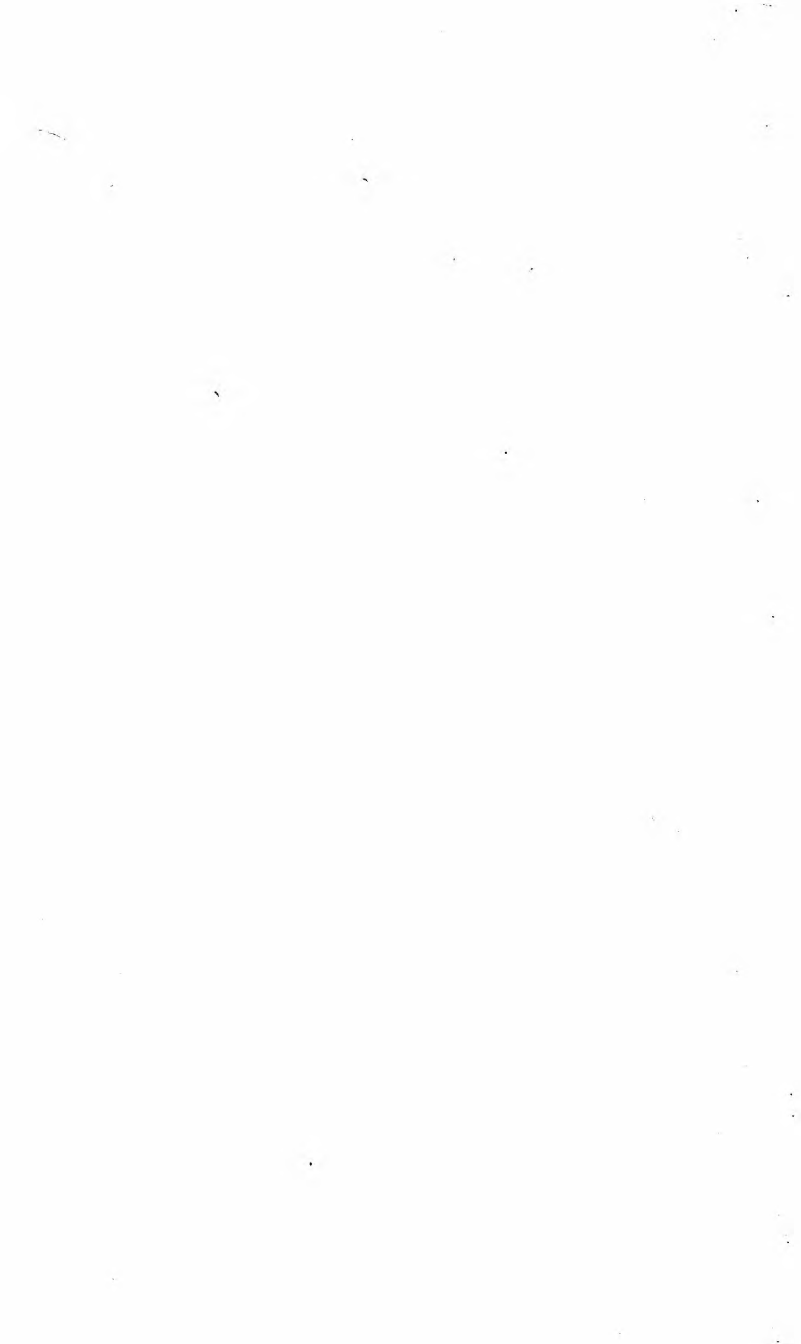




A COLLECTION
OF WEIRD TALES

JAN POTOCKI

THE
SARAGOSSA
MANUSCRIPT





The Saragossa Manuscript

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Count Jan Potocki

A COLLECTION OF WEIRD TALES

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Preface

In compiling a world anthology of supernatural tales, I searched the literatures of various countries for stories I intended to collect in one volume. This volume I conceived as a sort of museum of universal horrors. For Poland, I procured the collection published in 1952 by Julian Tuwim,¹ but as I do not know Polish, I asked a friend to look it over and give me a brief oral report on those stories that struck him as suitable to my purpose. One of those tales was "Commander de Toralva" by Jan Potocki.² It looked to me like a shameless plagiarism of one of Washington Irving's well-known tales: "The Grand Prior of Min-

¹ *Polska Nowela fantastyczna*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2 vols., 1952.

² Pronounced *Pototski*.

orca." I soon realized, however, that I was mistaken. Irving's tale was published in 1855 and Count Potocki died in 1815, forty years before.

In the narrative that precedes "The Grand Prior of Minorca," Washington Irving explains that he first heard the tale he is about to tell from the Chevalier L——, ¹ but that having lost his notes, he later found a similar tale in some French memoirs published under the aegis of the great adventurer, Cagliostro. One snowy day in the country, Irving continues, he amused himself by translating the story roughly into English "for a group of young people gathered around the Christmas tree."

From a note of Tuwim's I learned, on the other hand, that the story of "Commander de Toralva" was an episode from a book written in French by Potocki and entitled *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* ("Manuscript Found in Saragossa"). It was a series of short stories divided into Days, in the style of ancient decamerons or heptamerons, the whole being connected by a loosely woven plot or intrigue. The entire work consists of a foreword, sixty-six of those Days and a conclusion. A first part was published in two sequences in only a few copies and with no indication of place or date; actually it was published in St. Petersburg in 1804 and 1805 (Vol. I, 158 pages; Vol. II, 48 pages). That first part corresponds to Days 1-13. The text breaks off abruptly in the middle of a sentence, undoubtedly because the author set off on a journey. Potocki had a second part published in Paris in 1813 by Gide fils, 2 rue Colbert, near the rue Vivienne and H. Nicolle, 12 rue de Seine. It consists of four slender volumes bearing the title: "Avadoro, A Spanish Story by M.L.C.J.P." (in other words, M. le Comte Jan Potocki). It tells, in a number of loosely connected stories, the adventures of a gypsy chief, as well as adventures other men have told him. It is essentially a sequel to the St. Petersburg text, of which it reproduces the last two Days. As the gypsy leader had already appeared

¹ The Chevalier Landolini, whom Irving met on Malta in 1805 or 1806. See Stanley T. Williams, "The Life of Washington Irving," New York, 1935; Vol. I, 62; II, 325.

in those last two Days of the Petersburg text, the new story really begins with his entrance on stage—that is, on the twelfth Day. From then on it reproduces, either partially or in full, Days 15 to 18, 20, 26 to 27, 47 to 56.

The following year, the same Gide fils (this time at 20 rue Saint-Marc) published in three volumes, from the St. Petersburg text, and in the same format, *Les Dix Jours d'Alphonse van Worden* ("The Ten Days of Alfonso van Worden"), except for a few changes I shall speak of later. Days 12 and 13, which had been reprinted in *Avadoro*, are missing, as is also Day 11. (The latter is undoubtedly omitted because the only stories it contains are two well-known tales, one borrowed from Philostratus, the other from Pliny, the Younger.¹ On the other hand, the work ends with a still unpublished episode, "The Story of Rebecca" that corresponds to Day 14 of the complete text. This episode is joined to Day 11 by a brief transition; in reality it continues the Petersburg text at the very place where the latter is broken off.

The Bibliothèque Nationale owns the three volumes of van Worden, the four volumes of *Avadoro* and the first volume of *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*, published in St. Petersburg—if one can call a volume something that looks more like a set of proofs. Bound in red leather, the back bears the words: "First Decameron." The title is written in ink on the flyleaf: (*Histoire d'*) *Alphonse van Worden (ou) (tirée d'un) Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse.*² Below, in pencil, is the author's name: Potocki, Jan. Alongside is a red seal with the words: "Gift no. 2693." The printed text does not go beyond page 156. The last two pages are re-copied in ink. There are a fairly large number of penciled corrections in the text, most of them strictly typographical. Other corrections suggest actual changes in style.

On the flyleaf is pasted a fragment of a printed notice, on the back of which is the following handwritten note (the words in parentheses are crossed out on the original):

¹ Story of Athenagoras (Pliny, *Lettres*, VI, 27) and Menippus (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.*, IV, 25).

² The words in parentheses are crossed out in ink. (Story of) Alfonso van Worden (or) (taken from a) Manuscript found in Saragossa.

May one not suppose that (Count P.) (it is Nodier) that (the) it is Nodier whom Klaproth indicated in 1829 as the person (in whose hands the) charged to review the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* before printing, and in whose hands the manuscript copy has remained. And (would it not be Nodier who, with the consent . . .) isn't it possible (that as custodian) that having (a man . . .) the work of Count Jan Potocki in his hands, he may have tried to get the most out of it from a literary and a financial point of view? But it is no less astonishing that he felt obliged to keep silent at the time of the scandalous lawsuit against Count de Worchamps¹ who (two words crossed out: illegible) had thought he could publish in the . . . the *Journ . . . La Presse* in 1841-42, at first under the title of *Le Val funeste*, then as *l'Hist. de don Benito d'Almuse-nar*, so-called excerpts from Cagliostro's unpublished memoirs. Those excerpts were merely a copy of *Avadoro* and of *Journées de la Vie d'Alphonse van Worden*. (It was there).

This *Val funeste* was an obvious steal. Nodier, who did not die until 1844 (cf) could have enlightened the law on that subject and he did not breathe a word. (He. . . *four words crossed out. Illegible*).

Number 2693 refers to a gift made on August 6th, 1889, by Mme. Bourgeois, née Barbier. In this case Nodier's accuser is, in all probability, Ant.-Alex Barbier, author of the *Dictionnaire des Anonymes*, in which he definitely attributes *Avadoro* and *van Worden* to Potocki. It will rest with Nodier's biographers to comment on those insinuations.² These few lines, therefore, clarify Washington Irv-

¹ In reality Maurice Cousin, Count de Courchamps, author of *Souvenirs de la Marquise de Créquy*. The plagiarist was denounced by *Le National*, October 13, 1841. At first Courchamps insisted that he was the one who had been plagiarized in the 1813-1814 editions. He claimed to have had the manuscripts from 1810 and to have lent them to a Polish nobleman. Unfortunately for him, M. Léon Duval, who pleaded for *La Presse*, was able to produce a sample of the Petersburg proofs which Potocki had sent to his friend General Senovert. On this famous lawsuit (Berryer defended the indefensible Courchamps) see J. M. Quérard, *Les Superchères littéraires dévoilées*, Vol. I, Paris, 1857. See Cagliostro, pp. 177-193.

² They will have to take into account those pages in which Paul Lacroix, *Enigmes et Découvertes bibliographiques*, Paris, 1866, pp. 57-69, declares that he did not hesitate at the time to attribute the two works to Nodier and he concludes boldly: "Well, I guessed right sixteen years ago. Charles Nodier is really the sole author of *Avadoro* and of *The Ten*

ing's "borrowing" and the fact that Irving could take cover behind the authority—for that matter extremely doubtful—of the famous Cagliostro. Irving found Courchamps' copy of Potocki's story in *La Presse* in 1841-42. That is the text he translates into English and which appears in 1855 in his collection "Wolfert's Roost." In all probability Irving never knew that he was plagiarizing a great Polish nobleman who had died many years before. Irving must be forgiven a translation which he presents as such, though inferring that this is an author's ruse to lend credibility to a piece of fiction. We should be all the more indulgent, as Irving himself was the victim of an identical "steal." One of his *Tales of a Traveler* (1824), "The Adventure of a German Student," was translated and adapted by Petrus Borel in 1843, under the title: "Gottfried Wolfgang."¹ Moreover, this time, too, the "borrowing" had been half admitted, half dissimulated by an ingenious and equivocal presentation.

And with this, the career of the French original ends.

In 1847, Edmund Chojecki brought out a Polish version of the entire work (except for an autographed manuscript now missing) in six volumes at Lipsk-Leipzig, under the title: *Rekopiz Znalezionej w Saragossie*. This translation was published again in 1857, 1863, 1917 and 1950. Finally a critical edition by M. Leszek Kukulski appeared in Warsaw in 1956. Almost simultaneously two important fragments of the original French text were discovered in the archives of the Potocki family at Krzeszowice near Cracow: (1) a copy entitled, "Fourth Decameron," checked and corrected by the author and containing Days 31 to 40; (2) a rough draft of Days 40 to 44 and fragments of Days 10, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 33, 39 and 45.

M. Kukulski, to whose courtesy I owe this information, is at present endeavoring to reconstruct the entire French

Days in the Life of Alfonso van Worden! The autographed manuscript exists: it is here before my eyes." But was that mysterious manuscript about which Lacroix gives no details and which, today, would be damaging evidence against Nodier, actually in Nodier's handwriting?

¹ See the preface to "The Phantom Isle and Other Tales" by Washington Irving, translated by R. Benayoun, Paris, 1951, p. 12.

text of the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*. He will use the five sources already mentioned: (1) the two St. Petersburg volumes for Days 1 to 12 and part of Day 13; (2) *Alphonse van Worden* (1814) for Day 14 and for the general foreword which does not appear in the St. Petersburg edition; (3) *Avadoro* (1813) for Days 15, 18, 20, 26-29, 47-56; (4) the corrected copy from the Potocki archives for Days 31-40; (5) the rough draft from the same archives for Days 19, 22-25, 29, and 41-45. For the rest—that is, for a little less than a fifth of the work, representing chiefly Days 21, 30, 46, 57-66 and the conclusion, he will be obliged to retranslate into French Edmund Chojecki's Polish version of 1847. I wish him a prompt and complete success. Historians of French literature should be able to judge in its entirety, and with the least possible delay, a work to whose importance and quality the fragments now available bear testimony. In the meantime, I am taking the initiative of issuing the principal part of the pages published in French during the author's lifetime, with his consent and under his supervision. As the copy in the Bibliothèque Nationale contains only the first part of the text printed in St. Petersburg, I have asked to be permitted access to the volume preserved in the Leningrad Library. It bears the number 6. 11. 2 24., and consists of two bundles of pages bound together. On the back of the binding there is one word in two lines: *Potockiana*. Inside the book, on the back of the cover, is pasted a strip of paper bearing the following information in handwriting:

Count Jan Potocki had these pages printed in Petersburg in 1805, shortly before his departure for Mongolia (at the time an embassy was sent to China), without title or ending, reserving the right to continue it or not at some future date when his imagination, to which he has given free rein in this work, would tempt him to do so.

The first series of sheets ends on page 158 at the bottom of which we read: "End of the First Decameron." And below it: "Transcribed in 100 copies." The text of the second part is broken off abruptly in the middle of a sentence at the bottom of page 48. The sentence should continue on p. 49, with which the thirteenth Day begins. That series was undoubtedly never printed, nor were those that

follow. I reproduce this text in full and complete it with the rather provisional conclusion that forms the ending of the *Dix Jours*. On the other hand, I reprint only a few excerpts from *Avadoro*.

I have two principal reasons for not publishing in its entirety what the author himself gave the public. In the first place, the text of *Avadoro* is fragmentary and not very reliable. It is better to wait till M. Kukulski has procured a less questionable version by using as a basis the manuscripts from Krzeszowice with the aid of Chojecki's translation. In the second place, I am particularly interested in emphasizing the import of Potocki's work on literature of the supernatural. It is precisely in the early Days of the "Saragossa Manuscript" that the supernatural plays a leading role. Hence my decision.

Potocki's work remained unknown in France. It was written in French and, though the author bore one of the greatest names in Poland, his work appears to have gained recognition in his native land only by slow degrees. His compatriots at least have always considered Potocki one of the founders of Slavic archaeology. A distinguished author, archaeologist and ethnologist, Potocki's life merits a serious study.¹

Born in 1761, Potocki was educated first in Poland, then in Geneva and in Lausanne. While still very young, he visited Italy, Sicily, Malta, Tunisia, Constantinople, Egypt. In 1788 he published in Paris an account of that journey: *Voyage en Turquie et en Egypte fait en l'année 1784*,² which he reprinted on his private presses in 1789. In his own country, however, he suddenly achieved fame by making a balloon ascension with M. Blanchard. In 1789, after a quarrel with the Polish government over the freedom of the press, he set up in his own castle a free printing

¹ In his *Jana hr. Potockiego Prace i Zaslugi Naukowe*, Warszawa, 1911, Aleksander Brückner has given a first and remarkable sketch of that life. Chapter III (pp. 23-44) treats of the "Saragossa Manuscript."

² Klaproth mentions, vaguely and with no references, a volume entitled *Voyage à Maroc* ("Journey to Morocco"): "It is the rarest of all Count Potocki's works. I have seen only one copy of it and I do not recall either the place it was printed or the date."

press (*Wolny Drukarnia*) on which he printed the two volumes of his *Essai sur l'Histoire universelle et recherches sur la Sarmatie*. In 1791, he traveled in England, Spain and Morocco. As captain in the Engineering Corps he took part in the campaign of 1792. From then on, he devoted himself to ancient history and archaeology. In 1795 he published in Hamburg his *Voyage dans quelques Parties de la Basse-Saxe pour la recherche des antiquités slaves ou vendes, fait en 1794 par le comte Jean Potocki*. In Vienna in 1796 he brought out a *Mémoire sur un nouveau Périple (sic) du Pont-Euxin, ainsi que sur la plus ancienne Histoire des Peuples du Taunus, du Caucase et de la Scythie*. The same year at Brunswick, he published in four volumes, *Fragments historiques et géographiques sur la Scythie, la Sarmatie et les Slaves*. Famous archaeologist and ethnologist, special adviser to Czar Alexander I, Potocki traveled in the Caucasus in 1798. In 1802, he published in St. Petersburg at The National Academy of Sciences, an "Early History of the Peoples of Russia; with a complete exposition of all the local, national and traditional ideas necessary to an understanding of the Fourth Book of Herodotus." This was followed in 1805 by a "Chronology" of the first two books of Manetho. At the same time, he quietly printed one hundred copies of the "Saragossa Manuscript." The Czar chose Potocki to head the scientific mission attached to Count Golovkine's embassy in Peking. That mission never reached Peking. It was turned back disdainfully from the Viceroy of Mongolia's camp. Discouraged, Potocki returned to St. Petersburg where he published in 1810, "Principles of Chronology for the Ages Anterior to the Olympiads," then a "Chronological Atlas of European Russia"; and finally in 1811, a "Description of the New Machine for Coining Money." In 1812, he retired to his estates. On December 2, 1815,¹ depressed, neurasthenic, he committed suicide.

Had I adhered to the principle that, to establish a text, one must choose the latest edition published during the

¹ Klaproth says, December 12, 1816.

author's lifetime, I would have followed for *Les dix journées d'Alphonse van Worden* the edition published by Gide fils in 1814. I had strong reasons for not doing so. The St. Petersburg text is superior from every point of view: it is more accurate and more complete. I have therefore reproduced the 1804-5 edition and added "The Story of Rebecca," with which the text published by Gide fils (1814) ends. In this way I believe I have procured a complete and authentic version of the entire first part of the book.

Avadoro is more picaresque than supernatural, the only supernatural tales in it being "The Story of the Terrible Pilgrim Hervas" and "The Story of the Princess of Monte-Salerno." "The Story of Leonora and the Duchess d'Avila," which I also include, contains no supernatural element, but thematically it belongs to the preceding series.

The Foreword does not appear in the St. Petersburg edition. I have taken it from the Paris edition of 1804-5. I disregarded the handwritten corrections in the copy at the Bibliothèque Nationale, except for obvious errors, typographical or others, to which I refer in a footnote or in parentheses. I have retained the 1804 text, but have modernized the orthography and the punctuation wherever a simple automatic change sufficed. However, I have scrupulously preserved *hh* in place of the Spanish *j*, as in *cortehho* (for *cortejo*), *Anduhhar* (for *Andujar*) or *fahha* (for *faja*). On the other hand, I have written *bolero* in place of *volero* and *sergente general* for *serhente heneral*. On occasion I have had to substitute a word omitted. It always appears in parentheses in the text.

I have preserved the same arrangement of tales in the Days as in the 1804 edition. The tales from *Avadoro* are from the 1813 edition, which I reprint unchanged, though that edition undoubtedly suffered the same sort of editorial treatment accorded to "The Ten Days" the following year. It is, however, the only text at present available in French. I feel it is my duty to reprint it while waiting for a better and more complete picture of Potocki's supernatural tales which, through a rare combination of fatalities, are still three-quarters unpublished and almost totally unknown in the language in which they were written. It is high time

that, after a delay of a century and a half, Potocki's work should find in French, as well as in European literature of the supernatural, the enviable position to which it is entitled.

Roger Caillois



The Saragossa Manuscript

Foreword

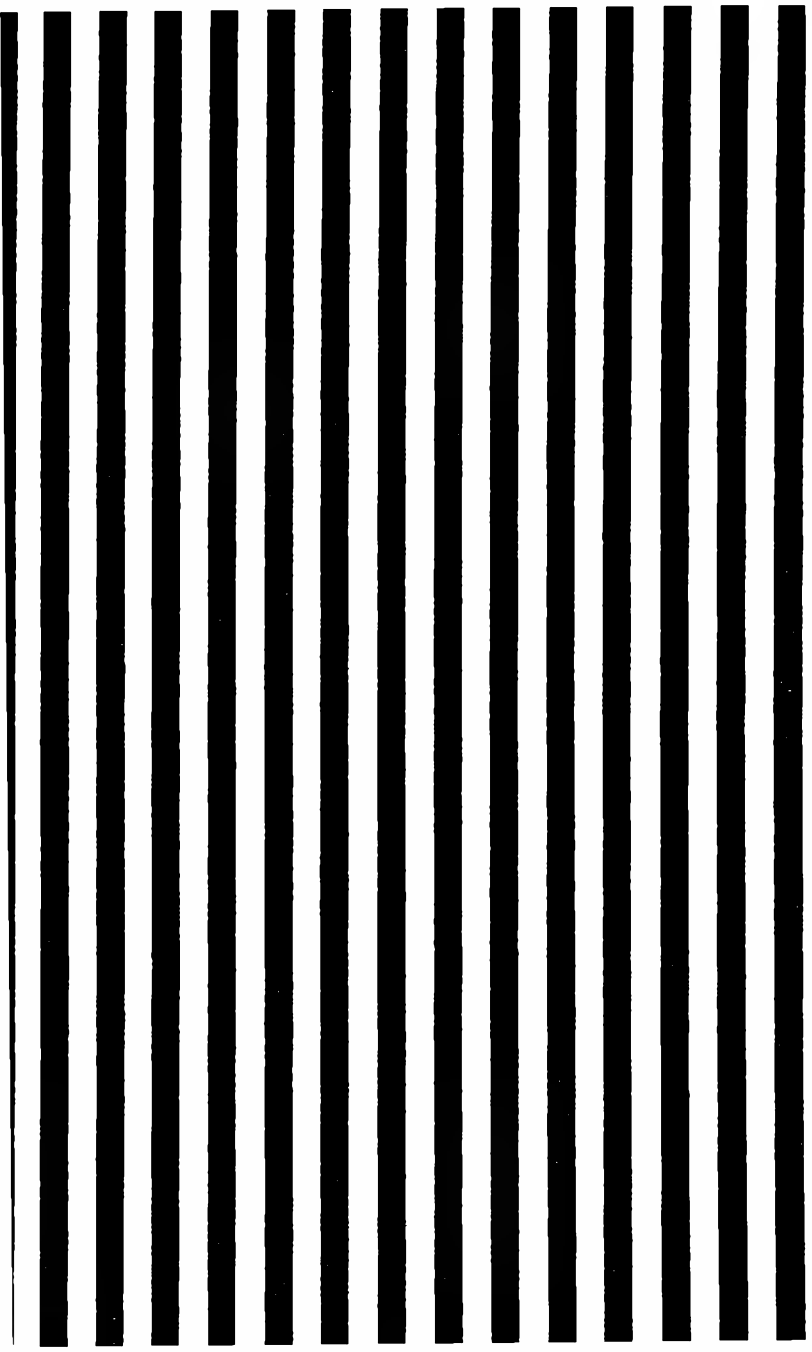
As an officer in the French Army, I took part in the siege of Saragossa. A few days after the town was captured, having advanced to a somewhat isolated post, I noticed a small but rather well-built villa that I thought, at first, had not been visited by any Frenchman.

I was curious and decided to look it over. I knocked on the door, but seeing that it was not locked, I pushed it open and stepped inside. I called, I looked all around—nobody was there. To all appearances everything of value had been removed; only a few unimportant objects lay scattered around on tables and in drawers. I noticed, however, on the floor in one corner, a number of copybooks filled with writing, and I glanced over the contents. It was a manuscript written in Spanish. I knew very little of that language,

but enough to understand that this manuscript might prove entertaining. There was a lot in it about brigands, ghosts, cabalists; and nothing could be more suited to distract me from the fatigues of the campaign than the perusal of a fantastic novel. As I was confident that this book would never be restored to its lawful owner, I did not hesitate to take possession of it.

In time we were obliged to leave Saragossa and, as ill luck would have it, I was cut off from the main body of the army along with my detachment, and taken prisoner by the enemy. I thought my last hour had come. When we came to the place to which they were leading us, the Spaniards began to strip us of our belongings. I asked to be allowed to keep only one possession which could be of no use to them—the manuscript I had found. At first they made some difficulty about it, but at last they asked their captain's advice. He glanced hastily through it, came up to me and thanked me for having preserved intact a work he valued highly, as it contained the story of one of his ancestors. I told him how it had come into my hands. He took me home with him and, during the somewhat lengthy sojourn I made in his house, where I was treated with the utmost courtesy, I urged him to translate this work for me into French. I wrote it down at his dictation.

Part one



The first day

Count d'Olavidez had not yet established foreign settlements in the Sierra Morena—that lofty chain of mountains that separates Andalusia from La Mancha—which was at that time inhabited solely by smugglers, bandits and a few gypsies who had the reputation of eating the travelers they murdered, whence the source of the Spanish proverb: *Las Gitanas de Sierre Morena quieren carne de hombres.*

That is not all. It was said that the traveler who ventured into that wild region was assailed by a thousand terrors that would freeze the blood of the boldest man. He heard wailing voices mingled with thundering torrents and howling storms; false lights led him astray, and invisible hands pushed him towards the edge of bottomless precipices.

There were, it is true, a few *ventas*, or lonely inns, scattered along that disastrous road, but ghosts, more diabolical than the innkeepers themselves, had forced the latter to yield the place to them and retire to regions where their rest was troubled only by twinges of conscience—the sort of phantom that innkeepers know how to deal with. The innkeeper of Anduhhar called on St. James of Compostella to witness the truth of these amazing tales. And he added that since the bowmen of St. Hermandad had refused to lead expeditions over the Sierra Morena, the travelers either took the Jaen road or went by way of Estramadura.

I replied that this choice might be all very well for ordinary mortals, but as the king, Don Philip the Fifth, had graciously honored me with the rank of captain in the Walloon Guards, the sacred laws of honor forbade me to take the shortest route to Madrid without inquiring if it were also the most dangerous.

“My lord,” replied my host, “your grace will allow me to point out to him that if the king has honored him with a company of Guards before age has honored your grace’s chin with the slightest sign of down, it would be wise to exercise a little caution. Now, I say that when demons take over a region . . .”

He would have said much more, but I put spurs to my horse and did not draw rein until I was out of reach of his remonstrances. Then looking back, I saw him still waving wildly and pointing to the road to Estramadura in the distance. My valet, Lopez, and Moschito, my *zagal*, turned piteous eyes on me, as if to repeat the innkeeper’s warning. I pretended not to understand, and plunged into the thickets at the point where the settlement known as La Carlota has since been built.

At the very spot where today there is a relay station, there was in those days a shelter, well known to muleteers, who called it “Los Alcornoces”—or the green oaks—because of two beautiful oak trees that spread their shade over a gushing spring as it flowed into a marble watering-trough. It was the only water and the only shade to be found between Anduhhar and the inn, “Venta Quemada.” Though it was built in the middle of a desert, the inn was large

and spacious. It was, in reality, an old Moorish castle which the Marquis de Penna Quemada had had repaired; hence the name Venta Quemada. The Marquis had leased it to a citizen of Murcia, who had turned it into the largest hostelry on that route. Travelers left Anduhhar in the morning, dined at Los Alcornoques on provisions they had brought with them, and then slept at Venta Quemada. Sometimes they even spent all the next day there to rest up for the journey over the mountains and to buy fresh provisions. This is what I had planned to do.

But as we came within sight of a clump of green oaks, and I mentioned to Lopez the light meal we counted on having there, I perceived that Moschito was no longer with us; neither was the mule laden with our provisions. Lopez explained that the boy had dropped behind some hundred paces to make some repair to his mount's packsaddle. We waited for him, then rode on a short distance, and halted to wait for him again. We called, we retraced our steps to search for him—but in vain. Moschito had vanished, taking with him our fondest hopes—in other words, our dinner. I was the only one fasting, for Lopez had never stopped nibbling on a Toboso cheese with which he had provided himself, but which, apparently, did nothing to raise his spirits for he kept muttering that "the Anduhhar innkeeper had told us so, and devils had certainly carried off poor Moschito."

When we arrived at Los Alcornoques, I found on the watering-trough a basket, filled with fig leaves, that had probably been full of fruit and had been left behind by some traveler. Out of curiosity I rummaged around in it and had the pleasure of finding four beautiful figs and an orange. I offered Lopez two of the figs, but he refused them, saying he could wait till evening. I therefore ate all the fruit, after which I desired to quench my thirst at the nearby spring. Lopez stopped me, saying that water, taken on top of fruit, would make me ill and that he had a little Alicante wine left. I accepted his offer, but scarcely was the wine in my stomach when I felt a heavy weight oppress my heart. Earth and sky whirled about my head and I would surely have fainted had not Lopez hastened to my aid. He restored me

to full consciousness and assured me it was nothing to alarm me, being merely the result of exhaustion and lack of food. And, in truth, not only was I quite myself again, but unusually strong and in an extraordinary state of excitement. The fields seemed to be dotted with the most vivid colors; objects shimmered before my eyes like stars on a summer night and my arteries throbbed wildly, especially in my throat and at my temples.

When he saw that my momentary weakness had had no ill effect, Lopez could not refrain from airing his grievances.

"Alas!" said he, "why did I not go to Fra Heronimo della Trinidad, monk, preacher, confessor and the oracle of our family! He is the brother-in-law of the son-in-law of the sister-in-law of the father-in-law of my mother-in-law and, as he is therefore our closest relative, nothing is done in our family without his advice. It's true he told me the officers of the Walloon Guards were a heretic breed, which is plain to be seen from their light hair, blue eyes and red cheeks, whereas the early Christians are the same color as Our Lady of Atocha, as painted by St. Luke."

I checked this flow of impertinence by ordering Lopez to hand me my double-barreled gun and to stay with the horses while I climbed a crag in the neighborhood to see if I could find Moschito, or some trace of him. At this Lopez burst into tears and, throwing himself at my feet, implored me, in the name of all the saints, not to leave him alone in such a dangerous place. I offered to stay with the horses and let him go and search, but he seemed to find that alternative even more alarming. I gave him, however, so many good reasons why we must search for Moschito that in the end he let me go. Then he pulled a rosary out of his pocket and began to say his prayers beside the watering-trough.

The heights I intended to scale were farther off than I had judged; it took me nearly an hour to reach them and, once there, I could see nothing but a wild and empty plain. There was no sign of men, animals or habitations, no road but the highroad I had followed and nobody on it—and everywhere, utter silence. I broke it with my shouts and the echoes came back from the distance. At last I gave up and

retraced my steps to the watering-trough, where I found my horse tied to a tree, but Lopez—Lopez had vanished.

Two courses were now open to me: to return to Anduhhar or to continue my journey. The first did not even enter my mind. I flung myself on my horse and, putting him to a fast trot, arrived two hours later at the banks of the Guadalquivir which, at that point, is by no means the calm and majestic river that encircles the walls of Sevilla in its stately course. As it emerges from the mountains, the Guadalquivir is a raging torrent without banks or bottom, constantly booming against masses of rocks that impede its progress.

The valley of Los Hermanos begins at the point where the Guadalquivir spreads out over the plain, a valley so-called because three brothers, united less by the ties of consanguinity than by their love of brigandage, had long made it the theatre of their exploits. Of the three brothers, two had been hanged and their bodies could be seen dangling from the gallows at the entrance to the valley. But Zoto, the eldest, had escaped from the prisons of Cordova and was said to have holed up in the mountains of Alpuharras.

Strange tales were told of the two brothers who had been hanged. Though people did not refer to them as ghosts, they declared that at night their bodies, inhabited by I know not what demons, came down from the gallows to harass the living. This was considered to be so true that a theologian from Salamanca wrote a dissertation proving that the two hanged men were a species of vampire, and that one thing was not more incredible than the other, a statement even the most skeptical readily admitted. It was also rumored that the two men were innocent and that, having been unjustly condemned, they were avenging themselves, with heaven's consent, on travelers and other wayfarers. As I had heard much talk of this in Cordova, I was curious to have a closer look at the gallows. The spectacle was all the more disgusting as the hideous cadavers, swaying in the wind, executed the most extraordinary movements, while horrible vultures tore at them and ripped off pieces of their flesh. I averted my eyes in horror and rushed headlong down the mountain road.

I must admit that, as far as I could see, the valley of Los

Hermanos seemed well adapted to favor the enterprises of bandits and to serve as their retreat. One was stopped on every hand either by rocks fallen from the cliffs above, or by trees uprooted by storms. In many places, the road crossed the river bed or passed by deep caverns, whose sinister aspect aroused distrust.

Emerging from that valley, I entered another and discovered the *venta* that was to be my shelter, but which from a distance did not inspire confidence. I could see that it had neither windows nor shutters; no smoke issued from the chimneys; I saw no signs of life around it and heard no dogs barking to warn of my approach. From that I concluded that this was one of the abandoned inns, of which the innkeeper of Anduhhar had told me.

The nearer I came to the *venta*, the deeper the silence seemed. At last I arrived and saw an alms box, on which was fastened a notice that read as follows:

“Traveler, take pity and pray for the soul of Gonzalez of Murcia, late innkeeper of the Venta Quemada. Above all, go your way and under no pretext tarry here for the night.”

I promptly made up my mind to brave the dangers with which the notice threatened me. It was not that I was convinced there were no such things as ghosts; but as will be seen later on, the emphasis in my whole education had been upon honor and I had always made a point of never showing any sign of fear.

The sun had just set and I hastened to take advantage of what little light remained to investigate the nooks and crannies of that dwelling, less to reassure myself that no demoniacal presences had taken possession of it than to search for food, for the little I had eaten at Los Alcornosques had stayed, but not satisfied, my gnawing hunger. I passed through any number of bedrooms and salons, most of which were lined with mosaics as high up as a man's head, with ceilings made of that beautiful woodwork on which the Moors lavish all their love of magnificence.

I visited the kitchens, the attics and the cellars. The latter were dug out of rock, some of them leading into under-

ground passages that appeared to penetrate deep into the mountain. But nowhere did I find anything to eat. At last, as the day was drawing to a close, I fetched my horse which I had tied up in the courtyard and led him to a stable where I had noticed a little hay. Then I settled myself in a room that boasted a pallet, the only one left in the whole inn. I should have liked a light, but the good thing about my tormenting hunger was that it kept me from falling asleep.

The blacker the night, however, the gloomier my reflections became. For a while I pondered the strange disappearance of my two servants; then I thought of ways to feed myself. I imagined that thieves, springing out suddenly from behind a thicket or an underground trap, had attacked first Moschito and later Lopez, and that I had been spared only because my military bearing did not promise as easy a victory. I was more concerned about my hunger than anything else. I had seen some goats on the mountain; they were doubtlessly guarded by a goatherd who would certainly have a small supply of bread to eat with his milk. Moreover, I could rely on my gun to provide me with food. But to retrace my steps and expose myself to the ridicule of the innkeeper at Anduhhar—that I definitely would not do. On the contrary, I was determined to continue my journey.

Having exhausted all these reflections, I could not help recalling the famous story of the counterfeiters and several others of that ilk with which my childhood had been nourished. I also thought of the notice tacked on the alms box. Though I didn't believe the devil had wrung the innkeeper's neck, I did not know what his tragic end had been.

The hours passed in deep silence. Suddenly I was startled by the unexpected chime of a clock. It struck twelve times and, as everyone knows, ghosts have power only from midnight till the cock's first crow. I said I was startled and rightly so, for the clock had not chimed the other hours; in short, there was something weird and mournful about its ringing. A moment later, the door opened and I saw a figure enter. It was all black, but not frightening, for it was a beautiful negress, half naked and carrying a torch in each hand.

The negress came up to me, made a deep curtsey and said in excellent Spanish:

"My lord, two foreign ladies, who are spending the night in this inn, invite you to deign to share their supper with them."

I followed the negress through corridor after corridor and came at last to a large, well-lighted room in the center of which was a table set for three and which was laden with receptacles of fine porcelain and carafes of rock crystal. At the far end of the room was a magnificent bed. A great many negresses stood around waiting to serve us, but they lined up respectfully as two young women entered, their rose and lily complexions in startling contrast to the ebony-colored skins of their servants. The two young women were holding each other by the hand. They were strangely dressed, or so it seemed to me, though actually that style was worn in several cities on the Barbary coast, as I have since discovered in my travels. Their costumes consisted of a linen chemise and a bodice. The linen chemise came to just below the belt, but lower down it was made of Mequinez gauze, a material that would have been completely transparent had not wide silk ribbons, woven into the fabric, veiled charms that gain by being merely divined. The bodice, richly embroidered in pearls and adorned with diamond clasps, covered the breast; it had no sleeves, since those of the chemise, also of gauze, were rolled back and fastened behind the collar. The young women's arms were bare and adorned with bracelets from wrist to elbow. Their bare feet, which, had these two beauties been devils, would have been forked or provided with talons, were encased in tiny embroidered mules, and around their ankles they wore a circlet of large diamonds.

The two strangers came up to me smiling affably. They were strikingly beautiful, the one tall, svelte, dazzling; the other, shy and appealing. The majestic one had a marvelous figure and equally beautiful features. The younger girl's figure was rounded, her lips full, slightly pouting, her eyes half closed so that the little one could see of her pupils was veiled behind extraordinarily long lashes. The eldest addressed me in Castilian:

"My lord," she said, "we thank you for graciously accept-

ing our little collation. I think you must be much in need of it."

Those last words sounded so malicious that I almost suspected her of having had our pack-mule carried off, but so lavishly did she replace our missing provisions that I could not be angry with her.

We seated ourselves at the table and the same lady, pushing a porcelain bowl towards me, said:

"My lord, you will find here an olla-podrida, composed of all kinds of meats save one, for we are faithful—I mean, Moslems."

"Beautiful stranger," I replied, "that is indeed the right word. Undoubtedly you are faithful, for it is the religion of love. But pray satisfy my curiosity before you satisfy my appetite. Tell me who you are."

"Pray continue to eat, my lord," replied the beautiful Moor, "we shall not maintain our incognito with you. My name is Emina and my sister is Zibeddé. We live in Tunis; our family comes from Granada and some of our relatives have remained in Spain where they observe in secret the laws of our ancestors. We left Tunis eight days ago, disembarked on a deserted beach near Malaga, then went through the mountains between Sohha and Antequerra and came to this lonely spot to change our clothes and make all necessary arrangements for our safety. You see, my lord, that our journey is therefore an important secret and we are trusting in your loyalty not to betray us."

I assured the beauties they need fear no indiscretion on my part. Then I began to eat, somewhat greedily to tell the truth, though with certain restrained refinements which a young man willingly assumes when he finds himself the only male in a group of women.

When they saw that my first hunger was appeased and that I was attacking what in Spain is called *las dolces* (the sweets), the beautiful Emina commanded the negresses to show me some of their native dances. To all appearances no command could have pleased them more. They obeyed with a liveliness that bordered on license. I even think it would have been difficult to stop them had I not asked their beautiful mistresses whether they, too, did not sometimes dance.

In reply, they stood up and called for the castanets. Their steps were reminiscent of the *bolero* of Murcia and the *foffa* which is danced in the Algarves; anyone who has visited those provinces can form an idea of it. But he will never know the charm of those two African beauties whose grace was enhanced by their diaphanous draperies.

I watched for a while with a certain composure, but at length their movements, quickened in response to a livelier rhythm, combined with the deafening noise of Moorish instruments and my own spirits raised by sudden nourishment—everything within me and without, united to trouble my reason. I no longer knew whether they were women or insidious succubae. I dared not look; I did not want to watch them. I put my hand over my eyes and I felt myself losing consciousness.

The two sisters came over to me and each took one of my hands. Emina asked me if I felt ill. I reassured her. Zibeddé wanted to know what the locket was that I wore around my neck and whether it contained the portrait of my mistress.

"That," I told her, "is a jewel my mother gave me, which I have promised to wear always. It contains a piece of the true Cross."

At those words Zibeddé recoiled and turned pale.

"You are perturbed," I said, "and yet the Cross can frighten only the Spirits of Darkness."

Emina replied for her sister:

"My lord, you know we are Moslems, and you must not be surprised at my sister's distress. I share it. We regret to see that you, our closest relative, are a Christian. That surprises you, but was not your mother a Gomélez? We are of the same family, which is a branch of the Abencerages. But let us sit down on this sofa and I will tell you more."

The negresses withdrew. Emina placed me in a corner of the sofa and sat down beside me, legs crossed under her. Zibeddé sat on my other side, leaned against my cushion and so close were we that their breath mingled with mine. For a second Emina seemed to be lost in thought, then looking at me keenly, she took my hand.

"Dear Alfonso," she said, "it is useless to hide from you that we are not here by chance. We were waiting for you.

If, out of fear, you had taken another route, you would have lost our esteem forever."

"You flatter me, Emina," I replied, "but I do not see what interest you could have in my courage."

"We take a great deal of interest in you," replied the beautiful Moor, "but perhaps you will not be so flattered when I tell you that you are almost the first man we have ever seen. That surprises you and you seem to doubt my word. I promised to tell you the story of our ancestors, but perhaps it would be better if I began with our own."

THE STORY OF EMINA AND HER SISTER ZIBEDDÉ

We are the daughters of Gasir Gomelez, maternal uncle of the present reigning dey of Tunis. We have never had any brothers, we have never known our father, with the result that, shut up within the walls of the seraglio, we have no idea what your sex is like. As both my sister and I were born with an unusual capacity for tenderness, we loved each other passionately. This attachment dates from our earliest childhood. We wept when they tried to separate us, even for seconds. If one of us was scolded, the other burst into tears. We spent our days playing at the same table, and we slept in the same bed.

This extraordinarily violent emotion seemed to grow with us, being given fresh impetus through a circumstance I am about to relate. I was then sixteen years old, and my sister fourteen. For some time we had noticed that our mother took care to hide certain books from us. At first, we paid little attention, being already extremely bored with the books from which we had learned to read, but as we grew older our curiosity increased. We took advantage of a moment when the forbidden bookcase had been left open and we hastily removed a little volume which proved to be *The Loves of Medgenoun and Leillé*, translated from the Persian by Ben-Omri. That divine work, which painted in colors of fire all the delights of love, turned our young heads. We did not understand it very well because we had never seen human beings of your sex, but we rehearsed their expressions. We were speaking the language of lovers; in short, we tried to make love to each other as they did. I

played the part of Medgenoun, my sister that of Leillé. To begin with, I declared my passion by the arrangement of flowers, a mysterious sign language much in vogue throughout all of Asia. Then I let my glances speak, I prostrated myself before her, I kissed her footprints, I implored the winds to carry my fond laments to her and with the fire of my sighs I tried to inflame her love.

Faithful to the lessons of her author, Zibeddé granted me a rendezvous. I fell at her knees, I kissed her hands, I bathed her feet with my tears. At first my mistress resisted gently, then she permitted me to steal a few favors; at last she yielded to my impatient ardor. In truth, our very souls seemed to mingle, and I still do not know who could make us happier than we were at that time.

I have forgotten how long we indulged in those scenes of passion, but at length our emotions cooled. We became interested in science, particularly in the knowledge of plants, which we studied in the writings of the celebrated Averroës.

My mother, who believed that one could not arm oneself too much against the boredom of the seraglio, was delighted. She sent to Mecca for a holy woman known as Hazareta, or the saint par excellence. Hazareta taught us the law of the prophet. Her lessons were couched in that pure and harmonious language which is spoken in the tribe of Koreisch. We never wearied of listening to her, and we knew by heart almost all the Koran. After that my mother instructed us herself in the history of our house and put in our hands a vast number of memoirs, some in Arabic, others in Spanish. Ah, dear Alfonso, how hateful your law seems to us, how we detested your persecuting priests! But what interest we took, on the other hand, in the many illustrious victims whose blood flows in our veins.

At one time we were all enthusiasm for Saïd Gomélez who suffered martyrdom in the prisons of the Inquisition; at another, for his nephew Laïss, who lived so long like a savage in the mountains, a life scarcely better than that of wild beasts. From characters like these we learned to love men. We were eager to see some in real life and we frequently went up on our terrace to catch a distant glimpse

of people going aboard the schooner on the lake, or on their way to the baths of Haman-Nef. Though we had not forgotten the lessons of the amorous Medgenoun, at least we did not practice them anymore. It even seemed to me there was no longer any passion in my devotion to my sister, but a new incident proved how mistaken I was.

One day, my mother brought a Princess from Tafilet, a middle-aged woman, to see us. We welcomed her cordially. After she had gone, my mother told us she had come to ask my hand in marriage for her son, and that my sister would marry a Gomélez. This was a terrible blow to us. At first, we were so stunned we could not speak. So grieved were we at the thought of living apart, that we gave way to the most terrible despair. We tore our hair; we filled the seraglio with our cries and moans. At length, so extravagant were the demonstrations of our grief that my mother was alarmed. She promised not to force us against our will, assuring us we would be permitted either to remain virgins or to marry the same man. Those assurances calmed us somewhat.

Some time afterwards, my mother came to tell us she had spoken to the head of our family and that he would permit us to share the same husband, provided that husband were of the blood of the Gomélez.

At first we made no answer, but as time went on, we were more and more pleased at the idea of sharing a husband. We had never seen a man, either young or old, save from a distance, but as young women seemed to us more attractive than old women, we hoped our husband would be young. We also hoped he would clear up several passages in Ben-Omri's book which we had not fully understood.

Here Zibeddé interrupted her sister and, clasping me in her arms, cried:

"Dear Alfonso, why are you not a Moslem? How happy I should be to see you in Emina's arms, to add to your delights, to be included in your embraces. For, after all, dear Alfonso, in our house as in the house of the prophet, the sons of a daughter have the same rights as the male branch of the family. Perhaps, if you chose, you would

become the head of our house, which is on the point of dying out. All you need do, for that, is to open your eyes to the holy truths of the law."

This smacked so strongly of Satan's tempting that I almost imagined I could see horns on Zibeddé's pretty forehead. I stammered a few religious phrases. The two sisters recoiled slightly. Emina looked serious as she continued in the following terms:

"My lord Alfonso, I have spoken too much of my sister and myself. That was not my intention. I sat down here merely to instruct you in the history of the Gomélez, from whom you are descended on the female line. This, then, is what I was about to tell you."

THE STORY OF THE CASTLE OF CASSAR-GOMÉLEZ

The author of our race was Massoud Ben Taher, son of Youssouf Ben who came to Spain at the head of the Arabs and gave his name to the mountain of Gebal-Taher, which you call Gibraltar. Massoud, who had contributed largely to the success of their arms, obtained from the Caliph of Bagdad the right to govern Granada, where he remained until the death of his brother. He would have stayed there longer, for he was adored as much by Moslems as by Mozarabs—in other words, Christians still living under Arab dominion. But Massoud had enemies in Bagdad who turned the caliph against him. Realizing that they were resolved to ruin him, he made up his mind to leave. Massoud therefore called his people together and went into hiding in the Alpuharras, which are, as you know, a continuation of the Sierra Morena mountains, and the chain that separates the Kingdom of Granada from the Kingdom of Valencia.

The Visigoths, from whom we wrested Spain, had never penetrated the Alpuharras. Most of the valleys were deserted. Three only were inhabited by the descendants of an ancient Spanish race called the Turdules, a people who recognize neither Mohammed nor your Nazarene prophet. Their religious beliefs and their laws were expressed in songs that had been handed down from father to son. They had once had books, but the books had been lost.

Massoud conquered the Turdules more by persuasion

than by force. He learned their language and taught them the Moslem law. The two peoples intermarried, and to this intermingling of races, plus the healthy mountain air, my sister and I owe our high coloring, which is characteristic of the daughters of the Gomélez family. Among the Moors one sees many white women, but they are always pale.

Massoud assumed the title of sheik and built a castle, a veritable stronghold, which he called Cassar-Gomélez. More a judge than a ruler of his tribe, Massoud could be approached at all times and he made a point of being so. But on the last Friday of each moon, he took leave of his family, shut himself up in the lower regions of the castle and there he stayed till the following Friday. These disappearances gave rise to various conjectures: some said our sheik talked with the twelfth Iman who was supposed to appear on earth at the end of time. Others believed that the anti-Christ was held in chains in our vaults. Still others thought the Seven Sleepers (of Ephesus), with their dog, Caleb, lay there. Massoud was undisturbed by those reports; he continued to rule over his people as long as his strength permitted. At length he chose the most discreet man of the tribe, appointed him his successor, handed him the keys of the caverns and retired to his hermitage, where he continued to live for many years.

The new sheik ruled as his predecessor had; like Massoud, he too disappeared on the last Friday of every moon. This went on till the time when Cordova had its own caliphs, independent of Bagdad. At that time, the mountaineers of Alpuharras, who had taken part in that revolution, began to settle in the plains, where they were known as the Abencerages, whereas those who remained loyal to the sheik of Cassar-Gomélez were still known as Gomélez.

The Abencerages, however, bought up the finest lands in Granada and the most beautiful houses in the city. Their display of wealth attracted public attention. The sheik's vaults were said to contain vast treasures, but no one could learn whether this was so, for the Abencerages themselves did not know the source of their riches.

At length, those two beautiful kingdoms brought down upon themselves the vengeance of heaven and fell into the

hands of infidels. Granada was captured, and eight days later the celebrated Gonzalvo of Cordova marched into the Alpuharras at the head of three thousand men. Hatem Gomélez was then our sheik. He marched out to meet Gonzalvo and offered him the keys of his castle; the Spaniards demanded the keys of the vaults and the sheik handed them over without a protest. Gonzalvo insisted upon going down into the vaults himself. There, finding only a tomb and a number of books, he made scornful mock of the tales he had been told and hastened to return to Valladolid where love and the delights of love-making called him.

After that, peace reigned in our mountains until the Emperor Charles came to the throne. At that time our sheik was Séfi Gomélez. For reasons no one has ever been able to fathom, Gomélez sent word to the emperor that if he would send a gentleman he could trust into the Alpuharras mountains he, Gomélez, would reveal to him an important secret. Less than two weeks later, Don Ruis of Toledo presented himself, in His Majesty's name, to Gomélez, only to learn that the sheik had been murdered the night before. Don Ruis had a number of persons tortured, but soon wearying of this, he returned to Court.

Meanwhile the sheik's secret was left in the hands of Séfi's murderer. That man, Billah Gomélez by name, gathered together the old men of the tribe and convinced them that they must take fresh precautions to guard such an important secret. They decided to reveal it to several members of the Gomélez family, but with the reservation that each man should be told only a part of it and then only after he had given striking proof of courage, discretion and loyalty.

Here Zibeddé again interrupted her sister.

"Dear Emina, do you not think Alfonso would have withstood all the tests? Ah! who can doubt it! Dear Alfonso, if only you were a Moslem! Vast treasures would perhaps be yours for the taking."

This again was exactly like the Spirits of Darkness who, failing to tempt me with sensual delights, were now trying to make me succumb to the lure of gold. But with the two beauties pressing close against me, there was no doubt in

my mind that I was touching bodies and not spirits. After a moment of silence, Emina picked up the thread of her story.

"Dear Alfonso," said she, "you know enough about the persecutions we suffered under the reign of Philip, the son of Charles. Children were carried off and brought up in the Christian religion. To them were given all the possessions of their parents who had remained faithful to the prophet. That was the time when a Gomélez was received in the *Teket* of the Dervishes of St. Dominic and fell into the hands of the Great Inquisitor."

At this point the cock crew and Emina stopped talking. The cock crew a second time. A superstitious man might have expected to see the two beauties fly up the chimney. They did nothing of the kind, but they did seem to be somewhat dreamy and preoccupied.

Emina was the first to break the silence.

"Dear Alfonso," said she, "day is about to dawn. The hours we have spent together are too precious to waste telling stories. We can be your wives only if you will embrace our holy law, but you are permitted to see us in your dreams. Do you consent?"

I consented to everything.

"That is not enough," Emina replied with the greatest dignity. "That is not enough, dear Alfonso. Moreover, you must swear by the sacred code of honor never to betray our names, our existence, or anything you know about us. Have you the courage to take this solemn pledge?"

I promised everything they asked.

"That will do," said Emina. "Sister, bring the cup consecrated by Massoud, our first chieftain."

While Zibeddé went to fetch the magic cup, Emina prostrated herself and recited some prayers in Arabic. Zibeddé returned bearing a goblet that looked to me as if it were cut out of a single emerald. She moistened her lips in it; Emina did likewise and then ordered me to drain the cup at one gulp.

I obeyed her.

Emina thanked me and embraced me tenderly. Zibeddé then pressed her lips on mine as if she would never take

them away. At last they left me, saying that I would see them again and they would advise me to fall asleep as soon as possible.

So many strange events, such astonishing tales and such unexpected emotions would undoubtedly have given me enough to think about all night long, but I must confess I was more interested in the dreams they had promised me, and I made haste to undress and get into a bed they had prepared for me. I was pleased to note that my bed was unusually wide; and dreams, I said to myself, do not need so much room. But no sooner had I made that reflection than I was overcome by an irresistible drowsiness; my eyelids closed and all the delusions of the night laid hold of my senses. I felt them being led astray by incredible marvels. My thoughts, borne, in spite of myself, on the wings of desire, set me down in the midst of African seraglios and took possession of the charms confined within those walls to make them my chimerical delights. I knew I was dreaming and yet I was conscious that the form I held in my arms was not a dream. I was lost on the crest of the maddest illusions, but I was always with my beautiful cousins. I fell asleep on their breasts. I awoke in their arms. I do not know how many times I enjoyed those sweet alternatives.

The second day

When at last I awoke, the sun was burning my eyelids; I could scarcely open them. I saw the sky. I saw that I was out of doors. But my eyes were still heavy with sleep. I wasn't really asleep, neither was I fully awake. Visions of tortures flashed through my mind, one after the other. I was horrified and I sat up with a start.

What words can express my horror when I realized that I was lying under the gallows of Los Hermanos, and beside me—the corpses of Zoto's two brothers! I had apparently spent the night with them. Then I noticed that I was lying on a conglomeration of rope, broken wheels, remains of human carcasses and the ghastly rags that had rotted and dropped from their bodies.

I thought I was still not fully awake and was having a

nightmare. I shut my eyes and tried to remember where I had been the night before . . . Then I felt talons dig deep into my side. A vulture was sitting on top of me while he devoured one of my companions. The pain of his talons at last brought me wide awake. I saw that my clothes lay near me and I made haste to put them on. My first thought, as soon as I was dressed, was to get out of this enclosure around the gallows, but the gate was nailed fast and try as I might I could not force it. I was therefore obliged to climb those gloomy walls. Then, leaning against one of the gallow posts, I surveyed the surrounding countryside. It was not difficult to get my bearings: I was at the entrance to the valley of Los Hermanos, not far from the banks of the Guadalquiver.

Down near the river I saw two travelers, one of whom was preparing a meal while the other held their horses' bridles. I was so pleased to see human beings that my first reaction was to call out "*Agour, Agour!*" which in Spanish means "Good morning" or "I salute you!"

The two travelers, who could see that someone was calling to them from the top of a gallows, appeared to hesitate a second, then suddenly they mounted their horses, put them to a fast gallop and were off like the wind along the Alcornoques road. I shouted to them to stop, but it was no use; the more I shouted the faster they spurred on their mounts. When they were out of sight, I jumped down from my post and in so doing injured my leg.

Limping slightly, I managed to reach the banks of the Guadalquiver and there I found the repast which the two travelers had left behind. Nothing could have been more welcome, for by this time I was exhausted. There was some chocolate, which was still hot, *sponhao* dipped in Alicante wine, and bread and eggs. I set to work to replenish my strength, after which I reflected on my experiences of the past night. My memories were extremely confused, but I clearly recalled having given my word of honor to keep my cousins' secret and I was firmly resolved to do so. That point once settled, all that was left was to plan my next move—in other words, decide which road I should take. And it seemed to me that more than ever I was in honor bound to go by way of the Sierra Morena.

You will perhaps be surprised to find me so concerned about my honor and so little with the events of the previous night. But that was again the result of the education I had received—as will be seen by what follows. For the moment I shall go on with the story of my journey.

I was curious to know what the demons had done with my horse, which I had left at the Venta Quemada. As my road lay in that direction, I decided to return there. I had to walk the whole length of the valley of Los Hermanos and the valley of the *venta*, which tired me greatly and increased my desire to find my horse. And, in truth, I found him in the same stable where I had left him; he appeared to be lively, well fed and freshly curried. I had no idea who had taken such good care of him, but I had seen so many extraordinary things that one more did not surprise me, and I would have set out at once had I not been curious to go through the inn again. I found the room in which I had slept, but though I searched and searched, I could not find the one in which I had seen the beautiful African girls. At last, tired of searching, I mounted my horse and rode on my way.

When I had awakened under the gallows of Los Hermanos, the sun had been at high noon. It had taken me more than two hours to reach the *venta*, so that after I had gone several more miles, it began to grow dark and I was obliged to look for a shelter for the night. As there was nothing in sight, I pushed on. At last, afar off, I caught sight of a Gothic chapel and, as I was now beginning to feel hungry, I did not hesitate to make that detour for the sake of procuring food. Arriving at the chapel, I dismounted, tied my horse to a tree and knocked at the door of the hermitage. A hermit with a most estimable face came forth, embraced me with fatherly tenderness, and said:

“Enter, my son, make haste. Do not spend the night outside. Beware of the Tempter. The Lord has withdrawn His hand from over us.”

I thanked the hermit for his kindness and explained that I needed food.

“Think of your soul, O my son,” he replied. “Go into the chapel. Prostrate yourself before the Cross. I shall at-

tend to your bodily needs. But you will have only a frugal repast such as one may expect from a hermit."

I went into the chapel and I actually prayed, for I was not a freethinker and I did not even know there were any, all of which was again a result of my education.

After a quarter of an hour, the hermit came to fetch me and led me into the hut where I found a light and fairly good meal: some excellent olives, chard in vinegar, sweet onions in a sauce, and crackers instead of bread. There was also a little bottle of wine. The hermit told me he never drank wine, but he kept it on hand for the celebration of Mass. At that I drank no more wine than the hermit, but the rest of the meal gave me great pleasure. While I was doing honor to it a figure, more terrifying than any I had ever seen, came into the hut. It was a man, apparently young, and hideously emaciated. His hair stood on end; he had lost one of his eyes and blood flowed from the empty socket. His tongue hung out of his mouth and from it poured a slobbery froth. He wore a fairly good black suit but it was his only article of clothing; he had neither socks nor shirt.

This ghastly creature said not a word but crouched down in a corner where he sat as motionless as a statue, his single eye fixed on a crucifix he held in his hand. When I had finished my supper, I asked the hermit who the man was.

"My son," said the hermit, "that man is possessed of a devil and I am exorcising it. His terrible story is clear proof of the fatal power the Angel of Darkness exerts in this unfortunate region; his story may help to save you and I shall command him to tell it."

Then, turning to the man possessed of devils, he said to him:

"Pascheco, Pascheco, in the name of thy Redeemer, I command thee to tell thy story."

Pascheco uttered a terrible cry and began as follows:

THE STORY OF PASCHECO, POSSESSED OF THE DEVIL

I was born in Cordova, where my father lived in more than comfort. My mother died three years ago. At first my father seemed to miss her greatly but, after a few months, having

occasion to make a journey to Sevilla, he fell in love there with a young widow, named Camilla de Tormes, who did not enjoy too good a reputation. Several of my father's friends tried to rescue him from her clutches. But despite all their efforts, the marriage took place exactly two years after my mother's death.

The wedding was celebrated in Sevilla and, a few days later, my father returned to Cordova, bringing with him his new wife, Camilla, and her sister, Inésille.

My new stepmother corresponded in all respects to the low esteem in which she was held. The first thing she did was to try to make me fall in love with her. In this she was not successful. I did fall in love, but with her sister, Inésille, and so violent was my passion that I flung myself at my father's feet and begged him to grant me the hand of his sister-in-law.

My father raised me and told me in a kindly way:

"My son, I forbid you to think of that marriage and I do so for three reasons: First of all, it would be ridiculous for you to become your father's brother-in-law. Secondly: the holy canons of the Church do not sanction such a marriage. Thirdly: I do not wish you to marry Inésille."

Having apprised me of those three reasons, my father turned on his heel and walked away.

I retired to my room where I gave myself up to despair. My stepmother, whom my father promptly informed of my request, came to me and told me I was wrong to be so upset and that if I could not become Inésille's husband, I could be her *cortehho*—in other words, her lover. She—my stepmother—would arrange it. At the same time, she confessed that she loved me and pointed out what a sacrifice she was making in giving me up to her sister. I was only too eager to listen to such talk, which inflamed my passion, but Inésille was so shy that it seemed to me impossible she could ever return my love.

About this time my father decided to go to Madrid for the purpose of obtaining the post of *corregidor* in Cordova, and he took his wife and sister-in-law with him. He was to be absent only two months, but the time seemed endless to me, because I was separated from Inésille.

When the two months were almost up, I received a letter from my father, commanding me to come to meet him and to wait for him at the Venta Quemada, at the beginning of the Sierra Morena.

A few weeks before, I would have hesitated to travel by way of the Sierra Morena, but Zoto's two brothers had recently been caught and hanged, his band was scattered, and the roads were supposed to be fairly safe.

I therefore left Cordova at about ten o'clock in the morning, and I slept in Anduhhar, at the inn of one of the most talkative hosts in all Andalusia. I ordered a large supper, ate part of it and reserved the rest for my journey.

The next day, I dined at Los Alcornos on what I had kept from the night before, and I arrived the same evening at the Venta Quemada. I did not find my father there, but as he had told me in his letter to wait for him, I decided to do so, all the more willingly since I found myself in a spacious and comfortable hostelry. The innkeeper at that time was a certain Gonzalez of Murcia, a good enough fellow though a great talker, who did not fail to promise me a meal fit for a grandee of Spain. While he was busy attending to the preparations, I went for a walk on the banks of the Guadalquivir, and when I came back to the inn I found a supper which actually was not bad.

When I had eaten, I told Gonzales to make up my bed. At that his face fell, and he launched into some rigmarole of which I could make neither head nor tail. At last he confessed that the inn was haunted by ghosts, and that he and his family spent their nights in a little farm on the river bank, adding that if I wished to sleep there too, he would make up a bed for me beside his own.

That suggestion seemed to me quite out of place. I told him he could go and sleep where he pleased and to send my servants to me. Shaking his head and shrugging his shoulders, Gonzalez obeyed me and withdrew.

My servants appeared a second later; they, too, had heard talk of ghosts and tried to persuade me to spend the night at the farm. I refused their advice somewhat roughly and ordered them to make my bed in the same room where I had dined. They obeyed me, albeit regretfully, and when

the bed was ready, they again implored me, with tears in their eyes, to come and sleep at the farm. Now genuinely irritated by their remonstrances, I permitted myself several demonstrations which put them to flight, and as I was not in the habit of having my servants undress me, I managed easily to get ready for bed without their aid. However, they had been more attentive than I deserved, considering the way I had treated them; they had left a lighted candle beside my bed, and another in reserve, along with two pistols, and several books lively enough to keep me awake. But the truth is I had lost all desire to sleep.

I spent a couple of hours, now reading, now twisting and turning on my bed. At last I heard a bell or a clock strike the midnight hour. This surprised me: I was positive I had not heard the other hours strike. Soon the door opened and I saw my stepmother enter; she was clad only in a night-robe and held a candle in her hand.

She came towards me, walking on tiptoe and with her finger on her lips as if to bid me keep silent. Then putting the candle down on my table, she sat down on my bed, took one of my hands and spoke to me as follows:

“My dear Pascheco, this is the moment when I can give you the pleasures I promised you. Only an hour ago we arrived at this inn. Your father went to sleep at the farm, but as I knew you were here, I received permission to spend the night with my sister Inésille. She is waiting for you and is disposed to grant all you desire; but I must inform you of the conditions I have set to your happiness. You love Inésille, and I love you. Now it is not right for two of us to be happy at the expense of the third. I suggest the one bed serve us all tonight. Come.”

Without giving me time to reply, my stepmother took me by the hand and led me through corridor after corridor until we came to a door, where she stooped and peered through the keyhole.

When she had looked enough, she said:

“Everything is all right, see for yourself.”

I took her place at the keyhole and I actually saw the charming Inésille lying in her bed, but in a state far from the modesty I had always noticed in her. The expression

in her eyes, her rapid breathing, her heightened color, her posture, everything about her showed that she was expecting a lover.

After I had looked my fill, Camilla said to me:

"My dear Pascheco, stay here at this door; when it is time, I shall come and tell you."

When she had gone in, I put my eye to the keyhole again and I saw a thousand things I would find difficult to relate. First, Camilla took off her nightgown, then getting into her sister's bed, she said to her:

"My poor Inésille, is it really true you wish to have a lover? Poor child, you don't know the harm he will do you. First, he will fling you down, then he will crush you, tear you apart."

When Camilla thought her pupil sufficiently indoctrinated, she flung open the door, led me to her sister's bed, and lay down beside us.

What shall I say of that fatal night from which I wrung sensual delights and criminal pleasures. For a long time I fought against sleep and nature to prolong as much as possible my diabolical enjoyments. At last I fell asleep and I awoke next morning under the gallows of the Zoto brothers, lying between their foul corpses.

Here the hermit interrupted the demoniac and said to me:

"Well, my son, what do you think of that? Wouldn't you have been frightened to find yourself lying between two hanged men?"

"Father," I replied, "you insult me. A gentleman must never be afraid, even less when he has the honor to be a captain in the Walloon Guards."

"But, my son," the hermit went on, "have you ever heard of anyone having an adventure like that?"

I hesitated a second, then I replied:

"Father, if that adventure could happen to Señor Pascheco it can happen to others. I shall be better able to judge of that if you will kindly command him to go on with his story."

The hermit turned to the demoniac and said to him:

"Pascheco, Pascheco! In the name of thy Redeemer I order thee to continue thy story."

Pascheco uttered a terrible howl and went on as follows:

I was half dead when I left the gallows. I dragged myself on not knowing where I was going. At last some travelers took pity on me and brought me back to the Venta Quemada, where I found the innkeeper and my servants in great anxiety about me. I asked them if my father had slept at the farm. They told me no one had come there.

I could not take it upon myself to tarry longer at the *venta*, and I set out again on the way to Anduhhar, which I did not reach until after sunset. The inn was crowded; they gave me a bed in the kitchen and though I lay down, I could not sleep, for I could not get the horrors of the preceding night out of my mind.

I had left a lighted candle at the entrance to the kitchen. Suddenly the candle went out, and I immediately felt a deadly chill freeze my blood.

My blankets were jerked off and I heard a small voice saying:

"I am Camilla, your stepmother. I'm cold, my darling; make room for me under your blanket."

Then another voice said:

"And I'm Inésille. Let me get into your bed. I'm cold, I'm cold."

Then I felt an icy hand seize me by the chin. Summoning all my strength I shouted:

"Get thee behind me, Satan!"

Then the little voices said:

"Why do you drive us away? Aren't you our little husband? We're cold. We're going to make a little fire."

And a few moments later, there actually was a fire on the kitchen hearth. As the flames grew brighter, I saw not Inésille and Camilla, but the two Zoto brothers, hanging in the fireplace.

That sight drove me out of my mind. I leapt from my bed, jumped out of the window and began to run across country. For a moment I flattered myself I had escaped all the horrors, but happening to glance behind I saw the two hanged men following me. Then I ran and ran till I

saw that I had left the hanged men behind. But my joy was of brief duration. The hateful creatures began to turn cartwheels and in a second they were on top of me. I ran and ran again till at last I could run no more.

Then I felt one of the hanged men seize me by the left ankle. I tried to free myself, but the other hanged man barred my way. He stood in front of me, making terrifying eyes and sticking out a tongue as red as iron, from which spurted flames. I begged for mercy . . . in vain! With one hand he gripped me by the throat, and with the other he tore out one of my eyes. Then he thrust his fiery tongue into the empty socket until the flames licked my brain and I screamed with pain.

The other hanged man, who had grabbed my left leg, also started to claw at me. First he clawed at the sole of the foot he was holding. Then the monster pulled off the skin, tore apart the nerves, laid them bare and tried to play on them as one plays on a musical instrument. But as I did not give out a note that pleased him, he plunged his claw into my knee joint, squeezed the tendons and began to twist them, the way you tune a harp. Finally he began to play on my leg, out of which he had made a psaltery. I heard his diabolical laughter. And while pain tore frightful groans from me, screams from hell joined in the chorus. But when I heard the gnashing of the souls in torment, it seemed to me their teeth were crushing every fiber in my body. At last I lost consciousness.

The next day some herdsmen found me out in the fields and brought me to this hermitage. There I confessed my sins, and at the foot of the Cross I have found a little solace for my ills.

Here the madman uttered a frightful howl and fell silent.

Then the hermit began to speak.

"Young man," he said, "you see the power of Satan. Pray and weep. But it is late. We must part. I do not suggest that you sleep in my cell, for Pascheco cries out so horribly during the night that it might disturb you. Go and sleep in the chapel. You will be under the protection of the Cross, which triumphs over all demons."

I told the hermit I would sleep wherever he wished. We

carried a little camp bed to the chapel. I lay down on it and the hermit bade me goodnight.

When I found myself alone, I began to think about Pascheco's story. It had many similarities with my own adventures, and I was still reflecting on it when I heard the hour of midnight strike. I did not know whether the hermit was ringing the bell or whether I would again have to deal with ghosts. Then I heard a scratching at my door. I went to the door.

"Who is there?"

A small voice answered:

"We're cold, open the door. It's your little wives."

"Ay, ay, you infamous wretches," I replied, "get back to your gibbet and let me sleep."

Then the little voice said:

"You laugh at us because you're in a chapel, but come outside."

"I'm coming right away," I promptly retorted.

I got up to look for my sword for I fully intended to go out, but I found the door locked. I told this to the ghosts, but they did not answer. I went back to bed and slept till daybreak.

The third day

I was wakened by the hermit, who appeared well pleased to see me safe and sound. He embraced me, bathed my cheeks with his tears, and said:

“My son, strange things happened in the night. Tell me the truth, did you sleep at the Venta Quemada? Did the demons get hold of you? You can still be saved. Kneel at the foot of the altar. Confess your sins. Do penance.”

The hermit launched into further exhortations of this sort. Then he stopped and waited for me to reply.

“Father,” I told him, “I confessed when I left Cadiz. Since then, I do not think I have committed any mortal sin, unless perhaps in dreams. It is true I slept at the Venta Quemada. But if I saw anything there, I have good reason not to speak of it.”

This reply seemed to surprise the hermit. He accused me of being possessed by the demon of pride and tried to persuade me that it was important for me to make a confession of all my sins. But seeing that he could not break down my obstinacy, he dropped his apostolic tone, and, speaking in a natural voice, said to me:

"My child, your courage astonishes me. Tell me who you are? And what education you have received? And whether you believe in ghosts or not? Pray, do not refuse to satisfy my curiosity."

I replied:

"Father, your desire to know me can only do me honor, and I am grateful to you as it meets. Allow me to get up. I shall join you at the hermitage where I shall tell you everything you wish to know."

The hermit embraced me again and withdrew.

When I was dressed, I went to find him. He was warming up some goat's milk, which he offered me with sugar and bread; he himself ate only a few roots boiled in water.

When we had finished eating, the hermit turned to the madman and said to him:

"Pascheco! Pascheco! in the name of thy Redeemer I command thee to lead thy goats to the mountain."

Pascheco gave a frightful howl and went out. Then I began my story which I told in the following terms.

THE STORY OF ALFONSO VAN WORDEN

I am descended from a very ancient family, but one that had few celebrities and even less worldly goods. Our entire patrimony never consisted of more than a noble fief called Worden, within the jurisdiction of Burgundy, and situated in the middle of the Ardennes.

As my father had an elder brother, he was obliged to content himself with a slender legacy, sufficient however to maintain him honorably in the army. He fought through all the War of the Succession and, at the peace, King Philip the Fifth gave him the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the Walloon Guards.

In those days in the Spanish Army, honor was carried to an extreme and my father went there even one better,

though truly one cannot blame him for it, since honor is actually the life and soul of a military man. Not a single duel was fought in Madrid that my father did not regulate the ceremonial of it, and when he decreed that sufficient reparation had been made, all parties concerned were satisfied. If by chance someone was not pleased, he immediately had to deal with my father himself, who never failed to sustain his decisions at the point of the sword. Moreover, my father kept a white book in which he wrote down the history of each duel, with all attendant circumstances. This actually put him at a great advantage when it came to making just decisions in embarrassing cases.

As he was almost solely concerned with his court of blood, my father was apparently little moved by the charms of love. At length, however, his heart was touched by the charms of a lady, still fairly young, named Uraque de Gomález, daughter of the *oidor* of Granada, and descended from the ancient kings of the land. Mutual friends soon brought the interested parties together and the marriage was arranged.

My father thought that all the men with whom he had fought—meaning those he had not killed—should be invited to the wedding. There were one hundred and twenty-two guests at the table, excluding thirteen from Madrid who did not come and thirty-three with whom he had fought in the war and of whom he had no news. My mother has often told me that it was an extraordinarily gay reception and that the greatest cordiality reigned—which I can readily believe, for my father had at bottom an excellent heart, and was greatly beloved by all.

For his part, my father was deeply devoted to Spain, and had never left his native land. Two months after his marriage however, he received a letter, signed by the magistrates of the town of Bouillon, informing him that his brother had died without issue, and that the fief had already reverted to him. That news upset my father greatly, and my mother has told me he was so absent-minded in those days that no one could get a word out of him. Finally he opened his book of duels, chose the twelve men from Madrid who

had fought the greatest number, asked them to come to see him and made the following speech:

“My dear brothers-at-arms, well do you know how many times I have eased your consciences in certain cases where your honor appeared to be compromised. Today I myself am obliged to depend upon your decision, for I fear that my own judgment may be at fault; or rather, I fear it may be weakened by a feeling of partiality. I have here a letter written by the magistrates of Bouillon whose testimony is credible, even though they are not gentlemen. Tell me whether honor compels me to reside in my ancestral castle or whether I should continue to serve the king, Don Philip, who has overwhelmed me with his favors, having recently promoted me to the rank of brigadier-general. I shall leave the letter here on the table and withdraw. In one hour I shall return to learn your decision.”

Saying this, my father left the room. He returned after half an hour and put the matter to the vote. Five were for staying in the army and seven for going to live in the Ardennes. My father accepted without a murmur the decision of the majority.

My mother would have preferred to stay in Spain, but she was so devoted to her husband that he did not even suspect how averse she was to leaving her native land. In the end they concentrated solely on preparing for the journey and arranging for a number of persons to accompany them in order that Spain might be properly represented in the Ardennes. Though I had not yet made my entrance into the world, my father, who had no doubt that I would arrive, thought this was the moment to give me a master-at-arms. For that post, he chose Garcias Hierro, the best fencing master in Madrid. That young man, tired of daily parrying blows at the Place de la Cevada, accepted with alacrity. On the other hand, as my mother was unwilling to leave without an almoner, she chose Innigo Velez, a graduate theologian of Curanza. Later he was to instruct me in Catholic religion and the Castilian language. All these arrangements for my education were made a year and a half before my birth.

When my father was ready to set out; he went to take

leave of his king, and, as was customary at the Court of Spain, he knelt on one knee to kiss His Majesty's hand. But as he knelt, he was seized with such a pain in his heart that he fell unconscious, and they were obliged to carry him home. The next morning he went to bid goodbye to Don Fernando de Lara, then prime minister. That gentleman received him with extraordinary distinction and informed him that the king was granting him a pension of twelve thousand *réales*, with the rank of *sergente general*, which is equivalent to that of field marshal. My father would have given half his life's blood for the satisfaction of throwing himself again at his master's feet, but as he had actually made his farewells, he contented himself with expressing in a letter some of the sentiments that filled his heart. At last, shedding many tears, he left Madrid.

My father chose the Catalonian route in order to see again the country over which he had fought, and to take leave of some of his former comrades who held commands on that frontier. Then he entered France by way of Perpignan.

His journey as far as Lyons was untroubled by any disagreeable incident, but as he left that town with post horses, a chaise passed him, which, being lighter, arrived first at the relay station. My father, who drove up a second later, saw that fresh horses were already being put to the chaise. He promptly drew his sword, and going up to the traveler, asked his permission to speak with him a second in private. The traveler, a French colonel, seeing that my father wore the uniform of a general officer, buckled on his sword to do him honor. They went into an inn directly across from the relay station and asked for a room. When they were alone, my father said to the traveler:

"My dear sir, your chaise outstripped my carriage in order to reach the relay station ahead of me. This proceeding, which in itself is not an insult is, however, so ungracious that I feel it my duty to ask you for an explanation."

The colonel, surprised, promptly laid all the blame on the postillions and gave his word that there was none on his part.

"My dear sir," replied my father, "I do not wish to make

anything serious of this either, and I shall be satisfied with first blood drawn."

So saying he drew his sword.

"Just a moment," said the Frenchman. "It seems to me my postillions did not outstrip yours, but yours, by going so slowly, lagged behind."

My father thought this over, then he said to the colonel:

"My dear sir, I think you are right, and if you had made that observation sooner, before I had drawn my sword, we would not have fought. You certainly realize, however, that at this point a little blood must be shed."

Undoubtedly the colonel considered that last reason good enough, for he too drew his sword. The combat was brief. Realizing that he had been wounded, my father immediately lowered the point of his sword and apologized profusely to the colonel for the trouble he had put him to. The latter replied by offering his services, gave the address in Paris where he could be found, stepped into his chaise and drove off.

My father thought at first that his wound was light, but he was so covered with wounds that the slightest prick could not fail to open an old scar. In truth, the colonel's blow had reopened an old musket wound in which the bullet was still imbedded. The lead finally worked its way out after two months of bandaging and my parents set out on their journey again.

On his arrival in Paris, my father's first care was to pay his respects to the colonel, who proved to be the Marquis d'Urfé, one of the most prominent men at the Court. He received my father with extreme courtesy and offered to present him to the Minister, as well as to the best circles. My father thanked him and asked only for an introduction to the Duc de Tarannes, who was at that time dean of the lords Marshals, and who could give him all the information he desired about the Court of the Point of Honor, which he held in the highest esteem, having heard it referred to in Spain as a very wise institution. Indeed my father would have liked to see that Court introduced into the kingdom. The Duc de Tarannes received my father with much polite-

ness and sent him to the Chevalier de Bélièvre, first officer of the lords Marshals and Chairman of their Court.

As the chevalier came to see my father frequently, he soon heard about his book of duels. That book seems to have been unique of its kind. The chevalier asked permission to show it to the lords Marshals who had the same opinion of it as their first officer. They asked my father to do them the favor of making a copy, which would be kept in the record office of their Court. No suggestion could have flattered my father more; he was inexpressibly delighted.

Such testimonies of esteem made the visit in Paris most agreeable to my father, but my mother received a different impression. She had made it a rule not only not to learn French, but even not to listen when that language was spoken. Her confessor, Innigo Velez, never ceased making sharp witticisms about the freedom of the Gallic Church, and Garcias Hierro ended all his conversations by declaring that the French were miserable worms.

At last my parents left Paris, and four days later they arrived at Bouillon. My father introduced himself to the magistrate and went to take possession of his fief.

Our forefathers' roof lacked not only the presence of its masters, but a great part of its tiles—and to such an extent that the rain poured down into the bedrooms as freely as in the courtyard, with the difference that the courtyard pavement dried promptly, whereas in the bedrooms the water settled in pools that never dried. This domestic inundation was not displeasing to my father, for it reminded him of the siege of Lerida where he had spent three weeks knee-deep in water.

His first care, however, was to put his wife's bed on dry ground. In the state drawing room there was a Flemish fireplace so large that fifteen people could warm themselves comfortably around it, the hood of the fireplace forming a sort of roof supported by two columns on each side. One of the columns blocked the chimney flue, and under its hood they could place my mother's bed with a night-table and a chair. As the hearth was raised a foot high, it formed a sort of inaccessible island.

My father settled himself on the other side of the draw-

ing room, on two tables over which boards had been laid. From his bed to my mother's, a sort of pier made of coffers and bricks had been constructed. This work was finished the same day we arrived at the castle, and nine months later to the very day I made my entrance into the world.

While work on the most necessary repairs was progressing feverishly, my father received a letter that filled him with joy. It was signed by the Duc de Tarannes, and asked his opinion on an affair of honor which was currently before the court. That genuine favor seemed so important to my father that he wished to celebrate by giving a party to all the neighborhood. But as we had no neighbors, the party was reduced to a fandango danced by a master-at-arms and Signora Frasca, my mother's first chambermaid.

In answering the Duc de Tarannes' letter, my father asked him to be so kind as to send him, in the future, extracts of proceedings carried out by the Court. This satisfaction was afforded him, and the first of every month he received a letter that for more than four months supplied conversation and small talk on winter evenings around the great fireplace, and in summer on two benches before the castle door.

During my mother's pregnancy, my father talked constantly of the son she would have; he even considered choosing a godfather for me. My mother leaned towards the Duc de Tarannes or the Marquis d'Urfé. My father agreed that it would be a great honor for us, but he feared those two gentlemen might think they were doing him too much honor and tactfully decided upon the Chevalier de Bélièvre who, for his part, accepted with esteem and gratitude.

At last I came into the world. At the age of three I could hold a little foil, and at six I could shoot a pistol without blinking my eyes . . . I was almost seven years old when my godfather visited us. That gentleman had married at Tournai, and held the position there of lieutenant in the military tribunal presided over by the constable, and of chairman of the Court of the Point of Honor. Those positions were instituted in the days of trials by champions and, since then, they have been combined under the Court of the Marshals of France.

Mme. de Bélièvre's health was delicate and her husband

took her to the waters of Spa. Both of them became extremely fond of me, and as they had no children, they begged my father to entrust my education to them; it could not be properly attended to in a district as remote as that of the castle of Worden. My father agreed, being particularly impressed by the office of Chairman of the Court of the Point of Honor, which assured him that, in the Bélièvre household, I would not fail to be imbued with all the principles which would, one day, determine my conduct.

At first it was arranged to have Garcias Hierro accompany me, for my father considered that the noblest manner of fighting was with the sword in the right hand, and the poniard in the left, a style of fencing altogether unknown in France. But as my father had formed the habit of fencing every morning with Hierro, and as that exercise had become necessary to his health, he did not think it his duty to deprive himself of it.

There was talk of sending the theologian Innigo Velez with me, but my mother understood only Spanish and it was natural that she could not get on without a confessor who knew that language. The result was that I did not have with me the two men who, before my birth, had been destined to attend to my education. However, I was given a Spanish valet, so that I would not forget entirely the Spanish language.

With my godfather I set out for Spa, where we spent two months. Then after a journey into Holland, we reached Tournai towards the end of autumn. The Chevalier de Bélièvre lived up perfectly to my father's trust in him and, for six years, he neglected nothing that might contribute to making me one day an excellent officer. At the end of that time, Mme. de Bélièvre died; her husband left Flanders to settle in Paris, and I was recalled to my paternal home.

After a journey rendered fairly annoying by the advanced season of the year, I arrived at the castle about two hours after sunset, and found the inhabitants assembled around the great fireplace. Though delighted to see me, my father did not indulge in effusions that might have compromised what Spaniards call *la gravidad*. My mother wept over me. The theologian, Innigo Velez, gave me his blessing, and the

spadassin, Hierro, presented me with a foil. We fenced and I acquitted myself in a manner beyond my years. My father was too good a connoisseur not to perceive this and his gravity gave place to the liveliest tenderness. Dinner was served and everyone was very gay.

After dinner, we returned to our places around the fire, and my father said to the theologian:

"Reverend Don Innigo, be so kind as to fetch your huge book in which there are so many marvelous stories, and read us one of them."

The theologian went up to his room and came back with a folio bound in white parchment that was yellowed by age. He opened it at random and read the following tale.

STORY OF TRIVULCE OF RAVENNA

Once upon a time, in a city in Italy called Ravenna, there was a young man named Trivulce. He was rich, handsome and thought very highly of himself. The young girls of Ravenna stood at their windows to see him pass, but he found none of them to his liking. Indeed, if now and then he took a slight fancy to one or the other, he gave no sign of it, lest he do her too much honor. But in the long run that overweening pride could not hold out against the charms of young and beautiful Nina Dei Gieraci. Trivulce deigned to declare his love. Nina replied that Signor Trivulce did her much honor, but that since childhood she had loved her cousin, Tebaldo Dei Gieraci, and that surely she would never love any but him.

At that unexpected reply, Trivulce departed, showing signs of extreme rage.

Eight days later, on a Sunday, as the good citizens of Ravenna were on their way to the metropolitan church of St. Peter, Trivulce spied Tebaldo in the crowd with his lovely cousin on his arm. Covering his face with his cloak, Trivulce followed them. When they had gone into the church, where it is not permitted to hide one's face in one's cloak, the two lovers might easily have seen that Trivulce was following them, but they had thoughts only of their love, to which they paid more attention than to the Mass, which is a great sin.

Trivulce, however, sat down on a bench behind them. He overheard everything they were saying and his rage increased. Then the priest went up into the pulpit and said:

"Brethren, I am here to publish the banns of Tebaldo and Nina Dei Gieraci. Does anyone oppose their marriage?"

"I do!" cried Trivulce, and, at the same time, drew his dagger and stabbed the two lovers twenty times. People tried to stop him, but he stabbed them again and again, left the church and then the city, and escaped to the State of Venice.

Trivulce was proud and spoiled by fortune, but he had a sensitive soul. Remorse avenged his victims as he wandered from city to city dragging out a miserable existence. After several years had passed, his parents settled the case and he returned to Ravenna, but he was no longer the same Trivulce, beaming with happiness and proud of his privileges. In short, so changed was he that his own nurse did not recognize him.

The first day he returned, Trivulce asked where Nina's tomb was. They told him she was buried with her cousin in the church of St. Peter, close to the spot where they had been murdered. Trembling from head to foot, Trivulce went there and, when he stood beside the tomb, he kissed it and wept bitterly.

Whatever may have been the grief the unhappy murderer suffered at that moment, he felt that his tears had comforted him. He therefore gave his purse to the sacristan and obtained permission to enter the church whenever he desired. The result was that he ended by going there every night, and the sacristan became so used to seeing him that he paid little attention.

One evening, Trivulce, who had not slept the night before, fell asleep beside the tomb, and when he awoke, the church was locked. He willingly decided to spend the night there, for he liked to prolong his grief and add to his gloom. He heard the hours strike one after the other and wished that this were the hour of his death.

At last midnight struck. Then the door of the sacristy opened and Trivulce saw the sacristan enter, holding his lantern in one hand and a broom in the other. But that

sacristan was nothing but a skeleton. He had hardly any skin on his face and his eyes were deep hollows, but his surplice, which clung to his bones, showed plainly that there was no flesh on his body.

The ghastly sacristan set down his lantern on the high altar and lighted the candles as if for vespers. After that he began to sweep the church and dust the benches. He even passed close to Trivulce several times, but he did not appear to see him.

At last he went to the door of the sacristy and rang the little bell that is always there. Thereupon the tombs opened, and the dead appeared wrapped in their grave clothes and began to chant melancholy litanies.

After they had droned along for a time, a dead man, clad in surplice and stole, mounted the pulpit and said:

"Brethren, I am here to publish the banns of Tebaldo and Nina Dei Gieraci. Damned Trivulce, do you oppose the banns?"

Here my father interrupted the theologian and, turning to me, said:

"Alfonso, my son, in Trivulce's place, would you have been afraid?"

"My dear father," I replied, "I think I would have been terrified."

At that my father rose, in a fury, grabbed his sword and would have run me through had not someone come between us and finally managed to calm him. But when he had sat down again, he flung me a terrible glance.

"Son, unworthy of me," he cried, "your cowardice is a disgrace to the regiment of Walloon Guards in which I had intended to enter you."

After those harsh words, at which I nearly died of shame, there was a great silence. Garcias was the first to break it, and addressing my father, he said to him:

"My lord, if I may presume to give Your Excellency my opinion, it would be to prove to monsieur your son that there are no ghosts, or specters, or dead men who chant litanies and that there cannot be any. If you did that, he would certainly not be afraid."

"Monsieur Hierro," replied my father with a touch of

bitterness, "you forget that I had the honor to show you yesterday a story of ghosts, written by my ancestor in his own hand."

"My lord," replied Garcias, "I do not give the lie to Your Excellency's ancestor."

"What do you mean, 'I do not give the lie'?" cried my father. "Do you realize that that expression implies that you accuse my ancestor of lying?"

"My lord," said Garcias again, "I am well aware that I am of too little account for monsieur your ancestor to deign to demand satisfaction of me."

Then my father, looking even more ferocious, said:

"Hierro, may heaven preserve you from making excuses, for they imply an insult."

"Then," said Garcias, "I can only submit to whatever punishment it may please Your Excellency to inflict on me in the name of his ancestor, but for the honor of my profession, I would that that trial be administered by our almoner so that I may consider it an ecclesiastical penance."

"Not a bad idea," my father then said in a calmer tone. "I remember having once upon a time written a little treatise on satisfactions admissible in cases where the duel could not take place. Let me think about it."

My father appeared at first to busy himself with the subject, but from reflecting overlong he ended by falling asleep in his chair. My mother was already asleep, as was the theologian also, and Garcias wasted no time in following their example. Whereupon I felt that it was up to me to retire. And thus passed the first day of my return to the paternal mansion.

The next day, I fenced with Garcias. I went hunting. We supped, and when we rose from the table my father asked the theologian to go and fetch his big book. The Reverend obeyed, opened it haphazardly and read the story I am about to relate.

THE STORY OF LANDOLFO OF FERRARA

In a city of Italy called Ferrara, there lived a young man named Landolfo. He was a libertine, without religion, and held in horror by all the good souls in that town. This

wicked fellow was passionately fond of frequenting prostitutes, and had gone the rounds of all those in the town, but none of them pleased him so much as Bianca de Rossi, because she surpassed all the others in depravity.

Bianca was not only selfish, dissolute and depraved; she even demanded of her lovers things that dishonored them, and she required Landolfo to take her every evening to his house to dine with his mother and his sister. Landolfo immediately went to his mother and suggested this to her as if it were the most natural thing in the world. The good mother burst into tears and implored her son to think of his sister's reputation. Deaf to her prayers, Landolfo promised only to keep the matter as quiet as possible; then he went to Bianca's house and brought her to his home.

Landolfo's mother and sister received the prostitute far better than she deserved. But the latter, seeing their kindness, redoubled her insolence: at supper she made outrageously free suggestions and gave her lover's sister lessons she could well have done without. Finally she made it clear to both the sister and her mother that they would do well to withdraw, for she wished to be alone with Landolfo.

The next day the prostitute spread that story throughout the town, and for several days no one talked of anything else. So far did the public gossip travel that it soon came to the ears of Odoardo Zampi, brother of Landolfo's mother. Now Odoardo was a man one did not insult with impunity. He considered himself insulted in the person of his sister, and that very day he had the infamous Bianca murdered. When Landolfo went to call on his mistress he found her stabbed to death and lying in a pool of blood. He soon learned that his uncle had dealt this blow. Rushing to his house to punish him, he found him surrounded by the greatest bravos in town, who jeered and made mock of his anger.

Not knowing on whom to expend his fury, Landolfo ran to his mother's, intending to blame her for the deed. The poor woman was with her daughter, and was just about to sit down at table. When she saw her son rush in, she asked him whether Bianca was coming to supper.

"May she come," cried Landolfo, "and take you to hell, along with your brother and all the Zampi family."

The poor mother fell to her knees.

"Oh my God!" she cried, "forgive him these blasphemous words."

At that moment the door was flung open with a bang and they saw a ghost enter, emaciated, slashed with dagger wounds, and bearing a horrible resemblance to Bianca.

Landolfo's mother and sister began to pray, and God gave them strength to endure that sight without dying of horror.

The ghost came forward slowly and sat down at the table as if to eat supper. With a courage which only the devil could inspire, Landolfo dared to pick up a dish and offer it to her. The ghost opened a mouth so large that her head seemed to be split in two, and a reddish flame came out of it. Then she held out a hand scarred with burns, helped herself to a piece of meat, swallowed it, and you could hear it fall under the table. In this way she swallowed all the contents of the dish; all the pieces fell under the table. When the dish was empty, the ghost, staring at Landolfo with horrible eyes, said to him:

"Landolfo, when I dine here, I sleep here. Come, get into bed."

Here my father interrupted the almoner and, turning to me, said:

"Alfonso, my son, in Landolfo's place, would you have been afraid?"

"My dear father," I replied, "I assure you I would not have had the slightest fear."

My father appeared to be satisfied with that reply and was very gay during the rest of the evening.

Our days passed thus with nothing to break their monotony, save that in good weather, instead of gathering around the fireplace, we sat on benches in front of the door. Six whole years slipped by in that sweet tranquility, but as I look back on them, they seem to me like so many weeks.

When I had completed my seventeenth year, my father decided to enter me in the regiment of the Walloon Guards and wrote to several of his former military comrades on whom he could count. Those worthy and respectable officers

gathered together everything they could say in my favor and succeeded in procuring me a captain's commission. When my father received the news, he suffered such a sharp attack that we feared for his life. But he promptly recovered, and had thoughts only for preparing for my departure. He desired me to go by sea so that I might enter Spain by way of Cadiz, and to present myself first to Don Henri de Sa, commandant of the province, the man who had contributed most to my promotion.

When the post chaise was drawn up in the castle courtyard, my father took me into his bedroom and, after closing the door, said:

"My dear Alfonso, I am about to confide to you a secret which I had from my father, and which you will entrust only to your son when you consider him worthy of it."

As I was sure the secret concerned hidden treasure, I replied that I had always considered gold merely as a means of succoring the unfortunate.

"No, my dear Alfonso," my father replied. "This is not a question either of gold or of silver. I am going to teach you a secret pass with which by counter-parrying and following with the flanconade, you are certain to disarm your enemy."

Then he picked up the foils, showed me the pass in question, gave me his blessing and led me to my carriage. I kissed my mother's hand again and departed.

I went by post chaise to Flushing, where I found a vessel that took me to Cadiz. Don Henri de Sa received me as if I had been his own son; he attended to procuring me a carriage and horses and recommended two servants, one of whom was named Lopez and the other Moschito. From Cadiz I went to Sevilla, and from Sevilla to Cordova, then I came to Anduhhar, where I took the road of the Sierra Morena. There, near the watering-trough of Los Alcornosques, I had the misfortune to become separated from my servants. However, I arrived the same day at the Venta Quemada and, last evening, at your hermitage.

"My dear child," said the hermit, "your story has interested me deeply and I am obliged to you for so kindly relating it. I now see clearly that from the way you have been raised, fear is an emotion completely unknown to you.

But since you have slept at the Venta Quemada, you may be exposed to obsessions of the two hanged men and you may suffer the sad fate of the young man possessed by the devil."

"Father," I said to the anchorite, "I have thought much about Sir Pascheco's story this evening. Though he may be possessed by the devil, he is nonetheless a gentleman and, as such, I believe him incapable of telling a lie. But Innigo Velez, almoner of our castle, told me that although there were demoniacs in the first centuries of the Church, there were none at present, and his testimony seems to me all the more worthy as my father commanded me to believe Innigo on all matters connected with our religion."

"But," said the hermit, "did you not see the madman's frightful countenance and how the demons blinded him?"

"Father," I replied, "Sir Pascheco may have lost his eye some other way. For that matter, I rely in all such things on those who know more than I do. I am glad that I fear neither ghosts nor vampires. If, however, you will give me some holy relic to protect me from them, I promise to wear it faithfully and reverently."

I thought the hermit looked a little amused at such naïveté. Then he said:

"I see, my dear child, that you still have faith, but I fear you will not continue to do so. Those Gomélez from whom you descend on the distaff side are all recent Christians. Some of them, so it is said, are even Moslems in their hearts. If they offered you a vast fortune to change your religion, would you accept it?"

"Assuredly not," I told him. "In my opinion, to renounce one's religion or to desert one's flag are two equally dishonorable acts."

Here I thought the hermit smiled again. Then he said:

"I am sorry to see that your valor rests on a far too exaggerated point of honor, and I warn you that you will not find Madrid as swashbuckling as it was in the days of your father. Moreover, valor has other and sounder elements. But I won't detain you longer, for you have a hard day's journey to go before you come to the 'Venta del Pegnon,' or inn of the rock. The innkeeper stays there despite thieves, because he counts on the protection of a

group of gypsies encamped in the environs. The day after tomorrow, you will come to the 'Venta de Cardegnas,' where you will be out of the Sierra Morena. I have put some provisions in your saddle bags."

Having said this, the hermit embraced me tenderly, but he did not give me any relic to protect me from demons. I did not like to mention it again, so I mounted my horse and rode off.

On the way, I began to reflect on the maxims I had just heard, for I could not conceive of any more solid basis for valor than the point of honor, which seemed to me to include all the virtues. I was still deep in those reflections when a rider, emerging suddenly from behind a rock, blocked my path.

"Is your name Alfonso?" he asked.

I replied that it was.

"In that case," said the rider, "I arrest you in the name of the King and of the Holy Inquisition. Give me your sword."

I obeyed without a word. Then the rider blew a whistle, and from all sides I saw armed men swoop down upon me. They tied my hands behind my back and we set out towards the mountains on a crossroad which, after an hour, led us to a very strong castle. The drawbridge was lowered and we entered. While we were still below the dungeon, they opened a little side door and threw me into a dark cell without even taking the trouble to undo my bonds.

The cell was pitch black, and as my hands were tied and I could not hold them out in front of me, I could not move about without bumping my nose against the walls. I therefore sat down where I was and, as one can easily imagine, I began to reflect on who could have had me thrown into prison. My first—and sole—idea was that the Inquisition had seized my beautiful cousins and that the negresses had told what had taken place at the Venta Quemada. If I were to be questioned about the beautiful African girls, I had the choice of betraying them and of breaking my word of honor, or of denying that I knew them, which course would embark me on a series of disgraceful lies. After taking some thought as to the part I should play, I

decided to maintain absolute silence, and I resolved firmly not to answer any of their questions.

That doubt once clarified in my mind, I set to dreaming about the events of the two preceding days. I was not sure my cousins were flesh and blood women. An indefinable feeling, but stronger than anything I had ever heard about the power of demons, confirmed me in this. As for the trick they had played on me by putting me under the gallows, I was highly indignant at it.

However, the hours were slipping by. I began to feel hungry, and as I had heard that cells were sometimes furnished with bread and a pitcher of water, I felt around with my feet to see if I could find anything. And truth to tell, I soon came up against an object that proved to be half a loaf of bread. The difficulty was to get it to my mouth. I lay down on the floor beside the loaf and tried to seize it in my teeth, but it kept sliding away from me. Finally I pushed it until I had it up against the wall. I found I could eat it, for the loaf had been cut through the middle. If it had been whole, I could not have bitten into it. I also found a pitcher, but it was impossible to drink out of it. I had scarcely wetted my lips when all the water spilled. Continuing my researches, I found a little straw in one corner and lay down upon it. My hands were artistically tied—that is, strongly tied—but so as not to cause me pain. In short, I had no trouble in falling asleep.

The fourth day

It seems I had slept several hours when they came to wake me, and a Dominican monk entered, followed by several men of evil countenance. Some of them carried torches, others instruments that were completely unknown to me and which I judged to be instruments of torture. I reminded myself of my resolutions and was more determined than ever to keep them. I thought of my father. True, he had never been put to torture; but had he not suffered a thousand painful operations at the hands of surgeons? I knew he had endured them without a murmur. I resolved to imitate him, not to utter a word, and, if possible, not to let even a sigh escape me.

The inquisitor called for a chair, sat down near me, and in a gentle, wheedling tone spoke to me as follows:

"My dear sweet child, thank heaven that has led you to this dungeon. But tell me why you are here? What sins have you committed? Confess, pour your tears into my bosom. You do not answer? Alas! my child, you are wrong. We do not interrogate; that is not our method. We leave it to the guilty man to accuse himself. That confession, though somewhat forced, is not without merit, especially when the guilty man denounces his accomplices. You do not say anything? So much the worse for you. Come, we shall have to give you a hint. Do you know two princesses, execrable vampires and demons incarnate? You do not speak. Bring in those two *Infantas* from the court of Lucifer."

Here they brought in my two cousins who, like me, had their hands tied behind their backs. Then the inquisitor continued in these terms:

"Well, my dear son, do you recognize them? You still say nothing. My son, do not be alarmed at what I am about to tell you. We are going to hurt you a little. You see those two boards. We will put them on your legs, we will press them close together and tighten them with ropes. Next we will put between your legs these wedges you see here, and we will hammer them in. First your feet will swell. Then the blood will burst from your big toe, and your other toenails will all drop off. Then the soles of your feet will split open and we shall see a fatty mixture of bruised flesh ooze out. That will be very painful! You say nothing—yet all that is only the usual torture. However, you will faint. Here are bottles filled with various spirits with which we shall restore you. When you have regained consciousness, we will take away those wedges and put on much larger ones. At the first blow, your knees and your ankles will break. At the second, your legs will split from one end to the other. The marrow will come out, flow down on this straw and mingle with your blood. And still, you will not speak? . . . Come, put the thumbscrews on him."

The torturers took hold of my legs and fastened them between the boards.

"You will not speak? . . . Drive in the wedges . . . You will not speak? . . . Ready with the hammers."

At that moment there was a sound of gunfire. Emina cried out:

"Oh Mohammed! We are saved. Zoto has come to our aid."

Zoto rushed in at the head of his gang, threw out the executioners, and tied the inquisitor up to a ring in the wall of the cell. Then he unbound the two Moorish girls and me. And the first thing they did when their arms were free was to throw themselves into mine. Zoto's men separated us. Zoto ordered me to mount and ride on ahead, and assured me he would follow shortly with the two ladies.

The advance guard with which I set out was composed of four horsemen. At daybreak we came to a completely deserted spot where we found a relay. After that our road ran along high peaks and crests of mountain chains.

Towards four o'clock we reached certain rocky caverns where we were to spend the night, but I was glad we had arrived while it was still daylight, for the view was superb, particularly to me, who had seen only the Ardennes and Zealand. At my feet stretched that beautiful "Vega de Granada," which Granadians ironically call *la Nuestra Vegilla*. I saw the whole expanse of it, with its six towns, its forty villages; the tortuous course of the Hénil, and rivers racing down from the top of the Alpuharras mountains, thickets, cool shady nooks, buildings, gardens and a vast number of *quintas* or small farms. Charmed that my eye could embrace so many beautiful objects at one time, I gave myself up to the contemplation of that marvelous panorama. I felt that I was becoming a lover of nature; and I even forgot my cousins. However, they soon arrived in litters borne by horses. They sat down on some flagstones in the grotto and, when they were somewhat rested, I said to them:

"Ladies, I have no complaint to make of the night I spent at the Venta Quemada, but I confess that it ended in a manner infinitely displeasing to me."

"My Alfonso," Emina replied, "blame us only for the beautiful part of your dreams. But what are you complaining of? Did you not have a chance to show proof of super-human courage?"

“What!” I cried, “would anyone doubt my courage? If I knew where to find him, I would fight him on a cloak or with my handkerchief in my mouth.”

“I don’t know what you mean with your handkerchief and your cloak,” said Emina. “There are things I cannot tell you. There are even some I do not know myself. I do nothing save by order of the head of our family, the successor to Sheik Massoud, the man who knows the secret of Cassar-Gomélez. All I can tell you is that you are our closest relative. The *Oidor* of Granada, your mother’s father, had a son who was found worthy to be initiated. He embraced the Moslem religion and married the four daughters of the reigning Dey of Tunis. The youngest daughter was the only one to have children; she is our mother. Shortly after Zibeddé was born, my father and his three other wives died in an epidemic which, at that time, ravaged all the Barbary coast . . . But let us leave all those things which perhaps you will know one day. Let us talk of you, of the gratitude we owe you, or rather of our admiration for your courage. With what indifference you gazed on those instruments of torture! What scrupulous respect for your word! Yes, Alfonso, you are greater than all the heroes of our race and we belong to you!”

Zibeddé, who willingly let her sister have the floor when the conversation was serious, claimed her rights when it took a sentimental turn. In short, I was flattered, caressed, pleased with myself and others. Then the negresses arrived; they gave us supper and Zoto waited on us in person, and showed us every mark of respect. Afterwards the negresses made up a fairly good bed for my cousins in a sort of grotto. I went to bed in another grotto and we all enjoyed the sweet rest of which we were much in need.

The fifth day

The next day the caravan was up and about betimes. We went down mountains and circled in the hollow of valleys, or rather in precipices that seemed to reach down to the bowels of the earth. They cut the chain of the mountains in so many different directions that it was impossible to orient ourselves or to know on which side we were.

We proceeded thus for six hours till we came to the ruins of a deserted village. There Zoto made us dismount and, leading me to a well, said:

“My lord Alfonso, do me the favor to look in this well and tell me what you think of it.”

I replied that I saw water in it and that I thought it was a well.

"No," Zoto replied, "you are mistaken; it is the entrance to my palace."

Having spoken thus, he thrust his head in the well and gave a shout. Then I saw some planks pop out of one side of the well; they had been laid a few feet above the water. Next, a man in armor emerged from the same opening, and then another. They climbed out of the well and when they were outside, Zoto said to me:

"My lord Alfonso, I have the honor to present to you my two brothers, Cicio and Momo. You may have seen their bodies hanging on a certain gallows, but they are none the worse for it, and will always be devoted to you, being, as I am, in the service and in the pay of the great Sheik of Gomélez."

I replied that I was charmed to see the brothers of a man who seemed to have done me an important service.

I had to make up my mind to go down into the well. They brought a rope ladder on which the two sisters descended with more ease than I had anticipated. I went down after them. When we reached the planks, we found a little side door so low that one could enter only by stooping. But the next moment we came to a beautiful staircase, cut in the rock and lighted by lamps, on which we descended more than two hundred steps. At last we entered a subterranean dwelling, in which there were a great number of drawing-rooms and bedrooms. All the rooms in use were covered in cork to protect them from the damp. Since then, I have seen, at Cintra near Lisbon, a convent, hewn out of rock, where the cells were similarly covered, and which was therefore known as the Cork Convent. In addition, good fires, strategically placed, gave Zoto's underground a most agreeable temperature. The horses for his cavalry were dispersed in the neighborhood, but in case of need they could also be let down into the bosom of the earth through an opening which gave onto a neighboring valley; there was a machine made expressly to hoist them, though it was seldom used.

"All these marvels," Emina told me, "are the work of the Gomélez. They dug out this rock in the days when they were masters of the land—that is, they finished digging it—for the infidels who were living in the Alpuharras when

the Gomélez arrived had already carried the work quite far. Scholars claim that in this very place were the free gold mines of Bétique, (the old Roman name for Andalusia), and ancient prophecies declare that one day all this region must return to the power of the Gomélez. What do you say to that, Alfonso? It would be a pretty patrimony."

This speech of Emina's seemed to me extremely out of place. Nor did I hesitate to say so. Then, changing the subject, I asked what plans they had for the future.

Emina replied that after what had happened they could not stay in Spain, but they wanted to have a little rest while arrangements were being made for their journey.

Zoto gave us a lavish dinner, especially plentiful in venison, and a large quantity of preserves. The three brothers served us with the greatest alacrity. I remarked to my cousins that it was impossible to find nicer hanged men anywhere. Emina agreed, and turning to Zoto, said to him:

"You and your brothers must have had some very strange adventures. We would be pleased if you would tell us about them."

After a little coaxing, Zoto sat down beside us and began in these terms:

ZOTO'S STORY

I was born in the town of Benevente, capital of the duchy of that name. My father, whose name was Zoto too, was an armorer and clever at his profession. But as there were two other armorers in town who had even more of a reputation, he had the greatest difficulty in supporting himself, his wife and his three children—namely, my two brothers and myself.

Three years after my father married, my mother's younger sister married an oil merchant named Lunardo, who gave her for a wedding present some gold earrings, with a chain of the same metal to wear around her neck. From that wedding, my mother came home in a mood of blackest gloom. Her husband wanted to know the cause of it, but for a long time she refused to tell him. At length she admitted that she was dying of envy to have a gold necklace and earrings like her sister's. My father made no comment.

He had a hunting gun of the finest workmanship, with pistols and a hunting knife, all of the same type. The gun fired four times without being recharged. My father had worked on it for four years. He estimated its worth at three hundred *onces* of gold of Naples. He went to a bidder and sold all the mountings for eighty *onces*. Then he bought the pieces of jewelry his wife wanted and brought them home to her. That very day my mother hurried off to show them to Lunardo's wife and when she discovered that her earrings were a little finer than her sister's, she was extremely pleased.

But a week later, Lunardo's wife came to my mother's house to return her call. She was wearing her hair in coils and fastened with a gold pin, the head of which was a filigree rose enriched with a little ruby. That gold rose plunged a cruel thorn in my mother's heart. She relapsed into her melancholy and did not come out of it till my father had promised her a pin like her sister's. But as my father had no money and no means of procuring any, and as a pin like that cost forty-five *onces*, he soon became as melancholy as my mother.

In the midst of all this, my father received a call from a bravo of the country, one Grillo Monaldi, who came to him to have his pistols cleaned. Perceiving my father's depression, Monaldi asked him the cause. My father did not hide it from him. Monaldi looked thoughtful, then he said:

"Signor Zoto, I am more indebted to you than you realize. The other day, my dagger was found by chance in the body of a man who had been murdered on the road to Naples. The police showed that dagger to all the armorers for identification and you generously swore that you had never seen it. It was, however, a weapon you yourself had made and sold to me. If you had told the truth, you could have caused me some embarrassment. Here, therefore, are the forty-five *onces* you need and, in addition, my purse will always be open to you."

My father accepted the money gratefully, bought a gold pin with a ruby in it, and took it to my mother, who did not fail to parade it the next day under the eyes of her proud sister.

But once home again, my mother had no doubt that she would soon see Signora Lunardo decked out with a new jewel. That lady, however, was hatching very different plans. Her great ambition was to appear in church attended by a hired lackey in livery, and she had suggested as much to her husband. Lunardo, who was miserly, had been willing to purchase a bit of gold, for after all, gold seemed to him as safe on his wife's head as in his own strongbox. But it was a different matter when he was asked to give an *once* of gold to a queer fish merely to stand for half an hour behind his wife's bench. However, so violently did Signora Lunardo pester her husband and nag at him that he finally decided to put on a coat of livery and attend her himself. Signora Lunardo thought her husband would do as well in this role as another man, and she looked forward to appearing in the parish the following Sunday attended by this new style lackey. The neighbors made polite fun of that masquerade, but my aunt attributed their jests and pleasantries to the envy that was devouring them.

As she approached the church, the beggars made a great outcry and shouted to her in their jargon:

"Mira Lunardu che fa lu criadu de sua mugiera!" ("Look at Lunardo playing servant to his wife!")

However, as the beggars did not push their boldness beyond that point, Signora Lunardo entered the church unmolested and was paid all sorts of honors there, such as being offered holy water and a bench to sit on, while my mother had to stand, lost in a crowd of women of the lowest class.

Back at home, my mother immediately took a blue coat of my father's and began to trim the sleeves with a remnant of yellow bandoleer that had been part of a cartridge belt belonging to a certain Miquelet. My father asked what she was doing. My mother told him the story about her sister and how her husband had been so kind as to follow her in a coat of livery. My father assured her that never would he be such a complaisant fool. But the following Sunday he gave an *once* of gold to a hired lackey, who followed my mother to church, where she played an even finer role than Signora Lunardo had on the preceding Sunday.

That same day, immediately after Mass, Monaldi came to see my father.

"My dear Zoto," he said, "I have heard of the war of extravagances your wife and her sister are waging. If you don't put a stop to it, you'll be unhappy all your life. You have therefore only two choices: one, to punish your wife, the other to adopt a profession which allows you to satisfy her expensive taste. If you choose the former, I'll give you a hazelwood stick that I used on my late wife as long as she lived. There are other hazelwood sticks that you grasp by both ends; they turn in your hand and help you discover sources of water or even hidden treasures. This stick does not have the same properties. But if you grasp it by the end and apply the other end to your wife's shoulders, I assure you, you will have no trouble in curing her of her whims.

"If, on the contrary, you decide to satisfy all your wife's fantasies, I offer you the friendship of the most courageous men in all Italy. They are willing to meet at Benevente because it is a frontier town. I think you understand me, so think these matters over."

With these words Monaldi left his hazelwood stick on my father's workbench and went away.

Meanwhile, after Mass, my mother had gone to show off her hired lackey on the Corso and at the houses of several friends. At last she came back all triumphant, but my father received her very differently from what she had expected. With his left hand, he seized her left arm, and taking the hazelwood stick in his right hand, he began to put Monaldi's advice into execution. His wife fainted. My father cursed the stick, begged her pardon, was forgiven and peace was restored.

A few days later, my father went to see Monaldi to tell him that the hazelwood stick had not had a good effect and that he commended himself to the good graces of the bravos of whom Monaldi had spoken.

"Signor Zoto," Monaldi replied, "I am surprised that whereas you haven't the heart to inflict the slightest punishment on your wife, you are brave enough to waylay men on the edge of a wood. However, everything is possible, and the human heart shrinks from many other inconsistencies. I

am delighted to introduce you to my friends, but first you will have to commit at least one murder. Every evening, when you have finished your work, take a long sword, put a dagger in your belt, and walk boldly towards the Gate of the Madonna. Perhaps someone will come and engage you. Good-bye. May heaven bless your ventures."

My father followed Monaldi's advice and soon he noticed that the police and several knights of his own ilk greeted him with a knowing air. After two weeks of that exercise, my father was accosted one evening by a well-dressed man who said to him:

"Signor Zoto, here are eleven *onces*. In half an hour you will see two young men pass wearing white feathers on their hats. You will go up to them, as if you wished to tell them a secret, and you will say in a low tone:

"'Which of you is the Marquis Feltri?' One of them will say 'I am he.' You will take your dagger and stab him in the heart. The other young man, who is a coward, will flee. Then you will finish Feltri. When the deed is done, do not go and hide in a church. Return home calmly and I will follow close behind you."

My father followed those instructions to the letter. No sooner was he at home again when there arrived the stranger whose resentment he had served. The latter said to him:

"Signor Zoto, I am very appreciative of what you have done for me. Here is another purse of one hundred *onces* which I beg you to accept, and here is still another of the same value which you will give to the first policeman who comes to your house."

Having said this, the stranger departed.

Soon after that the Chief of Police appeared at my father's house. My father promptly gave him the one hundred *onces* destined for the law, and the latter invited my father to dine with friends at his house. They went to a lodging that backed on the public prison and there they found as fellow guests the Barigel and the confessor of prisoners. My father was a trifle upset, as a man usually is after his first murder. Noticing his distress, the priest said to him:

"Come, Signor Zoto, no sadness. Cathedral Masses cost twelve *taris* each. I hear that the Marquis Feltri has been

murdered. Have twenty Masses or so said for the repose of his soul and you will be given general absolution into the bargain."

After that there was no further question of what had happened and the supper was fairly gay.

The next day, Monaldi came to my father's and complimented him on the manner in which he had conducted himself. My father wanted to return the forty-five *onces* he had received, but Monaldi said:

"Zoto, you insult me. If you mention that money again, I'll think you are reproaching me for not having given you enough. My purse is at your disposal and my friendship you have won. It is time to tell you that I myself am the leader of the band I spoke to you about. They are all men of honor and the strictest probity. If you wish to be one of us, say that you are going to Brescia to buy gun barrels and come and join us at Capone. Put up at the 'Croce d'Oro' and don't worry about the rest."

Three days later my father left home and went through a campaign as honorable as it was lucrative.

Though the climate of Benevente is very mild, my father, who was not yet used to the profession, did not want to work in the stormy season. He spent that part of the winter in the bosom of his family, and his wife had a lackey on Sunday, gold clasps on her black bodice and a gold hook from which to hang her keys.

One day towards spring, my father was called into the street by a strange servant who told him to follow him to the city gate. There he found an elderly gentleman and four men on horseback. The gentleman said to him:

"Signor Zoto, here is a purse of fifty *sequins*. Be so kind as to follow me to a nearby castle and allow us to bind your eyes."

My father agreed to everything, and after a fairly long stretch of road and several detours, they arrived at the old gentleman's castle. They led him inside and removed his bandage. Then he saw a masked woman tied in an arm-chair and with a gag in her mouth. The old gentleman said to him:

"Signor Zoto, here are one hundred *sequins* more. Be so kind as to kill my wife."

"Sir," my father replied, "you have misjudged me. I wait for people at street corners or I attack them in a wood, as becomes a man of honor, but I do not take on the job of executioner."

Saying this, my father flung the two purses at the vindictive husband's feet. The latter did not insist. He ordered his men to bind my father's eyes again and to take him back to the gate of the town. My father's noble and generous action did him much credit, but later on he did something that was even more generally approved.

There were, at Benevente, two men of quality, one of whom was named Count Montalto and the other the Marquis Serra. Count Montalto sent for my father and promised him five hundred *sequins* if he would murder Serra. My father accepted, but asked for time, because he knew that the marquis was greatly on his guard.

Two days later, the Marquis Serra sent for my father to meet him in a secluded spot and said to him:

"Zoto, here is a purse of five hundred *sequins*. It is yours. Give me your word of honor that you will murder Montalto."

My father took the purse and said:

"Monsieur le marquis, I give you my word of honor to kill Montalto. But I must confess to you that I have also given him my word to put an end to you."

The marquis laughed.

"I sincerely hope you will not do so."

My father replied very seriously:

"Pardon me, monsieur le marquis, I have promised him and I shall do it."

The marquis jumped back and drew his sword. But my father pulled a pistol from his belt and broke the marquis's head. Then he went to Montalto and told him that his enemy was no more. The count embraced him and handed over the five hundred *sequins*. Then my father confessed, in some embarrassment, that before he died, the marquis had given him five hundred *sequins* to murder the count. The count said he was charmed to have forestalled his enemy.

"Monsieur le comte," my father replied, "that will do you no good, for I have given my word."

And with that he plunged his dagger into his heart. As he fell, the count cried out and his servants came running. My father got rid of them by using his dagger and escaped to the mountains where he found Monaldi's band. All the bravos toasted him to the skies for so strict a devotion to his word. I assure you that this deed is still, so to speak, on everyone's lips and that in Benevente people will talk about it for years to come.

When Zoto came to this place in his father's story, one of his brothers entered to tell him that his men were waiting for orders about the embarkation. He therefore left us, first asking our permission to continue his story the next day. But his words had given me much to think about. He had never ceased to vaunt the honor, delicacy, and strict probity of men who would have been getting off lightly, had they been hanged. The abuse of those words, which he used so confidently, troubled my thoughts.

Noticing that I was preoccupied, Emina asked what I was thinking about. I told her that the story of Zoto's father reminded me of what only two days before I had heard a certain hermit say—to wit, that there were sounder bases for valor than the point of honor.

"My dear Alfonso," Emina replied, "respect that hermit and believe what he tells you. You will meet him again more than once in the course of your life."

Then the two sisters rose and withdrew with the negresses to the interior of the apartment—that is, to that part of the underground that had been set aside for them. They came back for supper and then everyone went to bed.

But when all was quiet in the cavern, I saw Emina enter, holding a lamp in one hand, like Psyche, and with the other leading her little sister, who was prettier than love. My bed was made in such a way that they could both sit on it. Then Emina said to me:

"Dear Alfonso, I have told you we are yours. May the great sheik forgive us if we anticipate somewhat his permission."

"Beautiful Emina," I replied, "forgive me yourself. If this

is another test of my virtue, I am afraid it will not come out so well."

"That has been foreseen," replied the beautiful African, and putting my hand on her hip, she made me feel a belt which was not the belt of Venus, though it had to do with the art and genius of that goddess's husband. The belt was fastened by a padlock, the key to which my cousins did not possess—or at least so they assured me.

The center of all prudery thus being safeguarded, they did not dream of depriving me of the surfaces. Zibeddé remembered the role of the mistress she had formerly rehearsed with her sister. The latter saw the object of her pretended lover in my arms and yielded to the sensual delights of that sweet contemplation. The younger sister, supple, alert, burning with passion, devoured me with her caresses. Our moments were again filled by I know not what—by plans they did not explain, by all that sweet babble of young lovers who are betwixt memories of recent joys and the hope of approaching happiness.

At last sleep weighted my cousins' beautiful eyelids and they retired to their apartment. When I found myself alone, I thought how disagreeable it would be if I were to wake up again under the gallows. And though I laughed at the idea, nevertheless it bothered me up to the moment when I fell asleep.

The sixth day

I was awakened by Zoto, who told me I had slept a long time and that dinner was ready. I dressed hastily and went to find my cousins, who were waiting for me in the dining room. Their eyes still caressed me, and they seemed more occupied with memories of the past night than with the dinner that was served them. After the table had been cleared, Zoto sat down with us and went on with his story as follows:

CONTINUATION OF ZOTO'S STORY

When my father joined Monaldi's band¹, I must have been seven years old and I remember that my mother, my two brothers and I were taken to prison. But that was only for

¹ 1804: Zoto

form's sake, for my father had not forgotten to recompense the law, and it was easy to convince them that we had no connection with his exploits.

The Chief of Police took special care of us during our incarceration and even shortened the term. When she came out of prison, my mother was given a royal welcome by the neighbors and by the whole quarter, for in the south of Italy bandits are the people's heroes, as smugglers are in Spain. We boys had our share of the universal esteem, and I, in particular, was considered the prince of rascals on our street.

About this time, Monaldi was killed in a fray and my father became head of the company; and, as he wished to begin his rule with a brilliant action, he took up a position on the road to Salerno, there to intercept a convoy of gold which the Viceroy of Sicily was sending that way. In this he was successful, but my father was wounded by a musket-ball in the thigh, which incapacitated him for further action. The moment when he took leave of the company was extraordinarily touching. It was even said that several of the bandits wept; which I would find hard to believe if I myself had not wept once in my life—after I had stabbed my mistress—but I will tell you about that in due time.

The company quickly broke up; some of our bravos went to Tuscany where they were hanged, others joined Testa-Lunga who was beginning to gain quite a reputation in Sicily. My father himself crossed the strait and went to Messina, where he asked asylum at the Augustines del Monte. He put his little nest egg in the hands of those fathers, did public penance, and settled down in the cloisters of their church, where he led a very pleasant life, being free to walk in the gardens and courtyards of the monastery. The monks gave him soup, and he sent out to a neighboring eating-house for a couple of dishes. In addition, the frater of the order continued to dress his wounds.

I suppose that in those days my father sent us large sums, for we had all and more than we needed in our household. My mother took part in the carnival festivities, and, in Lent, she made a crib, or *présépe*, with little walls, sugar castles and other foolishness of that sort, things that are much in vogue throughout all the Kingdom of Naples and

are counted as luxuries among the bourgeois. My aunt Lunardo also had a *présépe*, but it was not half so fine as ours.

As I remember my mother, it seems to me she was a very good woman and we often saw her weep over the dangers to which her husband was exposed. However, a few triumphs over her sister or over her neighbors quickly dried her tears. The satisfaction her beautiful crib gave her was the last pleasure of that sort she was to enjoy. I don't know how she caught pleurisy, from which, a few days later, she died.

After her death we would not have known which way to turn had not the Barigel taken us in. We spent several days there, after which they put us in the care of a mule-driver, who took us across all Calabria. On the fourteenth day we arrived in Messina. My father had already been notified of his wife's death. He welcomed us tenderly, had them give us a straw mat beside his, and introduced us to the monks who enrolled us among the many choir boys. We served Mass, snuffed candles, lighted holy lamps, and, except for that, we were exactly the same unmitigated rascals we had been in Benevente. When we had eaten the monk's soup, my father gave us a *tari* apiece with which we bought chestnuts and cracknels. After this we went down to the port to play and did not come home till nightfall. In short, we were happy young rascals. At this time an event, which even today I cannot recall without rage, changed the course of my whole life.

One Sunday, as we were on our way to sing Mass, I came back to the church door, laden with chestnuts I had bought for my brothers and myself. As I was dividing them among us, I saw a magnificent carriage drive up. It was drawn by six horses and preceded by two horses of the same color who were running free, a display of wealth such as I have never seen anywhere but in Sicily. The carriage door was flung open and I saw emerge, first a gentleman *braciere*, or escort, who gave his arm to a beautiful lady, then an abbot, and finally a little boy of my own age—a boy with a charming face and magnificently dressed in the Hungarian style, as was the custom there among children. His little long-skirted coat was of blue velvet embroidered in gold and trimmed

with sable; it came down to the middle of his legs and even covered part of his boots, which were of yellow leather. His blue velvet cap, also trimmed with sable, was tasseled in gold cord, and jewels flashed from his little sword. Last of all, in his hand he held a prayer book bound in gold. I was so astonished to see such a beautiful coat on a boy of my age that, scarcely knowing what I was doing, I went up to him and offered him the two chestnuts I had in my hand. But instead of responding to my friendly offer, that nasty little beast brought his prayer book down on my nose with all the strength of his arm. My left eye was almost blackened, and one of the clasps on his book pierced and tore one of my nostrils, so that in an instant I was covered with blood. It was then I thought I heard the little lord cry out in alarm, but I had, so to speak, lost consciousness. When I came to, I was near the fountain in the garden, surrounded by my father and brothers who were washing my face and trying to stop the hemorrhage.

I was still bleeding profusely when we saw the little lord returning, followed by his abbot, by the gentleman *braciere*, and by two footmen, one of whom carried a bundle of switches. The gentleman explained in a few words that the Principessa di Rocca-Fiorita demanded that I be whipped till the blood came, to atone for the fright I had given her as well as her Principino—and the footmen promptly executed the sentence. Afraid of losing his sanctuary, my father at first dared not protest, but seeing that they were flaying me mercilessly, he could not control himself. Addressing the gentleman in accents of restrained fury, he cried:

“Stop this at once. Do not forget that I have murdered men worth ten of your sort.”

The gentleman apparently thought those words contained great sense and ordered them to stop, but while I was still lying on my stomach, the Principino came up and kicked me in the face, saying:

“*Managia la tua faccia de banditu.*” (“Damn your little bandit’s face!”)

That last insult put the final touch to my rage. From that moment I ceased to be a child, or at least I no longer enjoyed the sweet pleasures of childhood, and for a long time

after that, I could not, in cold blood, see a man richly dressed.

Vengeance must be the original sin of our country, for though I was only eight at the time, night and day I thought only of ways to punish the Principino. I would wake up with a start, dreaming that I held him by the hair and was beating him up, and by day I thought of ways to harm him from afar, for well I knew I would not be allowed to get near him. Moreover, I wanted to make a quick getaway after I had struck the blow. Finally I decided to throw a stone at his face, an exercise at which I was already very proficient. To keep myself in trim, however, I chose a target and practiced almost daily.

My father asked me once what I was doing. I told him I intended to smash the Principino's face and then escape and turn bandit. Though my father obviously did not believe me, the smile he gave me confirmed me in my plan.

At last came the Sunday which was to be my day of vengeance. The carriage appeared, the occupants got out. I was greatly excited but I controlled myself. My little enemy caught sight of me in the crowd and stuck out his tongue at me. I was holding my stone. I threw it and he fell over backward.

I immediately took to my heels and did not stop till I came to the opposite end of the town. There I met a little chimney sweep I knew who asked me where I was going. I told him my story and he immediately took me to his master. The latter, who was short of boys and didn't know where to find any for such a rough job, was delighted to take me on. He assured me nobody would recognize me when my face was smeared with soot and that the ability to climb chimneys was often a very useful talent. In that he did not deceive me. I have frequently owed my life to the talent I acquired at that time.

The chimney dust and the odor of soot made me sick at first, but I got used to it, for I was at an age when one gets used to everything. I had been following that profession for about six months when the adventure occurred that I shall now relate.

I was on a roof and was listening to find out through

which flue I could hear the master's voice. Thinking that I heard him shouting in the chimney nearest me, I went down it; but I found that below the roof, the chimney was divided in two parts. At that point, I should have called, but I did not. Choosing at random one of the two openings, I let myself slide down and found myself in a beautiful drawing room. The first thing I saw there was my Principino, in shirt sleeves, playing battledore and shuttlecock.

Though that little fool had undoubtedly seen other chimney sweeps, he decided to take me for the devil, and falling to his knees, and promising to be good, he implored me not to carry him off. His protests might perhaps have touched me, but I had my little broom in my hand and the temptation to use it was too strong. Though I had avenged myself well for the blow the Principino had given me with his prayer book and in part for the beating, I still had at heart the kick in the face and the insulting:

"Managia la tua faccia de banditu." ("Damn your little bandit's face!")

After all, a Neapolitan likes to avenge himself rather more than less.

I therefore pulled out a fistful of switches from my broom. Then I tore the Principino's shirt off his back and when it was bare, I tore that too, or at least I messed it up rather badly. But the strangest part of it all was that he was so frightened he couldn't call for help.

When I thought I had done enough, I wiped my face and said to him:

"Ciucio maledetto io no zuno lu diavolu, io zuno lu piciolu banditu delli Augustini." ("You damned jackass! I'm not the devil. I'm the little bandit from the Augustines.")

At that the Principino found his voice again and began to shout for help, but I wasted no time and, rushing to the chimney, climbed up the same way I had come down.

When I was on the roof, I still heard the master's voice calling me, but I did not think it just the moment to answer. Running from roof to roof, I finally came to one on a stable in front of which was a hayrack. It took but a moment to fling myself from the roof to the hayrack and from the hayrack to the ground. Then I raced at top speed

for the main door of the Augustines where I told my father what had happened to me. He listened with much interest, and then said:

"Zoto, Zoto! Gia vegio che tu sarai banditu." ("Zoto, Zoto! I can already see you're going to be a bandit.")

Then, turning to a man who stood beside him, he said to him:

"Pardon Lettereo, prendete lo chiutosto vui." ("Padron Lettereo, you'd better take him with you.")

Lettereo is a baptismal name peculiar to Messina. It comes from a letter the Virgin is said to have written to the inhabitants of that town and which she is said to have dated "the year 1452 from the birth of my son." The citizens of Messina are as devoted to that letter as the Neapolitans are to the blood of St. Januarius. I mention this detail because a year and a half later I offered a prayer to the *Madonna della lettera* which I thought would be the last in my life.

Now Padron Lettereo was captain of an armed pink, a vessel supposedly used for coral fishing, but in reality a smuggler and even a pirate ship, depending upon the opportunity that offered. This happened to him rarely, for he did not carry a cannon and he would have had to take ships by surprise near deserted beaches.

All this was known in Messina, but Lettereo ran contraband for the leading merchants of the town. The custom officers had their share in it and, besides, the Padron was known to be extremely free with *coltellade* (stabs with his knife), which impressed those who would have liked to make trouble for him. And lastly, he was a truly imposing figure: not only did his great height and broad shoulders make him stand out in a crowd, but his general appearance was so striking that timid people could not look at him without a start of fright. His face, already deeply bronzed, had been darkened by a blast of gunpowder that had left many marks, and his brownish-grey skin was plastered over with various and unusual patterns. Almost all Mediterranean sailors have their arms and chests tattooed with numerals, outlines of galleys, crosses and similar ornaments. But Lettereo had gone them one better. He had a crucifix tattooed on one cheek and, on the other, a Madonna, of which you could see, how-

ever, only the top portion, for the lower half was hidden by a heavy beard that no razor had ever touched and that only scissors kept within bounds. Add to that gold rings in his ears, a red liberty cap, a belt of the same color, a sleeveless coat, sailor's trousers, bare arms and feet, and pockets full of gold—that was the Padron.

People claim that in his youth he had been a Don Juan in the highest circles; then again, that he was the darling of the women of his own class and the terror of their husbands.

Finally, to complete your acquaintance with Lettereo, I shall tell you that he had been the intimate friend of a man of true merit who, since then, has been much talked about as Captain Pepo. They had served together in the corsairs of Malta. Then Pepo entered the service of his king, while Lettereo, who cared less for honor than for money, chose to enrich himself in all sorts of ways. At the same time, he had become the sworn enemy of his former comrade.

While living under the protection of the Augustines, my father had nothing to do but nurse his wound from which he could never hope to fully recover, and he was glad enough to talk with heroes of his own stamp. That was what had attracted him to Lettereo and, in recommending me to him, he had reason to hope that I would not be turned down. Nor was he mistaken. Lettereo was even touched by that mark of confidence. He promised my father that my novitiate would not be so harsh as a ship's boy's usually is, and he assured him that since I had been a chimney sweep, it would not take me two days to learn to climb the rigging.

As for me, I was delighted, for my new profession seemed to me much nobler than scrabbling around in chimneys. I kissed my father and my brothers and set off gaily with Lettereo on the way to his ship. When we came aboard, the Padron called together his crew of twenty men with faces very like his own, introduced me to those gentlemen and made this speech:

"Anime managie quista criadura e lu filiu de Zotu, se uno de vui a outri li mette la mana sopra io le mangio l'anima."
("You damned rascals, this lad is the son of Zoto and if anyone dares to put a hand on him, I'll eat him alive.")

That recommendation had the intended effect. I was even

invited to eat at the common mess, but as I saw two boys of my own age waiting on the sailors and eating their leftovers, I did as they did. They let me do it and the men liked me all the better for it. But when they saw later on how I climbed the lateen yard, each man put himself out to compliment me. The lateen yard takes the place of the yard in lateen sails, but it is much less dangerous to hold on to the yards, for they are always in a horizontal position.

We set sail and arrived the third day in the Strait of St. Boniface, which separates Sardinia from Corsica. There we found more than sixty boats all busy coral fishing. We started to fish too, or rather pretended to. But for my part, I learned a great deal, for in four days I was swimming and diving with the boldest of my comrades.

At the end of eight days, our little flotilla was scattered by a *gregalade*—the name given in the Mediterranean to a wind from the northeast. When that blows it's every fellow for himself and the devil take the hindmost. As for us, we reached an anchorage known as the St. Pierre Roadstead, a deserted beach on the coast of Sardinia. There we found a Venetian *polacca* that had apparently suffered heavily from the storm. Our Padron immediately had designs on that ship and dropped anchor close beside it. Then he sent part of his crew below to the hold to make it appear he had only a few men aboard, a precaution that was almost superfluous, for vessels with a lateen rig almost always carry a larger crew than others.

Keeping his eye constantly on the Venetian crew, Lettereo saw that it was composed of the captain, the first mate, six sailors and a cabin boy. Moreover, he noticed that the top-sail was torn and that they were lowering it for repair, for merchant ships do not carry spare sails. Supplied with this information, he ordered eight guns and as many swords put in the longboat, covered them with a canvas and sat back to wait for the favorable moment.

When the weather again turned fine, the sailors climbed the top to unfurl the sail. But as they did not go about it very well, the first mate climbed up too and he was followed by the captain. At that Lettereo ordered the longboat into the water, slipped aboard with seven sailors and came up to

the *polacca* at the stern. The captain, who was on the yard, shouted at them:

"*A larga ladron, a larga!*" ("Keep off, you thieves! Keep off!")

But Lettereo aimed his gun at him and threatened to kill the first man who made a move to come down. The captain, apparently a man of character, hurled himself into the shrouds to lower himself. Lettereo shot him in mid-air; he fell into the sea and was seen no more. The sailors begged for mercy. Lettereo left four men to hold them under arrest, and with three others searched the vessel. In the captain's cabin he found a barrel of the sort used to keep olives in, but as it was rather heavy and carefully ringed, he thought it might contain more interesting contents. He opened it and was agreeably surprised to discover several bags of gold. This was all he needed and he sounded the retreat. The men came back on board and we set sail. As we rounded the Venetian's stern, we shouted to him again, in mockery:

"*Viva San Marco!*"

Five days later we arrived at Livorno. Taking two of his men, the Padron immediately called on the Neapolitan consul and reported "that his crew had fallen foul of the crew from a Venetian *polacca* and that the Venetian captain had unfortunately been pushed by a sailor and had fallen into the sea." Part of the barrel of olives was used to give that story an air of verisimilitude.

Lettereo had a definite leaning towards piracy and would doubtless have attempted other ventures of the sort, but at Livorno he was offered a new trade which he considered preferable. A Jew named Nathan Levi, having observed that the Pope and the King of Naples made an excellent profit on their copper money, decided that he, too, would share in that gainful transaction. He therefore had money like it coined in an English town called Birmingham. When he had a certain amount, he sent one of his agents to la Flariola, a fishing hamlet on the frontier of the two states (Rome and Naples), and Lettereo was given the task of transporting the merchandise and landing it safely.

The profit was considerable, and for more than a year we did nothing but come and go, always laden with our

Roman and Neapolitan currency. Perhaps we could even have continued our voyages for some time, but Lettereo had a genius for speculation, and he promptly advised the Jew to turn out gold and silver currency. The latter followed his advice and even set up a small mint for making *sequins* and *scudi*. Our profit aroused the jealousy of the authorities. One day when Lettereo was in Livorno making ready to hoist sail, he was told that Captain Pepo had an order from the King of Naples to seize his ship, but that Pepo could not put to sea before the end of the month. This false information was merely a ruse of Pepo's; he had already been at sea for four days. Lettereo fell dupe to it. The wind was favorable; he thought he could make one more trip and he set sail.

The next morning, at dawn, we found ourselves in the midst of Pepo's flotilla, composed of two galiots and two *scampavie*. We were surrounded; it was impossible to escape. Lettereo had death in his eyes. He broke out all sails and drove straight on the captain. Pepo was on the bridge and gave orders to board ship. Lettereo took a gun, aimed it and broke Pepo's arm. All that was the affair of a few seconds.

Soon after that the four vessels bore down on us and we heard from all sides: "Haul down your flag, you dirty double-dealing rascal!" Lettereo's ship was so close-hauled that our side grazed the surface of the water. Then addressing the crew, he said:

"Anime managie, io in galera no ci vado. Pregate per me la santissima Madonna della lettera." ("Anime managie, I'm not going to prison. Pray to the Holy Madonna of the Letter for me!")

We all knelt. Lettereo put some cannon balls in his pockets. We thought he intended to jump overboard. But that shrewd pirate was not to be caught thus. There was a huge cask, full of copper, lashed to windward. Lettereo grabbed a hatchet and cut the hawser. Immediately the cask rolled on the other side, and as we were already heeling well over, it caused us to capsize completely. First, we who were kneeling all tumbled into the sails, and when the ship plunged, the elasticity of the sails fortunately flung us several yards to the other side.

Pepo fished us all out, with the exception of the captain, one sailor and a cabin boy. As they pulled us out of the water, they gagged us and flung us into the captain's store-room. Four days later, we dropped anchor in Messina. Pepo informed the law that he had to hand over a bunch of rascals deserving of their attention. Our disembarkment did not lack a certain pomp. We came ashore at the hour of the promenade, when all the nobility stroll back and forth on what they call the *Marina*. We marched solemnly along, preceded and followed by police.

Among the spectators was the Principino. He recognized me the moment he caught sight of me and cried out:

"Ecco lu picciolu banditu delli Augustini." ("There's the little bandit from the Augustines.")

At the same time he leapt at my eyes, grabbed me by the hair and scratched my face. As my hands were tied behind my back, I had difficulty in defending myself.

However, recalling a trick I had seen done to English sailors in Livorno, I lowered my head and butted the Principino in the stomach. He fell over backwards. Then, furious, he got up, pulled a little knife out of his pocket and tried to stab me. I dodged, tripped him up, and he fell so heavily that in falling he even wounded himself with the knife in his hand. The Principessa, arriving at this point, again ordered her men to beat me. But the police were against it and led us to the prison.

Our crew's trial was brief; they were condemned to be dipped from the yard-arm and then to spend the rest of their days in galley ships. As for the cabin boy who had been saved and as for me, we were released because we were under age. As soon as we were free I hurried to the monastery of the Augustines. But my father was not there. The frater-porter told me he was dead and my brothers were cabin boys on a Spanish ship. I asked to speak to the frater-prior. I was introduced and told my little story, not forgetting to mention that I had butted and tripped the Principino. His Reverence listened to me kindly. Then he said:

"My child, at his death your father left the monastery a considerable sum, a possession evilly acquired to which you have no right. It is in the hands of God and must be used

to maintain his servitors. We ventured, however, to reserve a few *écus* which we gave to the Spanish captain who is in charge of your brothers. As for you, in deference to our illustrious benefactress, the Principessa di Rocca Fiorita, we can no longer give you sanctuary in this monastery. But, my child, you shall go to our farm at the foot of Etna and there you will pass quietly the years of your childhood."

After he had said these things, the prior called a lay brother and gave him orders concerning my fate.

The next day I set out with the lay brother for the farm, to which I was admitted. From time to time I was sent to town on commissions for the farmers. You may be sure that on those little trips I did my best to avoid the Principino. Once however, when I was buying chestnuts on the street, he passed by, recognized me and had me brutally beaten by his lackeys. Not long after that, I managed to slip into his house in disguise; it would undoubtedly have been easy for me to murder him, and it is my daily regret that I did not do so. During the first years of my youth, not six months passed, or even four, that I did not run into that cursed Principino, who frequently had the advantage of numbers over me. At last I was fifteen, still a child in age and reason, but almost a man in strength and courage, which is not surprising if one considers that the sea air and more recently the air of the mountains had strengthened my constitution.

I was therefore fifteen when for the first time I saw the brave and worthy Testa-Lunga, the most honest and courageous bandit in all Sicily. Tomorrow, if you will allow me, I shall introduce you to that man whose memory will live eternally in my heart. For the moment I am obliged to leave you; the management of my cavern requires attention which I cannot shirk.

Zoto left us and each of us reflected on his tale according to his or her temperament. I confess I felt a sort of grudging admiration of men so courageous as those he described. Emina maintained that courage deserves our esteem only inasmuch as it is used to make virtue respected. Zibeddé said the little fifteen-year old bandit was indeed a lad to inspire love.

We dined and then went to bed. And again the two sisters came to surprise me. Emina said to me:

"Alfonso, are you capable of making a sacrifice for us? It is more in your interest than in ours."

"My beautiful cousin," I replied, "these preambles are all quite unnecessary. Tell me simply what you wish."

"Dear Alfonso," Emina said. "We are shocked and chilled by that jewel around your neck, which you call a piece of the true Cross."

"Oh! As to that jewel," I promptly replied, "don't ask me for it. I promised my mother never to part with it and I keep all my promises. You should know that."

My cousins did not answer. They sulked a little, then softened, and the night passed in almost the same way as the night before—that is, the chastity belts were not disturbed.

The seventh day

The next morning, I woke earlier than usual and went to see my cousins. Emina was reading the Koran. Zibeddé was trying on pearls and shawls. I interrupted those serious occupations with fond caresses which were really almost more friendly than amorous. Then we dined. After dinner, Zoto picked up the thread of his story, and continued as follows:

SEQUEL TO ZOTO'S STORY

I promised to tell you about Testa-Lunga and I shall keep my word. My friend was a peaceful inhabitant of Val-Castera, a little village at the foot of Etna. He had a charming wife. One day when the young prince of Val-Castera was inspecting his domains, he saw Testa-Lunga's wife, who

had come with the wives of other notables to pay her respects to him. Far from being sensible of the homage his vassals were offering him through the hands of beauty, that presumptuous youth had eyes only for the charms of Signora Testa-Lunga. He told her frankly the effect she had on him and put his hand in her bodice. At that moment the husband happened to be standing behind his wife. He pulled out a knife and plunged it into the young prince's heart. I am sure any man of honor would have done the same in his place.

After dealing that blow, Testa-Lunga withdrew to a church where he remained until nightfall. But deeming it necessary to take measures for the future, he resolved to join a group of bandits who had recently found refuge on the summits of Etna. No sooner had he joined them than the bandits promptly made him their leader.

At that time, Etna was erupting a tremendous amount of lava; it was in the midst of those fiery torrents that Testa-Lunga holed up his band in those hiding places the approach to which was known only to him. When he had thus provided for his safety, that brave leader appealed to the viceroy to pardon him and his companions. The government refused—in fear, I imagine, of compromising its authority. Then Testa-Lunga began negotiations with the principal farmers in the surrounding countryside.

"Let us steal in common," he said to them. "When I come to you and ask for something, you will give me whatever you wish and you can be sure your masters will never hear of it."

It was stealing nevertheless, even though Testa-Lunga divided everything among his companions and kept for himself only what he absolutely needed. When he entered a village, on the other hand, he paid double for everything, so that in a short time he became the idol of the people of the two Sicilies.

I have already told you that several bandits in my father's troop had joined Testa-Lunga, who for some years remained on Etna in order to make sorties into the Val di Noto and the Val di Mazara. But at the period of which I am speaking—that is to say, when I was fifteen years old—the bandits

came back to the Val Demoni, and one fine day we saw them arrive at the monks' farm.

The utmost in smartness and brilliance you can imagine could give you no conception of the dashing appearance Testa-Lunga's men made: miquelet coats, hair in a silken net, a belt full of pistols and daggers. A long sword and an equally long gun—such was approximately their battle equipment. They stayed with us three days, eating our chickens and drinking our wine. On the fourth day, word came that a detachment of dragoons from Syracuse was advancing to surround them and cut off their retreat. That news made them laugh uproariously. They took ambush in a deep pass, attacked the detachment and scattered them. The bandits were outnumbered one to ten, but each man carried more than ten guns, and all of the best quality.

After the victory, the bandits came back to the farm, and I, who had watched them fighting from a distance, was so excited that I threw myself at the leader's feet and begged him to take me into his group. Testa-Lunga asked who I was. I told him I was the son of the bandit Zoto. At that beloved name, all those who had served with my father gave a shout of joy. Then one of them picked me up in his arms, set me on the table and said:

"Comrades, Testa-Lunga's lieutenant has been killed in the skirmish; we have no one to replace him. Let little Zoto be our lieutenant. Aren't the sons of dukes and princes made leaders of regiments? Let us do the same for the son of good old Zoto! I guarantee that he'll prove worthy of this honor."

That speech was greeted with rousing applause and I was unanimously elected.

My rank, at first, was little more than a joke, and each bandit would burst out laughing as he called me "*signor tenente*." But they soon had to change their tune. Not only was I always the first to attack and the last to cover the retreat, but none of them was as clever as I at spying on the enemy's movement or assuring the safety of the group. Sometimes I climbed on top of rocks to spy out more of the country and signal as agreed; sometimes I spent whole days in the midst of the enemy, coming down from one tree only to climb another. Often, I even spent my nights in the

tallest chestnut trees on Etna; and when I couldn't keep awake any longer, I lashed myself to the branches with a strap. This was easy for me, as I had been both a ship's boy and a chimney sweep.

I was so successful that at last the safety of the group was left entirely in my hands. Testa-Lunga loved me like a son, but, if I may say so, I gained a reputation that almost surpassed his own, and the exploits of little Zoto were the talk of all Sicily. But all that glory did not make me insensible to the sweet distraction so natural to boys of my age. I have already told you that, in our country, bandits were the people's heroes, and you can imagine that the shepherdeses of Etna would not have refused me their hearts. But mine was fated to yield to more delicate charms, and love was reserving a more flattering conquest for me.

I had been a lieutenant two years and just turned eighteen when our troop was obliged to move south again, because a fresh eruption of the volcano had destroyed our hideout. At the end of four days, we arrived at a castle called Rocca-Fiorita—fief and principal country estate of the Principino, my enemy.

I had long since forgotten his insults, but the name of the place brought back all my resentment. This should not surprise you; in our country, we never forget or forgive. If the Principino had been in his castle, I believe I would have burnt it to the ground. I contented myself with doing all the damage I could, and my comrades, who knew my motives, seconded me to the best of their ability. The castle servants, who had first tried to resist us, could not resist their master's good wine, which we emptied out in great floods. They were ours. In short, we turned Rocca-Fiorita into a land of milk and honey.

That life lasted five days. On the sixth, our spies warned me that we were about to be attacked by an entire Syracuse regiment and that the Principino would follow immediately after with his mother and several ladies from Messina. I ordered my men to withdraw, but I was too curious to leave and I settled myself in the top of a thick oak tree at the far end of the garden. However, I had taken the precaution to make a hole in the garden wall to facilitate my escape.

At last the regiment arrived, placed guards around the castle and made camp in front of the castle door. Then came a string of litters, carrying the ladies, and in the last one, the Principino himself, lying on a pile of cushions. Supported by two grooms he managed, with difficulty, to descend, ordered a company of soldiers to precede him, and when he was satisfied that none of us had remained in the castle, he entered with the ladies and several gentlemen of his suite.

At the foot of my tree was a fresh water spring, a marble table and several benches. As it was the most decorative part of the garden, I supposed the host and his guests would not be long in coming there, and I resolved to wait and get a closer look at them. Surely enough, half an hour later I saw a young girl of about my age coming towards me. Angels were never so beautiful, and the impression she made on me was so strong and so immediate that I would have fallen from the top of my tree if I hadn't been tied by my belt—a habit of mine when I wanted to rest with greater safety.

The young girl's eyes were lowered and she seemed deeply dejected. She sat down on a bench, bent over the marble table and wept copiously. Scarcely knowing what I was doing, I let myself slide down to the foot of my tree and stood so that I could see her without being seen. Then I saw the Principino coming towards her, holding a bouquet in his hand. It was nearly three years since I had last seen him; he had grown up, and his face, while still handsome, was rather weak.

When the young girl caught sight of him, a look of such disdain crossed her face that I was deeply grateful to her. The Principino, however, was very pleased with himself.

"My darling promised bride," he said, "I will give you this bouquet of flowers if you will promise never to speak to me again of that little rat of a Zoto."

The young girl replied:

"Sir, you are wrong to attach conditions to your favors, and even were I not to mention that charming Zoto, the entire household would be talking of him. Didn't your nurse herself say she had never seen such a pretty boy—and yet you were present."

Greatly piqued, the Principino replied:

"My lady Sylvia, do not forget you are my promised bride."

In answer, Sylvia burst into tears.

At that the Principino flew into a rage.

"Disgusting creature," he cried, "since you are in love with a bandit, this is what you deserve." And with that, he slapped her face.

Then the young girl cried out:

"Zoto! Zoto! Why aren't you here to punish this coward!"

She had scarcely spoken those words when I appeared and said to the Principino:

"You ought to recognize me. I am a bandit and I could murder you. But I respect the lady, who has deigned to call me to her aid, and I prefer to fight as you nobles do."

As usual, I had two daggers and four pistols on me. Dividing them, I set them ten feet apart and I left the choice to the Principino. But that poor fool had collapsed on the bench in a faint.

Then Sylvia turned to me.

"Brave Zoto," she said, "I am noble and poor. I must marry the prince tomorrow or be sent to a convent. I shall do neither. I wish to be yours for life."

And she flung herself into my arms.

You can imagine I needed no urging. However, I had to keep the Principino from preventing our escape. Taking one of my daggers, and using a stone as a hammer, I nailed his hand to the bench on which he had fallen. He screamed and fainted again. Sylvia and I then escaped through the hole I had made in the garden wall and fled to the top of the mountain.

My comrades all had mistresses; they were charmed that I had found one too, and their fair dames swore obedience in everything to mine.

I had spent four months with Sylvia when I was obliged to leave her to investigate the changes the recent eruptions had made in the north. On that cross-country journey, I discovered in nature charms I had not formerly perceived. I noticed grassy lawns, grottoes, shady nooks, in places where before I would have seen only ambushes or defense posts.

Sylvia had softened my brigand's heart. But it was not long in recovering its ferocity.

I came back from my journey to the north of "The Mountain." I express myself that way because when Sicilians speak of Etna they always say *il monte*—or The Mountain par excellence. At first I headed towards what we call the Philosopher's Tower, but I could not reach it. A yawning chasm, on the flanks of the volcano, had belched forth a torrent of lava, which, separating just before it reached the Tower and coming together a mile below it, had created a completely inaccessible island.

I immediately saw the importance of that position. Moreover, in the Tower itself, we had a depot of chestnuts I did not wish to lose. After much searching, I found an underground passage I had used at other times; it led me to the foot of, or rather into, the Tower itself. That island would be a perfect place to put all our women. I immediately ordered leaf huts built and decorated one of them as best I could. Then I went south and brought back the whole colony, which was enchanted with its new retreat.

Now, when I look back in memory to the time I spent in that happy abode, I find that it stands out by itself in the midst of the cruel disturbances that have assailed my life. Torrents of flame separated us from mankind; but the flames of love fired our senses. Everyone obeyed my orders and everyone was subject to my darling Sylvia. Then, to put the final touch to my happiness, my two dear brothers came to join me. Both of them had had interesting adventures, and I can assure you that if some day you would like to hear that story, you will derive more satisfaction from it than from the one I am now telling you.

Few are the men who cannot count some happy days, but I do not know of any man who can count happy years. My own happiness did not last a whole year. The bravos of our troop were very honest among themselves. No one would have dared cast his eyes on his comrade's mistress and even less on mine. Jealousy was therefore banished from our island, or rather it was only exiled for a time, for that Fury discovers only too easily the way to places where love dwells.

A young bandit named Antonino fell in love with Sylvia,

and his passion being very strong, he could not hide it. I noticed it myself, but seeing that he was extremely sad, I judged that my mistress did not respond to it and I was not worried. I should even have liked to cure Antonino of his passion, for I admired him because of his courage. There was another bandit in the troop whom I detested because he was a coward, and if Testa-Lunga had listened to me, he would have driven him away long ago. That man's name was Moro.

Moro succeeded in gaining young Antonino's confidence and he promised to help him in his love affair. He also knew how to get Sylvia's ear and to make her believe I had a mistress in a nearby village. Sylvia was afraid to ask me for an explanation. As a result her manner was constrained, and this I attributed to a change in her feeling for me. At the same time, Antonino, coached by Moro, redoubled his attentions to Sylvia and he soon began to wear such a satisfied air that I supposed she had made him happy.

I was not experienced in unraveling intrigues of that sort. I stabbed Sylvia and Antonino. The latter, who did not die immediately, revealed Moro's treachery. Bloody dagger in hand, I went looking for the scoundrel. He was terrified, fell on his knees and confessed that the Principino di Rocca-Fiorita had paid him to get rid of both me and Sylvia, and that he had joined our company for the sole purpose of accomplishing that end. I stabbed him. Then I went to Messina, stole into the Principino's house in disguise and sent him to the other world to join his henchman and my two other victims. Such was the end of my happiness, and even of my glory. My courage turned into a complete indifference for life and, as I was equally indifferent to the safety of my comrades, I soon lost their confidence. Finally, I can assure you that, since then, I have become the most ordinary of brigands.

Not long after that, Testa-Lunga died of pleurisy and all his band was scattered. My brothers, who knew Spain well, persuaded me to go there. At the head of a dozen men, I went to the Bay of Taormina and remained there in hiding for three days. On the fourth day, we seized a snow, an old

type of brigantine, on which we reached the coasts of Andalusia.

Though there are several mountain chains in Spain that offer advantageous retreats, I chose the Sierra Morena and I have never had occasion to regret it. I carried off two convoys of *piastres* and I made other important coups.

Finally my success became offensive to the Court. The Cadiz authorities had orders to take us, dead or alive, and they sent out several regiments. From another side, the great Sheik of the Gomélez invited me to enter his service and offered me a retreat in this cavern. I accepted without weighing the matter.

The Court of Granada had no intention of being put in the wrong. Seeing that they could not capture us, they seized two shepherds in the valley and hanged them under the names of Zoto's two brothers. I knew those two men and I knew they had committed several murders. It is said, however, that annoyed at being hanged in our stead, they come down from the gallows at night to cause all sorts of confusion. I have not seen this myself and I can only tell you what I hear. It is true, however, that chancing on several occasions to pass near the gallows on a moonlight night, I have actually seen that the two hanged men were not there and, the next morning, there they were again.

That, my dear sirs, is the story you asked for. I think my two brothers, whose lives have not been so wild, would have had more interesting things to tell you, but they will not have time, for all arrangements have been made and I have definite orders for us to embark tomorrow morning.

Zoto withdrew and the beautiful Emina said sorrowfully: "That man was quite right, moments of happiness are all too brief in life. We have spent here three days we shall perhaps never know again."

The supper was anything but gay and I hastened to bid my cousins goodnight. I hoped to see them again in my bedroom and to have better success there in driving away their gloom.

They arrived even earlier than usual and, to add to my pleasure, I saw they were carrying their belts in their hands.

Though that emblem was not difficult to understand, Emina took the trouble to explain it to me.

"Dear Alfonso," she said, "you have set no limits to your devotion to us; we would not set any to our gratitude. Perhaps we shall now be parted forever. In a similar situation other women might be strict and rigid, but we wish to live in your memory and, if the women you will see in Madrid surpass us in beauty of mind and face, they will at least not have been more loving or more passionate. However, my dear Alfonso, you must renew the pledge you made not to betray us, and swear again to believe no evil people may speak of us."

I could not help laughing at that last clause, but I promised what they wished and I was rewarded by the sweetest and most passionate caresses. Then Emina said to me again:

"My dear Alfonso, that jewel around your neck bothers us. Can you not take it off a moment?"

I refused, but Zibeddé, who had a scissors in her hand, put her arm behind my neck and cut the ribbon. Emina seized the locket and threw it into a crack in the rock.

"You can have it back tomorrow," she said. "Meantime wear this lock of my hair and my sister's around your neck, and the talisman that is attached will preserve you from inconstancy, at least if anything can preserve lovers from it."

Then Emina pulled out a gold pin that held her hair in place and used it to pin my bed curtains tight together.

I shall follow her example and draw a curtain over the rest of that scene. It is enough for you to know that my charming friends became my wives. There are doubtless cases where it is a crime for violence to shed innocent blood. But there are others where cruelty shows up innocence in its true light. That therefore was what happened to us and I conclude from it that my cousins did not have a very real part in my dreams at the Venta Quemada.

However, our passions finally grew calmer and we were fairly quiet when an inevitable clock began to strike the midnight hour. I could not help feeling a chill at my heart and I told my cousins I feared some sinister occurrence threatened us.

"I fear so too," said Emina, "and the danger is near, but heed well what I tell you. Do not believe the evil people will speak of us. Do not even believe your own eyes."

At that moment the curtains of my bed were torn apart and I saw a tremendously tall man dressed like a Moor. In one hand he held the Koran; in the other a sword. My cousins prostrated themselves at his feet, crying:

"Mighty Sheik of the Gomález, pardon us!"

The sheik replied in a terrible voice:

Adonde estan las fahas? ("Where are your belts?")

Then, turning to me, he said:

"Unhappy Nazareen, you have dishonored the blood of the Gomález. You must turn Mohammedan or die."

I heard a frightful howl and I saw the insane Pascheco making signs at me from the back of the room. My cousins saw him too. In a furious rage, they got up, seized Pascheco and dragged him out of the room.

"Unhappy Nazareen," the Sheik of the Gomález began again, "drain this cup at one draught or you will die a shameful death and your body, suspended between the bodies of Zoto's brothers, will be the prey of vultures and the sport of the Spirits of Darkness, who will use it in their infernal metamorphoses."

It seemed to me that in such a situation I was in honor bound to commit suicide. I cried out in pain:

"Oh! my father, in my place you would have done as I did."

Then I took the cup and drained it at one draught. I felt terribly sick and weak and I lost consciousness.

The eighth day

Since I have the honor to be telling you my story, you will realize that I did not die of the poison I thought I was taking. I merely lost consciousness and I do not know how long I was in that state. All I know is that I woke up under the gallows of Los Hermanos—with a sort of pleasure even, for at least I had the satisfaction of knowing I was not dead. This time I was not lying between the two hanged men. I was on their left and I saw, on their right, another man who, I thought, had also been hanged because he seemed to be lifeless and had a rope around his neck. I realized, however, that he was merely sleeping and I roused him. When the stranger saw where he was, he began to laugh.

“One has to admit,” he said, “that in studying cabala, a

man is subject to annoying contretemps. Evil geniuses are so clever at assuming different forms, one never knows with whom one is dealing. But," he added, "why do I have a rope around my neck? I thought it was a lock of hair."

Then he caught sight of me.

"Ah! You are very young to be a cabalist," he said, "but you also have a rope around your neck."

And surely enough, I did have one. I remembered that Emina had put a lock of her hair and her sister's around my neck, and I did not know what to think of it.

The cabalist stared at me a few seconds, then he said:

"No, you're not one of us. Your name is Alfonso, your mother was a Gomélez; you are a captain in the Walloon Guards, brave but still a trifle guileless. No matter, we must get out of here and then we shall see what can be done."

The gate of the gallows' enclosure stood wide open. We walked out and I saw again the cursed valley of Los Hermanos. The cabalist asked me where I wished to go. I told him I had decided to take the road to Madrid.

"Good," he said to me, "I'm going that way too, but let us begin by first taking a little nourishment."

Whereupon he pulled out of his pocket an enamel cup, a pot filled with a sort of paste and a crystal bottle containing a yellowish liquor. He put a spoonful of paste in the cup, poured a few drops of liquor into it and told me to swallow it. I did not make him repeat that advice, for I was faint with hunger. The elixir was marvelous. I felt so restored I did not hesitate to set out on foot, which, without that drink, would have been an impossible undertaking.

The sun was already very high when we caught sight of the unlucky Venta Quemada. The cabalist stopped short.

"Here," said he, "is an inn where they played a very cruel trick on me last night. However, we shall have to enter it. I've left certain provisions there that will be good for us."

We actually went into that disastrous *venta*, where we found, in the dining room, a table, fully set, on which stood a partridge pie and two bottles of wine. The cabalist had an excellent appetite, and his example encouraged me. Without that I don't know whether I could have forced myself to eat, for all I had seen in the last days had so

bewildered me that I no longer knew what I was doing. In fact, had anyone tried to make me doubt my own existence, he would have had no trouble in doing so.

When we had finished dinner, we walked through the rooms till we came to the one where I had slept the day I left Anduhhar. I recognized my wretched pallet and, sitting down on it, I began to reflect on what had happened to me and especially on the events in the cavern. I remembered that Emina had warned me not to believe the evil people would speak of her.

I was absorbed in those reflections when the cabalist called my attention to an object shining between the loosely jointed planks in the floor. I looked closer and I saw that it was the locket the two sisters had taken off my neck. I knew they had thrown it into a hole which I had thought was in the cavern. I began to think I had never really left that unlucky inn, and that the hermit, the inquisitor, and Zoto's brothers were all phantoms produced by some magical conjuration. Using my sword, I pulled out the locket and hung it around my neck again.

The cabalist began to laugh.

"So this belongs to you, Sir Knight," he said. "If you slept here I'm not surprised that you woke up under the gallows. No matter, we must be on our way. We shall certainly come to the hermitage by evening."

We set out and we were only half way there when we met the hermit, hobbling painfully towards us. While still far off he caught sight of us.

"Ah! my young friend," he called, "I was looking for you. Come back to my hermitage. Snatch your soul from the clutches of Satan, but first lend me your arm. I have made cruel efforts for your sake."

We rested and then we continued our journey and the old man was able to get along by leaning now on one of us, now on the other. At last we arrived at the hermitage.

The first thing I saw was Pascheco, stretched out on the floor in the middle of the room. He appeared to be dying in agony, or at any rate his chest was torn by that horrible rattle which is the ultimate sign of approaching death. I tried to talk to him, but he did not recognize me. The hermit

took the holy water, sprinkled it over Pascheco and said to him:

"Pascheco, Pascheco, in the name of thy Redeemer, I command thee to tell us what happened last night."

PASCHECO'S STORY

Father, you were in the chapel chanting litanies when I heard someone knocking at this door and a bleating that sounded exactly like our white nanny goat. As I had forgotten to milk her, I thought the poor beast had come to remind me. I was all the more sure of this as the same thing had happened several days before. I therefore went out of your hut and I actually saw your white goat, who turned her back on me and showed me her swollen udders. I tried to grasp her to perform the service she asked, but she got away from me and, stopping and then running off, she led me to the edge of the precipice near your hermitage.

There, the white goat was changed into a black ram. That metamorphosis terrified me and I tried to flee towards your hut. But the black ram blocked my path and rearing up on his hind legs, he glared at me with such fiery eyes that my senses froze.

Then the cursed ram began to butt me with his horns and pushed me towards the precipice. When I was on the very edge, he stopped to gloat over my mortal anguish. Finally he tossed me over the edge. I thought I would be smashed to pieces, but the ram was at the bottom of the precipice before me and caught me on his back so that I was not harmed.

It was not long before new fears assailed me, for the moment that cursed ram felt me on his back, he began to gallop in an extraordinary manner. In one single leap he went from mountain to mountain, crossing the deepest valleys as if they were mere ditches. Finally he shook himself and I fell—I don't know how—into the bottom of a cavern. There I saw the young lord who had slept at our hermitage a few days ago. He was on his bed and had beside him two very beautiful girls, dressed in Moorish garb. After they had caressed him, those two young girls took a locket off his neck and, from that moment, they

lost their beauty in my eyes, and I recognized them as the two hanged men from the valley of Los Hermanos. But the young lord, still thinking they were beautiful girls, called them the tenderest names. Then one of the hanged men took the rope off his own neck and put it around the young lord's neck, and the latter showed his gratitude by many a caress. At last they pulled the curtains to. I don't know what they did, but I think it was some horrible sin.

I tried to call out, but I couldn't make a sound; that lasted some time. Finally a clock struck midnight, and soon after that I saw a demon come in. He had horns of fire and a flaming tail behind him that was carried by several little devils.

That demon held a book in one hand and a fork in the other. He threatened to kill the young lord if he did not embrace the Mohammedan religion. Then, seeing that the soul of a Christian was in danger, I made a great effort and I think I succeeded in making myself understood. But at the same moment, the two hanged men jumped on me and dragged me out of the cavern where I found the black ram. One of the two hanged men sat astride the ram and the other astride my neck and they forced us to gallop over hill and dale.

The hanged man I was carrying around my neck kept digging his claws into my side. But finding that I still was not going to please him, he leaned down while I was running, and picked up two scorpions, fastened them to his feet like spurs, and began to rip my sides barbarously. At last we came to the door of the hermitage, where they left me. This morning, Father, you found me there unconscious. I thought I was safe when I saw myself in your arms, but the scorpions' poison has gotten into my blood; it is tearing my entrails; I shall never live through it.

Here the demoniac gave a ghastly howl and was silent.

Then, the hermit said to me:

"My son, you have heard. Can it be that you have had carnal relations with two demons? Come, confess, admit your guilt. The divine clemency is unlimited. You do not reply? Have you become callous?"

After reflecting a few seconds I replied:

"Father, this demoniacal gentleman saw things I did not see. One of us has been bewitched and perhaps we have both been mistaken. But here is a gentleman cabalist who has also slept at the Venta Quemada. If he will tell us his adventure, perhaps it will throw a new light on the events that have occupied us for several days."

"My lord Alfonso," replied the cabalist, "people who, like me, concern themselves with occult sciences, cannot tell everything. I shall try, however, to satisfy your curiosity, as much as is in my power, but not this evening. Let us sup, if you please, and go to bed. Tomorrow our judgment will be clearer."

The anchorite served us a frugal supper, after which our one thought was to go to bed. The cabalist claimed to have good reasons for spending the night near the demoniac, and I was sent to the chapel as before. My bed was still there, and I stretched out on it. The hermit wished me a good night and warned me that, for greater safety, he would lock the door as he went out.

When I found myself alone, I thought about Pascheco's tale. One thing was certain—I had seen him in the cavern. It was equally certain that I had seen my cousins jump on him and drag him out of the room; but Emina had warned me not to think evil of her or of her sister. In short, the demons who had taken possession of Pascheco could also have unhinged his mind and assailed him with all sorts of visions. Finally, I was still looking for reasons to justify and love my cousins when I heard midnight strike . . .

Soon after that, I heard a knock at the door and what sounded like the bleat of a goat. I took my sword, went to the door and said in a loud voice:

"If you are the devil, try to open that door, for the hermit has locked it."

The goat was silent.

I went back to bed and slept till the next day.

The ninth day

The hermit came to wake me and sat down on my bed.

“My child,” he said, “new obsessions assailed my unlucky hermitage last night. The recluses of the Thebaid were not more exposed to the malice of Satan. Nor do I know what to think of the man who came with you and who calls himself a cabalist. He undertook to cure Pascheco, and he actually made him much better, but he did not use any of the exorcisms prescribed by our holy Church. Come into my hut, we shall have breakfast and then we shall ask him to tell the story he promised us last evening.”

I rose and followed the hermit. Pascheco's condition had indeed become more bearable and his face less hideous. He was still blind in one eye, but his tongue had gone back

into his mouth. He no longer foamed at the mouth and his single eye was much brighter. I complimented the cabalist on this result, and he explained that it was but a feeble sample of his power. Then the hermit brought in our breakfast, which consisted of very hot milk and chestnuts.

While we were eating, we saw a gaunt, lean man enter. There was something frightening about his face, though one could not have said precisely what it was in him that inspired such horror. The stranger knelt before me and took off his hat. Then I saw that he had a bandeau around his forehead. He held out his hat to me as if he were asking for alms, and I tossed a piece of gold into it. The extraordinary beggar thanked me, adding:

"My lord Alfonso, your good deed will not be lost. I warn you that an important letter awaits you at Puerto-Lapiche. Do not enter Castille until you have read it."

After giving me that advice, the stranger went over and knelt before the hermit, who filled his hat with chestnuts. Then he knelt before the cabalist, but rose immediately.

"I want nothing from you," he said to him. "If you tell them who I am, you will regret it." Whereupon he went out of the hut.

When the beggar had gone, the cabalist began to laugh.

"To show you how little importance I attach to that man's threats," he said, "I shall tell you first of all who he is: he is the Wandering Jew, of whom you have perhaps heard. For almost seventeen hundred years he has neither sat down, nor lain down, neither rested, nor slept. As he walks along he will eat your chestnuts, and by tomorrow morning he will have covered sixty leagues. As a rule he wanders through the vast deserts of Africa. He feeds on wild fruits; wild animals cannot harm him because of the sacred sign of Tau printed on his forehead. He never appears in our countries unless forced to do so by the working of some cabalist. For that matter, I assure you I was not the one who brought him here, for I hate him. I admit, however, that he is well-informed about many things, and I warn you, my lord Alfonso, not to neglect the advice he has given you.

"Sir Cabalist," I answered, "the Jew told me there was a

letter for me at Puerto-Lapiche. I hope to be there day after tomorrow, and I shall not fail to ask for it."

"You need not wait so long," replied the cabalist, "I would have little credit in the world of genii if I could not arrange for you to have that letter sooner."

Then he turned his head towards his right shoulder and gave a command. Five minutes later, a large letter addressed to me fell on the table. I opened it and read as follows:

My lord Alfonso:

On behalf of our king, Don Fernando quarto, I order you not to enter Castille again. You may lay this severity solely to the misfortune you have had to displease the Holy Tribunal, whose duty it is to preserve the purity of the faith in Spanish lands. Do not lessen your zeal in the service of the king. You will find enclosed a permit for a three months' leave. Spend this time on the frontiers of Castille and Andalusia, but do not show yourself too often in either of those two provinces. We have taken the trouble to set your honorable father's mind at rest, and to present this matter in such fashion as not to cause him too much distress.

Affectionately yours,

Don Sanchez de Tor de Pennas
Minister of War

That letter was accompanied by a three months' leave in due form and provided with all the proper signatures and seals.

We complimented the cabalist on his courier's speed. Then we urged him to keep his promise and tell us what had happened to him the previous night at the Venta Quemada. As on the night before, he answered that there were many things in his story we would not understand but, after thinking it over a moment, he began as follows:

THE CABALISTS'S STORY

In Spain I am known as Don Pedro de Uzeda, and under that name I own a charming castle a league from here. But my real name is Rabbi Sadok Ben Mamoun, and I am a Jew. To confess that, in Spain, is a trifle dangerous but,

aside from the fact that I trust your probity, I warned you that it would not be easy to harm me. The influence of the stars on my destiny began to manifest itself the moment I was born, and my father, who drew up my horoscope, was overjoyed when he saw that I had come into the world just as the sun crossed the sign of Virgo. True, he had used all his art to bring that about, but he had not hoped for such perfect success. I need not tell you that my father, Mamoun, was the leading astrologer of his era. But knowledge of the constellations was one of the least of his attainments, for he had pushed the science of cabala to a degree no rabbi before him had ever reached.

Four years after I came into the world, my father had a daughter, who was born under the sign of the Gemini. In spite of that difference, we were given the same education. I was not yet twelve and my sister was eight when we knew Hebrew, Chaldean, Syro-Chaldean, Samaritan, Coptic, Abyssinian, and several other dead or dying languages. Moreover, we could combine all the letters of a word in all the ways indicated by the rules of the cabala and without the aid of a pencil.

It was therefore at the end of my twelfth year that they locked up both of us, and so as not to belie the prudishness of the sign under which I was born, they gave us only virgin animals to eat, taking care to have me eat only males and my sister only females.

When I was sixteen, my father began to initiate us into the mysteries of the Sefiroth cabala. To begin with, he put in our hands the Sepher Zoohâr, or luminous book, so-called because you cannot understand any of it at all, so much does the light it casts dazzle the eye of understanding. Next we studied the Siphra Dzaniutha, or occult book, in which the clearest passage could pass for a riddle. Finally we came to the Hadra Raba and Hadra Sutha—in other words, to the great and little Sanhedrin. Those are the dialogues in which Rabbi Simeon, son of Johai, author of two other works, dropping to the level of a conversational style, makes a pretence of instructing his friends in the simplest matters and shows them how the most astonishing mysteries—or rather, all those revelations—come to us di-

rectly from the prophet Elijah, who stole away from the celestial abode and attended that assembly under the name of Rabbi Abba. Perhaps you people think you have acquired some knowledge of all those divine writings through the Latin translation that was printed along with the original Chaldean in the year 1684, in a little city in Germany called Frankfurt. But we laugh at the presumption of people who imagine that all one needs in order to read is the material organ of sight. That might indeed suffice for certain modern languages, but in Hebrew each letter is a number, each word a scholarly combination, each sentence an appalling formula, which, well pronounced, with all the proper breathing and accents, could crush mountains and dry up rivers. You know that *Adunai* created the world through the word, then he made himself the word. The word strikes the air and the mind; it acts on the senses and on the soul. Profane though you are, you might readily conclude that the word is the true intermediary between matter and intelligences of all orders. All I can tell you is that every day we acquired not only new knowledge, but a new power, and if we dared not use it, at least we had the pleasure of being conscious of our power and of being inwardly convinced of it. But our cabalistic joys were soon interrupted by the most baleful of all events.

Every day my sister and I noticed that our father Mamoun was losing his powers. He seemed to be pure spirit who had assumed human form only to be perceptible to the coarse senses of worldly beings. At last, he summoned us one day into his study. He appeared so venerable and so godlike that involuntarily we both fell to our knees. He left us there and, pointing to a sand-clock said to us:

“Before this sand has run out, I shall be no more. Listen carefully and remember my words. My son, I address myself first to you; I have marked out for you heavenly spouses, daughters of Solomon and of the Queen of Sheba. Their birth destined them to be simple mortals. But Solomon had revealed to the queen the great name of He Who Is, and the queen spoke that name at the very moment she was giving birth. The genii of the great East hastened to her bedside and received the twins before they had touched the

impure abode called earth. They bore them away into the sphere of the daughters of Elohim, where they received the gift of immortality, with the power to communicate it to him whom they should choose for their common spouse. Those are the two ineffable wives whom their father had in mind in his Schir haschirim or Song of Songs. Study that divine epithalamia of nine in nine verses. For you, my daughter, I destine you to an even more beautiful marriage: the two Thamims, whom the Greeks knew under the name of Dioscuri, the Phoenicians under that of Kabires—in a word, the heavenly Gemini. They will be your husbands—what am I saying? Your tender heart, I fear that a mortal . . . The sand is running out. I am dying . . .”

After he had spoken those words, my father vanished and we found in the place where he had been only a few light and shining ashes.

I gathered up those precious remains, enclosed them in an urn and placed them in the inner tabernacle in our house, beneath the wings of the cherubims.

You can easily imagine that the hope of enjoying immortality and of possessing two heavenly wives gave me a new enthusiasm for cabalistic sciences, but it was years before I dared to aspire to such a height and I contented myself with conjuring several genii of the eighteenth order. But last year, as I gradually became bolder, I undertook a work on the first verses of the Schir haschirim. Scarcely had I composed a line when there was a tremendous noise and my castle seemed to rock on its foundations. None of that frightened me; on the contrary, I concluded that my operation had been well done. I went on to the second line; when it was finished, a lamp on my table jumped down on the floor, leapt in the air several times and came to rest in front of a large mirror at the back of my room. I looked in the mirror and saw the tips of two very pretty feminine feet. Then two more little feet. I flattered myself that those charming feet belonged to Solomon's heavenly daughters, but I thought it wise not to push my operations farther.

I resumed them the following night and I saw the four little feet as far as the ankles. Then, the night after that, I

saw the legs as far as the knees, but the sun came out from the sign of Virgo and I was obliged to leave off.

This year I was making ready to begin again when I learned that a famous expert was to pass through Cordova. A discussion I had with my sister about him decided me to go and see him when he passed through the city. I was a little late in starting and that day did not get farther than the Venta Quemada. I found that inn deserted because people are afraid of ghosts. But as I am not afraid of them, I settled myself in the dining room and ordered little Nemrael to bring me some supper. This Nemrael is a little genie of a very abject nature whom I employ on commissions of that sort. By the way, he is the one who went to fetch your letter at Puerto-Lapiche. That night he went to Anduhhar where a Benedictine prior was sleeping, helped himself to the prior's supper without a "by-your-leave" and brought it to me. It was that partridge pie you found the next morning. As for me, I was so tired I scarcely touched it. I sent Nemrael back to my sister and I went to bed.

In the middle of the night, I was awakened by a clock striking twelve times. After that prelude, I expected to see some ghost or other and I even made ready to get rid of it because in general they are unpleasant and annoying. Such was my mood when I saw a bright light on a table in the middle of the room. Then I saw a little sky-blue rabbi who was waving his arms in front of a pulpit the way rabbis do when they pray. He was only a foot high and not only was his coat blue, but even his face, his beard, his pulpit and his book were blue. I soon realized that this was not a ghost, but a geni of the seventeenth order. I did not know his name; in fact I had no idea who he was. However, I used a formula that has power over all spirits in general. Then the little sky-blue rabbi turned to me and said:

"You began your operations backwards. That's why the daughters of Solomon showed themselves to you feet first. Begin with the last verses and seek first the name of those two celestial beauties."

After he had spoken, the little rabbi disappeared. Though what he had told me was contrary to all the rules of cabala, I was weak enough to follow his advice. I set to work after

the last verse of the Schir haschirim and, on looking for the names of the two immortals, I found Emina and Zibeddé. This surprised me greatly. Nevertheless, I began to conjure up the spirits. Then the earth rocked under my feet terrifyingly; I thought I saw the heavens falling on my head and I lost consciousness.

When I came to, I found myself in a place ablaze with light, in the arms of young girls more beautiful than the angels. One of them said to me:

"Son of Adam, come to your senses. You are here in the dwelling of those who are not dead. We are governed by the patriarch Henoah, who walked before Elohim and who has been lifted up above the earth. The prophet Elijah is our great priest and his chariot will always be at your disposal when you wish to go to some planet. As for us, we are Egregors, born of the commerce of the sons of Elohim with the daughters of men. You will see some Nephelims among us, but only a few. Come, we are going to present you to our sovereign."

I followed them to the foot of the throne on which sat Henoah; I could not endure the fire that flashed from his eyes, and I dared not raise mine higher than his beard, which looked rather like that pale light we see around the moon on damp nights. I feared that my ear could not withstand the sound of his voice, but his voice was softer than heavenly organs. He softened it even more to say to me:

"Son of Adam, your wives will be brought before you."

Immediately I saw the prophet Elijah enter, holding by the hand two beautiful girls whose charms no mortal could imagine. So delicate were their bodies that one could see their souls through them and I distinctly perceived the fire of passion as it flowed through their veins and mingled with their blood. Behind them, two Nephelims carried a tripod, of a metal as superior to gold as gold is more precious than lead. They placed my two hands in the hands of Solomon's daughters and they put a lock of their hair around my neck. A pure, hot flame, issuing at that moment from the tripod, consumed in a flash all that was mortal in me. We were led to a glorious, shining couch, glowing with

love. They opened a large window that communicated with the third heaven, and the concert of the angels added the final touch to my ecstasy. But the next day, I must tell you, I awoke under the gallows of Los Hermanos, and lying beside their two horrible corpses, just like the young lord here. From this I concluded that I had been dealing with malicious spirits whose nature I did not know. I even greatly fear that all this adventure may harm me with the real daughters of Solomon of whom I saw only the tips of their feet.

"Poor blind man," said the hermit, "what do you regret? All is illusion in your deadly art. The cursed succubae who played this trick on you have caused the unfortunate Pascheco to undergo the most horrible torments; and undoubtedly a similar fate awaits this young lord who, out of a baneful stubbornness, will not confess his mistakes to us. Alfonso, my son Alfonso, repent, there is still time."

The hermit's persistence in asking for confessions I did not wish to make, displeased me greatly. I replied rather coldly that I respected his holy exhortations, but that I was acting only in accord with the laws of honor. Then we spoke of other things.

The cabalist said to me:

"My lord Alfonso, since you are being followed by the Inquisition and the king commands you to spend three months in this desert, I offer you my castle. You will see my sister Rebecca, who is almost as beautiful as she is wise. Yes, do come! You are a descendent of the Gomélez and we have a right to be interested in that blood."

I looked at the hermit to see what he thought of that proposition. The cabalist seemed to divine my thought and, turning to the hermit, he said:

"Father, I know you better than you think. You can do much through faith. My ways are not as holy, but they are not diabolical. Come to my house with Pascheco and I will complete his cure."

Before replying, the hermit began to pray. Then, after meditating a few moments, he came to us smiling and said he was ready to follow us. The cabalist turned his head towards his right shoulder and ordered some horses. An in-

stant later, we saw two horses at the door of the hermitage, with two mules which the hermit and the demoniac were to ride. Though the castle was only a day's journey away, according to Ben Mamoun, we were there in less than an hour.

During the journey, Ben Mamoun had talked much to me of his scholarly sister, and I expected to see a Medea with black locks, a wand in her hand and muttering a few words of gibberish, but that picture was completely false. The amiable Rebecca, who received us at the castle door, was the most charming and touching blonde one can imagine. Her beautiful golden hair fell loosely on her shoulders, a white gown hung carelessly from her shoulders, but it was fastened with priceless clasps. Her whole appearance was that of a girl who never bothers about her adornment, though even if she had, it would have been difficult to achieve a happier result.

Rebecca flung her arms around her brother's neck.

"How you worried me!" she cried. "I have had news of you constantly, except for the first night. What happened to you then?"

"I will tell you everything," replied Ben Mamoun. "For the moment, think only of welcoming the guests I am bringing you; this is the hermit of the valley, and this young man is a Gomélez."

Rebecca glanced rather indifferently at the hermit, but when she looked at me she seemed to blush and said rather sadly:

"I hope for your happiness that you are not one of us."

We entered and the drawbridge was immediately drawn up. The castle was fairly large, and everything seemed to be in apple-pie order. We saw only two servants, however—a young mulatto boy and a mulatto girl of the same age. Ben Mamoun led us first to his library; it was a little circular room that also served as dining room. The mulatto boy set the table, and brought in an olla-podrida and four place settings, for the beautiful Rebecca did not sit at table with us. The hermit ate more than usual and seemed also to become more human. Pascheco, still blind in one eye, had apparently been exorcised of his evil spirit, and was merely

serious and silent. Ben Mamoun ate with a fairly good appetite, but he seemed preoccupied and confessed that his adventure of the night before had given him much food for thought. As soon as we left the table he said to us:

"My dear guests, here are some books to amuse you, and my negro will be eager to serve you in all things, but permit me to withdraw with my sister for an important piece of work. You will not see us until tomorrow, at dinner."

Ben Mamoun thereupon withdrew and left us, so to speak, masters of the house.

The hermit took from the library a legend of the Desert Fathers and ordered Pascheco to read a few chapters to him. As for me, I went out on the terrace from where one looked towards a chasm at the bottom of which flowed a river I could not see, but which I could hear roaring. Gloomy as that landscape appeared, it was with extreme pleasure that I began to consider it, or rather to yield to the emotions the sight aroused in me. It was not melancholy; it was almost a prostration of all my faculties, the result of the cruel turmoil to which I had been exposed for several days. The more I thought of the things that had happened to me, the less I understood. In the end I dared not think of it any more lest I lose my mind. For the moment, the hope of spending a few peaceful days in the castle of Uzedra was what attracted me most. Leaving the terrace, I returned to the library. Then the young negro served us a light collation of dried fruits and cold meats, among which there was not a piece of unclean meat. After that we separated: the hermit and Pascheco were led to one room, and I to another.

I lay down and fell asleep, but soon afterwards I was awakened by the beautiful Rebecca.

"My lord Alfonso," she said. "Forgive me for venturing to interrupt your slumber. I have just come from my brother. We made the most horrible conjurations in the hope of learning who the two spirits were he saw in the *venta*, but we were not successful. We believe he has been tricked by some Baalims, over whom we have no power at all. However the abode of Enoch is really just as he saw it. All that is of great consequence for us, and I implore you to tell us what you know about it."

Having thus spoken, Rebecca sat down on my bed, but she came merely to sit there and seemed solely concerned with the explanations she asked of me. She did not get them, however, and I confined myself to informing her that I had given my word of honor never to speak of the matter.

"But, my lord Alfonso," Rebecca replied, "how can you imagine that a word of honor given to two demons can be binding? Now we know that they are two female demons and that their names are Emina and Zibeddé. But we are not certain of the nature of those demons, because, in our science, as in all other sciences, one cannot know everything."

I still persisted in my refusal and asked the beautiful girl not to speak of it any more. Then she looked at me with a sort of benevolence and said:

"How fortunate you are to have principles, according to which you guide all your actions and quiet your conscience! How different is our fate! We have wanted to see what is not granted to the eyes of men to see and to know things their reason cannot grasp. I was not made for that sublime knowledge. What does vain dominion over demons matter to me! I would be well content to hold sway over the heart of a husband. But my father desired it so and I must submit to my destiny."

As she spoke Rebecca took out a handkerchief and apparently wiped away a few tears. Then she added:

"My lord Alfonso, let me come back tomorrow at the same hour and try again to break down your obstinacy or, as you call it, that great devotion to your word. Soon the sun will enter the sign of Virgo and it will be too late. Then what is to be will be."

As she said goodnight, Rebecca gave my hand a friendly pressure and went back reluctantly to her cabalistic operations.

The tenth day

I woke earlier than usual and went out on the terrace to get a breath of fresh air before the heat of the day set in. Not the faintest breeze was stirring. Above the roar of the river, which seemed less furious, I could hear the concert of birds. The peace of the elements stole into my soul and I could reflect with some tranquility on the things that had happened to me since I left Cadiz. A few words that Don Emmanuel de Sa, governor of that city, had let drop and which occurred to me only now, made me think that he too was in some way concerned with the mysterious life of the Gómez and that he also knew part of their secret. It was he who had given me my two servants, Lopez and Moschito, and I supposed that he had ordered them to leave

me at the entrance to the disastrous valley of Los Hermanos. Several times my cousins had hinted that they wished to test my courage. I decided that, at the *venta*, they had given me a potion to put me to sleep and that, while I was sleeping, they had placed me under the gibbet. Pascheco might have lost his eye through some other accident and not as the result of his amorous liaison with the two hanged men, and his ghastly story could be merely a yarn. The hermit, who persisted in trying to make me confess in order to learn my secret, might well be an agent of the Gomález, seeking to test my discretion. Finally, it seemed to me that I was beginning to see things more clearly and had found a natural explanation for these events, when I heard in the distance the sound of gay music that seemed to be coming round the mountain. Soon the music came closer and I saw a merry band of gypsies marching towards me in step and singing to the accompaniment of their *sonn-ahhas* and *cascarras*. They set up their little temporary camp near the terrace and thus gave me a chance to notice the elegance of their clothes and their vehicles. I supposed they were those same gypsy thieves under whose protection the inn-keeper of the Venta de Cardegnas had placed himself, as the hermit had told me, but they seemed to me too elegant to be brigands. While I was looking them over, they pitched their tents, put their *olles* on the fire and hung their babies' cradles on branches of nearby trees. And when all those preparations were finished, they relaxed and enjoyed the pleasures of their vagabond life, the greatest of which in their eyes was doing nothing.

The chief's tent was distinguished from the others not only by the tall silver-headed pole in front of it, but also because it was in excellent condition and even trimmed with a handsome fringe not ordinarily found on gypsy tents. Imagine my surprise when I saw the tent flap open and my two cousins stepped out; they were garbed in that elegant costume which in Spain is known as *à la Hitana Mahha*. They came forward to the foot of the terrace, but apparently did not see me. Then they called their companions and began to dance that *pollo*, famous for the words:

Quando me Paco me azze
Las Palmas para vaylar
Me se puene el corpecito
Como hecho de marzapan, etc.

If tender Emina and sweet Zibeddé had turned my head when they were wearing Moorish simars, or loose jackets, they charmed me no less in this new costume. But I thought they looked rather sly and mocking—a proper expression for fortune-tellers to tell the truth, but which meant, I feared, that they were plotting some new trick to play on me by letting me see them in that new and unexpected form.

The cabalist's castle was locked and barred, and as he himself kept the keys, it was impossible for me to join the gypsies. However, by going through a subterranean passage that ended at the river and was closed by an iron grill, I could get a closer look at them and even speak to them without attracting the attention of anyone in the castle. I therefore went down to that secret door where only the bed of the river separated me from the dancers. I saw the two beautiful gypsies—but they were not my cousins at all! They even looked rather common to me, as was consistent with their station in life.

Feeling a bit sheepish about my mistake, I walked slowly back to the terrace. From there I looked again and I saw that they were my cousins! They, too, seemed to recognize me, burst into shouts of laughter and disappeared into their tents.

I was indignant.

By heavens! I said to myself, could it be possible that those two passionate and alluring creatures were really mischievous sprites, who make game of mortals by assuming various forms? Or were they perhaps sorceresses, or, what would be more revolting, vampires whom heaven has allowed to assume the hideous bodies of the men hanged in the valley? A few minutes ago I thought I had found a natural explanation for all this mystery, but now I did not know what to believe.

Reflecting thus, I returned to the library where I found on the table a large volume, written in Gothic characters,

entitled: "Strange Narratives by Hapelius." The book lay open and the corner of the page was turned down to mark the beginning of a chapter in which I read the following story:

STORY OF THIBAUD DE LA JACQUIÈRE

Once upon a time there lived in France, in the city of Lyons on the Rhône, a rich merchant named Jacques de La Jacquièrre, though he did not take the name of La Jacquièrre till he had retired from business and had become provost of the city, a post the Lyonnais give only to men who have a great fortune and a spotless reputation. Such, therefore, was the good provost de La Jacquièrre: charitable towards the poor and liberal to monks and other friars who, according to the Lord, are the true poor.

But such was not the provost's only son, Messire Thibaud de La Jacquièrre, standard-bearer of the king's men-at-arms, unscrupulous ruffian and overfond of using his sword, gay deceiver of young girls, thrower of dice, breaker of windows, smasher of lanterns, curser and blasphemer. Many a time he held up a worthy citizen on the street to exchange his old coat for a new one and his worn felt for a better one. So that it was not long before Messire Thibaud was the talk of the town, in Paris as well as at Blois, Fontainebleau and wherever the king was in residence. Now therefore it happened that Francis I, our good sire of holy memory, was finally grieved by the behavior of the young subaltern and sent him back to Lyons to do penance in the house of his father, the good provost de La Jacquièrre, who was then living at the corner of the Place de Bellecour and the rue Saint-Ramond.

Young Thibaud was received in the paternal mansion with as much joy as if he had arrived laden with all the indulgences of Rome. Not only did they kill the fatted calf for him, but the good provost invited his friends to a banquet that cost more gold *écus* than there were guests. He did even more. The guests drank the young man's health and each one hoped he would acquire wisdom and repent. Those charitable wishes displeased Thibaud. He snatched a gold cup from the table, filled it with wine and cried:

"Hells bells! In this wine I pledge my body and soul to the devil if ever I become a better man than I am today." At those terrible words the guests shuddered and their hair stood on end. They crossed themselves and some of them rose from the table.

Messire Thibaud rose, too, and went to take the air on the Place de Bellecour, where he found two of his former comrades—lawless ruffians like himself. He embraced them, led them into his house, plied them with bottle after bottle, and ignored his father and the latter's guests.

What Thibaud had done on the day he arrived, he did the next day, and every day after that. With the result that the good provost was cut to the heart. He thought of appealing to his patron, Saint Jacques, and placed a ten-pound candle before the saint's image; but as the provost was about to put the candle on the altar, he dropped it and knocked over the silver lamp that was burning before the saint. The provost had had this candle molded for another purpose, but as his son's conversion was the thing closest to his heart, he was only too glad to make an offering of it. When, however, he saw the candle fall and the lamp upset, he thought it was a bad omen and he returned home sadly.

That same day, Messire Thibaud feasted his friends again. They tossed off many a bottle, and then, as the night was already far advanced and very dark, they went for a stroll on the Place de Bellecour. The three young ruffians linked arms and strutted arrogantly back and forth, like libertines who think they can attract the attention of young girls that way. But this time they had no luck, for not a girl, not a woman, passed and as the night was dark, they could not see them from the windows. Then young Thibaud, swearing his customary oath, cried out in a loud voice: "Hells bells! I pledge myself body and soul to the devil, and if that great, strapping she-devil, his daughter, passed by I would wanton with her, so greatly am I overheated by the wine."

This suggestion displeased Thibaud's two friends, who were not such great libertines as he. And one of them said:

"My friend, don't forget that the devil is the eternal foe of mankind. He does harm enough without inviting him and invoking his name."

At that Thibaud replied:

"I shall do as I said."

In the midst of all this, the three ribald youths saw a young woman, veiled, but with the charming figure of a very young person, come out of a nearby street. A little negro walked behind her. He stumbled, fell on his nose and broke his lantern. The young girl appeared to be greatly alarmed and did not know which way to turn. Then Messire Thibaud went up to her and, in his most courteous manner, offered his arm to lead her to her home. After protesting a little, poor Dariolette accepted. Turning towards his friends, Messire Thibaud said to them in an aside:

"Well, you see, the one I invoked hasn't kept me waiting. So then, I bid you goodnight."

The two friends understood what he wanted and laughing and wishing him joy, they took leave of him.

Thibaud therefore gave his arm to the veiled beauty, and the little negro, whose lantern had gone out, walked ahead of them. The young lady at first seemed so upset she could scarcely stand, but little by little she became reassured and leaned more frankly on the cavalier's arm. Sometimes she even made a false step and clutched at his arm to keep from falling. Then the cavalier, to support her, pressed her arm against his heart, which he did, however, with much discretion in order not to frighten the quarry.

They walked so far, through street after street, that Thibaud began to think they had lost their way. But he was well pleased, for he thought he would make all the shorter work of this beautiful lost lady. First, however, he wished to know with whom he had to deal, and he urged her to rest on a stone bench they could see near a door. She consented and he sat down beside her. Then clasping her hand with a lover-like air, he said to her boldly:

"Beautiful wandering star, since my star has willed that I meet you tonight, be so kind as to tell me who you are and where you live."

At first the young girl hesitated shyly, but then, taking heart, she told him the following story.

STORY OF THE GENTLE DARIOLETTE OF
THE CHÂTEL DE SOMBRE

My name is Orlandine—at least, that is what I am called by the few people who live with me in the Châtel de Sombre in the Pyrenees. The only human beings I saw there were my governess, who was deaf, a servant who stammered so badly she was almost a mute, and an old porter who was blind.

The porter had little to do save open the castle door once a year to a gentleman who came to us only to take me by the chin and speak to my duenna in the Basque tongue, of which I knew not a word. Fortunately I had already learned to talk before I was locked up in the Châtel de Sombre, for I would certainly not have learned from my two companions in that prison. As for the blind porter, I saw him only when he passed our dinner through the bars of our one window. In truth, my deaf governess often shouted in my ears some lesson or other on morals to which I paid as little attention as if I, too, were as deaf as she, for she talked about the duties of marriage and did not explain what a marriage was. She also spoke of many other things she would not explain to me. Often, too, my stammering servant made an effort to tell me some story, which she assured me was very funny, but she never got farther than the second sentence. She had to give it up and would go off stammering excuses that were just as impossible to understand as her story.

I said we had only one window—by that I mean only one overlooking the castle courtyard. The others looked out on another court which, being planted with a few trees, could pass for a garden. The sole exit led to my bedroom. I raised a few flowers in that garden and it was my only pastime. But I am wrong; I had one other pastime, a very innocent one: it was a large mirror in which I used to look at myself as soon as I was up, even the moment I got out of bed. My governess, in scanty attire like mine, would come and look at herself too and it amused me to compare my figure with hers. I indulged in this pastime also on going to bed and after my governess had fallen asleep. Sometimes I

imagined I saw in my mirror a companion of my own age who responded to my gestures and shared my emotions. The more I indulged in that illusion the more the game pleased me.

I told you there was a gentleman who came once every year to clasp me by the chin and talk Basque with my governess. One day, instead of taking me by the chin, he took me by the hand and led me to a closed carriage in which he imprisoned me with my governess. "Imprisoned" is really the word, for the only light that penetrated the carriage came from above. There we had to stay for three days, or rather until the third night, for when we emerged it was well along in the evening. A man opened the door and said to us:

"Here you are at the Place de Bellecour, at the entrance to the rue Saint-Ramond, and here is the house of the provost de la Jacquière. Where do you wish to go?"

"Drive under the first porte-cochere after the provost's," said my governess.

At this, young Thibaud was all ears, for he was actually the neighbor of a gentleman called the Sire de Sombre, who was said to have a very jealous disposition. Many a time had the said Sire de Sombre boasted in Thibaud's presence that one of these days he would prove that a man could have a faithful wife. In his little castle, he was bringing up a virgin who would become his wife and would prove his contention. Young Thibaud had not known she was in Lyons and he was delighted to have her in his hands.

However, Orlandine continued as follows:

We therefore drove under a porte-cochere and they led us through vast and beautiful rooms, and from there, by a circular staircase, into a little tower from where it seemed to me one could have seen the whole city of Lyons had it been day. But even by day we could see nothing, for the windows were covered with a heavy green cloth. To make up for that, the tower was lighted by a beautiful crystal chandelier set in enamel. My duenna seated me in a chair, gave me her rosary to amuse me and went out, locking the door behind her with a double and triple turn.

When I was alone, I threw down my rosary and with a

pair of scissors at my belt I made an opening in the green cloth that covered the window. I saw another window very close to me and through that window a brightly lighted room in which three young cavaliers were dining with three young girls, handsomer and gayer than anything one can imagine. They sang, they laughed, they drank, they embraced each other. Sometimes they even took each other by the chin, but it was quite different from the gentleman of the Châtel de Sombre who, however, came only for that. Moreover, those cavaliers and those young women were always taking off more and more of their clothes, the way I did at night in front of my large mirror and, in truth, it was most becoming to them and not at all like my old duenna."

Here Messire Thibaud saw clearly that the supper in question was one he had given the evening before to his two friends. He put his arm around Orlandine's round and supple waist and clasped her close against him.

"Yes," she said, "that is exactly what those young cavaliers did. In truth, it seemed to me they all loved each other very much. But then one of those young men said he was a better lover than the others. 'No, I am, I am,' cried the two others. 'He is!' 'No, the other one is,' cried the young women. Then the one who had boasted of being the best lover thought of a curious device to prove what he said."

Here, Thibaud, who remembered what had happened at the supper, almost choked with laughter.

"Well," said he, "lovely Orlandine, what was that device the young man thought up?"

"Ah!" replied Orlandine, "do not laugh, sir. I assure you it was a very beautiful device and I was paying close attention to it when I heard the door open. I quickly picked up my rosary just as my duenna entered.

"Without a word my duenna took me by the hand and made me get into a carriage, which was not closed like the first one, and I could certainly have seen the city in this one. But the night was too dark and all I could see was that we went a long, long way until we came to open country at the farthest end of the town. There we stopped before the last house. From outside it looked like a simple hut and it

was even roofed with thatch, but inside it was very pretty, as you will see if the little negro knows the way, for I see he has found a light and is relighting his lantern."

Here Orlandine ended her story. Messire Thibaud kissed her hand and said:

"Beautiful lost lady, pray tell me, do you live alone in that pretty house?"

"All alone," replied the beauty, "with the little negro and my governess. But I do not think she can return tonight. The gentleman who takes me by the chin sent word to me to bring my governess and meet him at his sister's, but he could not send his carriage, for it had gone to fetch a priest. We therefore went there on foot. Someone stopped us to tell me how pretty I was. My duenna, who is deaf, thought he was insulting me and answered back. This attracted a crowd and I began to run. The little negro ran after me. He fell down. His lantern was broken and it was then, my good sir, that to my good fortune I met you."

Charmed with the naïveté of that recital, Messire Thibaud was about to make a pretty speech in reply when the little negro returned with his lighted lantern. As its light fell on Thibaud's face, Orlandine exclaimed:

"What do I see! It's the same cavalier who thought up the fine device."

"The same," said Thibaud, "and I assure you that what I did then is nothing compared to what a charming and respectable young girl could expect from me. For the girls I was with were anything but that."

"You certainly looked as though you loved them—all three," said Orlandine.

"That's because I didn't love any," said Thibaud.

And so well did they pass the time, that walking and chatting of this and that, they came to the end of the town to a solitary hut. Here the negro opened the door with a key he wore at his belt.

There was nothing of a hut, however, about the interior of the house. Instead there were beautiful Flemish tapestries with figures of people so well drawn, so cleverly portrayed, that they seemed to be alive; branch candlesticks in exquisite heavy silver; rich cabinets in ivory and ebony;

armchairs covered in Genoese velvet and trimmed with gold fringes, and a bed in Venetian moiré. But Messire Thibaud paid no attention to all that. He saw only Orlandine and was eager to come to the end of the adventure.

Then the little negro came in to set the table and Thibaud noticed that he was not a child, as he had thought at first, but an ancient dwarf, all black and with an ugly face. What the little man brought in, however, was not at all ugly: an enamel dish in which four partridges, succulent and well prepared, lay smoking hot and, under his arm, a bottle of hippocras. The moment Thibaud had drunk and eaten, he felt as though liquid fire were flowing through his veins. As for Orlandine, she ate little and looked steadily at her fellow guest, now with a tender and naïve expression, now with eyes so full of malice that the young man was almost embarrassed.

At last the negro came to clear the table. Then Orlandine took Thibaud by the hand and said to him:

"Handsome cavalier, how shall we spend the evening?"

Thibaud did not know what to reply.

"I have an idea," said Orlandine. "Here is a large mirror. Let's pretend as I did at the Châtel de Sombre. I used to amuse myself there by seeing that my governess was not made like me. Now I want to know whether I am like you."

Orlandine placed two chairs in front of the mirror, after which she unlaced Thibaud's ruff and said to him:

"Your neck is almost the same as mine. Your shoulders, too—but your chest! What a difference! Mine was like that last year, but I have put on so much flesh I hardly know myself any more. Take off your belt. Unfasten your doublet. Why all those laces? . . ."

Unable to control himself any longer, Thibaud carried Orlandine over to the bed of Venetian moiré and thought himself the happiest of men . . .

But he soon changed his mind, for he felt something like claws piercing his back.

"Orlandine, Orlandine," he cried, "what does this mean?"

Orlandine was not there. In her place Thibaud saw only a horrible group of strange and hideous forms.

"I am not Orlandine," said the monster in a terrible voice, "I am Beelzebub."

Thibaud tried to invoke the name of Jesus, but Satan, who guessed what he was about, seized the young man's throat in his teeth and prevented him from speaking the sacred name.

The next morning, some peasants on their way to the Lyons market to sell their vegetables, heard groans coming from an abandoned roadside hut that was used as a refuse-dump. They went in and found Thibaud lying on a half-rotted carcass. They took him up and laid him on top of their baskets, and thus they carried him home to the provost of Lyons . . . The unhappy La Jacquière recognized his son.

The young man was put to bed. In a little while he seemed to regain his senses to a certain extent and, in a feeble and almost unintelligible voice, he said:

"Let that holy hermit in, let that holy hermit in."

At first they did not understand him. At last they opened the door and they saw a venerable monk enter, who asked to be left alone with Thibaud. They obeyed him and closed the door on them. For a long time they could hear the hermit's exhortations, to which Thibaud replied in a loud voice:

"Yes, Father, I repent and I trust in divine mercy."

At last, when they heard nothing more, they thought they should go in. The hermit had disappeared and Thibaud was found dead with a crucifix in his hands.

I had no sooner finished that story than the cabalist came in; he searched my eyes as if to read what impression the story had made on me. To tell the truth, it had made a deep impression, but as I did not wish him to know that, I retired to my room. There, I thought over all that had happened to me and I almost came to the conclusion that demons had taken possession of the hanged men's bodies in order to trick me; in short, that I was a second La Jacquière.

The dinner gong sounded, but the cabalist did not appear. Everyone seemed to me to be preoccupied, no doubt because I was myself.

After dinner¹, I went back to the terrace. The gypsies pitched their camp some distance from the castle. Of the inexplicable gypsy girls there was no sign. Night fell and I retired to my room. For a long time I waited for Rebecca. She did not come and at last I fell asleep.

END OF THE FIRST DECAMERON

¹ At this point in "Ten Days in the Life of Alfonso van Worden" there are two pages that serve to introduce directly the "Story of Rebecca," Days 12 and 13 having been carried over to "Avadoro." Day 11 does not appear in any of the Paris editions. Here is the text of those two pages:

After dinner, the young Israelite took me aside and said to me: "Alfonso, this morning you were watching the gypsies attentively as they danced at the foot of the terrace. Did you find in them a striking resemblance to anyone else?"

I begged her not to question me on this subject. She replied:

"Estimable stranger, I see you never go back on your word. Happy the person who finds a confidant like you! Our secrets are of such a nature that they are known only to people who are not at all like you, but we need you. My brother begs you to go over to the gypsy camp and remain there a few days. He thinks you will get some information about the occurrences at the *venta*; they should interest you as much as him. Here are the keys of the gate at the foot of the terrace; it will let you out into the country road on the side where the gypsies have pitched their camp. Do not refuse to do us this service; watch the daughters of the gypsy chief and try to spread light on a mystery that troubles our people and may perhaps decide our fate. Ah! why can I not lead the life of the humblest mortal! I would have been better suited to that than these spheres to which I have been transported against my will."

After this speech, Rebecca withdrew. She seemed deeply moved. I dressed hastily, flung my cape over my shoulders, took my sword and, passing through the terrace gate, I walked out into the country towards the gypsies' tents.

From afar off I saw the leader; he was seated between two young girls, who looked to me something like my cousins, but the girls went back into the tent before I had time to get a good look at them. The old chief came towards me and said to me slyly:

"Do you realize, my lord, that you are in the midst of a band of people of whom much ill is spoken in this country? Are you not afraid of us?"

At the word "afraid" I put my hand on the hilt of my sword, but the gypsy held out his hand and said to me affectionately:

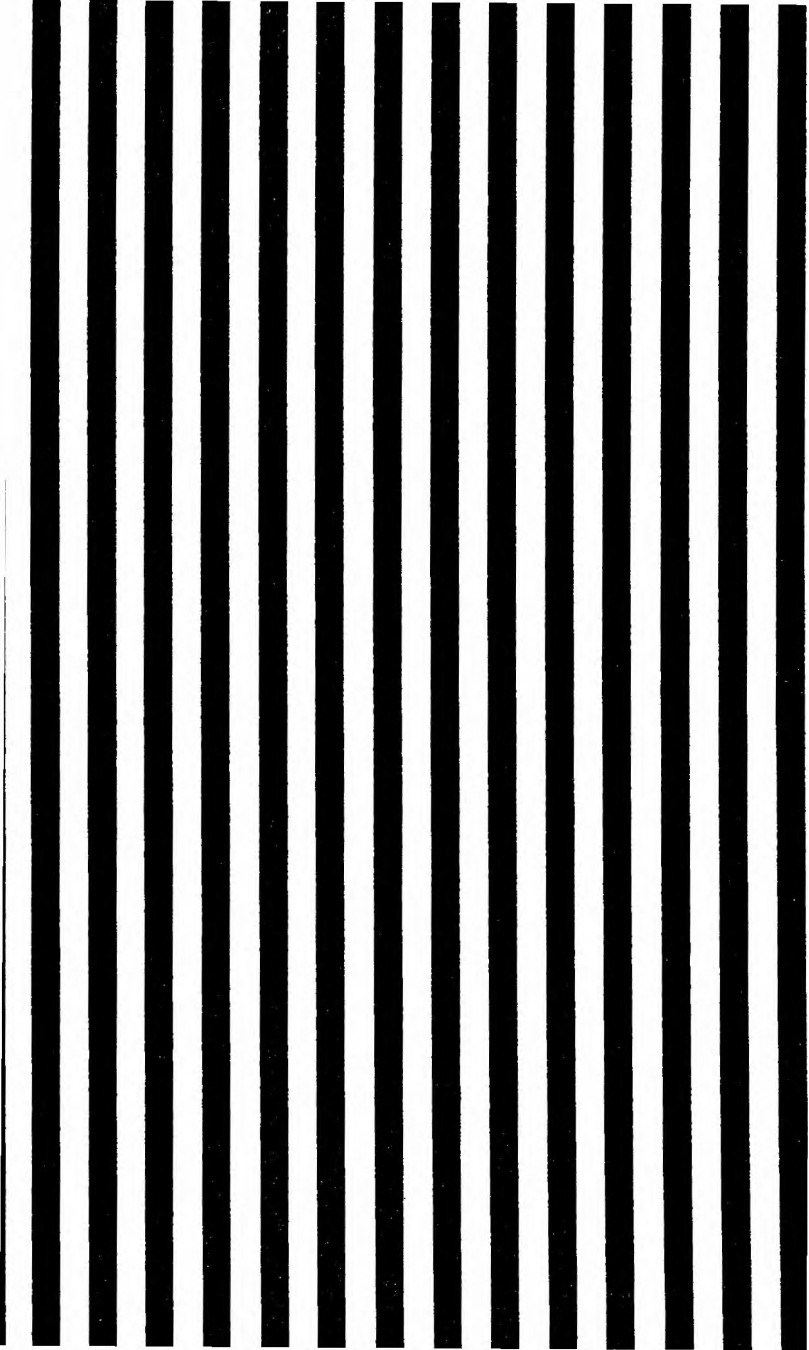
"Forgive me, my lord, I did not mean to offend you. Indeed, that is so far from my intention that I beg you to spend several days with us. Come into my tent; it shall be yours as the best we have to offer."

I accepted at once and he presented his two daughters but, to my great surprise, I saw not the slightest resemblance to my cousins.

We walked around the camp until someone came to tell us supper was served. The table had been laid under a tree with thick foliage, the food was good, especially as to game, the wine delicious and, seeing that the chief was in the mood for talking, I expressed a desire to know more about him. He did not hesitate to tell me his story. That man was named Avadaro, and the first part of his adventures has already been given to the public.¹

¹Four volumes pub. by Gide fils, 20 rue Saint-Marc. (Note in the 1814 edition).

Part two



The eleventh day

I was awakened by Rebecca. When I opened my eyes, the gentle Israelite was already seated on my bed and was holding one of my hands.

"My good Alfonso," she said to me, "yesterday you tried to come upon the two gypsy girls unawares, but the river-gate was locked. I have brought you the key. If they approach the castle today, I beg you to follow them, even into their camp. I assure you my brother will be very pleased if you can give him some information about them. As for me," she added in a melancholy tone, "I must depart. My fate wills it thus, my strange fate. Ah! Why did not my father leave me to a common destiny! I would have known love in reality and not in a mirror."

“What do you mean by ‘in a mirror?’ ”

“Nothing, nothing,” replied Rebecca, “you will know one of these days. Good-bye, Good-bye.”

With that, Rebecca, apparently deeply moved, left my room. I could not help thinking she would have a hard time keeping herself for the Gemini brothers to whom, according to her brother, she was to be married.

I went out on the terrace. The gypsies had moved even farther off than the night before. I took a book from the library, but I read little of it. I was distracted, preoccupied. At last we sat down to the table, and as usual the conversation turned on spirits, specters and vampires. Our host remarked that antiquity had known them under the names of Empusae, larvae and lamiae, but had entertained very confused ideas about them. The ancient cabalists, he said, were better than modern cabalists though they were known as philosophers, a name common to them as well as to many other people who had not the slightest inkling of the hermetic sciences—in other words, alchemy. The hermit mentioned Simon the Magician, but Uzeda maintained that Apollonius of Thyane must be regarded as the greatest cabalist of those days, since he had gained extraordinary control over all the creatures of the world of demons. And thereupon, having gone to look for a Philostratus in the Morel edition of 1608, he glanced at the Greek text; and with the greatest of ease and, apparently, perfect comprehension, read in Spanish what I am about to tell you.

THE STORY OF MENIPPUS OF LYCIA

There was in Corinth a Lycian named Menippus. He was twenty-five years old, witty and handsome. Rumor in town had it that he was loved by a beautiful and very wealthy foreign woman whose acquaintance he owed solely to chance. He had met her on the road to Kenchrée, where she addressed him most charmingly, saying:

“O Menippus, I have loved you a long time. I am a Phoenician and I live at the other end of the nearest suburb of Corinth. If you come to my house, you will hear me sing. You will drink a wine such as you have never drunk before.

You will have no rival to fear and you will always find me as faithful as I believe you are honest."

The young man, who, it must be added, admired discretion, could not resist those fine words from such lovely lips and he became devoted to his new mistress.

When Apollonius saw Menippus for the first time, he studied him with the eye of a sculptor about to make a bust of him. Then he said:

"O beautiful youth, you caress a serpent and a serpent caresses you."

Menippus was surprised at that speech, but Apollonius added:

"You are loved by a woman who cannot be your wife. Do you think she loves you?"

"Certainly," said the young man, "she loves me dearly."

"Are you going to marry her?" said Apollonius.

"I should like very much," said the young man, "to marry a woman I love."

"When will the wedding be?" Apollonius asked.

"Perhaps tomorrow," the young man said.

Apollonius noted the hour of the festivities, and when the guests had assembled he entered the room and said:

"Where is the beauty who is giving this feast?"

"She is not far away," Menippus replied.

Then, a little sheepishly, he stood up.

Apollonius continued as follows:

"This gold, this silver, and all the other decorations in this room, do they belong to you or to that woman?"

"They belong to that woman," Menippus replied. "As for me, all I own is my philosopher's cloak."

Then Apollonius said:

"Have you seen the gardens of Tantalus which are and are not?"

The guests replied:

"We saw them in Homer, for we have not yet gone down to hell."

Then Apollonius said to them:

"Everything you see here is like those gardens. It is nothing but sham; no reality. And that you may recognize the truth of what I am saying, know that this woman is

one of those Empusae, commonly known as larvae or lamiae. They are extremely hungry, not for the pleasures of love, but for human flesh. And by offering the allurements of pleasure they attract those they would devour."

Then the pretended Phoenician said:

"Mind your language."

And showing that she was annoyed, she railed against philosophers and called them madmen. But at Apollonius's words the vessels of gold and silver disappeared. The cup-bearers, the cooks also disappeared. Then the Empusa pretended to weep and begged Apollonius not to torment her further. But as the latter continued to press her relentlessly, she finally confessed her true identity, admitting that she had satisfied Menippus's passions in order to devour him afterwards and that she liked to eat handsome young men, because their blood was so beneficial to her.

"I think," said the hermit, "it was Menippus's soul she wished to devour rather than his body, and that that empusa was merely the demon of concupiscence. But I cannot imagine what words Apollonius spoke that gave him such great power. For after all, he was not a Christian and he could not use the terrible weapons the Church puts in our hands. Though philosophers were able to gain some power over demons before the birth of Christ, all the more must the Cross, which has silenced the oracles, have destroyed any other power of idolaters. And I think that Apollonius, far from being able to drive out the most insignificant demon, would not have made any impression on the least of ghosts, since spirits of that order return to earth by divine permission and they always ask for masses, proof that there were none in the days of paganism."

Uzeda was of a different opinion. He maintained that the pagans had been as much obsessed by ghosts as the Christians, though undoubtedly for other reasons; and, to prove it, he picked up a volume of Pliny's *Letters* in which he read the following:

THE STORY OF THE PHILOSOPHER ATHENAGORAS

There was in Athens a house that was very large and tenantable, but run-down and deserted. Often, in the deep-

est silence of the night, one could hear the clank of iron striking against iron and, if one listened carefully, a rattle of chains that seemed to come from a distance and then drew nearer. Soon, one saw a specter in the form of an old man: thin, dejected, with a long beard, hair standing on end, and irons on his hands and legs. Those irons he rattled in a most terrifying manner. That horrible apparition drove out sleep, and the resulting insomnia brought on illnesses that ended tragically. For whereas the specter did not appear during the day, the impression he had made kept him constantly before one's eyes, and the fright was still just as great though the cause of it had disappeared. In the end, the house was abandoned and given over wholly to the ghost. However, the authorities put up a placard announcing that the house was for rent or for sale, thinking perhaps that someone who had not heard of that terrible inconvenience might be tricked into taking it.

About that time, the philosopher Athenagoras came to Athens. He noticed the sign; he asked the cost. The reasonable price aroused his suspicions. He inquired about it. They told him the story which, far from deterring him, impelled him to conclude his purchase without further delay. He moved in and at nightfall he told his servants to set up his bed in the front room, to bring him his tablets and a light, and for them to retire to the back of the house. Fearing lest his overly active imagination might, at the mercy of a ridiculous fear, call up idle phantoms, he applied his mind, his eyes and his hand to his writing.

At nightfall silence reigned in that house, as everywhere for that matter. Then he heard iron clanking on iron, chains rattling. He did not raise his eyes; he did not leave his place, he reassured himself and forced himself to shut out those sounds.

The noise increases. It seems to be at the door of the room . . . in the room itself. He looks up. He sees the ghost just as he had been described to him. The ghost stands there, beckoning with his finger. Athenagoras makes a motion with his hand for him to wait a little and begins to write as if nothing had happened. The specter rattles his chains again and this time in the philosopher's ears.

The latter turns and sees that the ghost is again beckoning with his finger. He gets up, takes the light and follows the ghost. The ghost walks slowly, as if the weight of the chains bore him down. When he reaches the courtyard, he suddenly disappears and leaves our philosopher picking up grass and leaves to mark the spot from which the ghost had vanished so that he may recognize it again.

The next day Athenagoras goes to the magistrates and urges them to have that spot searched. They do so. They find a few fleshless bones entwined in chains. Time and the dampness of the earth having wasted all the flesh, there is nothing left to collect but those few bones in fetters. The town takes charge of burying them; and since the last respects have been paid to the dead man, he no longer disturbs the peace of that house."

When the cabalist had finished reading, he added:

"Ghosts have come back throughout all the ages, Reverend Father, as we see from the story of the *Baltoyve* of Endor, and it has always been in the power of cabalists to bring them back. But I admit that there have been great changes in the world of demonology. And vampires, among others, are a new invention, if I may so express myself. I distinguish two sorts: the vampires of Hungary and Poland are dead bodies, who emerge from tombs at night and go about sucking the blood of men; and the vampires of Spain are unclean spirits, who take possession of the first body they find, give it all sorts of forms and . . ."

Knowing what the cabalist was about to say, I got up from the table, perhaps a little too abruptly, and went out on the terrace. I had not been there half an hour when I saw my two gypsies, apparently following the road to the castle. At that distance they looked exactly like Emina and Zibeddé. I immediately decided to make use of my key. Hastening to my room, I seized my cape and my sword and hurried down to the gate. But when I had opened it, the hardest part was still before me, for I had to pass the rushing river. To do so I was obliged to follow the terrace wall by clinging to some irons that had been placed there for that purpose. At last I came to a bed of stones and, leaping from one to the other, I found myself on the other side of

the river and face to face with my gypsies. But they were not my cousins. They did not have their manners, but neither did they have the common, vulgar ways of the women of their nation. It almost seemed as if they were playing at being gypsies. First they wanted to tell my fortune. One of them opened my hand and the other, claiming to see in it my whole future, said to me in her dialect:

"Ah my lord, *che vejo en vuestra bast. Dirvanas Kamela, ma por quen? Por demonias?*"

In other words: "Ah, my lord, what do I see in your hand? Much love, but for whom? For demons?"

You may be sure I would never have guessed that *Dirvanas Kamela* meant "much love" in the gypsies' jargon. But they took the trouble to explain it to me. Then, each one taking me by an arm, they led me to their camp where they presented me to an old man with a kindly face and a remarkably healthy appearance, who, they said, was their father. The old man said to me rather slyly:

"Do you realize, my lord, that you are in the midst of a band of whom people speak ill in this country? Aren't you afraid of us?"

At the word "afraid" my hand flew to the hilt of my sword. But the old chief held out his hand to me affectionately, saying:

"Forgive me, my lord, I did not mean to insult you. That is so far from my intention that I even urge you to spend several days with us. If a journey in these mountains interests you, we will promise to show you the most beautiful as well as the most horrible valleys, the most smiling sites and close beside them what are known as striking horrors; and if you like hunting, you will have plenty of leisure to satisfy your taste."

I accepted that offer all the more eagerly as I was beginning to be somewhat bored by the cabalist's dissertations and the solitude of his castle.

Then the old gypsy led me to his tent.

"My lord," he said, "this tent shall be yours during the time you are pleased to spend with us and I shall have a bell-tent put up quite near in which I shall sleep the better to protect you."

I told the old man that as I had the honor to be a captain in the Walloon Guards, I must not seek any protection save that of my own sword.

That made him laugh and he said to me:

"My lord, our bandits' muskets would kill a captain of the Walloon Guards as easily as any other man; but when they have been warned, you could even become separated from our troop. Until then it would be imprudent to attempt it."

The old man was right and I was rather ashamed of my boasting.

We spent the evening wandering around the camp, chatting with the young gypsy girls who seemed to me the maddest—but the happiest—women in the world. Then supper was served. The table was laid in the shelter of a carob tree, near the chief's tent. We stretched out on deer skins and the food was served on a buffalo skin, treated like morocco leather, which took the place of linen. The food was plentiful, especially as to game. The wine was poured by the chief's daughters, but I preferred water from a spring that came out of rock two feet from us. The chief himself kept the conversation going pleasantly. He seemed to know all about my adventures and prophesied that I would have more to come.

At last it was time to go to bed. They set up a bed for me in the chief's tent and stationed a guard at the door. But towards the middle of the night, I woke up with a start. Then I felt both sides of my bed covering being raised at the same time and someone pressing close against me.

"My God," I said to myself, "will I have to wake up again between the two hanged men?" However, that thought did not stop me. I imagined that this was part of gypsy hospitality and that it was scarcely suitable for a military man of my age not to adapt himself to it. Afterwards I fell asleep in the firm conviction that I was not with the two hanged men.

The twelfth day

And truth to tell, I did not wake up under the gibbet of Los Hermanos, but in my bed and at the noise the gypsies were making as they struck camp.

“Get up, my lord,” the chief said to me, “we have a long trek to make. But you will ride a mule that has not its equal in Spain and you will not feel yourself moving.”

I dressed hastily and mounted my mule. We took the lead with four gypsies, all heavily armed. The rest of the troop followed at a distance, with the two young women at their head, in whose company I thought I had spent the night. Now and then, because of the zigzags the paths made in the mountains, I passed a few hundred feet above or below them. At such moments I stopped to get a good look at

them and I was almost positive they were my cousins. The old chief seemed to enjoy my perplexity.

At the end of four hours of a fairly steep trail, we came to a plateau on top of a mountain, and there we found a great number of bales which the old chief immediately inventoried. After this he said to me:

"My lord, the contents of these bales come from England and from Brazil, enough to supply the four kingdoms of Andalusia, Granada, Valencia and Catalonia. The king suffers a little at the hands of our small trades people, but he gets it all back from another side, and a little contraband amuses and consoles the people. Besides, in Spain, everyone is involved in it. Some of these bales will be deposited in the soldiers' barracks, others in the cells of monks, and even in the vaults of the dead. The bales with red marks on them are destined to be seized by the *alguazils*, who will be praised for it by the custom officers and will be all the more devoted to our interests."

After saying this, the gypsy leader ordered the merchandise hidden in various caves in the rocks. Then dinner was served in a grotto, the view from which stretched farther than the eye could see—in other words, the horizon was so far away it seemed to melt into the sky. As I was becoming daily more sensitive to the beauties of Nature, that view plunged me into a veritable ecstasy from which I was roused by the chief's two daughters bringing in the dinner. Close at hand, as I have said, they did not look at all like my cousins. Their sidelong, stolen glances seemed to tell me they were pleased with me, but something warned me they were not the girls who had come to me during the night.

The two beauties brought in a steaming hot *olle*, which some of the men, who had been sent on in advance, had let simmer all morning. The old chief and I ate abundantly of it, with the difference that he mixed his eating with frequent attention to a gourd filled with good wine, while I contented myself with the water from a neighboring spring.

When we had satisfied our appetite, I let him see that I was curious to know more about him. He demurred, but I urged him on. At last he consented to tell me his story, which he began in the following terms:

THE STORY OF PANDESOWNA,
CHIEF OF THE GYPSIES

All the gypsies in Spain know me by the name of Pandesowna. That is, in their dialect, the translation of my family name, which is Avadora; for I was not born among gypsies. My father was Don Felipe d'Avadoro, and he was considered the most serious and the most methodical man of his day. He was so much so that were I to tell you the story of one of his days, you would know the story of his whole life, or at least of the time between his two marriages: the first, to which I owe my existence, and the second, which caused his death, because of the irregularity in his style of living.

While he was still in his forefather's house, my father conceived a tender passion for a distant relative whom he married as soon as he was the head of the house. She died in giving birth to me, and my father, inconsolable because of his loss, shut himself up in his house for several months and would not even receive his closest friends. Time, which softens all sorrows, lessened his grief too, and at length we saw him open the door of his balcony that looked out on the Calle de Toledo. There he breathed in the fresh air for a quarter of an hour; then he opened a window that looked out on a cross street. He saw some people he knew in the house opposite, and greeted them almost cheerfully. He was seen to do the same thing in the days that followed, and that change in his mode of living finally reached the ears of Fra Heronymo Santez, a Theatine monk and my mother's maternal uncle.

That priest betook himself to my father, complimented him on his return to health, barely mentioned the consolations religion offers us, but spoke of how important it was for my father to enjoy himself. He even pushed indulgence so far as to advise him to go to the theatre. My father had the greatest confidence in Fra Heronymo; that very evening he went to the Theatre de la Cruz. They were giving a new play which was backed by the party of the *Pollacos*, while the party of the *Sorices* were doing their best to make it fail. My father became so interested in the

game those two factions were playing that from then on he never willingly missed a single performance. He even sided openly with the party of the *Pollacos*, and went to the Theatre du Prince only when the Theatre de la Cruz was closed.

After the performance he would stand at the end of the double line the men form to compel the women to pass them one by one, but he did not do it as the others did, the better to get a good look at them. On the contrary, he had very little interest in women, and as soon as the last one had passed, he would set out for the "Croix de Malte," where he ate a light supper before returning home.

In the morning, the first thing my father did was to open the balcony door that looked out on the Calle de Toledo. There he breathed in the fresh air for a quarter of an hour. Then he went and opened the window that gave onto the little street. If there was anyone at the window opposite, he greeted him graciously, saying *agour* ("good morning"), and then closed the window. That word *agour* was sometimes the only word he uttered all day long; for though he took a keen interest in the success of all the comedies at the Theatre de la Cruz, he showed that interest only by clapping his hands, and never in words. If there was no one at the window opposite, he waited patiently until someone appeared and then made his gracious gesture.

Afterwards, my father went to Mass at the Theatine monks. On his return, he found his room set to rights by the household servant, and he took particular care to put each piece of furniture back in the same place it had been the night before. He gave extraordinary care to this, and he was quick to discover the tiniest bit of straw or grain of dust that had escaped the servant's broom.

When my father was satisfied with the order in his room, he took a compass and a pair of scissors and cut twenty-four pieces of paper of equal size, filled each piece with a pinch of tobacco from Brazil, and made twenty cigars so neatly rolled and so even they could be considered the most perfect cigars in all Spain. He smoked six of those *chefs-d'oeuvres* as he counted the tiles on the *Palacio Alba*, and six as he counted the people who came in through the Toledo Gate.

Then he looked towards the door of his room until he saw his dinner arrive.

After dinner, he smoked the remaining dozen cigars. Then he stared at the clock until it struck the hour of the performance, and if there was no play at a theatre, he went to the bookseller, Moreno, where he listened to the talk of a number of men of letters whose custom it was to gather there in those days, but he never entered into their conversations. If he was ill, he would send to Moreno for the play they were giving at the Theatre de la Cruz. Promptly at the hour set for the performance, he would begin to read the play, not forgetting to applaud all the passages the *Pollacos'* faction were in the habit of acclaiming.

It was a very innocent life, but my father, wishing to fulfill his religious duties, asked at the Theatines for a confessor. They sent him my great-uncle, Fra Heronymo Santez. Fra Heronymo seized that opportunity to remind my father that I was in the world and actually in the house of Doña Felic Dalanosa, my late mother's sister. Whether my father feared that the sight of me would remind him of the beloved wife whose death I had innocently caused, or whether he did not wish my infant cries to trouble his silent routine, it is certain that he implored Fra Heronymo never to let me come near him. At the same time, however, he provided for my maintenance by making over to me the income from a *quinta*, or farm, he owned in the environs of Madrid, and he entrusted my tutelage to the bursar of the Theatines.

Alas! it seems that by keeping me away from him, my father must have had some presentiment of the tremendous difference Nature had created in our two characters. You have seen how methodical and regular my father was in his mode of living, and I can assure you it would be almost impossible to find a man more inconstant than I have always been. I have been inconstant even in my inconstancy, for the idea of a calm happiness and a retired life has always followed me in my vagabond journeys, and the love of change has always kept me from retiring. So that, knowing myself at last, I have put an end to that restless indecision by settling down among this horde of gypsies. It is, in a way, a combination of retreat and a regular life, but at least

I don't have the misfortune to see always before my eyes the same trees, the same rocks, or what would be even more intolerable to me, the same streets, the same walls and the same roofs.

Here I interrupted and asked:

"Signor Avadoro, or Pandesowna, I imagine that a vagabond life like yours must have brought many strange adventures."

"My lord," the gypsy replied, "I have truly seen some very extraordinary things since I came to live in this desert. As for the rest of my life, it runs a fairly ordinary course, in which the only remarkable thing is my infatuation with all sorts of lives, though I never follow any of them more than one or two years at a time."

The gypsy then went on with his story:

I told you that my aunt Dalanosa took me into her house. She had no children and therefore she lavished on me all the combined indulgence of an aunt and a mother; in a word, I was a spoiled child. And I was more and more spoiled every day, for as I grew in strength and intelligence, I was also more tempted to take advantage of the many kindnesses shown me. On the other hand, as my wishes were practically never opposed, I offered little resistance to the desires of others, with the result that I seemed to be almost docile. Then, too, my aunt had a certain tender and caressing smile with which she accompanied her commands and I could never resist her. Such as I was, in short, the good Dalanosa was convinced that in me Nature had produced, with her aid, a true work of art. There was, however, one essential point lacking to complete her happiness, and that was that she could not show my father the progress I was making and convince him of my perfections, for he still refused to see me.

But where is the obstinacy a woman cannot conquer? Señora Dalanosa worked so persistently and so effectually on her Uncle Heronymo that the latter finally made up his mind to take advantage of my father's next confession and point out how wrong it was to be so cruelly indifferent to a child who could not have done him any harm.

Father Heronymo kept his promise to my aunt. But my

father was greatly upset at the thought of receiving me into his home. Father Heronymo suggested a meeting and a walk in the garden of the "Buen Retiro"; but that walk did not enter into the methodical and regular plan from which my father never varied. Rather than depart from his routine, he consented to receive me in his house, and Father Heronymo hastened to announce the good news to my aunt, who thought she would die of joy.

I should tell you that ten years of hypochondria had added greatly to the eccentricities of my father's home life. Among other fads, he had taken to making ink. This is how it came about. One day at Moreno's, the bookseller, a number of the greatest minds in Spain and several lawyers were complaining of the difficulty of procuring good ink. Each man said there was no such thing, or that he had tried in vain to make some. Moreno said he had in his shop a collection of recipes where they would surely find the necessary information on the process of making ink. He went to look for the volume, which he had some difficulty in finding, and when he came back the conversation had switched to the success of a new play and no one wanted to talk about ink or to listen to articles on how to make it. Not so my father, however. He picked up the book, turned immediately to the chapter on ink, and was amazed to find that he understood perfectly a subject the greatest minds in Spain considered extremely difficult. Indeed, all one had to do was to mix tincture of nutgall with a solution of vitriol and add gum to it. The author warned, however, that it was impossible to get good results unless the ink was made in large quantities at one time; that the mixture should be kept hot and that it should be stirred frequently, because the gum, having no affinity for metallic substances, was apt to separate from them; that, moreover, the gum itself tended to dissolve and become putrid. This could be prevented only by adding a small amount of alcohol.

My father bought the book and the next day he procured the necessary ingredients: a scale for weighing the amounts, and finally, because his author recommended making the ink all at once in large quantities, the largest bottle he could find in Madrid. The operation was succes-

ful. My father took a bottle of his ink to the great minds assembled at Moreno's. All of them found it admirable; all of them wished to have some.

In his quiet, isolated life, my father had never had the opportunity to do anything for anyone and less opportunity even to receive praise. He found it sweet to be able to do for others, sweeter even to be praised, and he devoted himself wholeheartedly to making ink that brought him such agreeable pleasures. Seeing that the great minds in Madrid had exhausted, in less than no time, the largest bottle he had been able to find in the whole city, my father sent to Barcelona for a demijohn, of the sort Mediterranean sailors keep their supply of wine in. With that demijohn he could make twenty bottles of ink at a time. The great minds exhausted the twenty bottles as rapidly as they had the first bottle, and continued to shower praise and thanks on my father.

But the larger the bottles, the more inconvenient they were. You couldn't heat the composition in them, much less stir it properly, and it was particularly difficult to decant it. My father therefore decided to send to Toboso for one of those great earthenware jars that are used in making saltpeter. When it came, he had it built on top of a little stove, in which he kept a charcoal fire burning constantly. A spiggot attached to the bottom of the jar served to draw off the liquid and, by climbing up on the stove, he could stir it quite easily with a large wooden pestle. Those jars are taller than a man, so you can imagine the quantity of ink my father made at one time, and he was careful to add the same amount he took out. It was a real pleasure to him to see the maid or the man-servant of some famous man of letters enter his house to ask for ink. And when the famous man published a book that made a stir in the literary world and they talked about it at Moreno's, my father would smile complacently, as if he had in some way contributed to that success. Indeed, to be quite frank, he was now known in town only as Don Felipe de Tintero Largo, or Don Felipe of the Big Inkwell, and only a few people remembered that his name was Avadoro.

I knew all that. I had heard people talk of my father's strange character, of his neat apartment, of his huge jar

of ink; and I was dying to see it with my own eyes. As for my aunt, she was sure that as soon as my father had the happiness of seeing me, he would give up all his fads, and devote himself to admiring me from morning to night. At last the presentation day was set. My father confessed to Father Heronymo on the last Sunday in every month. The Father was to strengthen him again in his resolve to see me, to inform him that I was waiting for him at his house and to accompany him to his lodging. In telling us of this arrangement, Father Heronymo advised me not to touch anything in my father's room. I promised to do everything they wished and my aunt promised to keep an eye on me.

At last the long-awaited Sunday came. My aunt had me put on a rose colored *majo* coat, trimmed with silver fringe, and buttons of Brazilian topazes. She assured me that I looked like Cupid himself and that my father would not fail to go wild with joy when he saw me. Full of hopes and flattering thoughts, we walked gaily across the Calle des Ursulines to the Prado, where several women stopped to caress me. From there we turned into the Calle de Toledo and at last entered my father's house. They showed us into his room, and my aunt, who feared my liveliness, made me sit down in an armchair, seated herself opposite me, and held on to the fringes of my scarf to keep me from getting up and touching things.

At first I compensated for this restraint by gazing around at every nook and corner of the room, which I admired for its neatness and cleanliness. The corner used for making ink was as clean and well-ordered as the rest; the huge jar from Toboso was like an ornament. Next to it stood a tall, glass-front cupboard, containing all the necessary ingredients and instruments.

At sight of that high, narrow cupboard alongside the stove and the earthenware jar, I was seized with an irresistible desire to climb up on it. Nothing, I thought, would be nicer than to see my father looking all around the room for me and finally catching sight of me above his head. Quick as a flash, I slipped off the scarf my aunt was holding, jumped up on the stove and from there on to the cupboard.

My aunt's first reaction, which she could not suppress,

was to applaud my skill. Then she pleaded with me to come down. At that moment they came to tell us my father was on his way upstairs. My aunt went on her knees and begged me to get down off the cupboard. I could not refuse her touching pleas. But as I was about to jump down onto the stove, my foot caught on the edge of the jar. I tried to hold on, but I felt I was going to pull the cupboard over. I let go both hands and—fell into the jar of ink. I would have drowned there, but my aunt grabbed the pestle that was used for stirring the ink, hit the jar a terrific whack and broke it into a thousand pieces. At that moment my father entered the door. He saw a river of ink inundating his room and a black face from which came the most horrible shrieks. He rushed out to the staircase, sprained his ankle and fainted.

As for me, I soon stopped howling. The ink I had swallowed made me terribly ill. I lost consciousness and I did not recover entirely until after a long illness that was followed by a fairly long convalescence. The thing that contributed most to my recovery was my aunt's decision to leave Madrid and go to live in Burgos. I was so excited at the thought of going on a journey, they were afraid I would lose my mind. My excitement lost some of its edge, however, when my aunt asked me if I would like to go in her chaise or if I preferred to be carried in a litter.

"Neither one, certainly," I replied angrily. "I'm not a woman. I intend to travel on horseback only, or at least on a mule, with a fine Segovian musket fastened to my saddle, two pistols at my belt and a long sword. I'll go with you only on condition that you will give me all those things. Besides, it's in your interest to do so, since I am the one to protect you."

I said a thousand foolish things like that, which all seemed most sensible to me, and which were charming indeed coming from the lips of an eleven-year-old boy.

The preparations for our journey gave me a chance to display an extraordinary activity. I came, I went, I climbed, I carried, I gave orders—in short, I was the proverbial busy little bee. And in fact I did have a great deal to do, for my aunt, who was going to live in Burgos, was taking all her

household furniture with her. At last the day of our departure arrived. We sent the heavy baggage by the Aranda road and we took the road to Valladolid.

Seeing that I was determined to ride a mule, my aunt, who had at first intended to go in a chaise, decided to ride a mule too. Instead of a saddle, they made her a very comfortable little chair and mounted it on a pack-saddle with a parasol on top. A *zagal* walked in front of her, to ward off even the semblance of danger. All the rest of our outfit, which consisted of twelve mules, looked very smart. And I, who considered myself the leader of that elegant caravan, rode now at the head, now at the rear, and always with one of my weapons in my hand, particularly at all the detours in the road and other suspicious places.

As you may imagine, there was no opportunity to display my courage, and we arrived in good time at Alabahas, where we found two caravans as large as ours. The animals were at the rack and the travelers at the opposite end of the stable, in the kitchen, which was separated from the stable only by two stone steps. In those days, that was the usual arrangement in almost all the hostels in Spain. The whole house consisted of only one very long room, in which the mules occupied the best part and the men the smallest. But we were all the gayer for that. As the *zagal* unharnessed the animals, he kept up a steady banter directed at the host's wife, and she retorted with all the liveliness of her sex and class until the host, mindful of his dignity, called a halt to those battles of wit—though they started again the next minute. The servant girls made the house ring with the click of their castanets as they danced to the accompaniment of the goatherds' rough songs. Travelers became acquainted; they invited each other to supper. After that they gathered around the glowing coal fire. Each one told his name, where he came from and, sometimes, the story of his life. Those were the good days. Today, we have better lodgings, but it is impossible to describe the charms of the sociable, riotous life travelers led in those days. All I can tell you is that on that particular day I was so impressed that I made up my little mind to spend my life traveling, and I have stuck to that decision ever since.

One incident in particular helped to strengthen me in that resolve. After supper, when all the travelers had gathered around the fire, and each man had told something about the countries he had visited, one man, who until then had not opened his mouth, said:

"All those things that have happened to you in your journeys are extremely interesting to hear and to recall. As for me, I would that no worse had happened to me, but while traveling in Calabria, I had such an extraordinary adventure—so surprising, so terrifying—that I cannot get it out of my mind. It pursues me, obsesses me, poisons all the pleasures I might have, and I shall be lucky if the depression it causes me does not drive me crazy."

That sort of a prelude roused the audience's curiosity. They urged him to unburden himself and tell them his admirable tale. At first he refused, but after much coaxing he began as follows:

THE STORY OF GIULIO ROMATI AND OF
THE PRINCESS OF MONTE-SALERNO

My name is Giulio Romati. My father, Pietro Romati, is the most famous lawyer in Palermo and even in all Sicily. He is, as you may know, greatly attached to a profession that gives him an honorable existence. But he is even more attached to philosophy and devotes to it every moment he can steal from the law.

I can say without boasting that I have followed in his footsteps in both careers, for I was a doctor-of-law at the age of twenty-two. And having since applied myself to mathematics and astronomy, I have been successful enough in those fields to be able to annotate Copernicus and Galileo. I do not mention those things boastfully, but because I must tell you about a most amazing adventure, and I would not have you take me for a credulous and superstitious fool. I am so far removed from such a flaw that theology is perhaps the only science I have consistently neglected. As for the other sciences, I devoted myself to them zealously, and the only relaxation I knew was to change from one study to another.

Such steady application told on my health; and as my

father could not think of any other way to divert me, he suggested traveling and even insisted that I make the tour of Europe and return to Sicily at the end of four years.

At first it was very hard for me to leave my books, my study, my observatory. But my father insisted; I had to obey. No sooner was I on the way than a most favorable change came over me: I recovered my appetite, my strength—in a word, my health. At first I traveled in a litter, but after the third day I rode a mule and felt extremely well.

Many people know the world, but not their own country. As I did not wish my country to reproach me for a similar failing, I began my journey by seeing the wonders Nature has lavished so generously on our island. Instead of following the coast of Palermo to Messina, I went by way of Castro Novo and Caltanizete, and I came to a village at the foot of Etna whose name I do not recall. There I made ready to go up the mountain, intending to give a month to it. I actually did stay there all that time, which I spent chiefly in verifying several experiments that had recently been made on the barometer. At night, I looked at the stars and I had the pleasure of seeing two stars that had not been visible at the Palermo Observatory because they were below its horizon.

It was with real regret I left those places where I felt I was almost sharing in the ethereal lights, as well as in the sublime harmony of the heavenly bodies whose laws I had studied so thoroughly. Besides, it is certain that the rarefied air of high mountains has a special effect on our bodies, making our pulse faster and our breathing more rapid. At last I left the mountain and I came down it on the side of Catania.

That town is the home of a nobility as illustrious as the nobility of Palermo but more enlightened. Not that there are many followers of the exact sciences in Catania any more than in the rest of our island. But people there are much interested in the arts, in antiquities, in the history both ancient and modern of all the peoples that have occupied Sicily. The excavations, in particular, and the beautiful objects found in them were favorite topics of conversation.

At that time they had just dug out of the bowels of the earth a very beautiful marble slab covered with strange hieroglyphics. After examining it attentively I saw that the inscription was in the Punic language; and Hebrew, which I know fairly well, helped me to explain it to the general satisfaction of all concerned. That success won me a flattering welcome, and the most distinguished people in town sought to retain me and made me attractive offers of large sums of money. However, as I had left my family for other purposes, I refused their offers and set out for Messina. In that city, renowned as a center of commerce, I lingered a whole week. After that, I crossed the strait and landed at Reggio.

Until then my journey had been only a pleasure trip, but at Reggio the adventure took a more serious turn. A bandit named Zoto was ravaging Calabria and the sea was covered with Tripolitan pirates. I had absolutely no idea how to get to Naples, and had I not been embarrassed to admit defeat, I would have returned to Palermo.

I had been in Reggio a week and a prey to those uncertainties, when one day, after walking along the docks for a fairly long time, I sat down on some rocks on a less frequented part of the beach. There I was accosted by a man with a pleasing face who was wearing a scarlet cloak. He sat down beside me without so much as a "by-your-leave," and addressed me as follows:

"Is Signor Romati busy with some problems of algebra or astronomy?"

"Not at all," I replied, "all Signor Romati wants is to leave Reggio and go to Naples, and the problem that embarrasses him at the moment is how to get there without falling into the hands of Signor Zoto and his bandits."

Then the stranger, looking very serious, said:

"Signor Romati, your talents already do honor to your country. You will do your country even greater honor when your travels have enlarged the sphere of your learning. Zoto is too much of a gentleman to wish to hinder you in such a noble undertaking. Take these red feathers, put one in your hat, give the others to your servants and set out boldly. As for me, I am that Zoto you fear so much, and so that you

may have no doubt of my word, I am going to show you the instruments of my profession."

At that he flung back his cloak and showed me a belt full of pistols and daggers. Then clasping my hand cordially, he disappeared.

Here I interrupted the chief of the gypsies to tell him that I had heard of this Zoto and that I knew his two brothers.

"I knew them too," replied Pandesowna. "They are, like me, in the service of the great sheik of the Gomélez."

"What? You, too, are in his service?" I exclaimed in astonishment.

At that moment a gypsy came to whisper in the chief's ear. The latter rose immediately and went off, leaving me to brood over what he had just told me. What, I wondered, is that powerful association whose sole aim seems to be to conceal some secret or other, or to bewitch me with mysteries which at one moment I think I understand in part only to be plunged back the next moment into the blackest doubts. It is clear that I myself am part of that invisible chain. It is also clear that they want to keep me even more closely confined to it. At this point, my reflections were interrupted by the chief's two daughters, who came to suggest that we take a walk. I accepted and followed them; the conversation was in good Spanish and without any mixture of *herigonae*, or gypsy jargon; their minds were cultivated and their temperament frank and gay. After the walk, we supped and went to bed. But, that night, no cousins.

The thirteenth day

The gypsy chief ordered an ample breakfast brought to me and told me:

“My lord, the enemy is approaching—in other words, the custom officers. It is right to yield the battlefield to them. They will find the packages intended for them; the rest are already in safekeeping. Take your time over breakfast and then we shall leave.”

As we could already see the custom officers on the other side of the valley, I ate hastily, while the greater part of the company went on ahead. We wandered from mountain to mountain, plunging farther and farther into the wastelands of the Sierra Morena. At last we halted in a deep valley where some of the band were waiting for us and had

prepared our meal. After we had eaten, I urged the chief to continue the story of his life, which he did in the following terms:

SEQUEL TO THE STORY OF PANDESOWNA

You left me listening with all my ears to the admirable story of Giulio Romati. Here then—or approximately so—is the way he told it:

SEQUEL TO THE STORY OF GIULIO ROMATI

Zoto's character was well-known and I had perfect confidence in the assurances he gave me. I returned to my inn well satisfied and sent for some muleteers. Several of them applied, for the bandits never harmed them or their animals. I chose the man who had the best reputation among the lot, selected one mule for myself, one for my manservant and two to carry my baggage. The head mule-driver also had his mule and two helpers who followed him on foot.

The next morning I set out at break of day. No sooner was I on my way, than I noticed a number of men from Zoto's band who seemed to be following me at a distance. They were relayed by others from point to point. You can imagine that with such an escort no harm could come to me.

I had a very pleasant trip, during which my health improved from day to day. When I was only two days from Naples, I decided to turn off the main road and go by way of Salerno. My curiosity was quite natural. I had become interested in the history of the renaissance of art, the cradle of which in Italy had been the School of Salerno. I do not know what fatality sent me on that disastrous journey.

I left the high road at Monte-Brugio and, led by a village guide, plunged into the wildest countryside one can possibly imagine. At noon we came to a ruined hovel, which the guide assured me was an inn, though I would not have known it from the reception the host gave me. Far from offering me food, he asked me as a favor to share with him whatever I had. Luckily I had some cold meats with me and I shared them with the host, with my guide and with

my servant. The mule-drivers had remained behind at Monte-Brugio.

I left that wretched shelter about two hours past noon; and soon I saw a huge castle on the top of a mountain. I asked my guide what it was called and whether it was inhabited. He told me it was known thereabouts simply as Lo Monte or Lo Castello and that the castle was completely deserted and in ruins. However, a chapel and a number of cells had been built in the interior. The Franciscans of Salerno were in the habit of keeping five or six monks there, and he added naively:

"There are a lot of stories going around about that castle, but I can't tell you any of them, for as soon as people begin talking about it, I run out of the kitchen and go to my sister-in-law, Pepa's house, where I always find some Franciscan father who gives me his scapulary to kiss."

I asked this boy if we would pass close to the castle. He said we would pass it half way up the mountain on which it was built.

At this point, the sky clouded over and towards evening a heavy storm burst over our heads. We were then on the back of the mountain which afforded no shelter. The guide said he knew a cave where we might get under cover, but the road to it was rough and dangerous. I was willing to chance it, but scarcely had we passed between the rocks when the thunder struck quite close to us. My mule was knocked down under me. After making sure I was not hurt, I called to my traveling companions, but no one answered.

So violent and so close together were the flashes of lightning that I was able to distinguish objects around me and to move about with some degree of safety. I walked forward, holding on to the trees as I went, and in that way came to a little cave which, as no beaten path led to it, could not have been the one to which the guide intended to lead me.

Torrential rains, violent gusts of wind, deafening thunderclaps followed one on top of the other. My clothes were soaked through; I shivered with cold and in that annoying situation I was forced to remain for several hours. All of a sudden, I saw torches moving about down in the valley;

I heard voices, and, thinking they were my people, I called. No answer.

Soon I saw coming towards me a young man of pleasing countenance, followed by several servants, some of them carrying torches, others bundles of clothes. The young man greeted me respectfully and said to me:

"Signor Romati, we come from the Princess of Monte-Salerno. The guide you took at Monte-Brugio told us you had lost your way in these mountains and the princess commanded us to search for you. Take these clothes and follow us to the castle."

"What!" I cried, "you would lead me to that uninhabited castle on the top of the mountain?"

"Not at all," replied the young man, "you will see a superb palace, and we are only two hundred feet from it."

Thinking that some princess of the land actually had a dwelling in the neighborhood, I put on the dry clothes and followed the young man. Soon I found myself in front of a black marble portal, but that was all I could see of the building in the feeble light of the torches. We entered, and the young man led me to the foot of the staircase, where he left me. At the top of the first flight, I was met by a lady of rare beauty.

"Signor Romati," she said, "the Princess of Monte-Salerno has charged me to show you the beauties of this residence."

I replied that if the princess was anything like her ladies-in-waiting, I had already formed a very high opinion of her.

In short, the lady who was to be my guide was, as I have said, a ravishing beauty, and her manner was so distinguished that at first I thought she was the princess herself. Moreover, I noticed that her style of dress was similar to that in our family portraits painted in the last century. But I imagined that it was the costume worn by the ladies of Naples and that she had gone back to old-fashioned styles.

The first room we entered was all in massive silver: the floor was made of squares of silver, some dull, others highly polished. The wall-hanging, also in massive silver, was an imitation of damask, the background of which had been

polished and the floral designs left dull. The ceiling was carved like the woodwork in ancient castles. Lastly, the curtains, the edges of the wall-hanging, the chandeliers, the frames, the tables were all examples of the most wonderful goldsmith's art.

"Signor Romati," said the pretended lady-in-waiting, "you are taking a long time over those decorations. This is only the antechamber for the princess's footmen."

I made no reply and we entered a room almost like the first, save that here everything was in enamel, with decorations of that shaded gold so fashionable some fifty years ago.

"This room," said the lady, "is the antechamber for the gentlemen-in-waiting, the major-domo and the other household officials. You will see neither gold nor silver in the princess's apartments. Simplicity is the only thing she admires. You may judge of her taste by this dining room."

At that she opened a side door and we entered a room where the walls were all of tinted marble, with a frieze of a magnificent bas-relief in white marble that ran all around the room. There were also handsome sideboards crowded with rock crystal vases and bowls of the most beautiful porcelain from India.

We then returned to the officers' antechamber, from which we passed into the state drawing room.

"For instance," said the lady, "you may admire this room."

And admire it I did in truth. My first astonished glance was for the floor. It was of lapis lazuli encrusted with hard stones set in the style of Florentine mosaics, an art so intricate it takes several years to make one table. The design was an over-all pattern which gave a general effect of unity. But on examining the various squares, one saw that this enormous variety of detail did not in the least destroy the symmetry of the whole. Indeed, though the main design was repeated throughout, in one place it showed a cluster of beautiful flowers; in another, exquisitely enameled shells; here, butterflies; there, hummingbirds. In short, the most beautiful stones in the world were used to imitate the greatest beauties of nature. The center of this magnificent

floor represented a jewelcase made of colored stones surrounded by ropes of enormous pearls. It all stood out in relief and looked as real as in the Florentine tables.

"Signor Romati," said the lady, "if you stop to look at everything we shall never finish."

I raised my eyes and the first thing I saw was a painting of Raphael's, apparently the first after his *School of Athens*, but much more beautiful in coloring, since it was painted in oil.

Then I noticed a Hercules at the feet of Omphale. The figure of Hercules was by Michelangelo, and I recognized the brushstrokes of Guido in the figure of the woman. In a word, each of those paintings in that salon was more beautiful than any I had ever seen. The wall covering was plain green velvet, a shade that brought out the beauty of the paintings.

On both sides of the doors stood statues a trifle smaller than life. There were four of them. One was the famous Venus of Phidias, of whom Phryne¹ demanded the sacrifice; the second, the Faun by the same artist; the third, the original Venus of Praxiteles of which the one owned by the Medici is only a copy; the fourth, an extremely beautiful Antinoüs. There were other groups at each window.

All around the salon were chests of drawers that, instead of being decorated in bronze, were ornamented with the most exquisite jewels framing cameos, such as one sees only in the cabinets of kings. The chests contained a series of gold medals of the highest units.

"This," the lady told me, "is where the princess spends her time after dinner; and the examination of this collection gives rise to conversations as instructive as they are interesting. But you still have many things to see. Therefore, follow me."

Then we entered the bedroom. It was an octagonal room with four alcoves and as many beds, each of an extraordinary size. There was no sign of paneling, wallpaper or ceiling. Everything was covered in India muslin draped with

¹ Pythagoras (1813).

marvelous taste, embroidered with amazing skill and so fine it could have been a mist that Arachne herself might have woven into a gossamer web.

"But why four beds?" I asked the lady.

"To change about," she replied, "when you are overheated and cannot sleep."

"But," I added, "why are those beds so large?"

"That," replied the lady, "is because the princess sometimes allows her ladies to come in when she wishes to talk before she goes to sleep. But let us go into the bathroom."

The bathroom was circular, lined in mother-of-pearl with an ornamental border running around it. Instead of draperies, the upper part of the walls was trimmed with a wide-meshed fillet of pearls, from which hung a fringe of pearls all of the same size and color. The ceiling was a mirror, on which swam gold fish from China. Instead of a bathtub, there was a circular basin and around it a circle of artificial moss on which had been set the most beautiful shells from the Indian Ocean.

Here I could no longer contain my admiration.

"Ah, madame," I exclaimed, "paradise cannot be more beautiful!"

"Paradise," cried the lady looking desperate and bewildered. "Paradise! Did he say paradise? Signor Romati, I beg of you, do not use that word again. I beg you earnestly not to. Follow me."

We then passed into an aviary filled with all sorts of tropical birds, as well as all the delightful song birds of our own climate. There we found a table laid for me alone.

"Ah, madame," I said to my beautiful guide, "how can I dream of eating in such a heavenly abode? I see you will not join me, but I could never bring myself to sit down alone unless you will deign to tell me about this princess who owns so many marvels."

The lady smiled graciously, served me, sat down and began in these words:

"I am the daughter of the last Prince of Monte-Salerno."

"Who? You, madame?"

"I meant, the Princess of Monte-Salerno. But don't interrupt me again."

The Prince of Monte-Salerno, who was descended from the ancient Dukes of Salerno, was a grandee of Spain, Constable, Admiral of the Fleet, Master of the Horse, Royal Chamberlain, Master of the Royal Hunt—in short, he united in his person all the important positions in the Kingdom of Naples. But though he was in the service of his king, he himself had a household of gentlemen among whom there were several men of title. Among the latter was the Marquis de Spinaverde, first gentleman-in-waiting to the Prince. The marquis possessed the prince's full confidence, which he shared, however, with his wife, the Marchioness de Spinaverde, first lady-in-waiting to the princess.

I was ten years old—I mean the Prince of Monte-Salerno's only daughter was ten, when her mother died. At that time, the Spinaverdes left the prince's household, the husband to administer his estates, the wife to direct my education. Leaving in Naples their eldest daughter, Laure, who led a somewhat ambiguous existence in the prince's household, her mother and the young princess came to live at Monte-Salerno.

The marchioness paid little attention to Elfrida's education, but a great deal to the people she gathered around her. They were taught to anticipate my slightest wishes.

"Your slightest wishes . . ." I said to the lady.

"I asked you not to interrupt me," she replied with some annoyance.¹

After which she continued as follows:

I liked to test my ladies' submission in all sorts of ways. I would give them contradictory orders—half of them impossible to carry out—and I punished them either by pinching them, or by sticking pins into their arms and thighs. They left me. La Spinaverde gave me others; they also left me.

While this was going on, my father fell ill and we went to Naples. I saw little of him, but the Spinaverdes never left his side.

¹ With a great deal of annoyance (1813).

At last, after making a will in which he appointed Spinaverde sole guardian of his daughter and administrator of his estates and other properties, my father died.

The obsequies occupied us for several weeks, after which we returned to Monte-Salerno, where I again began to pinch my ladies-in-waiting. Four years slipped by in those innocent occupations, which were all the sweeter to me as La Spinaverde assured me daily that I was right, that everyone was born to obey me and that those who did not obey me promptly or well enough deserved the worst punishments.

One day, however, all my women left me one after the other, and I saw myself reduced that evening to undressing myself. I wept with rage and I ran to La Spinaverde, who told me:

"Dear, sweet princess, dry your beautiful eyes. I will undress you this evening and tomorrow I shall send you six ladies-in-waiting with whom you will surely be satisfied."

The next day, when I awoke, La Spinaverde presented to me six young girls who were so beautiful that when I saw them I was seized with a strange sort of emotion. They, too, seemed to be moved. I was the first to recover from my agitation. I leapt out of bed in my nightgown, embraced them one after the other and assured them I would never scold them or pinch them. Indeed, even when they were awkward in dressing me, or when they dared to contradict me, I never lost my temper.

"But, madame," I said to the princess, "those young girls may have been boys in disguise."

The princess looked very dignified and said:

"Signor Romati, I asked you not to interrupt me."

Then she resumed the thread of her discourse:

The day I was sixteen, some illustrious visitors were announced: a Secretary of State, the Spanish Ambassador and the Duke de Guadarrama. The latter came to ask my hand in marriage. The two others were there only to press his suit. The young duke was as handsome as one could imagine, and I cannot deny that he made an impression on me.

That evening they suggested a walk in the park. Scarcely had we taken a few steps when a mad bull sprang out of a

clump of trees and came charging down upon us. The duke rushed to meet him, cloak in one hand, sword in the other. The bull hesitated, hurled himself at the duke, ran himself through on the sword and fell at the duke's feet. I felt that I owed my life to the duke's courage and skill. But the next day I learned that the bull had been stationed there on purpose by the duke's equerry and that his master had arranged that scene in order to pay me a compliment after the fashion of his country. At that, far from being grateful, I could not forgive him for the fright he had caused me and I refused his hand.

La Spinaverde was deeply grateful to me for refusing him. She seized that opportunity to impress upon me my many advantages, and to show me how much I would lose by changing my status and giving myself a lord and master. Some time after that, the same Secretary of State came to see me again, accompanied by another ambassador, and with them the Crown Prince of Noudel-Hansberg. That sovereign was a grandee, big, fat, fair and pale-faced. He insisted upon talking about the entailed property in his hereditary estates; but he spoke Italian with a Tyrolean accent. I began to imitate his speech. Mimicking his accent, I assured him that his presence was urgently needed in his entailed estates. He departed in high dudgeon. La Spinaverde devoured me with caresses and, to make sure of keeping me at Monte-Salerno, she had all these beautiful things made that you see here.

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "how well she succeeded! This beautiful spot is indeed a paradise on earth."

At those words, the princess rose indignantly and said to me:

"Romati, I asked you not to use that expression again."

Then she began to laugh in a convulsive, rather terrifying fashion and kept repeating:

"Yes, paradise, paradise, he does well to talk of paradise."

This scene was becoming embarrassing. At last the princess stopped laughing, looked at me severely and ordered me to follow her.

She opened a door and we found ourselves in subterranean vaults. Beyond them I could see something that looked like a silver lake, but which was actually a lake of

quicksilver. The princess clapped her hands, and a boat appeared, rowed by a yellow dwarf. We stepped into the boat, and I noticed that the dwarf's face was of gold, his eyes of diamonds and his mouth of coral. In a word, it was a mechanical figure which, by means of little oars dipped into the quicksilver, cleverly propelled the boat forward. That new-style gondolier rowed us to the foot of a rock that opened, and we entered another underground passage where a thousand automatons presented the most unusual spectacle. Peacocks spread enameled tails covered with precious stones. Parakeets with feathers of emeralds flew over our heads. Negroes carved out of ebony offered us golden dishes filled with cherries made of rubies and grapes made of sapphires. A thousand other surprising wonders filled those marvelous vaults, which seemed to have no end.

Then—I don't know why—I was tempted to repeat the word "paradise" to see what effect it would have on the princess, and yielding to that fatal curiosity, I said:

"In truth, madame, one may say that you have paradise on earth."

The princess gave me a most charming smile and said to me:

"That you may judge the better of the charms of this abode, I shall introduce my six ladies-in-waiting to you."

Taking a gold key from her belt, she opened a large chest covered in black velvet and ornamented with solid silver.

As the chest opened, a skeleton emerged and stalked towards me menacingly. I drew my sword. Pulling off his left arm, the skeleton used it as a weapon and attacked me furiously. I defended myself well enough, but another skeleton leapt out of the chest, pulled out a rib from the first skeleton and hit me over the head with it. I grabbed him by the throat, he flung his fleshless arms around me and tried to throw me down. No sooner had I managed to get rid of him, when a third skeleton jumped out of the chest and joined the other two. Three others also appeared. As I could not hope to get out of such an unequal combat, I fell on my knees and begged the princess for mercy.

She ordered the skeletons back into the chest. Then she said to me:

"Romati, never forget as long as you live what you have seen here."

At the same time, she seized my arm. I felt it burn to the bone and I fainted.

I don't know how long I remained in that condition. At last I came to and I heard chanting fairly near me. I saw that I was in the midst of vast ruins. Trying to find my way out, I came to an inner court where I saw a chapel, and monks singing matins. When their service was over, the Superior invited me to come into his cell. I followed him and, making an effort to gather myself together, I told him what had happened to me. When I had finished my tale, the Superior said:

"My child, haven't you a mark on your arm where the princess grasped you?"

I rolled back my sleeve and I actually saw a bad burn on my arm and the marks of the princess' five fingers.

Then the Superior opened a chest beside his bed and took out of it an old parchment:

"Here," said he to me, "is the official document of our foundation. It will enlighten you on what you have seen."

I unrolled the parchment and read as follows:

In the year of Our Lord 1503, ninth year of Frederic, King of Naples and Sicily, Elfrida of Monte-Salerno, carrying impiety to the extreme, boasted openly of possessing the true paradise, declaring that of her own free will she renounced the one we await in the life eternal. However, during the night from Holy Thursday to Good Friday, an earthquake destroyed her palace. Its ruins have become an abode of Satan, where the enemy of mankind has installed many and many a demon. For a long time those demons have haunted—and still haunt, with a thousand allurements—not only those who dare approach Monte-Salerno, but even the good Christians who live in the environs. Wherefore, we Pius Third,¹ servant of servants, etc., do authorize the founding of a chapel in the very heart of the ruins . . .

I have forgotten the rest of the document. But I do recall that the Superior assured me the obsessions had become much rarer, though they sometimes occurred, and particularly in the night from Holy Thursday to Friday. At the

¹ Alexander VI (1813).

same time, he advised me to have Masses said for the repose of the princess's soul and to attend them myself. I followed his advice and then I departed to continue my journeys. But what I saw on that fatal night has left such a gloomy impression on me that nothing can efface it; moreover, my arm is very sore.

As he spoke, Romati turned back his sleeve and showed us his arm where we could see the mark of the princess's fingers and what looked like the scar from a burn.

Here I interrupted the chief to say that I had glanced through the various tales of Hapelius at the cabalist's castle and had found among them a story that was almost the duplicate of his.

"That may be," replied the chief. "Perhaps Romati got his story out of that book. Perhaps he made it up. In any case, one thing is certain: his story contributed greatly to giving me a love of traveling and even a vague hope of having thrilling adventures which I have never had. But so strong are the impressions we receive in our childhood, that that wild hope has plagued me for many a year and I have never gotten over it."

"Signor Pandesowna," I then said to the gypsy chief, "did I not understand you to say that since you have been living in these mountains you have seen things that are little short of marvelous?"

"That is so," he replied, "I have seen things that reminded me of Romati's story . . ."

At that moment, a gypsy came and interrupted us.¹ After he had talked alone with his chief, the latter said to me:

"It is not advisable for us to make camp here. Tomorrow, early in the morning, we shall leave these parts."

We separated to go to our tents. As on the previous night, my sleep was uninterrupted.

¹ At this point the St. Petersburg text is joined with the story of Rebecca in the "Ten Days of Alfonso van Worden," in which it follows almost without transition the story of Orlandine. Page 48, the last in the St. Petersburg edition, contains the following lines. The sentence, abruptly broken off, was to continue on page 49, which was probably never written:

"Then we dined, and as the chief was still busy, I took my gun and went hunting. I climbed several peaks and looking down on the valley . . ."

The fourteenth day¹

Long before dawn, we were on our horses and riding deep into the deserted valleys of the Sierra Morena. At sunrise, we found ourselves on a high peak, from where I could discern the course of the Guadalquivir and farther off the gallows of Los Hermanos. That sight made me shiver, reminding me as it did of a delicious night and of the horrors that had followed my awakening. From that peak we descended a rather smiling but lonely valley, where we halted. The men pitched camp, we breakfasted hastily and then, I don't know why, I wanted to get a closer look at the gallows and see whether the Zoto brothers were there. I took my gun. My habit of orienting myself made it easy for me to find

¹This account has obviously been restored. In the Paris text of 1814, that last story concludes the "Ten Days of Alfonso van Worden."

the way, and in a short time I reached the gallows' enclosure. The door was open; I could see the two corpses stretched out on the ground, and between them, a young girl whom I recognized as Rebecca.

I woke her as gently as I could. However, the shock that I could not altogether spare her put her in a cruel state. She went into convulsions, wept and fainted. I picked her up in my arms and carried her to a nearby spring, where I flung water in her face and gradually brought her back to consciousness. I would not have dared to ask her how she came to be under that gallows, but she spoke of it herself.

"I knew," she said, "that your discretion would be fatal to me. You would not tell me about your adventure, and now I, like you, have become the victim of those cursed vampires whose hateful ruses have wiped out, in a flash, the lengthy precautions my father took to assure me immortality. It is hard for me to make myself believe the horrors of last night. However, I shall try to recall them and tell you about them. But so you may understand me better, I shall begin a little farther back in the story of my life."

THE STORY OF REBECCA

In telling you his story, my brother told you part of mine. The two daughters of the Queen of Sheba were destined to be his wives, and I was supposed to be married to two genii who preside over the constellation of the Gemini. Flattered by such a splendid alliance, my brother redoubled his enthusiasm for the cabalistic sciences. It was the contrary with me—to marry two genii seemed to me terrifying. Moreover, I could not compose two lines of cabala. Each day I put off the work till the next day, and I ended by almost forgetting that art, which is as difficult as it is dangerous.

My brother was not slow to perceive my negligence. He reproached me bitterly and threatened to complain to our father. I implored him to spare me. He promised to wait till the following Saturday, but on that day, as I had still done nothing, he came to me at midnight, woke me and told me he was going to call up the terrible shade of Mamoun. I threw myself at his knees; he was inexorable. I heard him speak the formula, in times past invented by the Baltoive

of Endor. Immediately my father appeared, seated on an ivory throne; his threatening eye filled me with terror; I thought I could not survive the first word that would come out of his mouth. I heard it, however. "God of Abraham!" he said and uttered horrible imprecations. I shall not repeat what he said to me . . .

Here the young Israelite covered her face with her hands. But after a little while she controlled herself, and trembling at the mere thought of that cruel scene, continued as follows:

I did not hear the end of my father's speech: I had fainted before he finished. When I came to, I saw my brother holding out to me the Book of Sefiroth. I thought I would faint again; but I had to submit. My brother, who felt sure he would have to go back to first elements with me, had the patience to recall them little by little to my memory. I began with the composition of syllables and went on to composing words and formulas. And I ended by becoming devoted to that sublime science. I would spend whole nights in the study that had been my father's observatory, and there I would fall asleep when daylight interrupted my operations. I would be so dead for sleep that I scarcely knew when Zulica, my mulatto maid, undressed me. I would sleep for several hours and then return to occupations for which I was not made, as you will see.

You know Zulica, and you have noticed her charms, of which she has an infinity: her eyes are tenderness itself, her mouth smiling; her body perfect in form. One morning, returning from the observatory, I summoned her to undress me. She did not hear me. I went to her room, which is next to mine. I saw her at the window; she was half naked and, leaning out. She was making signs to someone on the other side of the valley and throwing kisses into which she seemed to put her whole soul. I had no idea of love; it was the first time I had ever witnessed any expression of that sentiment. I was so surprised and upset that I stood there like a statue. Zulica turned around and a deep red spread from the nut-brown color of her breast over her entire body. I blushed, too; then I turned pale. I almost fainted. Zulica caught me in her arms and the sound of her heart beating against mine calmed the disorder of my senses.

Zulica hastily undressed me. When I was in bed, she seemed to be eager to withdraw and even more eager to close the door. Soon after, I heard steps and someone entering her room. In a movement as quick as it was involuntary, I ran to her door, peered through the keyhole—and I saw the young mulatto Tanzai. He had a basket filled with flowers he had just gathered in the fields. Zulica rushed to meet him, seized a handful of the flowers and pressed them to her breast. Tanzai bent close to breathe their perfume and I distinctly saw Zulica tremble all over her body, a sensation he seemed to share with her. She fell into Tanzai's arms and I went back to my room to hide my weakness and my shame.

My bed was wet with my tears. Sobs choked me and in the extremity of my suffering I cried out:

"Oh! my hundred and twelfth ancestress, whose name I bear, sweet and tender spouse of Isaac, if, from the bosom of your father-in-law, from Abraham's bosom, you see the state I am in, appease the shade of Mamoun. Tell him his daughter is unworthy of the honors for which he has destined her."

My cries and lamentations woke my brother. He came into my room and, thinking I was ill, made me take a sedative. When he came again at noon, my pulse was rapid and he offered to continue my cabalistic operations for me. I accepted, for it would have been impossible for me to work. Towards evening, I fell asleep and my dreams were very different from the dreams I had had up to then. The next day, I daydreamed, or at least I was so absent-minded my brother must have thought I was dreaming. Every time he looked at me I blushed, though I didn't know why. Eight days passed in this way.

One night my brother came to my room. He had the Book of Sefiroth under his arm and in his hand a spangled bandeau on which were plainly written the seventy-two names that Zoroaster has given to the constellations of the Gemini.

"Rebecca," he said to me, "Rebecca, come out of a state that is unworthy of you. It is time for you to test your power over the elementary peoples. And this spangled bandeau will protect you from their activities. Choose a place on the hills

around here which you think is right for your work. Remember your fate depends on it."

My brother then dragged me out of the door of the castle and locked the bars behind me.

Left to myself, I gathered together my courage. The night was dark. I was barefoot, with my hair hanging loose, and clad only in a nightgown. In one hand I held my book; in the other, my magic bandeau. I set out in the direction of the nearest mountain. A shepherd tried to put his hands on me. Using the book I was holding, I pushed him away and he fell dead at my feet. You will not be surprised when you know that the cover of the book was made of larchwood, and such is its property that all who touch it die.

The sun was just rising when I reached the summit I had chosen for my operations. But as I could not begin work till the next day at midnight, I went into a cave where I found a she-bear and her cubs. The bear sprang at me, but the magic book had its effect and the furious animal fell at my feet. Her swollen dugs reminded me that I was faint from lack of food and I had as yet no genii at my command, not even the most insignificant hobgoblin. I therefore decided to lie down on the ground beside the mother-bear and suck her milk. There was still enough warmth in the animal's body to make that repast less disgusting, but the little cubs tried to drive me away. Alfonso, can you picture a sixteen-year-old girl, who had never been away from home, in that situation! I had terrible weapons at hand, but I had never used them, and the slightest carelessness might turn them against me.

However, the grass withered under my feet as I passed, the air was filled with a burning mist and birds died in mid-flight. I believed that demons, forewarned, were beginning to gather. A tree caught fire by itself and from it came clouds of smoke that, instead of rising, surrounded my cave and plunged me in darkness. The she-bear lying at my feet seemed to come to life again; her eyes glittered with a fire that, for a second, dispersed the dark. An evil spirit in the form of a winged serpent came out of her mouth. It was Nemrael, a demon of the lowest rank, who had been detailed to serve me. But soon afterwards I heard someone speaking

the language of the Egregores, the most illustrious of the fallen angels. I understood that they would do me the honor of attending my reception into the world of intermediary beings. That language is the same as the one we have in the Book of Enoch, a work of which I have made a special study.

Finally Semiaras, prince of the Egregores, was kind enough to advise me that it was time to begin. I came out of my cave, stretched out my star-studded band in a circle, opened my book and spoke aloud the terrible formulas which until then I had dared to read only with my eyes . . . Of course you realize, Signor Alfonso, that I cannot tell you what happened on that occasion, and you would not be able to understand it. I shall tell you only that I gained fairly great power over the spirits, and that they taught me how to make myself known to the heavenly Gemini. About that time, my brother saw the tips of the feet of Solomon's daughters. I waited for the sun to enter the sign of the Gemini and I went to work in my turn. I left no stone unturned to obtain complete success and, in order not to lose the thread of my combinations, I prolonged my work so late into the night that at last, overcome by sleep, I was obliged to give up.

The next day, as I stood in front of my mirror, I saw two human figures who seemed to be behind me. I turned around and there was no one there. I looked in the mirror and I saw them again. For that matter, there was nothing frightening about that apparition. I saw two young men a trifle larger than the human figure; their shoulders were broader, but with a slightly feminine roundness. Their chests were high, also, like women's chests, but their breasts were like men's. Their rounded, beautifully shaped arms were pressed flat along their hips, in the attitude one sees on Egyptian statues. Their hair, of a color between gold and pale blue, fell in long ringlets on their shoulders. I say nothing of their features; you can imagine how beautiful demigods are; for in short, they were the heavenly Gemini. I recognized them by the little flames above their heads.

"How were those demigods dressed?" I asked Rebecca.

"They had nothing on," she replied. "Each had four wings, two of which lay on their shoulders and two others crossed around their waists. To tell the truth, those wings

were as transparent as the wings of a fly, but streaks of purple and gold in that diaphanous material hid everything that could have been startling to modesty.

So there you are, I said to myself, the heavenly spouses to whom I am destined. To myself I couldn't help comparing them with the young mulatto who adored Zulica. I was ashamed of that comparison, and as I glanced towards the mirror, I thought I saw the demigods frown in annoyance, as if they had read my thoughts and were offended by that involuntary comparison.

For several days I dared not raise my eyes to the mirror. At last, I ventured to do so. The divine Gemini had crossed their arms over their chests and their tender expressions banished my shyness. But I did not know what to say to them. To cover my embarrassment, I went to look for a volume of the works of Edris, whom you call Atlas; it is the most beautiful poetry we have. The harmony of Edris' verses is somewhat like the harmony of the heavenly bodies. As I am not very familiar with the language of that author, and fearing that I had read it badly, I stole a glance in the mirror to see the effect I was making on my listeners. I had every reason to be satisfied. The two Gemini looked at each other, apparently approving of me, and now and then the glances they cast in the mirror filled me with emotion.

Then my brother came in and the vision vanished. He spoke to me of the daughters of Solomon, the tips of whose feet he had seen. We took a delightful walk through country that looked as if it had been enameled in the most beautiful colors. I noticed that my brother's eyes glowed with a fire very different from the passion one has for studies. We walked through a grove of orange trees, I dreaming my dreams, he dreaming his, and we came home still absorbed in our reveries.

When Zulica came to put me to bed, she handed me a mirror. I saw that I was not alone. I had her take the mirror away, persuading myself, like an ostrich, that I would not be seen as long as I did not see. I went to bed and I slept, but soon strange dreams crowded through my mind. I thought I saw in the unfathomable depths of the heavens two shining stars moving forward majestically in the zodiac. Suddenly

they moved apart and then came back again, bringing with them the little nebula from the foot of Auriga.

Those three heavenly bodies continued their ethereal way together; then they stopped and assumed the semblance of an igneous meteor. Finally they appeared in the form of three luminous rings which, after whirling about for a while, came to rest at one center. Then they changed into a sort of halo or aureole, around a throne of sapphire. I saw the Gemini holding out their arms to me and showing me the place I was to fill between them. I wanted to run to them, but at that moment I thought the mulatto Tanzai grabbed me by the waist and stopped me. I actually felt myself clasped in a strong embrace and I awoke with a start.

My room was dark and I saw through the crack under the door that Zulica had a light in her room. I heard her moan and I thought she was sick. Of course, I should have called her, but I didn't. I don't know how I was so thoughtless as to look through the keyhole again. I saw the mulatto Tanzai taking such liberties with Zulica that I froze with horror. My eyes closed and I fell in a faint.

When I came to, my brother and Zulica were standing beside my bed. I gave Zulica a withering glance and ordered her never to come into my presence again. My brother asked the reason for my severity. I told him, blushing, what had happened during the night. He said he had married Zulica and Tanzai the night before, but he was annoyed, not having foreseen what had happened. To tell the truth only my vision had been outraged; but the extreme delicacy of the Gemini caused him some anxiety. As for me, I was overcome with shame and I would have died rather than look in a mirror.

My brother did not know what my relations with the Gemini were; but he knew that I was not unknown to them, and seeing that I was letting myself drift into a sort of melancholy, he feared that I might neglect the work I had begun. The sun was about to come out of the sign of Gemini and he thought it his duty to warn me. I awoke as from a dream. I trembled at the thought of not seeing the Thamims again, of being separated from them for eleven months with-

out knowing their opinion of me, of having made myself unworthy of their notice.

I decided to go into the drawing room of the castle where there is a Venetian mirror twelve feet tall. And to give myself an excuse, I took with me the volume of Edris that contains his poem on the creation of the world. I sat down as far as possible from the mirror and began to read aloud. Then, breaking off abruptly and raising my voice, I dared to ask the Thamims if they had witnessed any of those marvels. At that the Venetian mirror came away from the wall and stood in front of me. In it I saw the Gemini smiling at me contentedly and nodding their heads to show me that they had actually been present at the creation of the world and that it had all happened as Edris described. I grew bolder; I closed my book, looked up and our eyes met in one long look. That instant of abandonment almost cost me dear. I was still too close to humanity to endure so intimate a communication. The flame that shone in their eyes almost consumed me; I lowered my eyes, and having gotten hold of myself somewhat, I went on with my reading. The poem I happened to turn to was Edris' second song, in which that foremost of poets describes the loves of the sons of Elohim for the daughters of men. Today it is impossible to conceive of the manner in which they made love in that early *erga* of the world. Again and again I hesitated over passages I did not fully understand. At those moments my eyes would turn involuntarily towards the mirror; and it seemed to me that the Thamims were getting more and more pleasure out of listening to me. They held out their arms; they came close to my chair. I saw them spread the shining wings on their shoulders; I even noticed a slight undulation of the wings that served them as belts. I thought they were going to spread them, too, and I put my hand over my eyes. At that moment I felt my hand kissed, also the hand that held my book, and I heard the mirror break into a thousand pieces. I understood that the sun had come out of the sign of the Gemini and that they were taking leave of me.

The next day, in another mirror, I again saw something like two shades, or rather like a faint outline of the two heavenly forms. The day after that I saw nothing at all.

Then, to while away the boredom of our separation, I spent nights in the observatory with my eye glued to the telescope, following my lovers until their setting. I imagined I could still see them, though they were already below the horizon. At last, when the tail of Cancer disappeared from sight, I retired to cry myself to sleep.

My brother, however, full of love and hope, devoted himself more closely than ever to the study of occult sciences. One day he told me that according to a certain sign he had noticed in the sky, a famous expert was to pass through Cordova on the twenty-third of our month Thybi at forty minutes past midnight. That celebrated cabalist had been living for two hundred years in the pyramid of Saophis and he was now about to sail for America. That evening I went to the observatory. I found that my brother was right, but my calculations brought a slightly different result from his. My brother maintained that he was right, and as he is wedded to his opinions, he insisted upon going to Cordova himself to prove his point. He could have made the journey in as short a time as it takes me to tell you, but he preferred to go on foot and to follow the ridge of the slope, choosing the route where he could enjoy the most beautiful scenery. Thus he came to the Venta Quemada. He had taken little Nemrael with him, that clever spirit that had appeared to me in the cave. He ordered him to bring his supper. Nemrael stole the supper of a Benedictine prior and took it to him at the *venta*. Then, as my brother had no further use for Nemrael, he sent him back to me. At that moment I was in the observatory and I saw signs in the sky that made me fear for my brother's safety. I ordered Nemrael to return to the *venta* and not to leave his master again. He obeyed but returned a second time to tell me that a power greater than his had prevented him from entering the inn. I was wild with anxiety. Finally I saw you arriving with my brother. I read in your features an assurance and a serenity that showed me you were not a cabalist. My father predicted that I would suffer greatly because of a mortal, and I was afraid you might be the one. Soon, however, other cares filled my mind. My brother told me the story of Pascheco, and related his own experience, adding, to my great surprise, and that he did not

know what type of demon he had to deal with. We waited for the night with the greatest impatience. Though we performed the most terrible conjurations, it was all to no purpose: we could learn nothing about the nature of the two beings, nor did we know whether through them my brother had actually lost his right to immortality. I thought you might be able to throw some light on the matter. But faithful to I know not what word of honor, you would not tell us anything.

Then, to help my brother, I decided to spend a night at the Venta Quemada myself. I set out yesterday and the night was already advanced when I came to the entrance to the valley. I gathered some mist, out of which I made a firefly, and commanded it to lead me to the *venta*. It is a secret that has been handed down in our family; and the same by which Moses, own brother of my seventy-third ancestor, made the column of fire that led the Israelites into the desert.

My firefly glowed brightly and began to fly in front of me; but he did not take the shortest road. I was well aware of his disloyalty, but I did not pay much attention to it.

It was midnight when I arrived. As I entered the courtyard of the *venta*, I saw that there was a light in the middle room and I heard beautiful music. I sat down on a stone bench. I made some cabalistic signs but nothing happened. True, that music charmed and distracted me to the point that even now I cannot tell you whether my operations were well done, and I suspect that I missed some essential point. But at the time I thought I was proceeding regularly, and, believing the inn to be free of demons or spirits, I concluded the singers could only be men, and I gave myself up to the pleasure of listening to them. There were two voices, accompanied by a stringed instrument, but so melodious, so well attuned in harmony, that no music on earth could compare with it.

Those songs filled me with a tenderness voluptuous beyond description. For a long time I sat on the bench listening to them, but at last I made up my mind to go in, since that was what I had come for. I therefore went up the stairs, and in the middle room I found two tall, handsome young men seated at a table, eating, drinking and singing at the

top of their lungs. They were dressed like Orientals: with turbans on their heads, chests and arms bare and costly weapons at their belt.

The two strangers, whom I took for Turks, rose, fetched a chair for me, filled my plate and my glass and then began to sing again, accompanying themselves on a theorbo, which they took turns playing. Their free and easy manner was contagious. They did not stand on ceremony. Nor did I. I was hungry; I ate. There was no water, so I drank wine. I wanted to sing with the young Turks who appeared charmed to listen to me. I sang a Spanish *seguidilla*. They replied in the same rhymes. I asked where they had learned Spanish.

One of them replied:

"We were born in Morea and, sailors by profession, it was easy for us to learn the language of the ports we frequented. But that's enough of *seguidillas*. Now listen to the songs of our country."

Their songs had a melody that played on all the nuances of emotion, and just when you were strung up to an unbearable pitch, an unexpected note flung you into the maddest gaiety.

I was not deceived by all those wiles. I stared attentively at the pretended sailors and I thought I found in one or the other a striking resemblance to my divine Gemini.

"You are Turks," I asked, "born in Morea?"

"Not at all," replied the one who had not yet spoken. "We are Greeks, born in Sparta. Ah! Divine Rebecca, how can you fail to recognize me? I am Pollux and this is my brother!"

Fright robbed me of the use of my voice; the pretended Gemini spread their wings and I felt myself rise in the air. Through a happy inspiration I pronounced a sacred name known only to my brother and me. Instantly, I was hurled down to earth and lay there completely dazed by my fall. You, Alfonso, restored me to consciousness. An inner feeling tells me I have lost nothing that is important for me to preserve, but I am weary of so many wonders; I feel that I was born to remain a simple mortal.

Rebecca's story did not have the effect on me she intended.

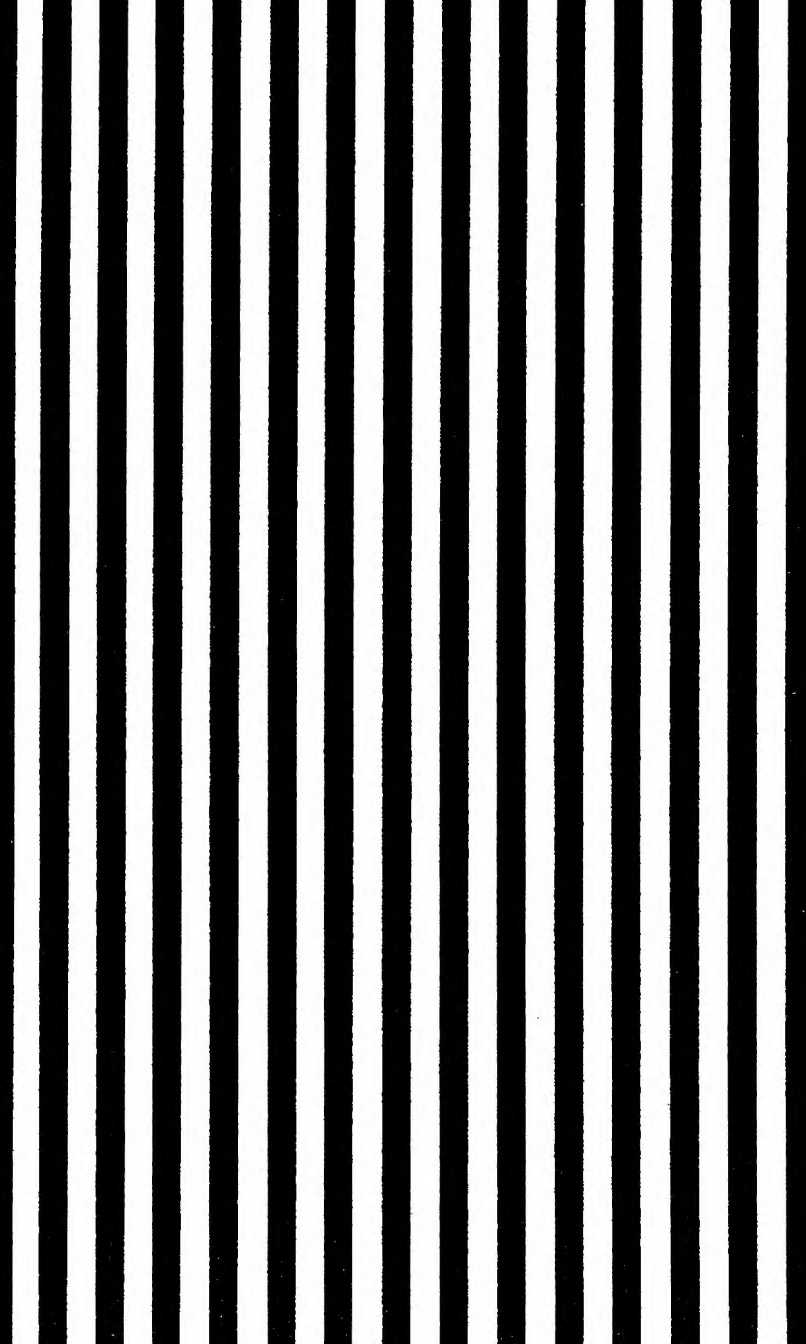
In spite of the extraordinary things I had seen and heard during the past ten days, I thought she had tried to make a fool of me and I left her rather abruptly. Reflecting on what had happened to me since my departure from Cadiz, I then recalled several words of Don Emmanuel de Sa, governor of that city, that made me think he was not wholly stranger to the mysterious existence of the Gomélez. It was he who had given me my two servants, Lopez and Moschito. I got it into my head that he had ordered them to leave me at the disastrous entrance to Los Hermanos. My cousins, and Rebecca herself, had frequently said they wanted to test me. Perhaps at the *venta* they had given me a potion to put me to sleep and afterwards nothing could be simpler than to carry me during my sleep and put me under the fatal gallows. Pascheco could have lost an eye in quite a different accident than his amorous liaison with the two hanged men, and his ghastly story could be nothing but a tale. The hermit who had tried to discover my secret was undoubtedly an agent of the Gomélez seeking to test my discretion. And finally Rebecca, her brother, Zoto and the chief of the gypsies had all perhaps connived to shake my courage.

The result of those reflections, as one may readily surmise, was that I decided to await resolutely the sequel to the adventures to which I was destined and which the reader will learn if he has enjoyed the first part of this story.¹

¹ By the first part of this story, we must obviously understand here the *Ten Days of Alfonso van Worden*—in other words, Days 1 to 10 and Day 14 of the complete work.



**Tales Taken from Avadoro,
a Spanish Story**



Story of the Terrible Pilgrim Hervas, and of His Father, the Omniscient Infidel

A profound knowledge of one hundred different branches of learning will seem, to some persons, to exceed the powers of which one human head is capable. It is certain, however, that Hervas wrote a book on each subject, beginning with its history and ending with extremely intelligent views on ways to increase and extend the frontiers of knowledge.

Hervas accomplished this colossal task by economizing his time and pursuing a regular schedule. He rose before sunup and prepared himself for his office work by mulling over the details he would have to attend to there. He appeared at the ministry half an hour before anyone else and, pen in hand, his mind empty of any thought other than the

task of the moment, he waited for the office to open. The moment the hour struck, he began his calculations and expedited them with surprising speed. After that, he went to the bookseller Moreno, whose confidence he had won, took the books he needed and carried them home with him. He went out again to eat a light meal, returned home before one o'clock and worked until eight o'clock at night. After that, he played *pelota* with several small boys in the neighborhood, returned home, drank a cup of chocolate and went to bed. On Sundays he spent the whole day away from home meditating on his work for the following week. In this way Hervas managed to devote three thousand hours a year to compiling his encyclopedic work. At the end of fifteen years (forty-five thousand hours) that amazing composition was actually completed without anyone in Madrid being aware of it; for Hervas was the least communicative of souls. He never spoke to anyone of his work, preferring to astonish the world by presenting all that vast accumulation of knowledge at one time.

Hervas therefore finished his work just as he himself came to the end of his thirty-ninth year, and he congratulated himself on entering his fortieth with a great reputation all ready to burst forth. But at the same time, in his heart he felt sad; for the habit of work, sustained by hope, had been to him a pleasant companionship that filled every moment of his day. He had lost that companionship; and boredom, which he had never known, began to make itself felt. That situation, so new to Hervas, changed his temperament completely. Far from seeking solitude, he was now seen in all the public places, where he always looked as if he were about to greet everyone; but as he did not know anyone and was unused to conversing, he passed by without a word. To himself, however, he thought that soon all Madrid would know him, would seek him out, and that his name would be on everyone's lips.

Tormented by his need for distraction, Hervas hit upon the idea of visiting his birthplace again, that straggling little village he hoped to make famous. For fifteen years the only relaxation he had permitted himself was to play *pelota* with the boys of the neighborhood, and he looked

forward with delight to the pleasure of playing the game in the place where he had spent his childhood.

Before he left, Hervas wanted to see his one hundred volumes ranged on a single shelf. He gave his manuscripts to a bookbinder, impressing upon him that the back of each volume must bear the name of the science and the number of the volume—from the first, which was the *World Grammar*, to the *Compendium*, which was the one-hundredth volume. At the end of three weeks the binder brought back the completed work. Hervas placed that imposing series on the bookshelf he had made ready for them and made a bonfire of all his notes and incomplete copies. Then, double-locking his door and putting his seal on it, he set out for Asturias.

The sight of his birthplace gave Hervas all the pleasure he had anticipated. A thousand memories, innocent and sweet, assailed him and he wept tears of joy that twenty years of the most arid conceptions had, so to speak, dried up at the source. Our polygraph would have gladly spent the rest of his days in his native village; but the hundred volumes called him back to Madrid.

So back he goes to the capital again, comes home, finds the seal on the door untouched. He opens the door! . . . and sees the hundred volumes in a thousand pieces, bindings ripped off, pages scattered in wild disorder all over the floor! That terrible sight drove him out of his mind; he collapsed amid the débris of his books and lost consciousness.

Alas! This was the cause of that disaster. Hervas never ate at home. Rats, so numerous in every house in Madrid, took good care not to frequent his place, where they would have found nothing but a few pens to nibble on. It was a different matter, however, when one hundred volumes, smelling of fresh glue, were brought into the bedroom, the very day that room was deserted by its owner. Attracted by the smell of the glue, encouraged by the emptiness of the place, the rats gathered in hordes. They turned everything topsy-turvy, they gnawed, they devoured . . .

When he recovered consciousness, Hervas saw one of those monsters dragging the last pages of his *Compendium* into a hole. It is doubtful if Hervas had ever known anger, but

he felt it now for the first time. He flung himself on the ravisher of his transcendental geometry, bumped his head against the wall and fainted again.

Hervas came to himself a second time, gathered up the pieces that littered the floor and flung them into a chest. Then he sat down on the chest and gave himself up to the saddest thoughts. Soon after that he was seized with a chill which, the next day, degenerated into a bilious fever, comatose and malignant.

Robbed of his glory by the rats, given up by his doctors, Hervas was not deserted by his nurse. She continued to look after him devotedly and soon a lucky crisis saved him. That nurse, a thirty-year-old girl named Marica, had come to take care of him out of the kindness of her heart; for Hervas had been in the habit of talking occasionally of an evening with her father, a shoemaker in the neighborhood. Now convalescent, he felt how greatly indebted he was to that kind girl.

"Marica," he said to her, "you have saved me and eased my return to life. What can I do for you?"

"Sir," the girl replied, "you could make me happy, but I dare not tell you how."

"Speak, speak! And be sure that, if it is in my power, I shall do it."

"But suppose I asked you to marry me?"

"I would do so and gladly. You will feed me when I am well, you will nurse me when I am sick and you will protect me from the rats when I am away. Yes, yes, Marica! I will marry you whenever you wish and the sooner the better."

Hervas, who had not yet entirely recovered, opened the chest containing the remnants of his polymathy, attempted to reassemble the mutilated pages and suffered a relapse that left him extremely weak. As soon as he was able to go out, he hurried to the Minister of Finance, pointed out that he had worked there fifteen years and had trained pupils, who were quite capable of replacing him. Moreover, his health being ruined, he now asked to be permitted to retire on a pension equivalent to half his salary. In Spain, favors of that sort are not difficult to obtain. Hervas's request was granted and he married Marica.

After his marriage, our scholar changed his style of living.

He took lodgings in a deserted neighborhood and vowed never to step outside his house till he had replaced the manuscript of his hundred volumes. The rats had chewed all the paper on the side of the books towards the back, leaving only the other half of each page, though even those halves were torn. Nevertheless, they were a help to Hervas when he began to rewrite the entire work. And while this was going on, he produced a work of a very different sort: Marica gave birth to me, the sinner and outcast. Ah! No doubt the day of my birth was a holiday in hell; the eternal fires of that terrible abode must have blazed with added fury and demons increased the torments of the damned the better to enjoy their howling.

I came into the world and my mother survived my birth by only a few hours. Hervas had never known love or friendship save through the definition of those two sentiments he had written in his sixty-seventh volume. The loss of his wife showed him that he had been born with a capacity for friendship and love. That loss crushed him more than the loss of his hundred tomes the rats had devoured. Hervas's house was small so that my cries re-echoed from garret to cellar; it was obviously impossible to leave me there. My grandfather, the shoemaker Maragnon, gave me a home. The old man was flattered to have in his house his grandson, the son of a *contador* and gentleman.

For his humble station in life my grandfather was very comfortably off. He sent me to school the moment I was old enough to go. When I was sixteen, he bought me handsome clothes and gave me enough money to flaunt my idleness around the streets of Madrid. He thought he was well repaid for his expenses when he could say: "*My nieto el hijo del contador.*" ("My grandson, the son of the contador.") But to go back to my father and his sad fate, which is all too well known; may it be a lesson to the ungodly and strike fear to their hearts!

Diego Hervas spent eight years repairing the damage the rats had done. His work was almost finished when some foreign newspapers that fell into his hands proved that, unknown to him, the sciences had made remarkable progress. Hervas sighed over this increase of difficulties; but as he

would not have his work imperfect, he added to each science the discoveries that had been made in it. That took him another four years. He had therefore spent twelve whole years practically glued to his work, without going out of his house. In the end, that sedentary life ruined his health. He suffered from chronic sciatica, lumbago, stones in his bladder and all the forerunners of gout. But at last, the polymathy in one hundred volumes was completed. Hervas sent for the bookseller Moreno, son of the Moreno who had sold his unfortunate Compendium.

"Sir," he said to him, "here are one hundred volumes that contain every bit of knowledge known to mankind today. This polymathy will be an honor to your presses and, I dare say, to Spain. I don't want anything for myself, only be kind enough to print it so that my noteworthy labor may not be entirely lost."

Moreno opened every volume, one after the other, and examined them carefully.

"Sir," he said, "I will undertake this work, but you must make up your mind to reduce it to twenty-five volumes."

"Go away," Hervas replied in deepest indignation. "Go away; go back to your store and print the romantic or pedantic rubbish that is the shame of Spain. Leave me, sir, with my ills and my genius which, had it been better known, would have brought me world-wide esteem. But I ask nothing more of men and even less of booksellers. Go!"

Moreno withdrew and Hervas relapsed into a mood of blackest melancholy. He could think of nothing but his hundred volumes, those children of his genius, conceived in delight, produced in a labor that also had its moments of pleasure, and all, all of them now plunged into oblivion. He saw his whole life wasted, his existence reduced to nothing, in the present as in the future. Then, too, his mind, strained to penetrate the mysteries of nature, turned unfortunately towards the depths of human misery. From measuring those depths, he saw evil on all sides; he saw nothing but evil and in his heart he said:

"Author of evil, who are you?"

He himself abominated that thought and he wanted to find out whether evil, to exist, must inevitably have been

created. Scholar that he was, he had no trouble in supporting his false system of sophistical proofs that are guaranteed to lead minds astray.

But in his efforts to penetrate the mysteries of creation, Hervas should have ascribed the glory to the Creator. And would to heaven he had done so! But his good angel had deserted him, and his mind, deranged by pride of knowledge, handed him over without defense to the magic of proud spirits whose fall brought about the fall of the world. Alas! While Hervas was raising his guilty thoughts above the spheres of human intelligences, his mortal body was threatened with approaching dissolution. To further defeat him, a number of acute diseases were added to his chronic illnesses. His sciatica, now extremely painful, robbed him of the use of his right leg; the stones in his kidneys tore his bladder; arthritis twisted the fingers of his left hand and threatened the joints of the right one; and finally the deepest hypochondria destroyed his spiritual as well as his physical forces. He shrank from letting anyone see his despondency and in the end he rejected even my attentions and refused to see me.

His only servant was a disabled old pensioner who put all his remaining strength into serving my father. But he himself fell ill and my father was then forced to put up with having me near him. Soon after that my grandfather Maragnon was stricken with brain fever. He was sick only five days. Feeling that his end was approaching, he sent for me.

"Blaz," he said, "my dear Blaz, receive my last blessing. You are born of a scholarly father and would to heaven he were less so! Happily for you, your grandfather was a man simple in faith and deeds, and he has raised you in the same simplicity. Don't let yourself be inveigled by your father. For some years now he has made few acts of faith and even a heretic would blush to have his opinions. Blaz, beware of human wisdom. In a few moments, I shall know more than all the philosophers. Blaz, Blaz, I bless you, I'm dying."

And, in truth, he did die. I paid him the last respects; then I went back to my father's house from which I had been absent four days. During that time the old pensioner had

also died and the Brothers of Charity had attended to burying him. I knew my father was alone and I intended to devote myself to taking care of him, but, as I was about to enter his room, an extraordinary sight met my eye and chilled me with horror. I remained in the outer room.

My father had taken off his clothes and wrapped himself in a bedsheet as if it were a shroud. He sat looking at the sunset. Then, after gazing at it a long time, he said:

"O Sun, whose last rays have touched my eyes for the last time, why did you shine on the day of my birth? Did I ask to be born? And why was I born? Men told me I had a soul and I cultivated it at the expense of my body. I cultivated my mind, but rats devoured it, booksellers would have none of it. There will be nothing of me left: I die altogether; as obscure as if I had never been born. Nothingness, receive your prey."

For a second Hervas remained sunk in gloomy reflections; then picking up a goblet that was apparently filled with old wine, he raised his eyes to the sky and said:

"Oh, God, if there be a God, have pity on my soul, if I have one."

After that he drained the goblet and set it down on the table. Then he put his hand to his heart as if he were in pain. He had prepared another table, on which he had placed some cushions. Hervas lay down on the table, crossed his hands over his chest and did not utter another word.

You will be surprised that seeing all those preparations for suicide I did not snatch the glass from him or call for help; I am surprised at it myself, or rather, I am sure that a supernatural power held me rooted to the spot, unable to move. My hair stood on end.

The Brothers of Charity, who had buried the pensioner, found me in that position. They saw my father stretched out on the table, covered with a shroud, and they asked if he were dead. I said I had no idea. They asked me who had put that shroud on him. I said he had put it on himself. They examined the body and found it lifeless. They saw the glass with the dregs of liquid and took it to examine. Then obviously dissatisfied, they went away and left me completely prostrated. After that the parish people came. They asked me the same questions and they went away saying:

"He died as he lived. It is not up to us to bury him."

I was left alone with the dead man. My discouragement had reached a point where I had lost all power to act, even to think. I flung myself down in the armchair my father had been sitting in and I sat there motionless, empty.

Night fell. The sky clouded over; a sudden gust of wind flung open my window; a bluish light flashed through the room and the next moment left it as dark as before. In the midst of that darkness, I thought I could see several fantastic shapes; then I seemed to hear my father utter a long groan, which distant echoes repeated through the night. I tried to get up, but I was held fast to my chair, unable to move. An icy cold penetrated my limbs; I shook with chills. My vision became dreams and at last I slept.

I awoke with a start: I saw the light from six tall yellow candles beside my father's body and a man seated opposite me. He seemed to be waiting for me to waken. He was a big man, tall, majestic and imposing in bearing, with wavy black hair that fell over his forehead and a glance that was keen and penetrating but at the same time gentle and seductive. He wore the ruff and gray cloak, which is the usual dress of gentlemen in the country.

When the stranger saw that I was awake, he smiled pleasantly and said:

"My son—I call you that because I look upon you as if you were already mine—God and men have abandoned you and the earth has closed over the remains of that sage who brought you into the world, but we shall not desert you."

"Sir," I replied, "you said, I think, that I had been deserted by God and men. As for men, that is true, but I do not think that God could ever desert one of his creatures."

"Your observation," said the stranger, "is correct in certain respects which I shall explain to you some other time. Nevertheless, to convince you of the interest we take in you, I offer you this purse; you will find in it a thousand *pistoles*. A young man ought to have passions and the means to satisfy them. Do not be sparing with this gold and count on us always."

After that the stranger clapped his hands. Six masked men appeared and carried out Hervas's body. The candles went out and the room was pitch black. I did not stay there

long. Groping my way to the door, I rushed out into the street and when I saw the starry sky, it seemed to me I could breathe more freely. The thousand *pistoles* in my pocket also helped to raise my spirits. I walked about Madrid till I came to the end of the Prado at the place where, since then, a colossal statue of Cybele has been erected. There I lay down on a bench and in no time at all I was fast asleep.

The sun was already fairly high in the sky when I awoke, and what woke me was, I think, a light slap of a handkerchief on my face. For the first thing I saw was a young girl, swishing her handkerchief back and forth over my face to drive off the flies that might have troubled my sleep. But the most peculiar thing of all was that my head was resting very comfortably on the knees of another young girl, whose sweet breath I could feel in my hair. As I had not moved on waking, I was at liberty to prolong that delightful situation by feigning sleep. I therefore shut my eyes again and soon I heard a voice, a trifle scolding but not sharp, speaking to my cradle-rockers.

"Celia, Zorilla," the voice said, "what are you doing here? I thought you were in church and here I find you at a beautiful devotion."

"But, Mamma," replied the young girl who served as my pillow, "didn't you say that good deeds were as meritorious as prayer? And isn't it a charitable deed to prolong the sleep of this poor young man who must have passed a very bad night?"

"Assuredly," replied the voice, more laughing than scolding, "assuredly that is very meritorious, and that thought proves, if not your devotion, at least your innocence. But now, my charitable Zorilla, put that young man's head down very gently and come on home."

"Ah, my dear Mamma," replied the young girl, "see how sweetly he sleeps. Instead of waking him, Mamma, you would do well to loosen his ruff, which is choking him."

"Ay, ay, wretches," said Mamma, "a fine commission you are giving me. But let me see! In truth, he looks very nice."

At the same time, Mamma's hand slid gently under my chin and unfastened my ruff.

"He looks even better that way," said Celia, who had not

yet spoken, "and he breathes more freely. I see that it is sweet to do good deeds."

"That reflection," said the mother, "shows much judgment. But one must not carry charity too far. Come, Zorilla, put that young head gently down on the bench and let us go."

Zorilla slipped her hands gently under my head and withdrew her knees. I decided that it was useless to feign sleep any longer, so I sat up and opened my eyes. The mother gave a little cry; the daughters tried to run away. But I would not let them go.

"Celia! Zorilla!" I said to them, "you are as beautiful as you are innocent, and you, who could be their mother only because your charms are more developed, spare me a few moments in which to express my admiration for all three of you, before I leave you."

Everything I said to them was the truth; Celia and Zorilla would have been perfect beauties, but they were so very young that their charms had not yet come to full perfection, and their mother, who was no more than thirty, did not look as though she were twenty-five.

"Milord," she said to me, "if you were feigning sleep, you should be convinced of my daughters' innocence and you must also have formed a good opinion of their mother. I am therefore not afraid of demeaning myself in your eyes if I invite you to accompany me to my house. An acquaintance so strangely begun seems bound to be pursued further."

I followed them. We came to their house that fronted on the Prado. The daughters went off to prepare chocolate. The mother, making me sit down beside her, said to me:

"You see a house somewhat more lavishly furnished than is suitable for our present situation. I took it at a happier period. Today I should be glad to sublet the best apartment, but I dare not. Because of the circumstances in which I am placed, I must live in strict retirement."

"Madam," I replied, "I too have reasons for living in seclusion. And if agreeable to you, I would willingly settle in the *quarto principal*, the best apartment."

So saying, I took out my purse and the sight of gold promptly silenced any objections the lady might have had. I

paid three months' rent in advance and the same for my board. It was arranged that my dinner would be served in my room and that I would be waited on by a trusted servant, who would also do my commissions outside. When Zorilla and Celia returned, bringing the chocolate, they were informed of the bargain. Their amorous glances took possession of my person, but I thought their mother's eyes seemed to offer them competition. That flirtatious little battle did not escape me but, leaving the issue to fate, I turned my thoughts to settling in my new dwelling. In no time at all it was furnished with everything that could make it pleasant and comfortable for me. Zorilla would bring me a writing desk or Celia a lamp for my table or several books. They forgot nothing. The two lovely girls came separately, and when they met in my room they would burst into gales of uncontrollable laughter. The mother had her turn; she took particular care of my bed, giving me fine sheets of Holland cloth, a beautiful silk bedspread and a pile of cushions. Those arrangements kept me busy all morning. Noon came; the table was set in my room; I was charmed by it. I liked to see three lovely creatures vying with each other to please me and suing for a share of my goodwill. But there is a time for everything; I was glad to indulge my appetite alone and undisturbed.

So then I dined; then, taking my cape and sword, I went for a walk around the town. Never had I had such a good time. I was independent, I had money in my pockets, I was full of health, vigor and, thanks to the attentions of the three ladies, filled with a high opinion of myself; for young men are wont to rate themselves according to the way the fair sex appreciates them.

I went into a jeweler's shop and bought a few trinkets. Afterwards I went to the theatre and I ended by going back to my dwelling. I found the three ladies seated at the door of their house. Zorilla was singing and accompanying herself on the guitar; the two others were crocheting.

"Milord," the mother said to me, "you are lodging in our house and you seem to trust us, though you do not know who we are. Nevertheless, it is right for me to tell you. Know, then, milord, that my name is Inez Santarez. I am the

widow of Don Juan Santarez, *Corregidor* of Havana. I was penniless when he married me; he left me in the same situation and with the two daughters you see. I was much handicapped by my widowhood and my poverty when I received most opportunely a letter from my father. You will forgive me if I do not mention his name. Alas! He too had struggled all his life against misfortune; but at length, so his letter informed me, he was in a splendid position, being Treasurer of War. His letter contained a remittance of two thousand *pistoles* and the command to come to Madrid. I came, but only to learn that my father had been accused of misappropriating funds, even of high treason, and was held prisoner in the castle of Segovia. However, this house had been rented for us. I therefore settled down in it and I live here in seclusion, receiving absolutely no one, with the exception of one young man who is employed in the War Ministry. He comes to report what he can learn about my father's case. He is the only person who knows of our connection with the unfortunate prisoner."

Señora Santarez ceased speaking and shed a few tears.

"Do not cry, Mamma," Celia said. "Everything comes to an end and undoubtedly even troubles must have an end too. Now here is a young gentleman who looks very successful, and meeting him seems to me a favorable omen."

"In truth," said Zorilla, "since he is here, our solitude does not seem sad anymore."

Señora Santarez flung me a glance of mingled sadness and tenderness. The daughters looked at me too, then lowered their eyes, blushed, looked flustered and then thoughtful. So then three charming persons loved me—a situation I found quite delightful.

While this was going on, a tall, good-looking young man came up to us, took Señora Santarez by the hand, drew her a few steps aside and held a long conversation with her. Afterwards she brought him up to me and said:

"Milord, this is Don Cristofero Sparadoz, of whom I spoke and who is the only man we see in Madrid. I should like him to know you; but though we live in the same house, I do not know whom I have the honor of addressing."

"Señora," I said, "I am a noble from Asturia. My name is Legancz."

I thought it better not to mention the name of Hervas, lest they should recognize it.

Young Sparadoz looked me up and down arrogantly and I even thought he was going to refuse to greet me. We went into the house, and Señora Santarez served a collation of fruits and light pies. Though I was still the center of attention from the three beauties, nevertheless I caught many a flirtatious glance and simper addressed to the newcomer. This hurt me and, in an effort to direct all the attention in my direction, I made myself as charming and witty as possible.

In the midst of my triumph, Don Cristofero crossed his right foot over his left knee and, staring at the sole of his shoe, drawled:

"Really, since shoemaker Maragnon died, it's impossible to find a well-made shoe in Madrid."

Then he slung me a mocking and scornful glance.

Now, as you know, shoemaker Maragnon was my maternal grandfather. He had brought me up and I was greatly beholden to him; but he was somewhat of a blot on my genealogical tree—or at least, so I thought. I was afraid of losing face with the three ladies if they knew that I had had a grandfather who was a shoemaker. All my gaiety fled; I glared at Don Cristofero now angrily, now proudly and disparagingly. And I decided then and there to forbid him to enter the house. When he left, I followed, intending to make this point clear to him. I caught up with him at the end of the street and paid him the disagreeable compliment I had prepared. I thought he would be angry. On the contrary, he assumed a friendly manner, grasped me by the chin as if to caress me, then suddenly jerked me off my feet, swung his leg and tripped me—and I fell on my face in the gutter. Dazed, covered with mud, I picked myself up and went home in a rage. The ladies had gone to bed. I went to bed, too, but I couldn't sleep. Two passions, love and hate, kept me awake; all my hatred was concentrated on Don Cristofero. My love was quite a different matter. My heart was filled with love, but for no one in particular; for Celia,

Zorilla and their mother each occupied my heart turn by turn and their lovely faces, mingling in my dreams, obsessed me for the rest of the night.

It was very late when I woke. On opening my eyes, I saw Señora Santarez settled at the foot of my bed; she looked as though she had been crying.

"My dear young sir," she said, "I have come to take refuge with you. There are some men upstairs asking me for money and I haven't any to give them. I must, alas! But don't I have to clothe and feed my poor children? They suffer far too many privations as it is."

Here Señora Santarez's eyes filled with tears and she began to sob. As she turned her head, she glanced involuntarily towards my purse, which lay beside me on my night table. I understood that mute language. I poured the gold out on my table, divided it mentally into two parts and handed one to Señora Santarez. She had not expected such generosity. At first she was motionless with surprise; then she grasped my hands, kissed them effusively, pressed them to her heart, and gathered up the money saying:

"Oh! my children, my dear children!"

Then the girls came in. And they, too, kissed my hands. All those signs of gratitude fired my blood, already overheated by my dreams.

I dressed hastily, intending to go out on one of the terraces, but as I passed the young girls' bedroom, I heard sobs and the sound of kissing and weeping. I listened a moment, then I went in.

"Listen to me, dearest and most charming guest," Celia said, "we are terribly upset. Never before in our lives has any cloud troubled the deep love we sisters bear for each other. For in truth we are drawn closer through our affection than through our blood relationship. But all that is over since you came. Jealousy has crept into our hearts and it may be that we shall even come to hate each other. Zorilla's naturally kind heart foresaw this dreadful misfortune. She flung herself into my arms, we wept together and we have become friends again. Now, dear guest, it is up to you to reconcile us completely. Promise us not to love one more

than the other; and if you wish to caress us, divide your embraces equally between us."

What did I reply to that urgent and pressing invitation? I embraced them both in turn; I dried their tears, and their sadness gave place to amorous follies.

We went out together on the terrace and there Señora Santarez joined us. In her relief at having paid her debts, she was beside herself with joy. She invited me to dine and asked me to spend the whole day with her. There was a definite atmosphere of trust and intimacy about that meal. The servants were dismissed and the two daughters took turns serving. Exhausted by her emotions, Señora Santarez drank two glasses of a noble wine from Rotha. Though her vision may have been a trifle blurred, her eyes shone all the more brightly. She was full of life and all we needed now was for her daughters to become jealous again. But apparently they had too much respect for their mother even to entertain such a thought. Though inflamed by the wine she had drunk, the mother's conduct was far from dissolute.

For my part, I had no need to plan a seduction. Sex and youth were our seducers. The sweet impulses of nature cast an inexpressible charm over our relationship; we found it hard to leave each other. At last, the setting sun warned us that we must part. However, I had ordered refreshments from a nearby lemonade dealer and their timely arrival was a splendid pretext to remain together. Up to that point all went well. We had scarcely sat down at the table when Cristofero Sparadoz appeared. I was annoyed. In my heart I felt that these ladies were mine and to have my rights jeopardized caused me real suffering.

Don Cristofero paid no more attention to that than to my person. He greeted the ladies, led Señora Santarez to the end of the terrace, held a long conversation with her and then came and sat down at the table without being invited. He ate and drank and did not say a word; but when the conversation turned to bullfights, he pushed aside his plate, pounded his fist on the table and exclaimed:

"By Saint Cristofero, my patron, why do I have to be a clerk in the Minister's offices? I would rather be the humblest *torero* in Madrid than president of all the Cortès of Castille."

At the same time, he thrust out his arm as if he were stabbing a bull and let us admire the thickness of his muscles. Then to show his strength, he seated the three ladies in one armchair, put his hand under the chair and carried it all around the room. Don Cristofero got so much pleasure out of those tricks that he prolonged them as much as possible, then picked up his cape and sword to leave. So far he had not paid the slightest attention to me. But now, turning to me, he said:

"My dear sir, tell me, who makes the best shoes since shoemaker Maragnon died?"

The ladies took that remark for one of Don Cristofero's many little jokes. As for me, I was extremely annoyed; and grabbing my sword, I ran after him. I caught up with him at then end of a cross street, planted myself in front of him and, drawing my sword, cried:

"Insolent wretch, you will pay for all those cowardly insults."

Don Cristofero put his hand on his sword hilt. But seeing a piece of wood on the ground, he picked it up, struck my sword blade a hard blow and knocked the sword out of my hand. Then coming up close to me, he grasped me by the nape of the neck, dragged me to the gutter and flung me into it as he had done the night before, but so roughly that I was dazed and numb for a long time.

Someone offered me a hand to help me up; I recognized the gentleman who had had my father's body carried away and had given me the thousand *pistoles*. I flung myself at his feet, but he raised me gently and told me to follow him. We walked along for some time in silence and at last came to the bridge over the Mançanarez. There we found two black horses, on which we galloped for half an hour along the river bank until we came to a house that stood alone. The doors opened by themselves and we entered a room, the walls of which were covered in brown serge, with silver torches and a brazier of the same metal. We sat down in two armchairs beside the fire and the stranger said to me:

"Señor Hervas, that's the way the world is. Its law and order, which is so much admired, is not conspicuous for an equal distribution of justice. Some men have by tempera-

ment the strength of eight hundred pounds, others of sixty. It is true men have invented treachery, which somewhat evens the balance."

As he spoke, the stranger opened a drawer, took out a dagger and said:

"See this weapon. The tip, shaped like an olive, ends in a point finer than a hair. Put it in your belt. Good-bye, my dear sir. Always remember your good friend, Don Belial de Gehenna. When you need me, come after midnight to the bridge of the Mançanarez. Clap your hands three times and the black horses will be there. By the way, I forgot the essential point. Here is a second purse. Do not hesitate to use it."

I thanked the generous Don Belial and mounted my black horse. A negro mounted the other horse. When we came to the bridge, I dismounted and returned to my lodging.

Once back home, I lay down and fell asleep, but my dreams were troubled. I had slipped the dagger under my pillow; I dreamt that it came out and went into my heart. I also saw Don Cristofero taking the three ladies of the house away from me.

My disposition the next morning was gloomy; not even the presence of the young girls had any effect on me. In fact, their efforts to cheer me produced the opposite effect and that day my caresses were much less innocent. When I was alone again, I picked up my dagger and went through all the motions of threatening Don Cristofero, whom I thought I saw before me.

That redoubtable person appeared again during the evening and again paid not the slightest attention to me, but he was overly importunate with the ladies. He plagued them each in turn, made them angry and then made them laugh. His bungling pleased them more than my pretty speeches.

I had ordered a supper sent in that was more elegant than abundant. Don Cristofero ate almost all of it himself; then he picked up his cape to leave. As he was about to go out, he turned abruptly to me and said:

"My dear sir, what is that dagger I see at your belt? You would do better to wear a shoemaker's awl."

Whereupon he burst into a roar of laughter and left us.

I followed him and, catching up with him at a turn in the street, I passed him on the left and stabbed him with all the strength of my arm. But I felt my arm warded off with as much strength as I had used in striking. Turning around, Don Cristofero said coolly:

“Cad! Don't you realize I'm wearing a breastplate?”

Then he took me by the nape of the neck and flung me into the gutter. But this time I was glad to be there and to have been spared a murder. I got up feeling almost pleased. And that feeling stayed with me till I was in my bed. That night my sleep was more peaceful than the night before.

In the morning, the ladies found me calmer than I had been the preceding day and congratulated me. But I dared not spend the evening with them; for I was afraid of the man I had tried to murder and I would not have ventured to look him in the face. I spent the evening walking about the streets, raging furiously when I thought of the wolf that had forced his way into my fold.

At midnight I went to the bridge. I clapped my hands; the black horses appeared; I mounted the one meant for me and followed my guide to Don Belial's house. The doors opened of themselves; my protector came to meet me and led me to the fire beside which we had sat the night before.

“Well,” he said to me and his tone was slightly mocking. “Well, my young sir, the murder did not come off. No matter, you will be credited with good intentions. Moreover, we have arranged to relieve you of your annoying rival. The indiscretions he has committed have already been reported and today he is in the same prison as Señora Santarez's father. It is up to you now to take advantage of your good fortune, but to more avail than you have done so far. Here, let me give you this bonbonnière; it contains some delicious candies. Give some to your ladies and eat some yourself.”

I took the candy box, which had a delightful perfume, and said to Don Belial:

“I'm not sure what you mean by 'taking advantage of my good fortune.' I would be a monster were I to abuse a mother's trust and her daughters' innocence. I am not as depraved as you seem to think.”

“I do not imagine,” said Don Belial, “that you are either

more or less depraved than all the sons of Adam. They all have scruples before they commit the crime and suffer remorse afterwards; and because they are remorseful, they flatter themselves that they still have a modicum of virtue. But they could spare themselves all those annoying emotions if they would consider what virtue is—an ideal quality whose existence they admit without question.”

“My lord, Don Belial,” I replied, “my father gave me to read his sixty-sixth volume, which treats of morality. According to him, prejudice was not an opinion accepted without previous judgment, but an opinion already held before we came into the world and transmitted through inheritance. Those habits of childhood sow the first seed in our soul, example develops it, knowledge of the law strengthens it; if we conform to the law, we are honest men; if we do more than the law commands, we are virtuous men.”

“Not a bad definition,” said Don Belial. “It does honor to your father; he wrote well and thought even better; perhaps you will be like him. But to come back to your definition. I agree with you that prejudices are preconceived opinions, but that is no reason not to examine them again in the light of a more mature judgment. A mind curious to delve to the bottom of things will submit prejudices to scrutiny; it will even consider whether the law is equally binding for all. Indeed, you will observe that the law seems to have been thought up to the sole advantage of those cold, lazy natures who look forward to getting their pleasures out of matrimony and their comfort out of economy and work. But what about the great geniuses, the men of strong passions, greedy for money and sensual pleasures who would like to squander their years? What has the social order done for them? They would spend their lives in jail and end it in tortures. Fortunately human institutions are not really what they seem. Laws are barriers, strong enough to turn aside the passer-by. But those who really want to cross, climb over them or under them. This subject would lead me too far; it is growing late. Good-bye, my dear sir. Enjoy my bonbonnière and count always on my protection.”

I took leave of Don Belial and returned home. They opened the door for me; I went to bed and tried to fall

asleep. The bonbonnière was on my night table; it gave out a delicious perfume. I could not resist the temptation; I ate two lozenges, fell asleep and passed a very restless night.

The two young girls came at the usual hour. They said I looked at them with a most extraordinary expression; and in truth, I was seeing them with different eyes. Their every movement seemed to be a provocation designed to please me; I even read the same meaning in their most casual words. Everything about them attracted me and called to mind things I had not dreamt of before.

Zorilla discovered my bonbonnière, ate two candies and offered some to her sister. Soon, what I had thought I saw took on a certain reality; the two sisters were swayed by an emotion to which they yielded without knowing what it was. They were frightened, and with a remnant of shyness that was almost cruel, they left me.

Then their mother came in. Since I had saved her from her creditors, she had been very affectionate with me and for a few moments her caresses soothed me. But soon I was seeing her with the same eyes with which I had seen her daughters. She realized what was happening to me and appeared slightly embarrassed. Her glances, avoiding mine, fell on the fatal bonbonnière; she took a few candies and left the room. Soon she was back again, caressing me, calling me her son and pressing me close in her arms. And when she left me it was with obvious reluctance, as if she were making a great effort to control herself. As for me, I became more and more restless until I thought I should go out of my mind; fire ran through my veins, I could scarcely distinguish the objects around me, a haze clouded my sight.

I went out on the terrace. The door to the young girls' room was half open; I could not resist going in. They were even more excited than I was. This frightened me, so that I wanted to tear myself from their arms, but I did not have the strength. I heard their mother come in, but her reproaches died on her lips and in a very short while she lost the right to censure us.¹

My bonbonnière was empty; my candies consumed; but

¹ At this point in the 1813 edition the story is briefly interrupted: the narrator and the listener agree to meet the next day.

our glances and our sighs still seemed eager to revive our quenched fires. Our thoughts fed on guilty memories and our languors had their sinful delights.

It is a characteristic of crime that it smothers natural emotions. A prey to unbridled desires, Señora Santarez forgot that her father was languishing in a cell and that his death sentence had perhaps been pronounced. But if she gave no thought to it, neither did I—even less so.

One evening, however, a man carefully wrapped in a cloak entered my room. I was startled and far from reassured when I saw that, the better to disguise himself, he was even wearing a mask. The mysterious person motioned to me to sit down, sat down himself and said:

“Señor Hervas, I understand you are a close friend of Señora Santarez. I shall be frank with you about her situation. As this is a serious matter, it would be painful to me to discuss it with a woman. Señora Santarez put her faith in an irresponsible fellow named Cristofero Sparadoz. Today he is in the same prison as Señor Goranez, the father of the lady in question. That crazy man thought he had the secret of certain important men; but I am the one who has that secret and this is it in brief. Eight days from today, half an hour after sunset, I shall walk past this door and I shall speak three times the name of the prisoner, ‘Goranez, Goranez, Goranez.’ At the third time you will hand over to me a bag containing three thousand *pistoles*. Señor Goranez is no longer in Segovia, but in a prison in Madrid. His fate will be decided before the middle of that same night. This is what I had to say; my mission is completed.”

With that, the masked man rose and departed.

I knew, or I thought I knew, that Señora Santarez did not have any financial means, so I decided to turn to Don Belial. I contented myself with telling my charming hostess that Don Cristofero did not come to see her any more because he had become suspect to his superiors; but that I myself had influence with some of the offices and that I had every reason to hope for complete success. Señora Santarez was overjoyed at the hope of saving her father and she now added gratitude to the many emotions I had already aroused

in her. In the circumstances, she felt it was less wicked to give herself to me. A service as great as that should certainly absolve her. New pleasures again filled our every moment. But one night I tore myself away from them and hurried off to Don Belial.

"I was expecting you," he told me. "I was sure your scruples would not last, and even less, your remorse. All the sons of Adam are alike. But I did not expect you would tire so soon of pleasures such as the kings of this little globe who did not have any *bonbonnière* have never enjoyed."

"Alas! My lord Belial," I replied, "part of what you say is only too true. It's not that I wearied. On the contrary, if those pleasures should come to an end, I fear that life would hold no further charms for me."

"And yet you have come to ask me for three thousand *pistoles* to save Señor Goranez, and as soon as he is freed, he will take his daughter and his granddaughters to his home. He has already arranged to marry them to two clerks in his office. You will see in the arms of those lucky husbands two charming creatures who have sacrificed their innocence to you and who, as the price of such an offering, ask only a share in the pleasures of which you are the center. Moved rather by a spirit of emulation than of jealousy, each of the daughters rejoiced in the happiness she gave you and ungrudging, enjoyed the pleasures you owed to her sister. Thanks to the contents of my *bonbonnière*, their mother, more knowledgeable and no less passionate, could see her daughters' happiness without resentment. After moments like that, what will you do with the rest of your life? Will you seek the legitimate pleasures of marriage or sigh after a coquette who will not even promise you a shadow of that voluptuousness no mortal before you has ever known."

Then, in a different tone, Don Belial said:

"But no, I am wrong. Señora Santarez's father is really innocent, and it is in your power to save him. The pleasure of doing a good deed should outweigh all others."

"Señor, you speak very coldly of good deeds and very warmly of pleasures which, after all, are sinful. One would say you desired my eternal damnation. I am tempted to believe you are . . ."

Don Belial did not let me finish.

"I am," he said, "one of the leading members of a powerful association whose goal is to make men happy by curing them of foolish prejudices they imbibe with their nurse's milk, and which later hinder them in all their desires. We have published some excellent books in which we prove admirably that love of self is the source of all human acts, and that gentle pity, filial piety, passionate and tender love, clemency in kings, are just so many refinements of egotism. Now, if love of self is the motivating force of all our actions, the accomplishment of our own desires must be the natural goal. Lawmakers have realized this. They have written laws so that they can be evaded and there is never any lack of interested parties."

"What do you mean!" I said. "My lord Belial, don't you consider justice and injustice actual qualities?"

"They are relative qualities. I will explain this to you with the help of a fable.

"Some tiny insects climbed up on top of tall grasses. One of them said to the others: 'See that tiger lying near us; he's the gentlest of animals; he never does us any harm. The sheep, on the other hand is a ferocious animal; if one of them should come here he would devour us along with our hiding place the grass; but the tiger is just. He would avenge us.'

"From that you can conclude, Señor Hervas, that all ideas of justice and injustice, of good and evil, are relative and by no means absolute or general. I agree with you that there is a sort of foolish satisfaction in what are called good deeds. This you will experience by saving good Señor Goranez, who is unjustly accused. Don't hesitate to do so, if you are tired of living with his family. Think it over; you have time. The money must be paid over on Saturday, half an hour after sunset. Be here Friday night and the three thousand *pistoles* will be ready precisely at midnight. Good-bye. Let me give you another bonbonnière."

I returned home and, on the way, I ate a few candies. Señora Santarez and her daughters had not gone to bed and they were waiting for me. I wanted to talk about the prisoner; they did not give me time. But why should I

reveal so many shameful and heinous crimes? It is enough for you to know that giving full rein to our desires we lost all sense of time and counted neither the passing hours or the days; the prisoner was completely forgotten.

Saturday was drawing to a close. The sun, setting behind clouds, seemed to cast reflections in the sky that were the color of blood. Sudden flashes of lightning startled me; I tried to recall my last conversation with Don Belial. All of a sudden, I heard a hollow, sepulchral voice repeating three times: "Goranez, Goranez, Goranez."

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Señora Santarez, "is that a spirit from heaven or from hell? It is a warning that my father is no more."

I had lost consciousness. When I recovered, I set out on the road to Mançanarez to make a last appeal to Don Belial. Some *alguazils* stopped me and led me to a district I had never seen and into a house also unknown to me, but which I soon recognized as a prison. They put me in irons and forced me into a small dark vault.

I heard a rattling of chains near me.

"Are you young Hervas?" my companion in misfortune asked.

"Yes," I told him, "I am Hervas and I can tell by the sound of your voice that you are Cristofero Sparadoz. Have you any news of Goranez? Was he innocent?"

"He was innocent," said Don Cristofero, "but his accuser had woven his intrigue so skillfully that he held Goranez's ruin or salvation in his hands. He demanded three thousand *pistoles*; Goranez was unable to raise them and he has just hanged himself in prison. They also gave me the choice of hanging myself or of spending the rest of my days in Laroche Castle on the coast of Africa. I chose the latter and I intend to escape as soon as I can and turn Mohammedan. As for you, my friend, they will put you on the rack to make you confess things you know nothing about; but your liaison with Señora Santarez implies that you have some information and that you are an accomplice of her father's."

Picture to yourself a man weakened body and soul by sensual excesses and now threatened with the horrors of a cruelly prolonged torture. I could already feel the agony

of the torture, and my hair stood up on my head. Sheer terror froze my limbs; I could not move them at will, but only in sudden convulsive jerks.

A jailor came in to fetch Sparadoz. As the latter went out, he tossed me a dagger, but I did not have the strength to grasp it, much less to stab myself. Such was my despair that even death could not strengthen me.

"Oh, Belial, Belial," I cried. "I know who you are and yet I am calling on you!"

"Here I am!" cried that unclean spirit. "Take this dagger; prick yourself till the blood comes and sign the paper I offer you."

"Oh, my good angel!" I cried then, "have you forsaken me?"

"You invoke him too late," cried Satan, gnashing his teeth and vomiting fire.

At the same time he impressed his claw on my forehead. I felt a burning pain and I fainted, or rather fell into a trance. A sudden light illuminated the prison: a cherubim, with shining wings, handed me a mirror and said:

"Look at the inverted *Thau* on your forehead; it is the sign of condemnation. You will see it on other sinners. Twelve of them you will lead back into the path of salvation and you yourself will come back. Take this pilgrim's cloak and follow me."

I woke up, or I thought I woke up; and actually I was not in the prison, but on the highroad that leads to Galicia. I was garbed as a pilgrim.

Soon afterwards a group of pilgrims passed on their way to Saint James of Compostella. I joined them and I made the tour of all the holy places in Spain. I wanted to go into Italy and visit Loreto, but as I was in the Asturias, I took the road for Madrid. Arriving in that city, I went to the Prado to look for Señora Santarez's house, but I could not find it, though I recognized all the other houses in the neighborhood. That obsession showed me that I was still in the power of Satan. I dared not continue my search.

I visited several churches, then I went to the "Buen-Retiro." The garden was deserted save for one man who was sitting on a bench. A large Maltese Cross embroidered

on his cloak showed me he was one of the leading members of that Order. He seemed to be preoccupied and as motionless as a statue, so deeply was he lost in thought.

As I walked toward him, I thought I saw under his feet an abyss in which his face was reflected upside down, as in water; but here, the abyss seemed to be filled with fire.

When I was closer, the illusion vanished; but as I looked at that man, I saw that he had on his forehead the inverted *Thau* sign, that sign of condemnation the cherubim had shown me in the mirror on my own forehead.

At once, I realized that I was looking at one of the twelve sinners I was to lead back into the way of salvation. Though I made every effort to gain that man's confidence, I did not succeed until he was convinced that my motive was not idle curiosity. To help him I had to know his story. I asked him for it and he began as follows:

The Story of Commander de Toralva

I entered the Order of the Knights of Malta while I was still a child, having been received, as they say, as a page. Through my good contacts at court, I was able to become sword-bearer at twenty-five; and the following year the Grand Master conferred on me the finest commandery in the "langués" of Aragon. I could then, as I can now, lay claim to the highest dignities in the Order. But since one attains them only at an advanced age, and as in the meantime I had absolutely nothing to do, I followed the example of our leading *baillis*¹, who should perhaps have given me a better example. In a word, I engaged in making love, which at that time I considered one of the most venial of sins; and would to heaven I had never committed any more

¹Title in the Order of Malta one grade above Commander. [Translator's note.]

serious! The one I reproach myself for is a guilty fit of violent anger in which I defied everything our religion holds most sacred. It terrifies me even to think of it. But let us not anticipate.

I must tell you then that in Malta we have a number of noble island families who do not enter the Order and have nothing to do with the knights of any rank whatsoever, for they recognize only the Grand Master, who is their ruler, and the Chapter, which is their council.

After them comes an intermediate class that is in commerce and seeks the protection of the knights. The ladies of that class keep to themselves and are known as "honorate," which in Italian means respected. And certainly they deserve that title for the decency with which they conduct themselves, and, if I must tell all, the mystery with which they surround their love affairs.

Their long experience showed the "honorate" that mystery was incompatible with the temperament of the French knights, or at least that it was infinitely rare to find one who combined discretion with the many fine qualities that distinguish their race. The result was that the young men of that nation, accustomed to brilliant success with the ladies of every land, were obliged, in Malta, to confine themselves to prostitutes.

The German knights, for that matter few in number, were the ones most pleasing to the "honorate," and I believe they owe their success to their pink and white complexions. After them come the Spaniards, and I think our success is due to our character, which is known to be honest and dependable—and rightly so.

The French knights, in particular the Caravanists, revenged themselves on the "honorate" by making all sorts of game of them, especially by unmasking their secret intrigues. But as they are a group to themselves and as they never learn Italian, which is the language of the country, nothing they say makes any great stir.

We were therefore living in peace, and so were our "honorate," when a battleship from France brought us Commander de Foulquère of the ancient house of the Seneschals of Poitou, descended from the Counts d'Angou-

lème. He had been in Malta before and had been known for the many duels he fought. Now he came seeking to be made admiral of galleys. As he was over thirty-five, everyone expected him to be quieter and steadier. But whereas the commander was not quarrelsome and brawling as in the past, he was arrogant, imperious and even facetious, demanding more consideration than the Grand Master himself.

The commander opened his house, to which the French knights flocked in throngs. We seldom went there and ended by not going at all, for we found that the conversation usually turned on subjects that were unpleasant to us, among others on the "honorate," whom we loved and respected.

Whenever the commander appeared in public, he was surrounded by young Caravanists. He often led them to the "narrow street," showed them the places where he had fought and described the details of his duels.

I must tell you that, according to our customs, dueling is forbidden in Malta except in the "narrow street," which is an alley on which no windows look out. That alley is just wide enough for two men to put themselves en garde and cross swords. They cannot step back. The adversaries take up their positions breadthwise of the street, while their friends halt passers-by and prevent them from disturbing the duelists. That custom was formerly introduced to prevent murders, for the man who has an enemy does not walk through the "narrow street"; and if the murder was committed elsewhere, he could not be made to go through that street again for a duel. Besides, the penalty for entering the "narrow street" with a dagger in one's possession is death. Dueling is therefore not only tolerated in Malta, but even permitted. That permission, however, is tacit and, far from abusing it, people speak of it with a sort of shame, as of an outrage adverse to Christian charity and unseemly in the leading town of a monastic order.

The commander's strolls in the "narrow street" were altogether out of place. They had the bad effect of making the French Caravanists more quarrelsome than ever, which

was unnecessary, since they were quarrelsome enough by nature.

That bad form went on increasing. The Spanish knights also became more and more reserved. At length they gathered in my house and asked me what could be done to put a stop to wild spirits and a license that was becoming absolutely intolerable. I thanked my compatriots for the honor they did me in according me their trust; I promised to speak to the commander, by representing the conduct of the young Frenchmen as an abuse which he alone could put an end to because of the great respect and consideration in which he was held by his nation. I promised myself to put into that explanation all the respect and consideration it would admit; but I had no hope of ending our difficulties without a duel. However, as the cause of that strange combat did me honor, I was not too annoyed. In a word, I did not hide my antipathy for the commander.

We were then in Holy Week, and it was agreed that my interview with the commander would not take place for a fortnight. I think he got wind of the meeting at my house and tried to forestall me by picking a quarrel.

We came to Good Friday; you know that it is a Spanish custom for a man interested in a woman to follow her that day to church and offer her holy water. We do this partly out of jealousy lest another man offer it to her and take that opportunity to make her acquaintance. That Spanish custom had been introduced into Malta. I therefore followed a young "honorate" to whom I had been devoted for several years. But at the first church she entered, the commander accosted her before I had a chance, placed himself between us, turned his back on me, now and then stepping back to tread on my feet, an action which did not pass unnoticed.

As I came out of church, I went up to my man casually as if to chat with him. I then asked him what church he intended to go to; he mentioned it by name. I offered to show him the shortest way and, unknown to him, I led him into the "narrow street." Once there I drew my sword, quite certain that no one would disturb us on a holy day when everyone was in the churches.

The commander also drew his sword, but he kissed the point:

"What's this!" he cried. "On Good Friday!"

But I would not listen.

"Look here!" he said to me, "it's more than six years since I went to confession. I am shocked at the state of my conscience. In three days . . ."

Now by nature I am peaceful, and you know that once aroused, men of that temperament refuse to listen to reason. I forced the commander to put himself en garde. He looked terror-stricken. He backed up against the wall, as if, foreseeing that he would be forced down, he was already seeking support. Indeed, at the very first pass I ran my sword through his body. He lowered his point, leaned against the wall and said in a dying voice:

"I forgive you. May heaven pardon you. Take my sword to Tête-Foulque, and have a hundred Masses said for me in the chapel of the castle."

He expired. At the moment I did not pay much attention to his last words, and if I have remembered them it is because since then I have heard them repeated. I made my declaration in the prescribed form. I may say that, before men, my duel did me no harm. Foulquère was detested, and it was thought he deserved his fate. But it seemed to me that before God, my act was culpable, especially because of the omission of the sacraments, and my conscience reproached me cruelly. That went on for eight days.

In the night between Friday and Saturday, I awoke with a start and looked around. I thought I was not in my room but in the middle of the "narrow street" and lying on the paving stones. I was surprised to be there; then I distinctly saw the commander leaning against the wall. The ghost looked as if he were making an effort to speak.

"Take my sword to Tête-Foulque," he said to me, "and have a hundred Masses said in the castle chapel."

Scarcely had I heard those words than I fell into a deep sleep. The next day I woke in my room and in my bed, but I had retained a clear memory of my vision.

The next night I made a servant sleep in my room and I did not see anything, nor on any of the following nights.

But in the night between Friday and Saturday, I had the same vision again, with the difference that this time I saw my servant lying on the paving stones a few feet from me. The commander's ghost appeared and made the same request. The same vision was repeated every Friday. My servant then dreamt that he had slept in the "narrow street," but he neither saw nor heard the commander.

I did not know at first what this Tête-Foulque was to which the commander desired me to take his sword. Some knights from Poitou told me it was a castle three leagues from Poitiers, in the midst of a forest. In that country, they said, most extraordinary things were told about it and people saw strange objects there such as the armor of Foulque-Taillefer, ancestor of the des Foulquère, and the arms of the knights he had killed; and that it was even a custom among the des Foulquère to desposit there the arms they had used either in war or in individual combats. All that interested me; but first I had to think of my conscience.

I went to Rome, confessed to the Grand Penitentiary and I did not conceal the vision with which I was still obsessed. He granted me absolution but on condition that I first do penance. The hundred Masses at the castle of Tête-Foulque were part of it. But heaven accepted the offering and, from the moment I confessed, I ceased to be obsessed by the commander's ghost. As I had brought my sword from Malta, I set out as soon as possible on the way to France.

Arriving in Poitiers, I found that they had heard of the commander's death and that he was no more regretted here than in Malta. I left my coach and horses in town; I put on a pilgrim's cloak and took a guide. I thought it was fitting to go on foot to Tête-Foulque. Besides, the road was not passable for carriages.

We found the dungeon gate locked; we rang the alarm bell in the belfry a long time. At last the castellan appeared. He was the only inhabitant of Tête-Foulque, besides a hermit who ministered to the chapel and whom we found saying his prayers. When he had finished, I told him I had come to ask for a hundred Masses and I laid

my offering on the altar. I wanted to leave the commander's sword there too, but the castellan told me it must be put in the armory with all the swords belonging to des Foulquère killed in duels, and those of the men they had killed; that such was the consecrated custom. I followed the castellan into the armory, where I actually found swords of all shapes, as well as portraits, in particular the portrait of Foulque-Taillefer, Count d'Angoulême. He had had Tête-Foulque built for one of his bastard sons who became the Seneschal of Poitou and founder of the des Foulquère of Tête-Foulque.

The portraits of the Seneschal and his wife hung in the corner of the armory, one on either side of the great fireplace. They were strikingly real. The other portraits were equally well painted, though in the style of their era. But none was as striking as that of Foulque-Taillefer. He was painted in a buff jerkin, sword in hand and grasping his rondache, which a groom was handing to him. Most of the swords were attached to the bottom of this portrait, where they formed a sort of pile of arms.

I asked the castellan to make a fire in the room and serve my supper there.

"As for supper," he replied, "I would be glad to, but, my dear pilgrim, I advise you to come and sleep in my room."

I asked the reason for that precaution.

"I mean it," replied the castellan, "and I am going to make up a bed for you beside mine."

I accepted his offer with all the more pleasure as this was a Friday and I was afraid my vision might come back.

The castellan went off to attend to my supper and I began to study the weapons and the portraits. The latter, as I have said, were painted with much realism. As the day drew to a close the dark draperies seemed, in the fading light, to melt into the murky background of the pictures. And the flickering glow of the firelight, touching only the faces, made them stand out sharply. There was something frightening about it, or perhaps it seemed so to me because the state of my conscience kept me in a perpetual fright.

The castellan brought my supper, which consisted of a dish of trout caught in a neighboring stream and a bottle

of fairly good wine. I invited the hermit to sit down with me, but he ate only on boiled grasses.

I have always made it a point to read my breviary—a duty for professed knights, at least in Spain—and I therefore took it out of my pocket along with my rosary and told the castellan that as I was not sleepy I would remain in prayer until the night was farther advanced. All he need do was to show me my room.

“Very good,” he replied. “At midnight the hermit will come to say his prayers in the chapel next door. Then you will go down this little staircase and you cannot miss your room, for I will leave the door open. Don’t stay here after midnight.”

With that, the castellan went away. I began to pray and, from time to time, put a few logs on the fire. But I dared not look around too much in the room, for the portraits seemed to be coming to life. If I looked at one a few moments, I thought it winked at me and grimaced, especial the Seneschal and his wife, who were on either side of the fireplace. I thought I saw them glare at me in annoyance and then exchange glances. A sudden gust of wind added to my terrors, for not only did it rattle the windows, but it blew the bundle of arms about and the sound of their clicking made me tremble. Nevertheless, I went on praying fervently.

At last I heard the hermit droning next door and, when he had finished, I went down the stairs towards the castellan’s room. But before I reached there, the wind blew out the candle-end I was carrying in my hand and I went back to light it again. What was my astonishment to see the Seneschal and his lady step down from their frames and sit down near the fire. They were talking together intimately and I could hear what they were saying.

“My love,” said the Seneschal, “what do you think of this Castilian who killed the commander without giving him time to confess?”

“Methinks,” replied the feminine ghost, “methinks, my love, there be in this deed felony and wickedness. Thus I shall ask Messire Taillefer not to permit the Castilian to depart from the castle without throwing down the gauntlet.”

This gave me a terrible fright and I rushed headlong down the stairs. I hunted for the castellan's door, and groping about I finally found it. I still held my unlighted candle in my hand. I thought of lighting it again, and feeling somewhat reassured, I tried to persuade myself that the two figures I had seen at the fireplace existed only in my imagination. So I climbed the stairs again and, halting at the door of the armory, I saw that the two figures really were not near the fire where I thought I had seen them. I therefore went in boldly, but scarcely had I taken two steps when I saw, in the center of the room, Messire Taillefer en garde and presenting me with the point of his sword. I tried to go back to the staircase, but the door was blocked by the groom who flung me a gauntlet. No longer knowing what to do, I grabbed up a sword, which I took out of the pile of arms, and attacked my supernatural adversary. I thought I had spitted him from head to foot; but the next moment I received, just below the heart, a thrust that burned as if it had been a red-hot iron. My blood inundated the room and I fainted.

I woke the next morning in the castellan's room. Seeing that I had not appeared, he had provided himself with some holy water and had come to look for me. He found me stretched out on the floor, unconscious, but with no wounds. The one I thought I had received was only a bewitchment. The castellan asked no questions but merely advised me to leave the castle.

I departed and set out on the road to Spain. It took me eight days to reach Bayonne, where I arrived on a Friday and put up at an inn. In the middle of the night I woke with a start and saw standing at my bedside Messire Taillefer, threatening me with his sword. I made the sign of the Cross and the ghost seemed to dissolve in smoke. But I felt the same sword-thrust I thought I had received at the castle of Tête-Foulque. It seemed to me I was bathed in my blood. I tried to call and get out of bed, but could do neither. That inexpressible anguish lasted till the first cock's crow. Then I fell asleep again; but the following day I was ill and in a pitiable condition. Since then I have had the same vision every Friday and no acts of devotion have been

able to rid me of it. Melancholy is driving me to my grave and I shall go to it before I have been able to free myself from the power of Satan. However, a remnant of hope in the divine mercy still sustains me and helps me to endure my ills.

Commander de Toralva was a religious man. Though he had committed a sin by fighting without giving his adversary time to put his conscience in order, I had no trouble in making him understand that if he really wished to get rid of Satanic obsessions, he must visit the holy places, and that the sinner never seeks without finding the consolations of grace.

Toralva let himself be persuaded. We visited together the holy cities in Spain. Afterwards we went to Italy; we saw Loreto and Rome. The Grand Penitentiary gave him not only conditional but general absolution and, accompanied by that papal indulgence, Toralva, now completely freed of his obsession, has gone to Malta and I have come to Salamanca.

Story of Leonore and the Duchess d'Avila

The knight of Toledo, who had become grand constable and subprior of Castile, left Malta, clad in his new honors, and invited me to make the tour of Italy with him. I accepted with pleasure. We sailed for Naples, where we arrived safely. It would have been difficult for us to leave if the charming Toledo had been held, as easily as he was caught, in the toils of beautiful ladies; but so adept was he that the beauties did not even have the courage to be angry when he left them. He therefore deserted his Neapolitan loves to put on new chains in Florence, Milan, Venice and Genoa successively. We did not reach Madrid till the following year.

The day he arrived Toledo paid his respects to the king; then he took the finest horse in the stable belonging to

his brother, the Duke de Lerme. I was given one that was equally handsome and off we went to mingle with the troop that danced attendance before the doors of several ladies who lived on the Prado.

My eye was caught by a magnificent equipage: it was an open four-wheeled carriage in which sat two ladies in half-mourning. Toledo recognized the proud Duchess d'Avila and hastened to pay his respects. The other lady turned around; he did not know her and seemed to be struck by her beauty.

The stranger was the beautiful Duchess de Sidonia who had just left her retreat to reappear again in society; she recognized her former prisoner and put her finger to her lips to enjoin me to silence. Then she turned her beautiful eyes on Toledo, who looked earnest and shy, an expression I had never seen in him in the presence of a woman. The Duchess de Sidonia had declared she would never remarry; the Duchess d'Avila that she would never marry. A knight of Malta was therefore precisely what those two beauties needed. They made advances to Toledo, who accepted them with the best grace in the world. Though she was careful not to show that she knew me, the Duchess de Sidonia managed to make her friend accept me; we formed a sort of quadrille which met constantly amid the tumult of receptions. Toledo, loved for the hundredth time in his life, now fell in love for the first time. I tried to pay respectful homage to the Duchess d'Avila. But before discussing my relations with that lady, I must say a few words about her situation at that time.

Her father, the Duke d'Avila, had died while we were still in Malta. The death of an ambitious man always has a profound effect: it is a great fall; men are moved and shocked. In Madrid people recalled the Infanta Beatrix and her secret marriage to the duke. There was talk again of a son who was destined to carry on the line. It was expected that the deceased's will would throw light on the mystery; the will explained nothing. The Court ceased gossiping, and the proud Duchess d'Avila appeared again in society, haughtier, more disdainful and farther from marriage than ever before.

I was born of a very good family; but according to Spanish traditions there could be no thought of equality between the duchess and me, and if she deigned to call me to her side it could only be as a protégé whose fortunes she wished to advance. Toledo was the knight of sweet Sidonia; I was a sort of squire for her friend.

That humble rank did not displease me. Without betraying my passion for her, I could anticipate the duchess's desires, carry out her orders, in a word, devote myself to her every wish. But while serving my sovereign lady, I took good care that not a word, not a glance, not a sign should betray the love in my heart. Fear of offending her and, even more, of being banished from her presence, gave me the strength to control my passion. During the course of this sweet bondage, the Duchess de Sidonia never missed an opportunity to praise me to her friend, but the favors she obtained for me were at the most a few charming smiles, signs merely of protection.

This situation continued for more than a year. I saw the duchess at church, on the Prado; I took her orders for the day, but I did not go to her palace. One day she sent for me; she was surrounded by her women and working on a tambour frame. She made me sit down beside her, then said haughtily:

"My lord Avadoro, I would do little honor to the blood from which I spring if I did not use my family influence to reward the deference you pay me daily. My uncle Sorriente remarked on this himself. He offers you a colonel's brevet in the regiment of his name. Will you do him the honor to accept it? Think it over."

"Madame," I replied, "my fortunes are bound up with my friend Toledo's and I desire only the posts he may obtain for me. As for the respects I have the honor to pay you every day, their sweetest reward would be your permission to continue them."

The duchess did not reply and, with a slight nod of her head, dismissed me.

Eight days later I was again called to the proud duchess; she received me as before and said to me:

"My lord Avadoro, I cannot permit you to surpass in

generosity the Avila, the Sorriente, and all the grandees whose blood flows in my veins. I have a new proposition to make. It will be of great advantage to you. A gentleman, whose family is connected with ours, has made a great fortune in Mexico. He has only one daughter; her dowry is one million . . .”

I did not let the duchess finish, and rising, I said to her indignantly:

“Madame, although the blood of the Avila and of the Sorriente does not flow in my veins, the heart it nourishes is placed too high for a million to touch it.”

I was about to withdraw when the duchess asked me to be seated again. Then, after she had ordered her women to go into the next room and leave the door open, she said to me:

“My lord Avadoro, there is only one reward left for me to offer you and your zeal for my interests makes me hope you will not refuse it: that is, to do an essential service for me.”

“Indeed,” I replied, “the happiness of serving you is the sole reward I ask for my service.”

“Come closer,” said the duchess, “my women might hear you from the next room. Avadoro, you undoubtedly know that my father was, secretly, the husband of the Infanta Beatrix and perhaps someone has told you, in the greatest secrecy, that he had a son by her. Actually my father set the rumor going himself, the better to baffle the courtiers. The truth is he had a daughter, and she is still living. She was raised in a convent near Madrid. When my father lay dying, he told me the secret of her birth, which she herself does not know. He also told me the plans he had made for her. But his death has ruined everything. It would be impossible today to retie the thread of ambitious intrigues he had woven; it would, I think, even be impossible to prove my sister’s legitimacy, and the first step we took would perhaps result in that unfortunate girl’s lifelong confinement. I have been to see her. Leonore is a good girl, simple, gay, and I have a real affection for her. But the abbess repeated so often that she looked exactly like me that I have not dared to go back there. However, I have had myself appointed her protector and I have allowed it to be thought that she is one of the fruits of the innumerable love affairs

my father had in his youth. Recently the Court has made some inquiries in the convent that are disturbing to me and I have decided to bring her to Madrid.

"In the Calle Retarda I have a rather modest little house. I have rented the house opposite and I beg you to lodge there and to keep watch over the trust I am giving you. Here is the address of your new lodging, and here is a letter you will present to the Abbess of the Ursulines del Pegnon. You will take four men on horseback and a chaise drawn by two mules; a duenna will come with my sister and will stay with her. The duenna is the only person with whom you will have any communication. You will not be permitted to come and go in the house; the daughter of my father and an Infanta must have a spotless reputation."

As she said this, the duchess bowed her head slightly, which with her was the signal for departure. I therefore left her and I went first to look at my new lodging. It was comfortable and well furnished; I left two trusted servants there and I kept the room I had in Toledo's house.

I also saw Leonore's house; I found there two women who were to serve her and an old servant from the d'Avila mansion who was not in livery. The house was lavishly and even elegantly provided with everything that would be needed in a bourgeois household.

The next day, I took four horsemen and I rode to the Convent del Pegnon. I was shown into the abbess's visiting-room. She read my letter, smiled and sighed:

"Sweet Jesus!" she said, "how many sins are committed in the world! I am glad I have left it. For example, my dear sir, the young lady you have come for is the image of the Duchess d'Avila; she looks exactly like her. Two images of the sweet Jesus are not more alike. And who are the young lady's parents? No one knows. The late Duke d'Avila—may God keep his soul— . . ."

The abbess would probably have gone on this way indefinitely, but I told her I was in a hurry to carry out my mission. The abbess shook her head, exclaimed "Alas!" and "Sweet Jesus," then she told me to go and speak at the turning box.

I went there; the cloister door was opened. Two ladies,

very heavily veiled, came out and entered the carriage without speaking. I mounted my horse and followed them. When we were close to Madrid, I rode ahead and received the ladies at the door of their house. I did not go up with them; I went to my lodging opposite from where I watched them settle themselves in their new home.

Leonore really seemed to bear a strong resemblance to the duchess; but her skin was whiter, her hair very blonde, and she seemed to be plumper—at least, so I thought from my window. However, Leonore kept moving about constantly and I was unable to distinguish her features. Shortly afterwards, the duenna closed the blinds and locked them and I saw nothing more.

After dinner I went to the duchess and gave her an account of what I had done.

“Señor Avadoro,” she said to me. “Leonore is marked out for marriage. According to our customs, you cannot be allowed to enter her house. However, I shall tell the duenna to leave a blind open on the side facing your windows; but I insist that your blinds must be shut. You are to report to me what Leonore does. It might be dangerous for her to know you, especially if you are as averse to marriage as you seemed to be the other day.”

“Madame,” I replied, “I merely told you that money interests would not influence me in marriage. But you are right. I do not expect to marry.”

I left the duchess and went to see Toledo, but I gave him no inkling of our secrets. Then I returned to my lodging on the Calle Retarda. The blinds and even the windows of the house opposite were opened. The old lackey, Androdo, was playing the guitar; Leonore was dancing the *bolero* with a vivacity and grace I would not have expected in a boarder of the Carmelites, for she had been brought up there and had not entered the Ursulines till after the duke's death. She dashed to and fro in high spirits and tried to make her duenna dance with Androdo. I could not get over my surprise that the serious Duchess d'Avila should have a sister with such a lively disposition. For that matter, the resemblance really was startling. I was very much in love with the duchess and her living image could not fail to

interest me deeply; but I had just given myself up to the pleasure of watching Leonore when the duenna closed the blinds.

The next day I went to the duchess and reported what I had seen. I did not try to hide the extreme pleasure her sister's naïve amusements gave me. I even dared to attribute my excessive delight to the strong family resemblance.

"This sounds like a long distance declaration," the duchess said and appeared to be annoyed. She was even more serious than usual.

"Señor Avadoro," she said, "whatever the resemblance between the two sisters may be, I beg you not to confuse them in your praises. However, come tomorrow. I have to go on a journey and I would like to see you before my departure."

"Madame," I said, "should your wrath annihilate me, your features are imprinted in my heart like the image of some divine goddess. You are, however, too far above me for me to dare to raise my amorous thoughts to you. Now I find again your divine features in a young girl, frank, simple and natural who will keep me from loving you in her."

As I was speaking, the duchess looked more and more severe and I fully expected to be banished from her presence. But instead she merely told me to come back again tomorrow.

I dined at Toledo's and in the evening I returned to my post. The windows of the house opposite were open and I could see to the end of the apartment. Amid great bursts of laughter Leonore herself was laying a table with a very white cloth and two simple place settings. She was wearing a plain bodice, with the sleeves of her jacket rolled back to the shoulders.

Then they closed the windows and the blinds, but what I had seen had made a strong impression on me. And where is the young man who can look cold-bloodedly on a young woman in her boudoir?

I'm not sure what I stammered out to the duchess the next day. She seemed to fear it might be a declaration and, interrupting me, said:

"My lord Avadoro, I must go away as I told you yester-

day. I am going to spend some time in my duchy of Avila. I have given my sister permission to go for a walk after sunset, provided she does not stray too far from the house. If you would like to speak to her then, the duenna has been informed and will let you talk as long as you wish. Learn to know that young girl's mind and character. You will give me a full account on my return."

Then a nod of her head warned me to take my leave. It was bitterly hard for me to leave the duchess; I was deeply in love with her, and not even her extreme pride could discourage me. On the contrary, I thought that if she decided to take a lover, she would choose a man below her station which, in Spain, is not at all unusual. In fact, everything told me that one day the duchess would love me; though, in truth, I do not know where that presentiment came from. Certainly nothing in her behavior towards me could have given rise to it. All day long my thoughts were of the duchess. But, towards evening, I began to think of her sister again. I went to the Calle Retarda. There was a beautiful moon; I saw Leonore and her duenna seated on a bench near their door. The duenna recognized me, too, came to meet me and invited me to sit beside her charge. She then disappeared.

After a moment's silence, Leonore said:

"So you are the young man who is permitted to see me? Will you have a friendly feeling for me?"

I replied that I already did—a very friendly feeling.

"Well! Tell me what my name is."

"Leonore."

"That's not what I'm asking you; I must have another name. I am not as ignorant as I was at the Carmelites. I thought then the world was full only of nuns and confessors. But now I know there are husbands and wives who never leave each other day or night, and that children have the same name as their father. That is why I want to know my name."

As the Carmelites, especially in some convents, have a very strict rule, I was not surprised that Leonore was still ignorant of life at the age of twenty. I told her I knew her only by the name of Leonore. I then went on to say that

I had seen her dancing in her bedroom and that she certainly had not learned to dance at the Carmelites.

"No," she replied, "the Duke d'Avila sent me to the Carmelites. But after his death, I went to the Ursulines, where one of the pensioners taught me to dance, and another to sing. As for the way in which husbands live with their wives, all the pensioners at the Ursulines told me about that and it is no secret at all among them. As for me, I want very much to have a name, and to get one I shall have to marry."

Then Leonore went on to talk about plays, promenades and bullfights, and she evinced a strong desire to see all those things. I had several more talks with her and always in the evening. At the end of eight days I received a letter from the duchess written in the following terms:

In bringing you together with Leonore, I hoped she would become fond of you. The duenna assures me my wishes have been fulfilled. If your devotion for me is genuine, you will marry Leonore. Consider that a refusal would offend me.

I replied as follows:

Madame:

My devotion to Your Highness is the only emotion that can occupy my heart; the emotions one owes a wife would not find any room there. Leonore deserves a husband interested only in her.

I received the following reply:

It is useless to hide it from you any longer. You are dangerous for me, and your refusal of Leonore's hand has given me the keenest pleasure I have ever felt in my life. But I am determined to master myself. I therefore give you the choice of marrying Leonore or of being banished forever from my presence, perhaps even from Spanish lands. My influence at Court would certainly go that far. Do not write to me again. The duenna has received my orders.

As much in love as I was with the duchess, I was justified in being displeased by such arrogance. For a moment I was tempted to tell Toledo everything and to put myself under

his protection; but Toledo, still in love with the Duchess de Sidonia, was very devoted to her friend and would not have taken my side against her. I therefore made up my mind to say nothing, and that evening I stood at the window to watch for my future bride.

The windows were open; I could see to the farthest end of the room. Leonore was surrounded by four waiting-women, all busy dressing her. She wore a white satin gown embroidered in silver, a crown of flowers, a necklace of diamonds. Over all that they put a white veil that covered her from head to foot.

This surprised me a little. But soon my surprise increased. They brought a table from the back of the room. A priest appeared, accompanied by two gentlemen who were apparently there only as witnesses; the husband was missing. I heard a knock on my door. The duenna entered.

"They are waiting for you," said she. "Would you think of opposing the duchess's wishes?"

I followed the duenna. The bride did not raise her veil; they put her hand in mine. In a word, they married us.

The witnesses congratulated me, as well as my wife, whose face they had not seen, and they withdrew. The duenna led us to a bedchamber faintly lighted by moonlight and shut the door on us.

The way in which I lived with my wife corresponds to that bizarre marriage. After the sun had set, the blind on her window was opened and I saw all the interior of her apartment. But she no longer went out at night and I had no means of approaching her. Towards midnight, the duenna came for me and she brought me back to my lodgings before dawn.

At the end of eight days the duchess returned to Madrid. I was somewhat troubled and embarrassed when I saw her. I had profaned my worship of her and I blamed myself for doing so. She, on the contrary, was very friendly. Her haughtiness vanished in our talks alone; I was her brother and her friend.

One evening when I returned to my lodging, as I was shutting my door, I felt someone pull my coattails and, turning, I recognized Busqueros.

"Ah! Ah! I've caught you," said he. "Messire de Toledo told me he never saw you any more and you were up to something he knew nothing about. I told him: 'Give me twenty-four hours and I'll find out what it is!' And I have. Ah! my boy, you should respect me, for I have married your stepmother."

Those words reminded me of the part Busqueros had played in my father's death. I could not keep from showing him my ill-will and I got rid of him.

The next day I went to the duchess and told her of that annoying encounter. She seemed to be very much upset.

"Busqueros," she said, "is a ferret whom nothing escapes. We must protect Leonore from his curiosity. Tomorrow I shall send her to Avila. Don't be angry with me, Avadoro. It is to protect your happiness."

"Madame," I said, "the idea of happiness presupposes the satisfaction of desires and I have never wished to be Leonore's husband. However, it is true that I am now devoted to her and I love her more every day—if I may be permitted to use that expression, for I never see her by day."

That same evening I went to the Calle Retarda, but there was no one there. The door and the shutters were locked.

Several days later Toledo called me into his study and said:

"Avadoro, I have spoken to the king about you. His Majesty is giving you a commission for Naples. Temple, that charming Englishman, urged me to make the overtures. He wants to see me in Naples and, if I can't go, he wants it to be you. The king does not think it the opportune moment for me to make that journey and prefers to send you. But," Toledo added, "you don't seem to be very flattered at the prospect."

"I am extremely flattered by His Majesty's kindness, but I have a protectress and I would do nothing without her approval."

Toledo smiled.

"I've already spoken to the duchess," he said. "Go and see her this morning."

I went and the duchess said to me:

"My dear Avadoro, you know the situation of the Spanish

monarchy: the king is dying and with him ends the Austrian line. In circumstances as critical as that, it is the duty of every good Spaniard to forget his own interests and, if he can serve his country, he must not fail to do so. Your wife is safe; she will not write to you. I will act as her secretary. If I can believe the duenna, I shall soon be able to send you an announcement that will bind you even more strongly to Leonore."

As she said this, the duchess lowered her eyes and blushed. Then she motioned to me to withdraw.

I took my instructions from the minister. They concerned foreign politics and extended also to the administration of the Kingdom of Naples, which they were more than ever desirous of bringing back under Spanish rule. I left the following morning and made the journey with all possible speed.

I was as enthusiastic in accomplishing my mission as a man is in his first job. But in the intervals, memories of Madrid flooded back to fill my mind. In spite of herself the duchess loved me; she had confessed as much. Now that she was my sister-in-law, she had been cured of whatever passion her feeling for me held; but she was still devoted to me and of this she gave me a thousand proofs. Leonore, mysterious goddess of my nights, had, through our marriage, offered me the cup of passionate joys. Her memory possessed my senses as well as my heart and my longing for her turned almost to despair. With the exception of those two women, no other woman in the world mattered to me.

The duchess's letters came in the diplomatic pouch. They were not signed and the writing was disguised. In this way I learned that Leonore's pregnancy was advancing, but that she was ill and very listless. Then I learned that I was a father and that Leonore had suffered greatly. The news they gave me of her health seemed to be couched in such a way as to prepare me for a sadder message.

At length Toledo appeared at a moment when I was least expecting him. He threw himself into my arms.

"I have come," he said, "in the interest of the king; but it was the duchess who sent me."

At the same time he handed me a letter. I opened it,

trembling; I guessed the contents. The duchess announced Leonore's death and, like the devoted friend she was, tried to console me.

For a long time Toledo had had the greatest influence over me and he now used it to calm my mind. I had never known Leonore, one might say; but she was my wife, and the thought of her was identified with happy memories of our brief union. I was sad and prostrated with grief.

Toledo set to work to carry out and complete my mission, and when it was finished we returned to Madrid. Near the gates of the capital, he made me get out and led me through roundabout paths to the cemetery of the Carmelites. There he showed me a black marble urn with the inscription, on the base, of the name: Leonore Avadoro. I wept bitterly over that monument and I returned there several times before I called on the duchess. She was not in the least annoyed—quite the contrary. The first time I saw her, she showed me an affection bordering on tenderness. Finally she led me into the inner rooms of her apartment and showed me a baby in a cradle. I was overcome with emotion. I knelt on the floor. The duchess took me by the hand to raise me. I kissed her hand. She motioned to me to withdraw.

The next day I went to the minister, and, with him, to the king. In sending me to Naples, Toledo had sought a pretext for having me granted honors: I was made Knight of Calatrava. Though that decoration did not put me on a level with the highest ranks, it nevertheless brought me much closer. I was now on practically an equal footing with Toledo and the two duchesses. Besides, I was their handiwork and they seemed to be pleased with my new status.

Soon after, the Duchess d'Avila commissioned me to follow a case she had in the council of Castile. I put into it all the zeal and prudence one can imagine and this added to the esteem in which my patroness held me. And this is where the fantastic part of my story begins.

On my return from Italy, I had taken up my lodging again with Toledo; but the house I had in Calle Retarda was still in my care. I left a servant named Ambrosio there. The house opposite, the one in which I was married, belonged to the duchess. It was closed and no one lived in it.

One morning, Ambrosio came to me and begged me to put someone in his place, especially someone serious, seeing that after midnight it was not good to be there anymore than in the house across the street.

I tried to make Ambrosio tell me what sort of apparitions he had seen but he confessed that he had been so frightened he was not sure of anything. Moreover, he had decided not to sleep in the Calle Retarda at all, neither alone, nor with someone to keep him company. These proposals piqued my curiosity. I decided to chance it myself that same night. The house was still partly furnished. I went there after supper, ordered a servant to sleep on the stairs, and I occupied the bedroom that looked out on the street and was directly opposite Leonore's former house. I drank several cups of coffee to keep from falling asleep and I heard midnight strike. Ambrosio had told me that was the hour the ghost appeared. As I did not want to frighten off the ghost I put out my candle. Soon I saw a light in the house across the way. It wandered from one room and from one floor to another, but as the blinds were closed I could not see where that light came from. The next day I called at the duchess's, asked for the keys to the house and went there. I found it completely empty and I made sure there was no one living in it. I then unfastened a blind on each floor and went about my business.

The next night I returned to my post and, at the stroke of midnight, the light appeared, but this time I saw clearly where it came from. A woman, dressed in white and holding a lamp, walked slowly through all the rooms on the first floor, went up to the second floor and disappeared. The lamp shed too feeble a light for me to be able to distinguish her features, but I recognized Leonore by her blond hair.

As soon as it was daylight, I hurried to the duchess. She was not there. I went to see my child and I found the waiting-women bustling nervously around. At first they would not say anything, but at last the nurse told me that a woman, dressed all in white and holding a lamp in her hand, had come during the night; that she had stood and gazed a long time at the child; that she had blessed it and then gone away.

The duchess returned. She sent for me and said:

"I have reasons for wishing you to take your child away from here. I have given orders to prepare the house in Calle Retarda for him. He will live there with his nurse and the woman who is supposed to be his mother. I would certainly suggest that you live there too, but that might have certain inconveniences."

I replied that I would keep the house opposite and that I would sleep there occasionally.

We conformed to the duchess's views. I took care to put my child in the bedroom that faced the street and to make sure the blinds were kept open.

Midnight struck. I went to the window. In the room opposite I saw the child asleep and the nurse, too. The woman in white appeared, a lamp in her hand. She went to the cradle, gazed a long time at the child and blessed him. Then she came to the window and looked over in my direction a long time. After that she left the room and I saw the light in the top story. Finally the same woman appeared on the roof, ran lightly over the ridgepole, crossed over onto the next roof and disappeared before my eyes.

I was struck dumb, I admit. I slept little and the next day I waited impatiently for midnight. As the hour struck, I stood at my window. Soon I saw, not the woman in white, but a sort of dwarf who had a bluish face, a wooden leg and a lantern in his hand. He went over to the child, looked at him attentively, then he went to the window, sat down, crossed his legs and began to stare fixedly at me. Then he jumped from the window to the street—or, rather, he seemed to slide down—crossed the street and knocked on my door. From the window I asked him who he was. But instead of answering he said:

"Juan Avadoro, take your cape and sword and follow me."

I did as he told me. When I went down to the street I saw the dwarf twenty feet from me, hobbling along on his wooden leg and holding up his lantern to show me the way. After he had gone a hundred steps, he turned to the left and let me into that lonely district between the Calle Retarda and the Mançanarez River. Passing under an arch we entered a patio planted with trees. (In Spain they call inner

courts where carriages do not enter a patio.) At the end of the patio was a little Gothic façade, which appeared to be the portal of a chapel. The woman in white came out of it. The dwarf held up his lantern so that the light shone full on my face.

"It's he!" she cried, "it's really he, my husband, my dear husband!"

"Madame!" I said. "I believed you were dead."

"I am alive!"

And in truth it really was Leonore. I recognized the sound of her voice and even more the passion of her embraces. Her ardor gave me no chance to ask questions about the miraculous aspect of our meeting; I didn't even have time. At last Leonore slipped out of my arms and vanished into the dark. The lame dwarf offered to light my way with his little lantern and I followed him through ruins and deserted districts. Suddenly the lantern went out. The dwarf, whom I tried to call back, did not answer my shouts; the night was pitch black. I decided to lie down on the ground and wait for the day and I fell asleep. When I awoke, it was broad daylight. I was lying near a black marble urn on which I read in gold letters: Leonore Avadora. In a word, I was lying beside my wife's tomb. I then remembered the events of the past night and I was troubled. It had been a long time since I had been to confession. I now went to the Theatine Monastery and asked for my great-uncle, Father Heronymo. He was ill. Another confessor appeared. I asked him if it was possible for demons to assume the form of human beings.

"Undoubtedly," he replied. "In his *Summa*, St. Thomas expressly mentions succubae and it is a reserved sin. When a man has not partaken of the sacraments for a long time, demons gain a certain control over him. They appear in the shape of women and lead him into temptation. If you think, my son, you have met succubae, go to the Grand Penitentiary. Hasten, do not waste time."

I replied that I had had a strange adventure in which I had suffered certain illusions and I asked permission to break off my confession.

I went to Toledo's house. He said he was going to take

me to dine at the Duchess d'Avila's and that the Duchess de Sidonia would be there too. He thought I seemed preoccupied and asked the reason for it. I was actually lost in day-dreams and I could not fix my thoughts on anything reasonable. Even at the duchesses' dinner I was sad; but so sparkling was their gaiety and so well did Toledo play up to them that before very long I, too, shared their happy mood.

During the dinner I noticed the duchesses and Toledo exchanging signs of intelligence and laughter that obviously had something to do with me. We left the table and instead of going into the salon, our *partie carrée* moved towards the duchess's private apartment. There Toledo locked the door and said to me:

"Illustrious Knight of Calatrava, kneel at the duchess's feet. She has been your wife for one whole year. Don't tell us you suspected it! The people to whom you will tell your story may perhaps guess it but the great art is to prevent suspicion from being aroused and that is what we have done. In truth, the mysteries of ambitious d'Avila have been very useful to us. He really had a son whom he expected to recognize. The son died and d'Avila made his daughter promise she would never marry in order that the fiefs would revert to the Sorriente, who are a branch of the d'Avila family. In her pride, our duchess vowed never to have a lord and master. But since our return from Malta that pride was somewhat shaken and in danger of being wrecked. Fortunately for the Duchess d'Avila, she has a friend, who is also your friend, my dear Avadoro. She confided in her and we came to an agreement. We then invented a Leonore, daughter of the duke and the Infanta, who was really the duchess herself, wearing a blonde wig and lightly made up. But you did not recognize your proud sovereign in the naïve boarder from the Carmelites. I attended several rehearsals of that rôle and I assure you I was just as deceived as you were.

"Seeing that you refused the most brilliant matches for the sole desire of remaining close to her, the duchess decided to marry you. You are married before God and the Church, but you are not married before men, or at least you would search in vain for proofs of your marriage. In this way the duchess has kept her promise to her father.

"You therefore married, and the result has been that the duchess was obliged to spend several months on her estates to avoid the glances of the curious. Busqueros had just arrived in Madrid. I told him where you were and, under the pretext of setting the ferret on the wrong trail, we sent Leonore off to the country. Then it suited us to have you leave for Naples, for we did not know what more to tell you about Leonore, and the duchess was unwilling to make herself known until a living token of your love would be added to your rights.

"At this point, my dear Avadoro, I ask you to forgive me. I plunged a dagger in your heart by announcing the death of a person who had never existed. But your sensitiveness was not wasted; the duchess is touched to see that you have loved her so completely under two such different guises. For one week she has been burning to declare herself. Here again I am to blame; I insisted upon making Leonore come back from the other world. The duchess was eager to be the white lady, but she was not the one who ran so lightly over the ridge on the neighboring roof. That Leonore was only a little chimney sweep.

"The same little fellow came back the following night, dressed as a lame devil. He sat on the window and slipped down into the street on a rope fastened there in advance. I don't know what happened in the patio of the Carmelite convent; but this morning I had you followed and I learned that you had made a lengthy confession. I dislike having anything to do with the Church and I fear the consequences of a jest that might be pushed too far. Therefore I ceased to oppose the duchess's desire and we decided to make the announcement today."

This, more or less, was the speech Toledo made. But I was not listening; I was kneeling at the duchess's feet. A charming flush suffused her face, in which I read complete surrender—her admission of defeat. My victory did not have—and never had—but two witnesses. It was none the less dear to me for that.

THE END

THE SARAGOSSA MANUSCRIPT

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