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Eduardo Zamacois

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T H E I R S O N
T H E N E C K L A C E
B Y E D U A R D O Z A M A C O I S
T R A N S L A T E D B Y G E O R G E A L L A N E N G L A N D



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1919

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For valuable assistance given in the rendering of localisms and obscure passages in the following stories, I wish to return acknowledgment and thanks to Miss Dolores Butterfield and Doña Rosario Muñoz de Morrison.

GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND.

CONTENTS

EDUARDO ZAMACOIS

Artist—Apostle—Prophet

FEW writers of the tremendously virile and significant school of modern Spain summarize in their work so completely the tendencies of the *resurgimiento* as does Eduardo Zamacois. "Renaissance" is really the watchword of his life and literary output. This man is a human dynamo, a revitalizing force in Spanish life and letters, an artist who is more than a mere artist; he is a man with a message, a philosophy and a vision; and all these he knows how to clothe in a forceful, masterly and compelling style, which, though not always lucid, always commands. Zamacois *sees* life, and paints it as it is, sometimes with humor, often with pitiless, dissecting accuracy.

To me, Zamacois seems a Spanish Guy de Maupassant. He tells a story in much the same way, with that grace and charm which only genius, coupled to infinite hard work, can crystallize on the printed page. His subjects are often much the same as those of de Maupassant. His sympathy for what prigs call "low life"; his understanding of the heart of the common people; his appreciation of the drama and pathos, the humor and tragedy of ordinary, everyday life; his frank handling of the really vital things—which we western-hemisphere hypocrites call improprieties and turn up our noses at, the while we secretly pry into them—all mark him as kin with the great French master. Kin, not imitator, Zamacois is Zamacois, no one else. His way of seeing, of expressing, is all his; and even the manner in which he handles the Castilian, constructing his own grammatical forms and words to suit himself, mark him a pioneer. He is a hard man to translate. Dictionaries are too narrow for the limits of his vocabulary. Many of his words baffle folk who speak Spanish as a birthright. He is a *jeune* of the *jeunes*. A creative, not an imitative force. Power, thought, vitality, constructive ideals: these sketch the man's outlines. He comes of a distinguished family. The great Spanish painter, of his same name, is a close relative.

His personality is charming. My acquaintance with him forms one of the pleasantest chapters in a life of literary ups and downs. Ruddy, vigorous, with short hair getting a bit dusty; with a contagious laugh and a frequent smile; with a kind of gay worldliness that fascinates; a nonchalant, tolerant philosophy; a dry humor; a good touch at the piano; an excellent singing voice for the performance of *peteneras* and folk-songs without number; a splendid platform-presence as a lecturer on Spanish literature and customs, Zamacois is an all-round man of intense vitality, deep originality and human breadth. He is a wise man, widely traveled, versed in much strange lore; and yet he has kept simplicity, courtesy, humanity. Spain is decadent? Not while it can produce men, thinkers, writers like this man—like this member of the new school that calls itself, because it realizes its own historic mission, *el resurgimiento*.

"Nothing binds nations together so securely," he said to me one day, "and nothing so profoundly vitalizes them, as literature and art. Commercial rivalries lead to war. But artistic and literary matters are free and universal. Beauty cannot be appreciated, alone. It must be shared, to be enjoyed. My ambition—or one of my ambitions—is to bring the old world to the new, and to take back the new to the old." He spoke with enthusiasm, for he is an enthusiast by temperament, filled with nervous energy that looks out compellingly from his gray eyes—not at all a Spanish type, as we conceive the typical Spaniard. "I am sorry you Americans know so little of Spanish letters. You have always gone to France, rather than to Spain, for your literary loves. To you, as a race, the names of Galdós, Benavente, Emilia Pardo Bazan, Valle Inclán, Martinez Ruiz, Baroja, Trigo, Machado, the Quintero, Carrere, Marquina, Dicenta, Martinez Sierra and Linares Rivas

are but names. The literary world still looks to France; but Spain is slowly coming into her own. Her language and literature are spreading. Civilization is beginning to realize something of the tremendous fecundity and genius of the modern Spanish literary renaissance."

When I asked him about himself, he tried to evade me. The man is modest. He prefers to talk about Spain. Only with difficulty can one make him reveal anything of his personality, his life.

"I have no biography," he laughed, when I insisted on knowing something of him. "Oh, yes, I was born, I suppose. We all are. My birth took place in Cuba, in 1878. When I was three, my parents took me to Brussels. I grew up there, and in Spain and Paris. My education—the beginning of it—was given me in Paris and at the University of Madrid. Degree? Well—a '*Philosophe ès Lettres*.' I much prefer the title of Philosopher of Humanity." That, alone, shows the type of mind inherent in Zamacois.

His first novel was published when he was eighteen. He has since written about thirty more, together with thousands of newspaper articles in *El Liberal*, *El Imparcial*, and no end of others. He has produced ten plays, and many volumes of criticisms, chronicles and miscellanea, beside two volumes on the great war. His pen must have had few idle moments!

In addition to all this, he has edited several papers. At twenty-two he was editing *Germinal*. A Socialist? Yes. Once on a time more radical than now, when the more universal tendencies have entered in, he still believes in the principles of Socialism, as do so many of the "young," all over Europe.

He himself divides his work into three main epochs. The first has love for its keynote; and here we find *El Seductor*, *Sobre el Abismo*, *Punto-Negro*, *Loca de Amor*, *De Carne y Hueso*, *Duelo a Muerte*, *Impresiones de Arte*, *Incesto*, *La Enferma*, *De mi Vida*, *Amar a Obscuras*, *Bodas Trágicas*, *Noche de Bodas*, *El Lacayo*, and *Memorias de una Cortesana*. The second epoch deals with death and mysteries, the future life, religion. (Zamacois is religious in the sense that so much of the young blood of the Latin world is religious—negatively. They think more clearly than we Anglo-Saxons, in some way, these Latins!) *El Otro*, *El Misterio de un Hombre Pequeñito* and some others fall into this epoch. The third is characterized by a wider vision, a more complete realization of the essential tragedy and irony of human life, and is tempered by the understanding that comes to all of us when graying hair and fading illusions tell us we are no longer young. Here we find *Años de Miseria y de Risa*, *La Opinión Ajena* and stories of the type of those in the present volume. Surely *El Hijo* and *El Collar* are cynical enough to rank with masterpieces of cynicism in any tongue.

Zamacois' plays are distinguished by the same dramatic, often mystic, elements that make his novels and short stories of such vital interest. The more important titles are: *Teatro Galante*, *Nochebuena*, *El Pasado Vuelve*, and *Frio*.

"Spain still dominates the whole of Spanish literature," says Zamacois. "The Latin new world has had but slight influence thereon. And Spain is fast becoming liberalized. *Resurgimiento* is the pass-word, all along the line. Even our women are becoming liberalized—or we are beginning to emancipate them, a little. That is highly revolutionary—for Spain! The war has flooded Spain with new ideas, not only abstract but concrete. We are getting free speech and a free press—is America winning more latitude, or shrinking to less?—and we are enforcing education. We are reviving physically. Athletic sports are coming in. These are all signs of the Renaissance, just as the new school of writers is a sign. I suppose most of the new blood is indifferent to religion. Spain has a small body of religionist fanatics, a strong minority of non-religious, intellectual élite, and a vast body of indifferent folk, slowly making progress toward enlightenment.

"Spain's misfortune is this—that you foreigners have seen in her only the picturesque, the medieval, the exotic. Spain has scientific, engineering and literary triumphs to be proud of now, as well as ivy-grown cathedrals, bull-rings and palaces. Under her old, hard carapace, new blood is leaping; it leaps from her strong heart, across half the world.

"Our real rebirth took place after the Spanish-American war, when our colonial system collapsed and we had to roll up our sleeves and support ourselves by hard work. Defeat was to us a blessing in disguise. Spain is to-day a much different and better land than it was twenty years ago. For one thing, we use more soap, these days. As the church declines, bathtubs multiply. *¿Tendré que decir más?*

"A new spirit and a new life are to-day stirring in ancient Iberia. A splendid artistic and literary renaissance, vast commercial undertakings and enormous manufacturing enterprises are all developing hand in hand. Spain's past is glorious. Her future is both glorious and bright."

GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND.

12 Park Drive, Brookline, Mass.

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THEIR SON

I

AT about the age of thirty, tired of living all alone with no one to love, Amadeo Zureda got married. This Zureda was a stocky fellow, neither tall nor short, dark, thoughtful, and with a certain slow, sure way of moving. The whole essence of his face, the soul of it—to speak so—was rooted in the taciturn energy of the space between his eyebrows. There you found the man, more than in the rough black mustache which cut across his face; even more than in the thickness of his cheek-bones, the squareness of his jaws, the hard solidity of his nose. His brow was somber as an evil memory.

One after the other you might erase all the lines of that face, and so long as you left the thick-tufted brows, you would not have changed the expression of Amadeo Zureda. For there dwelt the whole spirit of the man, reserved yet ardent.

His marriage rescued Rafaela, whom he made his wife, from the slavish toil of a work-woman. Rafaela was just over eighteen, a buxom brunette with big, roguish, black eyes. Her breath was sweet, her lips vivid, her mobile hips full and inviting, like her breasts; and she had a free-and-easy, energetic, enterprising way of walking. Joined to a kind of untamed grace (just a bit vulgar, in the manner of a daughter of the people), she possessed a certain distinction both of face and manner, of moving, of showing likes and dislikes, that enhanced and exalted her beauty. Her hands were small and well cared for. She liked fine shoes and starched petticoats that frou-froued as she walked.

Her mind resembled her body. It was restless, lively and incapable of keeping the same point of view for very long. When she talked, those coquettish eyes of hers shone brighter than ever, with enjoyment. Her mouth was rather large; her teeth dazzling; and the light of laughter always shone there like an altar-lamp.

Amadeo worshiped her. When he came home at night from work, Rafaela ran to meet him with noisy jubilation and then cuddled herself caressingly on his knees, after he had sat down. All this filled Zureda with ineffable joy, so that he became quite speechless, in ecstasy. At such times even the thoughtful scar of the wrinkle between his brows grew less severe, in the calm gravity of his dark forehead.

The newly married couple took lodgings on the sixth floor of a house not far from the Estación del Norte. The house was new, and their apartment was full of sun and cheer, with big, well-lighted rooms. They had a couple of balconies, too; and these the busy, artistic hands of Rafaela kept smothered in flowers.

Amadeo was a locomotive-engineer. The company liked him well and more than well. During the two years he had been on the Madrid-Bilbao run he had never been called in for reprimand. He was intelligent and a hard worker. Fifteen hours he could stand up to the job, and still see just as clearly as ever with those black, powerful eyes of his. In his corduroys, this muscular, dark-skinned, impassive man reminded you of a bronze.

He was devoted to his job. He had learned engineering in the States, which everybody knows is a master-country for railroading. His parents had both died when he was very young. He had dedicated the whole plenitude of his affections, his sap and vigor as a single man, to his work. Foot by foot he knew the right-of-way from Madrid to Bilbao in its most intimate details, so that

he could have made that run blindfolded, just as safely as if he had been walking about his own house. There were clumps of trees, ravines, rivers, hills and farms that, to his eyes, had the decisive meaning of a watch or a map.

"At such-and-such a place," he would think, "I've got to jam the brakes on; there's a down-grade just beyond." Or else: "Here's the bridge. It must be so-and-so o'clock." His grip on such ideas of time and space was always exactly right. He seemed infallible. Zureda knew that all these inanimate objects, scattered along the line, were so many faithful friends incapable of deceiving him.

He shared this fetichistic love of the landscape with the love inspired in him by his engines. Ordinarily he ran two: No. 187 and No. 1,082. He called the first "Nigger," and the second "Sweetie." Nigger was an intractable brute, ill-tempered and hard-bitted. When she tackled a hill she seemed to quiver with pain, and in her iron belly strange threatening shrieks resounded. She skidded downhill and was hard to get under control. You would have said some wayward spirit was thrashing about inside her, eternally rebelling against all government. She was logy, at times, and hated to start; but once you got her going you had a proper job to stop her. When she rushed in under the black arch of a tunnel, her whistle shrieked with ear-splitting alarum, like a man screeching.

"Sweetie" was a different sort, meek, obedient, strong and good-willed on an up-grade, cautious and full of reserve on a down, when the headlong flight of the train had to be checked.

Twice a week, each time that Amadeo started on a run, his wife always asked him:

"Which machine have you got, to-day?"

If it was "Sweetie," she had nothing to worry about.

"That's all right," she would say. "But the other one! I certainly am afraid of it. It's bad luck, sure!"

Zureda, however, liked to handle both of them. Sometimes he preferred one, sometimes the other, according to the state of his nerves. When his mood was cheerful, he liked "Sweetie" best, because there wasn't much work about running her. He preferred her, usually, on quiet days, when the sun was giving the earth a big, warm kiss. Zureda's fireman was a chap named Pedro; an Andalusian, full of spicy songs and tales. Amadeo rather liked to hear these, always keeping his eyes fixed on blue distances that seemed to smile at him. Out ahead, over the boiler, the rails stretched on and on, shining like silver in the sun. The warm air blew about Zureda, laden with sweet country smells. Under his feet the engineer felt the shuddering of "Sweetie," tame, laborious, neither bucking nor snorting; and at such times, both proud and caressing as if he loved her, he would murmur:

"Get along with you, my pretty lamb!"

At other times the engineer's full-blooded vigor suffered vague irritations and capricious rages, unwholesome disturbances of temper which made him unwilling to talk, and dug still deeper the grim line between his brows. Then it was that he preferred to take out "Nigger." Stubborn, menacing, rebellious against all his demands, the fight she gave him—a fight always potentially dangerous—acted as a sedative to his nerves and seemed to pacify him. At such times Pedro, the Andalusian with the risqué stories and the spicy songs, felt the numbing, evil humor of his engineer, and grew still.

All along the line, chiming into the uproarious quiverings of the engine and the whistling gusts of wind, a long colloquy of hate seemed to develop between the man and the machine. Zureda would grit his teeth and grunt:

"Go on, you dog! Some hill—but you've got to make it! Come on, get to it!"

Then he would fling open the furnace door, burning red as any Hell-pit, and with his own furious hand would fling eight or ten shovels of coal into the firebox. The machine would shudder, as if lashed by punishment. Enraged snorts would fill her; and from her smoking shoulders something like a wave of hate seemed to stream back.

Zureda always came home from trips like these bringing some present or other for his wife; perhaps a pair of corsets, a fur collar, a box of stockings. The wife, knowing just the time when the express would get in, always went out on the balcony to see it pass. Her husband never failed to let her know he was coming, from afar, by blowing a long whistle-blast.

If she were still abed when the train arrived, she would jump up, fling on a few clothes and run to the balcony. Her joyous face would smile out at the world from the green peep-holes through the plants in their flower-pots. In a moment or two she could see the train among the wooded masses of Moncloa. On it came with a roar and a rattle, hurling its undulating black body along the polished rails. Joyously the engineer waved his handkerchief at her, from the engine-cab; and only at times like these did his brow—to which no smile ever lent complete contentment—smooth itself out a little and seem almost happy.

Amadeo Zureda desired nothing. His work was hard, but all he needed to make him glad was just the time between runs—two nights a week—that he spent in Madrid. His whole brusque but honest soul took on fresh youth there, under the roof of his peaceful home, surrounded by the

simple pieces of furniture that had been bought one at a time. This was all the reward he wanted. The cold that pierced his bones, out there in the storms along the railway-line, gradually changed to a glow of warmth in the caressing arms of his wife. Body and soul both fell asleep there in the comfort of a happy and sensual well-being.

II

IT hardly takes more than a couple of years of married life to age a docile man; or at least—about the same thing—to fill him with those forward-looking ideas of caution, economy and peace that sow the seed of fear for the morrow, in quiet souls.

One time Zureda was laid up a while with a bad cold. Getting better of this, the engineer on a momentous night spoke seriously to his wife concerning their future. His bronzed face lying on the whiteness of the pillows brought out the salience of his cheek-bones and the strength of his profile. The vertical furrow between his brows seemed deeper than ever, cut into the serene gravity of his forehead. His wife listened to him attentively, sitting on the edge of the bed, with one leg crossed over the other. She cradled the upper knee between joined hands.

Slowly the engineer's talk unwound itself, to the effect that life is a poor thing at best, constantly surrounded by misfortunes that can strike us in an infinitude of ways. To-day it's a cold draft, to-morrow a chill or a sore throat, or maybe a cancer, that death uses to steal our lives away. All about us, yawning like immense jaws, the earth is always opening, the earth into which all of us must some time descend; and in this very swift and savagely universal hecatomb no one can be sure of witnessing both the rising and the setting of the same day.

"I'm not afraid of work, you know," went on Zureda, "but engines are made of iron, and even so they wear out at last and get tired of running. Men are just the same. And when it happens to me, as it's got to, some day, what'll become of us, then?"

Calmly Rafaela shook her head. She by no means shared her husband's fears. No doubt Amadeo's sickness had made him timorous and pessimistic.

"I think you're making it worse than it really is," she answered. "Old age is still a long way off; and, besides, very likely we'll have children to help us."

Zureda's gesture was a negation.

"That don't matter," he replied. "Children may not come at all; and even if they do, what of that? As for old age being far off, you're wrong. Even to-day, do you think I've got the strength and quickness, or even the enjoyment in my work, that I had when I was twenty-five? Not on your life! Old age is certainly coming, and coming fast. So I tell you again we've got to save something.

"If we do, when I can no longer run an engine I'll open a little machine-shop; and if I should die suddenly, leaving you fifteen or twenty thousand *pesetas*,^[A] you could easily start a good laundry in some central location, for that's the kind of work you understand."

[A] Three or four thousand dollars.

To all this Zureda added a number of other arguments, discreet and weighty, so that his wife declared herself convinced. The engineer already had a plan laid out, that made him talk this way. Among the people who had come to see him, while he had been sick, was one Manolo Berlanga, whose friendship with him had been brotherly indeed. This Berlanga had a job at a silversmith's shop in the Paseo de San Vincente. He had no relatives, and made rather decent wages. A good many times he had told Zureda how much he wanted to find some respectable house where he could live in a decent, private way, paying perhaps four or five pesetas a day for board and room.

"Suppose, now," went on Amadeo, "that Manolo should pay five pesetas a day; that's thirty *duros* a month—thirty good dollars—and the house costs us eight dollars. Well, that leaves us twenty-two dollars a month, and with that, and a few dollars that I'll put in, we can all live high."

To this Rafaela consented, rather stirred by the new ideas awakened by the innovation. The silversmith was a free-and-easy, agreeable young fellow, who chattered all the time and played the guitar in no mean fashion.

"Yes, but how about a place for him?" asked she. "Is there any? What room could we give him?"

"Why, the little alcove off the dining-room, of course."

"Yes, I was thinking of that, too. But it's mighty small, and there's no light in it."

The engineer shrugged his shoulders.

"It's good enough just to sleep in!" he exclaimed. "If we were dealing with a woman, that would be different. But we men get along any old way, all right."

Rafaela wrote to Berlanga next day, at her husband's request, telling him to come and see them. Promptly on the dot the silversmith arrived. He looked about twenty-eight, wore tightly-belted velveteen trousers gaitered under the shoe, and a dark overcoat with astrakhan collar and cuffs. He was of middle height, lean, pale-faced, with a restless manner, a fluent, witty way of talking. On some pretext or other the wife went out, leaving the two men to chew things over and come to an agreement.

"Now, as for living with you people," said Berlanga, "I'll be very glad to give five pesetas per. Or I'll better that, if you say so."

"No, no, thanks," answered Zureda. "I don't want to be bargaining with you. We can all help each other. You and I are like brothers, anyhow."

That night after supper, Rafaela dragged all the useless furniture out of the dining-room alcove and swept and scoured it clean. Next day she got up early to go to a hard-by pawnshop, where she bought her an iron bed with a spring and a woolen mattress. This bed she carefully set up, and fixed it all fine and soft. A couple of chairs, a washstand and a little table covered with a green baize spread completed the furnishing of the room.

After everything was ready, the young woman dressed and combed herself to receive the guest, who arrived about the middle of the afternoon with his luggage, to wit: a box with his workman's tools, a trunk and a little cask. This cask held a certain musty light wine, which—so Berlanga said, after coffee and one of Zureda's cigars had made him expansive—had been given him by a "lady friend" of his who ran a tavern.

A few days passed, days of unusual pleasure to the engineer and his wife, for the silversmith was a man of joyful moods and very fond of crooking his elbow, so that his naturally fertile conversation became hyperbolically colored and quite Andalusian in its exuberance. At dessert, the merry quips of Berlanga woke sonorous explosions of hilarity in Amadeo. When he laughed, the engineer would lean his massive shoulders against the back of the chair. Now and again, as if to underscore his bursts of merriment, he would deal the table shrewd blows. After this he would slowly emit his opinions; and if he had to advise Berlanga, he did it in a kind of paternal way, patiently, good-naturedly.

When he was quite well again, Amadeo went back to work. The morning he took leave of his wife, she asked him:

"Which engine have you got, to-day?"

"Nigger," he answered.

"My, what bad luck! I'm afraid something's going to happen to you!"

"Rubbish! Why should it? *I* can handle her!"

He kissed Rafaela, tenderly pressing her against his big, strong breast. At this moment an unwholesome thought, grotesquely cruel, cut his mind like a whip; a thought that he would pass the night awake, out in the storm, in the engine-cab, while there in Madrid another man would be sleeping under the same roof with his wife. But this unworthy suspicion lasted hardly a second. The engineer realized that Berlanga, though a riotous, dissipated chap, was at heart a brotherly friend, far from base enough to betray him in any such horrible manner.

Rafaela went with her husband to the stairway. There they both began again to inflame each other with ardent kisses and embraces of farewell. The wife's black eyes filled with tears as she told him to keep himself well bundled up and to think often of her. Tears quite blinded her.

"What a good lass she is!" murmured Zureda.

And as he recalled the poisonous doubt of a moment before, the man's ingenuous nobility felt shame.

The life of Manolo Berlanga turned out to be pretty disreputable. He liked wine, women and song, and many a time came home in the wee small hours, completely paralyzed. This invariably happened during the absence of the engineer. Next morning he was always very remorseful, and went with contrition to the kitchen, where Rafaela was getting breakfast.

"Are you mad at me?" he used to ask.

She answered him in a maternal kind of way and told him to be good; this always made him laugh.

"None o' that!" he used to say. "I don't like being good. That's one of the many afflictions marriage forces on a man. Don't you have enough 'being good' in this house, with Amadeo?"

Among men, love is often nothing more than the carnal obsession produced in them by the constant and repeated sight of one and the same woman. Every laugh, every motion of the woman moving about them possesses a charm at first hardly noticed. But after a while, under the spell of a phenomenon we may call cumulative, this charm waxes potent; it grows till some time it unexpectedly breaks forth in an enveloping, conquering passion.

Now one morning it happened that Manolo Berlanga was eating breakfast in the dining-room before going to the shop. Rafaela, her back toward him, was scrubbing the floor of the hallway.

"How you do work, my lady!" cried the silversmith, jokingly.

Her answer was a gay-toned laugh; then she went on with her task, sometimes recoiling so that she almost sat on her heels, again stretching her body forward with an energy that lowered the tight-corseted slimness of her waist and set in motion the fullness of her yielding hips. The silversmith had often seen her thus, without having paid any heed; but hardly had he come to realize her sensual appeal when the flame of desire blazed up in him.

"There's a neat one for you!" thought he.

And he kept on looking at her, his vicious imagination dwelling on the perfections of that carnal flower, soft and vibrant. His brown study continued a while. Then suddenly, with the brusqueness of ill-temper, he got up.

"Well, so long!" said he.

He stopped in the stairway to greet a neighbor and light a cigarette. By the time he had reached the street-door he had forgotten all about Rafaela. But, later, his desire once more awoke. At dinner he dissimulated his observations of the young woman's bare arms. Strong and well-molded they were, those arms, and under the cloth of her sleeves rolled up above the elbow, the flesh swelled exuberantly.

"Hm! You haven't combed your hair, to-day," said Berlanga.

She answered with a laugh—one of those frankly voluptuous laughs that women with fine teeth enjoy.

"You're right," said she. "You certainly notice everything. I didn't have time."

"It don't matter," answered the gallant. "Pretty women always look best that way, with their hair flying and their arms bare."

"You mean that, really?"

"I certainly do!"

"Then you've got the temperament and makings of a married man."

"I have?"

"Sure!"

"How's that?"

She laughed again, gayly, coquettishly, adding:

"Because you already know that married women generally don't pay much attention to their husbands. That's what hurts marriage—women not caring how they look."

So they went on talking away, and all through their rather spicy conversation, full of meaning, a mutual attraction began to make itself felt. Silently this began sapping their will-power. At last the woman glanced at her clock on the sideboard.

"Eight o'clock," said she. "I wonder what Amadeo's doing, now?"

"Well, that's according," answered Berlanga. "When did he get to Bilbao?"

"This morning."

"Then he's probably been asleep part of the time, and now I guess he's playing dominoes in some café. And we, meantime—we're here—you and I——"

"And you don't feel very well, eh?" she asked.

"I?"

Looking at Rafaela with eloquent steadiness he slowly added:

"I feel a damn sight better than *he* does!"

Then, while he drank his coffee, the silversmith laid out on the table his board-money for that week. He began to count:

"Two and two's four—nine—eleven—thirty-eight pesetas. Rotten week I've had! Say, I've hardly pulled down enough for my drinks."

He got together seven dollars, piled them up—making a little column of silver change—and shoved them over to Rafaela.

"Here you go!" said he.

She blushed, as she answered. You would have thought her offended by the somewhat hostile opposition of debtor and creditor that the money seemed to have set up between them. She

asked:

"What's all this you're giving me?"

"Say! What d'you suppose? Don't I pay every week? Well, then, here's my board. Seven days at five pesetas per, that's just thirty-five pesetas, huh? What's the matter with you?"

He made the coins jump and jingle in his agile hand, well-used to dealing cards. Then he added:

"To-day's Saturday. So then, I'll pay you now. That'll leave me three pesetas for extras—tobacco and car-fare. Oh, it's a fine time *I'll* have!"

With a lordly gesture, good-natured, protecting, the woman handed back Berlanga's money.

"Next week you can pay up," said she. "I'm fixed all right. By luck, even if I'm not five dollars to the good, I'm not five to the bad."

The silversmith offered the money again. But this time the offer was weak, and was made only in the half-hearted way that seemed necessary to keep him in good standing. Then he got up from the table, rubbed his hands up and down his legs to smooth the ugly bulge out of the knees of his trousers, pulled down his vest and readjusted the knot of his cravat before the mirror. He exclaimed with a kind of boastful swagger:

"D'you know what I'm thinking?"

"Tell me!"

"Oh, I don't dare."

"Why not?"

"You might get mad at me."

"No, no!"

"Promise you won't?"

"On my word of honor! Come on, now, say anything you like, and *I* won't mind."

"Well—how about—*him*?"

"I know what I'm doing!"

"Yes, but—see here! You don't care a hang for me, anyhow. You don't think very much of *me*!

"I do, too! I think a lot!"

She looked at him in a gay, provocative manner, stirred to the depths of her by such a strong, overpowering caprice that it almost seemed love.

Expansively the silversmith answered:

"Well, then, since we've got money and we're all alone, why don't we take in a dance, to-night?"

The whole Junoesque body of the young woman—a true Madrid type—trembled with joy. It had been a long time since she had had any such amusement; not since her marriage had she danced. Zureda, something of a stick-in-the-mud and in no wise given to pleasures, had never wanted to take her to any dances, not even to a masquerade. A swarm of joyful visions filled her memory. Ah, those happy Sundays when she had been single! Saturday nights, at the shop, she and the other girls had made dates for the next day. Sometimes they had visited the dance-halls at Bombilla. Other times they had gone to Cuatro Caminos or Ventas del Espiritu Santo. And once there, what laughter and what joy! What strange emotions of half fear, half curiosity they had felt at sensing the desire of whatever man had asked them to dance!

Rafaela straightened up, quick, pliant, transfigured.

"You aren't any more willing to ask me, than I am to go!" said she.

"Well, why not, then?" demanded the silversmith. "Let's go, right now! Let's take a run out to Bombilla, and not leave as long as we've got a cent!"

The young woman fairly jumped for joy, skipped out of the dining-room, tied a silk handkerchief over her head and most fetchingly threw an embroidered shawl over her shoulders. She came back, immediately. Her little high-heeled, pointed, patent-leather boots and her fresh-starched, rustling petticoats echoed her impatience. She went up to Berlanga, took him familiarly by the arm, and said:

"I tell you, though, I'm going to pay half."

The silversmith shook his head in denial. She added, positively:

"That's the only way I'll go. Aren't we both going to have a good time? That's fair, for us both to pay half."

Berlanga accepted this friendly arrangement. As soon as they got into the street they hired a carriage. At Bombilla they had a first-rate supper and danced their heads off, till long past

midnight. They went home afoot, slowly, arm in arm. Rafaela had drunk a bit too much, and often had to stop. Dizzy, she leaned her head on the silversmith's breast. Manolo, himself a bit tipsy and out of control, devoured her with his eyes.

"Say, you're a peach!" he murmured.

"Am I, really?"

"Strike me blind if you're not! Pretty, eh? More than that! You're a wonder—oh, great! The best I ever saw, and I've seen a lot!"

She still had enough wit left to pretend not to hear him, playing she was ill. She stammered:

"Oh, I—I'm so sick!"

Suddenly Berlanga exclaimed:

"If Zureda and I weren't pals——"

Silence. The silversmith added, warming to the subject:

"Rafaela, tell me the truth. Isn't it true that Amadeo stands in our way?"

She peered closely at him, and afterward raised her handkerchief to her eyes. She gave him no other answer. And nothing more happened, just then.

During the monotonous passage of a few more days, Manolo Berlanga gradually realized that Rafaela had big, expressive eyes, small feet with high insteps and a most pleasant walk. He noted that her breasts were firm and full; and he even thought he could detect in her an extremely coquettish desire to appear attractive in his eyes. At the end of it all, the silversmith fully understood his own intentions, which caused him both joy and fear.

"She's got me going," he thought. "She's certainly got me going! Say, I'm crazy about that woman!"

At last, one evening, the ill-restrained passion of the man burst into an overwhelming torrent. On that very night, Zureda was going to come home. Hardly had Manolo Berlanga left the shop when he hurried to his lodgings. He had no more than reached the front room when—no longer able to restrain his evil thoughts—he asked:

"Has Amadeo got here, yet?"

"He'll be here in about fifteen minutes," answered Rafaela. "It's nine o'clock, now. The train's already in. I heard it whistle."

Berlanga entered the dining-room and saw that the young woman was making up his bed. He approached her.

"Want any help?" he asked.

"No, thanks!"

Suddenly, without knowing what he was about, he grabbed her round the waist. She tried to defend herself, turning away, pushing him from her. But, kissing her desperately, he murmured:

"Come now, quick, quick—before he gets here!"

Then, after a brief moment of silent struggle:

"Darling! Don't you see? It had to be this way——!"

The wife of Zureda did not, in fact, put up much of a fight.

A year later, Rafaela gave birth to a boy. Manolo Berlanga stood godfather for it. Both Rafaela and Amadeo agreed on naming it Manolo Amadeo Zureda. The baptism was very fine; they spent more than two thousand *reals*^[B] on it.

[B] About \$100.

How pink-and-white, how joyous, how pretty was little Manolín! The engineer, congratulated by everybody, wept with joy.

LITTLE Manolo was nearly three years old. He had developed into a very cunning chap, talkative and pleasant. In his small, plump, white face, that looked even whiter by contrast with the dead black of his hair, you could see distinctive characteristics of several persons. His tip-tilted nose and the roguish line of his mouth were his mother's. From his father, no doubt, he had inherited the thoughtful forehead and the heavy set of his jaws. And at the same time you were reminded of his godfather by his lively ways and by a peculiar manner he had of throwing out his feet, when he walked. It seemed almost as if the clever little fellow had set his mind on looking like everybody who had stood near his baptismal font, so that he could win the love of them all.

Zureda worshiped the boy, laughed at all his tricks and graces, and spent hours playing with him on the tiles of the passageway. Little Manolo pulled his mustache and necktie, mauled him and broke the crystal of his watch. Far from getting angry, the engineer loved him all the more for it, as if his strong, rough heart were melting with adoration.

One evening Rafaela went down to the station to say good-bye to her husband, who was taking out the 7.05 express. In her arms she carried the boy. Pedro, the fireman, looked out of the cab, and made both the mother and son laugh by pulling all sorts of funny faces.

"Here's the toothache face!" he announced. "And here's the stomach-ache face!"

Then the bell rang, and they heard the vibrant whistle of the station-master.

"Here, give me the boy!" cried Zureda.

He wanted to kiss him good-bye. The little fellow stretched out his tiny arms to his father.

"Take me! Take me, papa!" he entreated with a lisping tongue, his words full of love and charm.

Poor Zureda! The idea of leaving the boy, at that moment, stabbed him to the heart. He could not bear to let him go; he could not! Hardly knowing what he was about, he pressed the youngster to his breast with one hand, and with the other eased open the throttle. The train started. Rafaela, terrified, ran along the platform, screaming:

"Give him, give him to me!"

But already, even though Zureda had wanted to give him back, it was too late. Rafaela ran to the end of the platform, and there she had to stop. Pedro laughed and gesticulated from the blackness of the tender, bidding her farewell.

The young woman went back home, in tears. Manolo Berlanga had just got home. He had been drinking and was in the devil's own humor.

"Well, what's up now?" he demanded.

Inconsolable, sobbing, Rafaela told him what had happened.

"Is *that* all?" interrupted the silversmith. "Say, you're crazy! If he's gone, so much the better. Now he'll leave us in peace, a little while. Damn good thing if he *never* came back!"

Then he demanded supper.

"Come, now," he added, "cut out that sniveling! Give me something to eat. I'm in a hurry!"

Rafaela began to light the fire. But all the time she kept on crying and scolding. Her rage and grief dragged out into an interminable monologue:

"My darling—my baby—this is a great note! Think of that man taking him away, like that! The little angel will get his death o' cold. What a fool, what an idiot! And then they talk about the way women act! My precious! What'll I do, thinking about how cold he'll be, to-night? My baby, my heart's blood—my precious little sweetheart——!"

In her anger she tipped over the bottle of olive-oil. It fell off the stove and smashed on the floor. The rage of the woman became frenzied.

"Damn my soul if I know *what* I'm doing!" she screeched. "Oh, that dirty husband of mine! I hope to God I never see him again. And now, how am I going to cook? I'll have to go down to the store. Say, I wish I'd never been born. We'd all be a lot better off! To Hell with such a——"

"Say, are you going to keep that rough-house up all night?" demanded the silversmith. Tired of hearing her noise, he had walked slowly into the kitchen. Now he stood there, black-faced, with his fists doubled up in the pockets of his jacket.

"I'll keep it up as long as I'm a mind to!" she retorted. "What are *you* going to do about it?"

"You shut your jaw," vociferated Berlanga, "or I'll break it for you!"

Then his rage burst out. Joining a bad act to an evil threat, he rained a volley of blows on the head of his mistress. Rafaela stopped crying, and through her gritted teeth spat out a flood of vile epithets.

"You dirty dog!" she cried. "You pimp! All you know how to do is hang around women. Coward! Sissy! The only part of a man you've got is your face!"

He growled:

"Take that, and that, you sow!"

The disgusting scene lasted a long time. Terrified, the woman stopped her noise, and fought. Soon her nose and mouth were streaming blood. In the kitchen resounded a confused tumult of blows and kicks, as the silversmith drove his victim into a corner and beat her up. After the sorry job was done, Berlanga cleared out and never came back till one or two in the morning. Then he went to his room and turned in without making a light, no doubt ashamed of his cowardly deed.

For a while he tried to excuse himself. After all, thought he, the whole blame wasn't his. Rafaela's tirade and the wine he himself had drunk, had been more than half at fault. Men, he reflected, certainly do become brutes when they drink.

The young woman was in her bedroom. From time to time, Berlanga heard her sigh deeply. Her sighs were long and tremulous, like those of a child still troubled in its dreams after having cried itself to sleep.

The silversmith exclaimed:

"Oh, Rafaela!"

He had to call her twice more. At last, in a kind of groan, the young woman answered:

"Well, what do you want?"

Slyly and proudly the silversmith grinned to himself. That question of hers practically amounted to forgiveness. The sweet moment of reconciliation was close at hand.

"Come here!" he ordered.

Another pause followed, during which the will of the man and of the woman seemed to meet and struggle, with strange magnetism, in the stillness of the dark house.

"Come, girl!" repeated the smith, softening his voice.

Then he added, after a moment:

"Well, don't you want to come?"

Another minute passed; for all women, even the simplest and most ignorant, know to perfection the magic secret of making a man wait for them. But after a little while, Berlanga heard Rafaela's bare feet paddling along the hall. The young woman reached the bedroom of the silversmith, and in the shadows her exploring hands met the hands that Manolo was stretching out to greet her.

"What do you want, anyhow?" she demanded, humble yet resentful.

"Come to bed!"

She obeyed. Many kisses sounded, given her by the smith. After a while the man's voice asked in an endearing yet overmastering way:

"Now, then, are you going to be good?"

Amadeo Zureda came back a couple of days later, eminently well pleased. His boy had played the part of a regular little man during the whole run. He had never cried, but had eaten whatever they had given him and had slept like a top, on the coal. When Zureda kissed his wife, he noticed that she had a black-and-blue spot on her forehead.

"That looks like somebody had hit you," said he. "Have you been fighting with any one?"

She hesitated, then answered:

"No, no. Why, who'd I be fighting with? Much less coming to blows? The night you left, the oil-bottle fell off the sideboard, and when I went to pick it up I got this bump."

"How about that big scratch, there?"

"Which one? Oh, you mean on my lip? I did that with a pin."

"That's too bad! Take care of yourself, little lady!"

Manolo Berlanga was there and heard all this. He had to bite his mustache to hide a wicked laugh; but the engineer saw nothing at all. The poor man suspected nothing. He remained quite blind. Even if he had not loved Rafaela, his adoration of the boy would have been enough to fill his eyes with dust.

TRUTH, however, is mighty and will prevail. After a while Zureda began to observe that something odd was going on about him. Slowly and without knowing why, he found a sort of distance separating him from his companions, who treated him and looked at him in a new way. You would almost have said they were trying to extort from his eyes the confession of some risqué secret he was doubtless keeping well covered up and hidden; a secret everybody knew. A complex sentiment of curiosity and silence isolated him from his friends and seemed to befog him with inexplicable ridicule. After a while he grew much puzzled by this phenomenon.

"I wonder if I've changed?" thought he. "Maybe I'm sick, without knowing it. Or can it be that I'm mighty ugly, and nobody dares to tell me so?"

Not far from the station, and near Manzanares Street, there was an eating-house where the porters, engineers and firemen were wont to foregather. This establishment belonged to Señor Tomás, who in his youth had been a toreador. The aplomb and force, as well as the stout-heartedness of that brave, gay profession still remained his. Señor Tomás talked very little, and for those who knew him well his words had the authority of print. He was a tall old fellow, with powerful hands and shoulders; he wore velveteen trousers and little Andalusian jackets of black stuff; and over the sash with which he masked his growing girth he strapped a wide leather belt with a silver buckle.

One evening Señor Tomás was enjoying the air at the door of his eating-house when Zureda passed by. The tavern-keeper beckoned the engineer; and when Zureda had come near, looked fixedly into his eyes and said:

"You and I have got to have a few words."

Zureda remained dumb. The secret, chill vibration of an evil presentiment had passed like a cold wind through his heart. Presently recovering speech, he answered:

"Any time you say so."

They reëntered the tavern, which just then was almost without patrons. A high wooden shelf, painted red and covered with bottles, ran about the room. On the wall was hung the stuffed head of the bull that had given Señor Tomás the tremendous gash which had torn his leg open and had obliged him to lay aside forever the garb of a toreador. At the rear, the bartender had fallen asleep behind the polished bar, on which a little fountain of water was playing its perpetual music.

The two men sat down at a big table, and the tavern-keeper clapped his hands together.

"Hey you, there!" he cried.

The bartender woke up and came to him.

"What'll you have?" asked he.

"Bring some olives and two cups of wine."

A long pause followed. Señor Tomás with voracious pulls at his smoldering cigar set its tip glowing. A kind of gloomy preoccupation hardened his close-shaven face—a face that showed itself bronzed and fleshy beneath the white hair grandly combed and curled upon his forehead.

Presently he began:

"I hate to see two men fight, because if they're spirited it's bound to be serious. But still I can't bear to see a good man and a hard-working man be made a laughing-stock for everybody. Get me?"

Amadeo Zureda first grew pale and then red. Yes, he knew something was up. The old man had called him to tell him some terrible mystery. He felt that the strange feeling of vacancy all about him, which he had been sensing for some time, was at last going to be explained. He trembled. Something black, something vast was closing over his head; it might be one of those fearful tragedies that sometimes cut a human life in twain.

"I don't know how to talk, and I don't like to talk," went on the tavern-keeper. "That's why I don't beat round the bush, but I call a spade a spade. Yes, sir, I call things by their right names. Because in this world, Amadeo—you mark my words—everything's got a name."

"That's so, Señor Tomás."

"All right. And I'm one of those fellows that go right after the truth the way I used to go after the bull—go the quickest way, which is the best way, because it's the shortest."

"That's right, too."

"Well, then. I like you first-rate, Amadeo. I know you're a worker, and I know you're one of those honest men that wouldn't stand for any crooked work to turn a dollar. And I know, too, you're a man that knows how to use his fists and how to run up the battle-flag of the soul, when you have to. I'm sure of all this. And by the same token, I won't let anybody make fun of you."

"Thanks, Señor Tomás."

"All right! Now, then, in my house, right here, people are saying your wife is thick with Manolo Berlanga!"

The eyes of the tavern-keeper and the engineer met. They remained fixed, so, a moment. Then the eyes of Zureda opened wide, seemed starting from their sockets. Suddenly he jumped up, and his square finger-nails fairly sank into the wood of the table. His white lips, slaving, stammered in a fit of rage:

"That's a lie, a damned lie, Señor Tomás! I'll cut your heart out for that! Yes, if the Virgin herself came down and told me that, I'd cut her heart out, too! God, what a lie!"

The tavern-keeper remained entirely self-possessed. Without even a change of expression he answered:

"All right! Find out what's true or false in this business. For you know there's no difference between the truth and a lie that everybody's telling. And if you decide there's nothing to this except what I say, come and tell me, for I'm right here and everywhere to back up my words!"

The tavern-keeper grew silent, and Amadeo Zureda remained motionless, struck senseless, gaping.

After a few minutes his ideas began to calm down again, and as they grew quiet they coordinated themselves; then the engineer felt an unwholesome and resistless curiosity to know everything, to torture himself digging out details.

"You mean to tell me," asked he, "that they've talked about that, right here?"

"Right on the spot, sir!"

"When?"

"More than once, and more than twenty times; and they say worse than that, too. They say Berlanga beats your wife, and you're wise to everything, and have been from the beginning. And they say you stand for it, to have a good thing, because this Berlanga fellow helps you pay the rent."

A couple of porters came in, and interrupted the conversation. Señor Tomás ended up with:

"Well now, you know all about it!"

When Zureda left the tavern, his first impulse was to go home and put it up to Rafaela. Either with soft words or with a stick he might get something about Berlanga out of her. But presently he changed his mind. Affairs of this kind can't be hurried much. It is better to go slow, to wait, to get information bit by bit and all by one's self. When he reached the station it was six o'clock. He met Pedro on the platform.

"Which engine have we got to-day?" asked Amadeo.

"Nigger," answered the fireman.

"The devil! It just had to be her, eh?"

That run was terrible indeed, packed full of inward struggles and of battles with the rebellious locomotive—an infernal run that Zureda remembered all his life.

With due regard for the prudent scheme that he had mapped out, the engineer set himself to observing the way his wife and Manolo had of talking to each other. After greatly straining his attention, he could find nothing in the cordial frankness of their relations that seemed to pass the limits of good friendship. From the time when Berlanga had stood godfather for little Manolo, Amadeo had begged them to use "thee" and "thou" to each other, and this they had done. But this familiarity seemed quite brother-and-sisterly; it seemed justified by the three years they had been living in the same house, and could hardly be suspected of hiding any guilty secret.

None the less, the jealousy of Zureda kept on growing, rooting itself in every pretext, and using even the most minor thing to inflame and color with vampire suspicion every thought of the engineer. The notion kept growing in Zureda; it became an obsession which made him see the dreaded vision constantly, just as through another obsession, Berlanga's desire for Rafaela had been born.

At last Amadeo became convinced that his skill as a spy was very poor. He lacked that astuteness, those powers of detection and that divining instinct which, in a kind of second sight, makes some men get swiftly and directly at the bottom of things. In view of his blunt character, unfitted for any kind of diplomatic craft, he thought it better to confront the matter face to face.

As soon as he had come by this resolution, his uneasiness grew calm. A sedative feeling of peace took possession of his heart. The engineer passed that day quietly reading, waiting for night to come. Rafaela was sewing in the dining-room, with little Manolo asleep on her lap. Half an hour before supper, Zureda tiptoed to their bedroom and took from the little night-table his heavy-bladed, horn-handled hunting knife—the knife he always carried on his runs. After that he put on a flat cap, tied a muffler round his neck—for the evening was cold—and started to leave the house. In the emptiness of the hallway his heavy, determined footfalls, echoing, seemed to waken something deadly.

A bit surprised, Rafaela asked:

"Aren't you going to eat supper here?"

"Yes," he answered, "but I'm just going out to stretch my legs a little. I'll be right back."

He kissed his wife and the boy, mentally taking a long farewell of them, and went out.

In Señor Tomás' tavern he found Manolo Berlanga playing *tute* with several friends. The silversmith was drunk, and his arrogant, defiant voice dominated the others. Slowly, with a careless and taciturn air, the engineer approached the group.

"Good evening, all," said he.

At first, no one answered him, for everybody's attention was fixed on the wayward come-and-go of the cards. When the game was done, one of the players exclaimed:

"Hello there, Amadeo! I didn't see *you*! But I saw your wife and kid yesterday. Some boy! And that's a pretty woman you've got, too. I don't say that just because you're here. It's true. Anybody can see you make all kinds of money, and spend it all on your wife!"

"Yes, and if he didn't," put in Berlanga, offering Zureda a glass of wine, "there'd be plenty more who would. How about that, Amadeo?"

Zureda remained impassive. He gulped the wine at one swallow. Then he ordered a bottle for all hands.

"Come on, now, I'll go you a game of *mus*," he challenged Berlanga. "Antolín, here, will be my partner."

The silversmith accepted.

"Go to it!" said he.

The players all sat down around the table, and the game began.

"I'll open up."

"Pass."

"I'll stay in."

"I'm out."

"I'll stick."

"I'll raise that!"

"I renig!"

Now and then the players stopped for a drink, and a few daring bets brought out bursts of laughter.

"Whose deal, now?"

"Mine!"

All at once Amadeo, who was looking for some excuse to get into a row with the silversmith, cheated openly and took the pot. Manolo saw him cheat. Incensed, he threw his cards on the floor.

"Here now, that don't go!" he cried. "I don't care if we *are* friends, you can't get away with *that*!"

All the other players, angered, backed up the silversmith.

"No, sir! No, that don't go, here!" they echoed.

Very quietly the engineer demanded:

"Well, what have *I* done?"

"You threw away this card, the five o' clubs," replied Berlanga, "and slipped yourself a king, that you needed! That's all. You're cheating!"

The engineer answered the furious insult of the silversmith with a blow in the face. They tackled each other like a couple of cats. Chairs and table rolled on the floor. Señor Tomás came running, and he and the other players succeeded in separating them. A crowd, attracted by the noise of the fight, gathered like magic. The tumult of these curiosity-seekers helped Amadeo hide his words as he and Manolo left the tavern. He said in his companion's ear:

"I'll be waiting for you in front of San Antonio de la Florida."

"Suits *me*!"

And, a few minutes later, they met at the indicated spot.

"Let's go where nobody can see us," said the engineer.

"I'll go anywhere you like," answered Berlanga. "Lead the way!"

They crossed the river and came to the little fields out at Fuente de la Teja. The shadows were thicker there, under the trees. At a likely-looking spot the two men stopped. Zureda peered all about him. His eyes, used to penetrating dark horizons, seemed to grow calm. The two men were all alone.

"I've brought you here," said the engineer, "either to kill you or have you kill me."

Berlanga was pretty tipsy. Brave in his cups, he peered closely at the other. He kept his hands in the pockets of his coat. His brow was frowning; his chin was thrust out and aggressive. He had already guessed what Zureda was going to ask him, and the idea of being catechized revolted his pride.

"It looks to me," he swaggered, "like you and I were going to have a few words."

And immediately he added, as if he could read the thought of Zureda:

"They've been telling you I'm thick with Rafaela, and you're after the facts."

"Yes, that's it," answered the engineer.

"Well, they aren't lying. What's the use of lying? It's so, all right."

Then he held his peace and looked at Zureda. The engineer's eyes were usually big and black, but now by some strange miracle of rage they had become small and red. Neither man made any further speech. There was no need of any. All the words they might have hurled at each other would have been futile. Zureda recoiled a few steps and unsheathed his knife. The silversmith snicked open a big pocket blade.

They fell violently on each other. It was a prehistoric battle, body to body, savage, silent. Manolo was killed. He fell on his back, his face white, his mouth twisted in an unforgettable grimace of pain and hate.

The engineer ran away and was already crossing the bridge, when a woman who had been following him at a short distance began to cry:

"Catch him! Catch him! He's just killed a man!"

A couple of policemen, at the door of an inn, stopped Zureda. They arrested him and handcuffed him. He made no resistance.

Rafaela went to see him in jail. The engineer, because of his love for her and for the boy, received her with affection. He assured her he had got into a fight with Manolo over a card-game. Fourteen or fifteen months later he maintained the same story, in court. He claimed he and Manolo had been playing *mus*, and that by way of a joke on his friends he had thrown away one of the cards in his hand and slipped himself another. Then he said Berlanga had denounced him as a cheat; they had quarreled, and had challenged each other.

Thus spoke Amadeo Zureda, in his chivalric attempt not to throw even the lightest shadow on the good name of the woman he adored. Who could have acted more nobly than he? The state's attorney arraigned him in crushing terms, implacably.

And the judge gave him twenty years at hard labor.

V

SCOURGED by poverty, which was not long in arriving, Rafaela had to move away to a little village of Castile, where she had relatives. These were poor farming people, making a hard fight for existence. By way of excuse for her coming to them, the young woman made up a story. She said that Amadeo had got into some kind of trouble with his employers, had been discharged and had gone to Argentina, for there he had heard engineers got excellent pay. After that, she had decided to leave Madrid, where food and lodging were very dear. She ended her tale judiciously:

"As soon as I hear from Amadeo that he's got a good job, I'm going out there to him."

Her relatives believed her, took pity on her and found her work. Every day, with the first light of morning, Rafaela went down to the river to wash. The river was about half a kilometer from the little village. By washing and ironing, at times, or again by picking up wood in the country and selling it, Rafaela managed, with hard, persistent toil, to make four or five *reals*^[C] a day.

[C] Twenty or twenty-five cents.

Two years passed. By this time the neighbors were beginning to find out from the mail-carrier that the addresses on all the letters coming to Rafaela were written by the same hand and all bore the postmark of Ceuta. This news got about and set things buzzing. The young woman put an end to folks' gossip by very sensibly confessing the truth that Amadeo was in prison there. She said a gambling-scraps had got him into trouble. In her confession she adopted a resigned and humble manner, like a model wife who, in spite of having suffered much, nevertheless forgives the man she loves, and pardons all the wrongs done her. People called her unfortunate. They tattled a while, and then took pity on her and accepted her.

Worn out by time and hardships, her former beauty—piquant in a way, though a bit common—soon faded away. The sun tanned her skin; the dust of the country roads got into her hair, once so clean and wavy; hard work toughened and deformed her hands, which in better days she had well cared for. She gave over wearing corsets, and this hastened the ruin of her body. Slowly her breasts grew flaccid, her abdomen bulged, her whole figure took on heavy fullnesses. And her clothes, too, bit by bit got torn and spoiled. Her petticoats and stockings, her neat patent-leather boots bought in happier days, disappeared sadly, one after the other. Rafaela, who had lost all desire to be coquettish or to please men, let herself slide into poverty; and, in the end, she sank so low as to slop round the village streets, barefooted.

This disintegration of her will coincided with a serious loss and confusion of her memory. The poor woman began to forget everything; and the few recollections she still retained grew so disjointed, so vague that they no longer were able to arouse any stimulating emotion in her. She had never really loved Berlanga. What she had felt for him had been only a kind of caprice, an unreasoning will o' the wisp passion; but this amorous dalliance had soon faded out. And the only reason she had kept on with the silversmith had been because she had been afraid of him and had been weak-willed. The smith, moreover, had become jealous and had often beaten her. Thus his tragic death, far from causing her any grief, had come to her as an agreeable surprise. It had quieted her, rested her, freed her.

If the punishment of Zureda and his confinement in prison walls wounded her deeply, it was not on account of her broken love for the engineer. No, rather was it because this disaster had disturbed the easy, comfortable rhythm of her life and because the exile of her husband had meant misery for her, poverty, the irremediable overthrow of her whole future.

After the crisis which had wrecked her home, Rafaela—hardly noticing it, herself—had grown stupid, old and of defective memory. The many violent and dramatic shocks she had borne in so short a time had annihilated her mediocre spirit. She suffered no remorse and had no very clear idea as to whether her past conduct had been good or bad. It was as if her conscience had sunk away into unthinking stupor. The only thing that still remained in her, unchanged, was the maternal instinct of living and working for little Manolo, so that he, too, might live.

True enough, on certain days the wretched woman drank deeply the cup of gall, as certain memories returned. Now and then there came to her a poisoned vision of black recollections that rose about her, stifling her. This usually happened down at the river-bank, while she was washing, at times of mental abstraction caused by her monotonous and purely mechanical toil. Then her eyes would fill with tears, which slowly rolled down her cheeks and fell upon her hands, now reddened by hard labor and the cold caress of the water. The other washwomen, all about her, observed her grief, and fell to whispering:

"See how she's crying?"

"Poor thing!"

"Poor? Well—it was her own doing. Fate is just. It gives everybody what they deserve. Why didn't she look out who she was marrying?"

From time to time away down at the end of the valley, shut in behind an undulating line of blue hills, a train passed by. Its strident whistle, enlarged and flung about hither and yon by echoes, broke the silence of the plain. Some few of the younger washwomen usually sat up on their heels, then, and followed with their eyes the precipitate on-rushing of the train. You could behold a dreaming sadness in their eyes, a vision of far-off, unseen cities. But Rafaela never raised her head to look at the train. The shrieking whistle tore at her ears with the vibration of a familiar voice. She kept on washing, while her tear-wet eyes seemed to be peering at the mysteries of forgetfulness in the passing water.

Despite the great physical and moral decline of the poor woman, she did not fail to waken thoughts and hopes in a certain man. To her aspired a fellow named Benjamin, by trade a shoemaker. He was already turning fifty years, was a widower and had two sons in the army.

This Benjamin's affairs went along only so-so, because not all the people of the village could afford to wear shoes, and those who could afford them did not feel any great need of wearing fine or new ones. Rafaela washed and mended his clothes, and ironed a shirt for him, every saint's-day. He paid her little, but regularly, for these services; and gradually friendship grew up between them. This mutual liking, which was at first impersonal and calm, finally grew in the shoemaker's heart till it became the fire of love.

"If you were only willing," Señor Benjamin often said to Rafaela, "we could come to an understanding. You're all alone. So am I. Well, why not live together?"

She smiled, with that disillusion which comes to a soul that life has bit by bit ravaged of all its dreams.

"You're crazy to talk that way, Benjamin," she would answer.

"Why?"

"Oh, because."

"Come now, explain that! Why am I crazy?"

Rafaela did not want to annoy the man, because she would thus lose a customer, and so she gave him an evasive answer:

"Why, I'm already old."

"Not for me!"

"I'm ugly!"

"That's a matter of taste. You suit *me* to a T."

"Thanks. But, what would people say? And suppose we had any children, Benjamin! What would they think of us?"

"Oh, there's a thousand ways to cover it all up. You just take a shine to me, and I'll fix everything else."

Rafaela promised to think it over; and every night when she came home from work, Benjamin jokingly asked her, from his door:

"Well, neighbor, how about it?"

"I'm still thinking it over," she answered, with a laugh.

"It seems to be pretty hard for you to decide."

"It surely is!"

"Yes, but are you going to get it settled?"

"How do *I* know, Benjamin? Sometimes I think one thing, and sometimes another. Time will tell!"

But the soul of Rafaela lay dead. Nothing could revive her illusions. The shoemaker, after many efforts, had to give her up. And always after that, when he saw her pass along, he would heave a sigh in an absurd, romantic manner.

On the first of every month, Rafaela always wrote a four-page letter to Zureda, containing all the petty details of her quiet, humdrum life. It was by means of these letters, written on commercial cap, that the prisoner learned the rapid physical growth of little Manolo. By the time the boy had reached twelve years he had become rebellious, quarrelsome and idle. He was still in the pot-hook class, at school. Stone-throwing was one of his favorite habits. One day he injured another boy of his age so severely that the constable gathered him in, and nothing but the fatherly intervention of the priest saved him from a night in the lock-up.

Rafaela always ended up the paragraphs thus, in which she described the fierce wildness of the boy:

"I tell you plainly, I can't manage him."

This seemed a confession of weariness, that outlined both a threat and a prophecy.

The prisoner wrote her, in one of his letters:

"The last jail pardon, that you may have read about in the papers, let out many of my companions. I had no such luck. But, anyhow, they cut five years off my time. So there are only six years more between us."

Regularly the letters came and went between Rafaela and the prisoner at Ceuta. Two years more drew to their close.

But evil fortune had not yet grown weary of stamping its heel on Amadeo Zureda's honest shoulders.

"Please forgive me, dear Rafaela," the prisoner wrote again, after a while, "the new sorrow I must cause you. But by the life of our son I swear I could not avoid the misfortune which most expectedly is going to prolong our separation, for I don't know how long.

"As you may guess, there are few saints among the rough crowd here, that are scraped up from all the prisons in Spain. Though I have to live among them, I don't consider them my equals. For that reason I try to keep away from them, and have nothing to do with their rough mirth or noisy quarrels. Well, it happened that the end of last week a smart-Aleck of a fellow came in, an Andalusian. He had been given twelve years for killing one man and badly injuring another. As soon as this fellow saw me, he took me for a boob he could make sport of, and lost no chance of

poking fun at me. I kept quiet, and—so as not to get into any mix-up with him—turned my back on him.

"Yesterday, at dinner, he tried to pick a quarrel. Some of the other prisoners laughed and set him on to me.

"'Look here, Amadeo,' said he. 'What are you in for?'

"I answered, looking him square in the eyes:

"'For having killed a man.'

"'And what did you kill him for?' he insisted.

"I said nothing, and then he added something very coarse and ugly that I won't repeat. It's enough for you to know your name was mixed up in it. That's why your name was the last word his mouth ever uttered. I drew my knife—you know that in spite of all the care they take, and all their searches, we all go armed—and cried:

"'Look out for yourself, now, because I'm going to kill you!'

"Then we fought, and it was a good fight, too, because he was a brave man. But his courage was of no use to him. He died on the spot.

"Forgive me, dearest Rafaela of my soul, and make our boy forgive me, too. This makes my situation much worse, because now I shall have another trial and I don't know what sentence I'll get. I realize it was very bad of me to kill this man, but if I hadn't done it he would have killed me, which would have been much worse for all of us."

Several months after, Zureda wrote again:

"I have been having my trial. Luckily all the witnesses testified in my behalf, and this, added to the good opinion the prison authorities have of me, has greatly improved my position. The indictment was terrible, but I'm not worrying much about that. To-morrow I shall know my sentence."

All the letters of Amadeo Zureda were like this, peaceful and noble, seemingly dictated by the most resigned stoicism. He never let anything find its way into them which might remind Rafaela of her fault. In these pages, filled with a strong, even writing, there was neither reproach, dejection, nor despairing impatience. They seemed to be the admirable reflection of an iron will which had been taught by misfortune—the most excellent mother of all knowledge—to understand the dour secret of hoping and of waiting.

VI

THE very same day when Amadeo Zureda got out of jail, he received from Rafaela a letter which began thus:

"Little Manolo was twenty years old, yesterday."

The one-time engineer left the boat from Africa at Valencia, passed the night at an inn not far from the railroad station, and early next morning took the train which was to carry him to Ecks. After so many years of imprisonment, the old convict felt that nervous restlessness, that lack of self-confidence, that cruel fear of destiny which men ill-adapted to their environment are accustomed to feel every time life presents itself to them under a new aspect. Defeat at last makes men cowardly and pessimistic. They recall everything they have suffered and the uselessness of all their struggles, and they think: "This, that I am now beginning, will turn out badly for me too, like all the rest."

Amadeo Zureda had altered greatly. His white mustache formed a sad contrast with his wrinkled face, tanned by the African sun. The expression of an infinite pain seemed to deepen the peaceful gaze of his black eyes. The vertical wrinkle in his brow had deepened until it seemed a scar. His body, once strong and erect, had grown thin; and as he walked he bent somewhat forward.

The rattling uproar of the train and the swift succession of panoramas now unrolling before his eyes recalled to the memory of Zureda the joys of those other and better times when he had been an engineer—joys now largely blotted out by the distance of long-gone years. He remembered Pedro, the Andalusian fireman, and those two engines, "Sweetie" and "Nigger," on which he had worked so long. An inner voice seemed asking him: "What can have become of all this?"

He also thought about his house. He mentally built up again its façade, beheld its balconies and evoked the appearance of each room. His memory, clouded by the grim and brutalizing life of the prison, had never dipped so profoundly into the past, nor had it ever brushed away the dust from his old memories and so clearly reconstructed them. He thought about his son, about Rafaela and

Manolo Berlanga, seeming to behold their faces and even their clothing just as they had been long ago; and he felt surprised that revocation of the silversmith's face should produce no pain in him. At that moment and in spite of the irreparable injury which had been done him, he felt no hatred of Berlanga. All the rancor which until then had possessed him seemed to sink down peacefully into an unknown and ineffable emotion of pity and forgetfulness. The poor convict once more examined his conscience, and felt astonished that he could no longer find any poison there. May it not be, after all, that liberty reforms a man?

At Játiva a man got into the car, a man already old, whose face seemed to the former engineer to bear some traces of a friendly appearance. The new-comer also, on his side, looked at Zureda as if he remembered him. Thus both of them little by little silently drew together. In the end they studied each other with warm interest, as if sure of having sometime known each other before. Amadeo was the first to speak.

"It seems to me," said he, "that we have already seen each other somewhere, years ago."

"That was just what I was thinking, myself," answered the other.

"The fact is," went on the engineer, "I'm sure we must have talked to each other, many times."

"Yes, yes!"

"We must have been friends, sometime."

"Probably."

And they continued looking at each other, enwrapped by the same thought. Zureda asked:

"Have you ever lived in Madrid?"

"Yes, ten or twelve years."

"Where?"

"Near the Estación del Norte, where I was an employee."

"Say no more!" exclaimed Zureda. "I worked for the same company, myself. I was an engineer."

"On what line?"

"Madrid to Bilbao."

Slowly and silently memories began to rise and group themselves together in the enormous, black forgetfulness of those twenty years. Amadeo Zureda took out his tobacco-box and offered tobacco to his companion. Whatever seemed to have been lacking to awaken memory, in the other's appearance or in his voice, was now instantly supplied as the engineer saw him take the fine-cut, roll a cigarette, light it and afterward thrust it into the left corner of his mouth. The memories of the old convict were flooded with light.

"Enough of this!" cried he. "You are Don Adolfo Moreno!"

"That's right, I'm the man!"

"You were a conductor on the Asturias line when I worked on the one running to Bilbao. Don't you remember me? Amadeo Zureda?"

"Yes, indeed!"

The two men embraced each other.

"Why, I used to say 'thee' and 'thou' to you!" cried Don Adolfo.

"Yes, yes, I remember that, too. I remember everything, now. We were good friends once, eh? Well, time seems to have made some pretty big changes in both of us."

When the joy of the first moments of meeting had been somewhat allayed, the former conductor and the old engineer grew sad as they recalled the many bitter experiences life had dealt them.

"I've already heard of your misfortune," said Don Adolfo, "and I was mighty sorry to hear about it. Sometimes a youthful moment of madness, that lasts only a minute, will cost a man his whole future. Why did you do it?"

Stolidly Zureda answered:

"Oh, it was a quarrel over cards."

"Yes, that's so; they told me about it."

Amadeo breathed easy. The conductor knew nothing; and it seemed probable that many others should be as ignorant as he about what had driven him to kill Manolo. Don Adolfo asked:

"Where have you been?"

"At Ceuta."

"A long time?"

"Twenty years and some months."

"The deuce! You've just come from down there?"

"Yes, sir."

"It's evident to me," continued Don Adolfo, "you've suffered a great deal more than I have; but you mustn't think I have been lucky, either. Life is a wild animal that drags down every one who tries to grapple with it, and yet people keep right on struggling. I'm a widower. My poor wife has been dust for nearly fifteen years. The eldest of my three daughters got married, and both the others died. Now I'm on a pension and live at Ecks with a sister-in-law, the widow of my brother Juan. I don't think you remember him."

Little by little, and with many beatings about the bush, because confidence is a timid quality which soon takes flight from those scourged by misfortune, the ex-convict told his plans. He hoped to establish himself at Ecks, with his wife. He had brought about two thousand pesetas from prison, with which he hoped to buy a little house and a bit of good land.

"I don't know beans about farming," he added, "but that's like everything else. You learn by doing. Moreover, my son, who has grown up in the town, will help me a great deal."

Don Adolfo wrinkled his brow with a grave and reflective expression, like a man who is remembering something.

"From what you say," he exclaimed, "I think I know who your wife is."

The old engineer felt shame. The bleeding image of his misfortune was hard to wipe from his memory. The mention of his wife had freshened it. He answered;

"You probably do know her. The village must be very small."

"Very small, indeed. What's your wife's name?"

"Rafaela."

"Yes, yes," answered Don Adolfo. "Rafaela's the woman. I know her well. As for Manolo, your son, I know him too."

Amadeo Zureda trembled. He felt afraid, and cold. For a few moments he remained silent, without knowing what to say. Don Adolfo continued with rough frankness:

"Your Manolo is a pretty tough nut, and he gives his poor mother a mighty hard time. She's a saint, that woman. I think he even beats her. Well, I won't tell you any more."

Pale and trembling, putting down a great desire to weep which had just come over him, Amadeo asked:

"Is it possible? Can he be as bad as that?"

"I tell you he's a dandy!" repeated Don Adolfo. "If he died, the devil would think a good while before taking him. He's a drunkard and a gambler, always chasing women and fighting. He's the limit!" After a moment he added: "Really, he don't seem like a son of yours, at all."

Amadeo Zureda made no answer. Looking out of the car window, he tried to distract himself with the landscape. The old conductor's words had crushed him. He had been ignorant of all this, for Rafaela in her letters had said nothing about it. He was astonished at realizing how evil destiny was attacking him, denying him that rest which every hard-working man, no matter how poor, is at last entitled to.

Retracing the hateful pathway of his memories, he reached the source of all his misfortunes. Twenty years before, when Señor Tomás had told him of the relations between Rafaela and Manolo, he too had declared: "They say he beats her."

What connection might there be between these statements, which seemed to weave a nexus of hate between the son and the dead lover? Once more the words of the old conductor sounded in his ears, and prophetically took hold upon his soul:

"Manolo does not appear to be your son."

Without having read Darwin, Amadeo Zureda instinctively sought explanation and consolation in the laws of heredity, for the pain now consuming him. Never had he, even when a young fellow, been given to drink or cards. He had not been fond of the women, nor had he been a meddler and bully. And how had such degradations been able to engraft themselves into the blood of his son?

Don Adolfo and Zureda got out at the station of Ecks. Afternoon was drawing to its close. On the platform there were only six or seven persons. The former conductor waved his hand to a woman and to a young man, drawing near. He cried:

"There are your folks!"

This time seeing Rafaela, Amadeo did not hesitate. It was she indeed, despite her protuberant

abdomen, her sad fat face, and her white hair. It was she!

"Rafaela!" cried he. He would have known her among a thousand other women. They fell into each other's arms, weeping with that enormous joy and pain felt by all who part in youth and meet again in old age, with the whole of life behind them. After the greeting with his wife was at an end, the engineer embraced Manolo.

"What a fine fellow you are!" he stammered, when the beating of his heart, growing a little more calm, let him speak.

Don Adolfo said good-by.

"I'm in a hurry. We'll see each other to-morrow!" He saluted, and walked away.

Amadeo Zureda, with Rafaela at his right and Manolo at his left, quitted the station.

"Is the town very far away?" asked he.

"Hardly two kilometers," she answered.

"All right then, let's walk."

Slowly they made their way down the road that stretched, winding, between two vast reaches of brown, plowed land. Far in the distance, lighted by the dying sun, the little hamlet was visible; that miserable collection of huts about which Zureda had thought so many times, dreaming that there he should find the sweet refuge of peaceful forgetfulness and of redemption.

VII

AFTER Amadeo came to Ecks, Rafaela went no longer to the river. The former engineer was unwilling that his wife should toil. They had enough for all to live on for a while, with what he had made in prison. They spoke not of the past. You might almost have thought they had forgotten it. Why remember? Zureda had forgiven everything. Rafaela, moreover, was no longer the same. The gay happiness of her eyes had gone dead; the waving blackness of her hair and the girlish quickness of her body had vanished. There was a melancholy abandonment, heavy with remorse, in her sad and flabby face, in the humility of her look, in the slow, round fatness of her whole body.

The ex-convict followed the advice of Don Adolfo and gave up all idea of devoting himself to farming. In the best street of the village, near the church, he set up a general repair-shop where he took in both wood and iron work. There he shod a mule, mended a cart or put a new coulter to a plow, with equal facility.

He had not been established long when his modest little business began to pick up and be a real money-maker. Very soon his customers increased. The disquieting story of his imprisonment seemed forgotten. Everybody liked him, for he was good, affable and pleasant, in a melancholy way. He paid his little debts promptly, and worked hard.

Zureda felt life once more grow calm. Slowly his future, which till then had looked stormy, commenced to appear a land of hospitality, comfortable and good. The threat of to-morrow, which makes so many men uneasy, had ceased to be a problem for him. His future was already founded, laid out, foreseen. The fifteen or twenty years that still might remain to him, he hoped to pass in the loving accumulation of a little fortune to leave his Rafaela.

He got up with the sun and worked industriously all day, driven by this ambition. In the evening he took a dog that Don Adolfo had given him, and went wandering in the outskirts of the village. One of his favorite walks was out to the cemetery. He often pushed open the old gate, which never was quite closed, and in the burial-ground sat himself down upon a broken mill-stone which happened to be there. Seated thus, he liked to smoke a cigarette.

Many crosses were blackening with age, in the tall grass that covered the earth. The old man often called up memories of the time when he had been an engineer. He remembered the prison, too, and his tired will seemed to tremble. Peacefully he looked about him. Here, sometime, would be his bed. What rest, what silence! And he breathed deep, enthralled by the rare and calming joy of willingness to die. Here inside the old wall of mud bricks, reddened by the setting sun—here in this garden of forgetfulness—how well one ought to sleep!

Only one trouble disturbed and embittered the peaceful decline of Amadeo Zureda. This trouble was his son, Manolo. Through an excess of fatherly love, doubtless mistaken, he had the year before got Manolo exempted from military service. The boy's wild, vicious character was fanatically rebellious against all discipline. In vain Zureda sought to teach him a trade. Threats and entreaties, as well as all kinds of wise advice, were shattered against the invincibly gypsy-like will of the young fellow.

"If you don't want to support me," Manolo often used to say, "let me go. Kick me out. I'll get by,

on my own hook."

Often and often Manolo vanished from the little town. He stayed away for days at a time, engaged in mysterious adventures. People coming in from neighboring villages reported him as given over to gaming. One night he showed up with a serious wound in the groin, a deep knife-stab.

"Who did that to you?" demanded Zureda.

The youth answered:

"Nobody's business. I know who it is. Sometime or other he'll get his, all right!"

To save himself from police investigation, Zureda said nothing about it. For some weeks, Manolo kept quiet. But early one morning a couple of rural guards found the body of a man on the river-bank. His body was covered with stabs. All investigations to find the murderer were fruitless. The crime remained unavenged. Only Amadeo—who just a bit after the discovery of the body had discovered Manolo washing a blood-stained handkerchief in a water-jar—was certain that his son had done this murder.

Once more the sinister words of Don Adolfo recurred to his mind, bruising him, maddening him, seeming to bore into his very brain:

"He does not seem to be your son, at all!"

Amadeo pondered this, and decided it was true. The boy did not seem his. Manolo's outlaw way of living did not stop here. Taking advantage of his mother's love and of the quiet disposition of Amadeo, almost every day he showed the very greatest need of money.

"I've got to have a hundred pesetas," he would say. "I've just *got* to have them! If you people don't come across, well, all right! I'll get them, some way. But perhaps you'll be sorry then, you didn't give them to me!"

He was mad for enjoyment. When his mother tried to warn and advise him, saying: "Why don't you work, you young wretch? Don't you see how your father does?"—he would retort:

"I don't call *that* living, to work! I'd rather go hang myself, than live the way the old man lives!"

You would have thought Rafaela was his slave, by the lack of decency and respect he showed her. When he called her, he would hardly condescend to look at her at all. He spoke little to his father, and what he said was rough and harsh. The worst boy in the world could not have acted with more insolence. His wild spirit, lusting pleasure, seemed to burn with an instinctive flame of hate.

One night when Amadeo came home from the Casino where he and Don Adolfo, with the druggist and a few other such-like worthies, were wont to meet every Saturday, he found the door of his shop ajar. This astonished him. He raised his voice and began to call:

"Manolo! You, Manolo!"

Rafaela answered him, from the back room of the house:

"He's not here."

"Do you know whether he's going to come back soon? I want to know, before locking up."

A short silence followed. After a bit, Rafaela answered:

"You'd better lock up, anyhow."

There seemed to be something like a sob of grief in the voice of the poor woman. The old engineer, alarmed by a presentiment of something terrible, strode through the shop and went on into the house. Rafaela was sitting in front of the stove, in the kitchen, her hands humbly crossed on her lap, her eyes full of tears, her white hair ruffled up, as if some parricide hand had furiously seized her head. Zureda took hold of his wife by the shoulders and forced her to get up.

"What—what's happened?" he stammered.

Rafaela's nose was all bloody, her forehead was bruised and her hands bore lacerations.

"What's the matter with you?" repeated the engineer.

Old and dull as were his eyes, now they blazed up again with that red lightning of death which, twenty years before, had sent him to prison. Rafaela was terrified, and tried to lie out of it.

"It's nothing, Amadeo," she stammered. "Nothing, I tell you. Let me tell you! I—I fell—that's the living truth!"

But Zureda shook the truth out of her with threats, almost with violence.

"Manolo's been beating you, eh? He has, hasn't he?"

She began to sob, still trying to deny it, not wanting to accuse her heart's darling. The old engineer repeated, trembling with rage:

"He beat you, eh? What?"

Rafaela took a long time to answer. She was afraid to speak, but finally she confessed everything.

"Yes, yes, he did. Oh—it's terrible!"

"What did he beat you for?"

"Because he wanted money."

"God! The swine!"

The rage and pain of the old convict burst out in a leonine roar, that filled the kitchen.

"He told you that?" demanded Amadeo. "Said he wanted money?"

"Yes."

"How much?"

"Twenty-five pesetas. I refused as long as I could. But what could I do? Oh, if you'd seen him then, you wouldn't have known him. I was awfully scared—thought he was going to kill me——"

As she said this, she covered her eyes with her hands. She seemed to be shutting out from them, together with the ugly vision of what had just happened, some other sight—the sight of something horrible, something long-past, something quite the same.

Zureda, afraid of showing the tumultuous rage in his heart, said nothing more. The most ominous memories crowded his mind. A long, long time ago, before he had gone to jail, Don Tomás in the course of an unforgettable conversation had told him that Manolo Berlanga maltreated Rafaela. And all these years afterward, when he was once more a free man, Don Adolfo had said the same thing about young Manolo. Remembering this strange agreement of opinions, Amadeo Zureda felt a bitter and inextinguishable hate against the whole race of the silversmith—a race accursed, it seemed, which had come into the world only to hurt and wound him in his dearest affections.

Next morning the old man, who had hardly slept more than an hour or two, woke early.

"What time is it?" asked he.

Rafaela had already risen. She answered:

"Almost six."

"Has Manolo come back?"

"Not yet."

The old engineer got out of bed, dressed as usual and went down to his shop. Rafaela kept watch on him. The apparent calm of the old man looked suspicious. Noon came, and Manolo did not return for dinner. Night drew on, nor did he come back to sleep. Zureda and his wife went to bed early. A few days drifted along.

Sunday morning, Zureda was sitting at the door of his shop. It was just eleven. Women, some with mantillas, others with but a simple kerchief knotted about their heads, were going to mass. High up in the Gothic steeple, the bells were swinging, gay and clangorous. A neighbor, passing, said to the old engineer:

"Well, Manolo's showed up."

"When?" asked Zureda, phlegmatically.

"Last night."

"Where did you see him?"

"At Honorio's inn."

"A great one, that boy is! He's certainly some fine lad! Never came near *me!*"

The day drew on, without anything happening. Cautiously the engineer guarded against telling Rafaela that their son had returned. A little while before supper, giving her the excuse that Don Adolfo was waiting for him at the Casino, Zureda left the house and made his way to the inn where Manolo was wont to meet his rough friends. There he found him, indeed, gaming with cards.

"I've got something to say to you," said he.

The young man threw his cards on the table and got up. He was tall, slim and good-looking; and in the thin line of his lips and the penetrant gaze of his greenish eyes lay something bold, defiant.

The two men went out into the street, and, saying no word, walked to the outskirts of the town. When Amadeo thought they had come to a good place, he stopped and looked his son fair in the face.

"I've brought you out here," said he, "to tell you you're never coming back to my house. Understand me?"

Manolo nodded "Yes."

"I'm throwing you out," continued the old man. "Get that, too! I'm throwing you out, because I won't deal with a dog like you. I won't have one anywhere around! I tell you this not as father to son, but as one man to another, so you can come back at me if you want to. Understand? I'm ready for you! That's why I've brought you 'way out here."

As he spoke, slowly, his stern spirit caught fire. His cheeks grew pale, and in his jacket pockets his fists knotted. Manolo's savage blood began to boil, as well.

"Don't make me say anything, you!" he flung at his father.

He turned as if to walk away. His voice, his gesture, the scornful shrug of his shoulders, with which he seemed to underscore his words, all were those of a ruffian and a bully. Anybody would have said that the tough, swaggering silversmith lived again, in him. Zureda controlled his anger, and began once more:

"If you want to fight, you'll be a fool to wait till to-morrow. I'm ready for it, now."

"Crazy, you?" demanded the youth.

"No!"

"Well, you act it!"

"You're wrong. I know all about *you*—I know you've been beating your mother. And you can't pay for a thing like that even with every drop of your blood. No, sir! Not even the last drop of pig's blood you've got in your body would pay for that!"

Amadeo Zureda was afraid of himself. He had begun to shiver. All the hate that, long ago, had flung him upon Berlanga, now had burst forth again in a fresh, strong, overwhelming torrent.

Suddenly Manolo stepped up to his father and seized him by the lapel.

"You going to shut up?" he snarled, in rage. "Or are you bound to drive me to it?"

Zureda's answer was a smash in the face. Then the two men fell upon each other, first with their fists, presently with knives. At that moment the old man saw in the face of the man he had believed his son, the same expression of hate that twenty years ago had distorted the features of Manolo Berlanga. Those eyes, that mouth all twisted into a grimace of ferocity, that slim and feline body now trembling with rage, all were like the silversmith's. The look of the father came back again in that of the son, as exactly as if both faces had been poured in the same mold.

And for the first time, after so long a time, the old engineer clearly understood everything.

Annihilated by the realization of this new disaster, no longer having any heart to defend himself, the wretched man let his arms fall. And just at this moment Manolo, beside himself with rage, plunged the fatal blade into his breast.

Now with his vengeance complete, the parricide took to flight.

Amadeo Zureda, dying, was carried to the hospital. There, that same night, Don Adolfo came to see him. The good neighbor's grief was terrible, even to the point of the grotesque.

"Is it true, what people are saying?" he asked, weeping. "Is it true?"

The wounded man had hardly strength enough to press his hand a very little.

"Good-by, Adolfo," he stammered. "Now I know what I—had to know. You told me, but I—couldn't believe it. But now I know you—were right. Manolo was not—my son—"

THE NECKLACE

THE first, motley spirit of the city. He wanted to behold many things, to school himself, strengthen himself with all these new impressions. Above all he wanted to feel the life-currents of Madrid beating about his migratory feet.

A few minutes before he had been sitting up there in the "peanut gallery" of the Teatro Real. And from that vulgar place he had beheld the theater with its vast ranges of seats and its boxes all drenched under the blinding dazzle of hundreds of electric lights. The theater had looked to him like some rare and beautiful garden; or maybe it had been a kind of gigantic nosegay, where

the sparkling diamonds on women's throats had seemed dew-drops caught on great silk petals, on glossy velvets, on white, bare shoulders.

So entirely absorbed had he been in this spectacle that he had hardly paid any attention at all to what the orchestra and the actors had been about. Every other emotion had been shut from his soul by these dazzling sight-impressions, that had never wearied him. The wonderful, human garden spread out below him had exhaled rare perfumes. A sensual and soporific kind of vapor had risen all about him—an incense blend of the odors of new-mown hay, of jasmine, musk and Parmesan violets, of daintily-bathed women's flesh, of wonderful lingerie. And he had studied all this luminous picture, resplendent as the climax of a brilliant play. Above all he had studied the women, with their sensuous bodies; their unashamed bosoms that had been the targets of analytical eagerness through many opera-glasses; their gay and laughing faces, whereof the beauty had been enhanced by the placid security of wealth. He had observed their deftly combed and curled little heads, their jewel-laden hands—hands that had waved big feather-fans to and fro over the gauzy stuff of their gowns.

Enrique wanted to see all this wonderful world at close range, so he went down to the foyer. And there he stopped, just a bit ashamed of himself. For the first time he was beginning to realize that his out-of-date slouch hat, his skimpy black suit that made him look like a high-school boy, and his old boots that needed a shine were greatly out of place. He felt that his flowing necktie, which he had tried to knot up with student-like carelessness, was just as ugly as all the rest of him. Correctly dressed men were passing all about him, with elegant frock-coats that bore flowers in their buttonholes and with impeccable Tuxedos. Women were regally trailing grosgrain and watered-silk skirts over the soft, red carpet. It all seemed a majestic symphony of silks, brocades and splendid furs, of wonderful ankles glimpsed through the perverse mystery of open-work stockings, of fascinating adornments, of bracelets whose bangles tinkled their golden song on the ermine whiteness of soft arms.

Abashed, feeling himself wholly out of place, young Darlés self-consciously strolled over to look at a bust of Gayarre—a bronze bust that showed the man with short, up-tossed hair. Its energy made one think of Othello. Quite at once, a hand dropped familiarly on Darlés' shoulder. The young man turned.

"Don Manuel! You? What a surprise!"

Don Manuel was a man of middle height, thick-set and just a trifle bald. He looked about fifty. A heavy, curling red beard covered his full-blooded, fleshy, prosperous cheeks and chin. He wore evening-dress. His short, thick, epicurean nose supported gold-bowed spectacles.

"Well, my boy," he exclaimed. "You, here?"

Enrique blushed violently, without exactly understanding why, as he answered:

"Yes, I came to—to see——"

Hardly knowing what he was about, he took off his hat, with that respect we learn even as children, when confronted by our parents' friends. Now he stood there, holding the hat with both hands across his breast. Don Manuel, you know, was a deputy in the National Assembly. The great man made Enrique put his hat on, again.

"What are you doing in Madrid?" asked he.

"Studying."

"Law?"

"No, sir. Medicine."

"That's a first-rate profession. What year are you in?"

"Freshman," answered Darlés, and smiled in a shamefaced sort of way. He knew his answers were short and clumsy, and the feeling of shabbiness oppressed him more than ever. Don Manuel glanced about him, with a kind of arrogant ease. Two or three times he murmured: "I'm waiting for somebody." Then he began to talk to the student again, asking him about his father and the political boss of the home town. Darlés kept on answering every question just the same way:

"No change, down there. Everything's all right."

And again the conversation was broken off by Don Manuel's expectant glancing about for the friend he was to meet.

The deputy asked, after a minute or two:

"You're living in a boarding-house, aren't you?"

"No, sir."

"Where, then?"

"In Calle Ballesta. I've rented a little inside room, on the fourth floor. It costs me thirteen pesetas a month, and I eat at a little tavern on the same street."

"I see you know how to rub along. You can save money, if you're willing to fight with landladies."

After you've got thoroughly used to Madrid, nothing can make you ever go back home. Madrid is wonderful! With money, a clever man can have all kinds of amusement here."

Don Manuel added, using that confidential air with which fools and parvenus try to impress people they think beneath them:

"See here! You're not a boy, any more. And I—hang it all!—you can't call me old, yet. I don't see my friend showing up, anywhere, so we can have a little talk. I've got—I've got something bothering me. You understand?"

Enrique nodded.

"You know her? Alicia Pardo?"

"No, sir."

"She's very popular, in the gay set. A beauty! At the Casino we call her 'Little Goldie'."

His whole expression suddenly changed. His eyes began to gleam, with joyful gluttony. The congested redness of his cheeks grew deeper, and he turned round, stroking his beard and straightening up his top-hat with the vanity of a fool who thinks people are admiring him.

The long, sharp trilling of electric bells announced that the second act was about to begin. Everybody began crowding back into the theater; and now, in the solitude of the foyer, the bust of Gayarre seemed higher. Don Manuel exclaimed:

"Come along with me. I'll introduce you to Alicia."

Don Manuel noticed the student's dismayed look, and added:

"That's all right about your not having a dress-suit on. You can stay in the rear of the box."

He started off with a firm step, trying to assume the ease and grace of youth. Enrique followed him without a word. He felt both happy and afraid.

They reached the outer box, that Don Manuel judged good enough for the young fellow. The deputy murmured:

"This is all right, isn't it? I'll see you later. You can see everything here."

Enrique made no answer. The play was already going on, and in the religious stillness of the theater the chorus of the piece was rising in triumphal harmony. It was one of those pleasant Italian operas, freighted for all of us with memories of youth. Darlés ventured to raise one of the heavy curtains just a little, that shut the outer box off from the inner one. A young woman was sitting there, with her back to him and her elbows on the railing of the box. She was all in white. He could see the tempting outlines of her firm hips, beneath the childish insufficiency of her girdle. Her shoulders were plump and of flawless perfection. On the snow of her bare neck her blonde hair, tinged with red, shadowed tawny reflections. Two splendid emeralds trembled, green as drops of absinthe, in the rosy lobes of her small, fine ears.

Don Manuel was beside her. Darlés noted that Alicia and the deputy had very little to say to each other. Suddenly she turned her head with an inquisitive air, graceful and fascinating; and the student received full in the eyes the shock of two large, green, luminous pupils—living emeralds, indeed. Her scrutiny of him was short, searching and curious; it changed to an expression of scorn.

Darlés flushed red and began to tremble. He let the curtain fall, and took refuge at the rear of the outer box. His first impulse was to escape; but presently he changed his mind, for it seemed to him more than a little rude to take French leave. The student thought he was bored, but in reality he was afraid. In spite of his agitation, he waited. And bit by bit the magic spell of the opera took possession of him and freed him from embarrassment.

The piece now going on was one of those romantic, wholly lyric poems in which the actors are everything. The environment about them, the sense of objectivity, played no rôle. The 'cellos, sighing with lassitude and pity, lamented in gentle accord; the violins cut through the harmony with sharp cries of rebellion and gay arpeggios. And the voice of the tenor rose above that many-toned, protean, orchestrated poem with warm persuasion, wailing into inconsolable laments.

Enrique got up again, and once more timidly drew apart the curtains of the outer box. Nobody noticed him. Alicia still sat there with her back toward him, transfixed by the fairy magic of the opera. Her emotions seemed almost to transpire through the white skin of her back and shoulders. Enrique Darlés once more began to tremble. His ideas grew fantastic. When he had seen the young woman's eyes, they had appeared two emeralds; and now the emeralds twinkling beneath the blaze of her hair seemed to be looking at him like two pupils. But this absurdity soon faded from his mind. The orchestra was languorously beginning a *ritornelle*; and all through the main motif independent musical phrases were strung like beads. These slid into chromatics, rising, beating up to lose themselves in one vast chord of agony supreme. And, in that huge lamentation, there mingled depths of disillusion, whispers of hope, desires and wearinesses, laughter and grimaces—the whole of life, indeed, seemed blent there, swift-passing, tragic, knotted in the bitterness of everything that ever has been and that still must be.

Enrique sat down again. Nameless suffering clutched his throat, so that he felt a profound

desire for tears. Like a motion-picture film, both past and present flashed across his vision in swift flight. His poor, old father and the little chemist's shop at home appeared before him—the miserable shop that hardly eked out a penurious living for the old man. Then he saw himself, as soon as his studies should be finished, condemned to go back to that hateful, monotonous little town. There he would labor to pay back his parents everything they had given him; and there all his years of youth, all his love-illusions, all his artistic inspirations would soon fade. There he must bury all the finest of his soul. Then, no doubt, he would marry and have children; and then—well, life would stretch out into a long, straight line, unwavering, with never any depths or heights, lost in the monotony of a blank desert. What could be more terrible than to know just what we are destined to be in ten years, in twenty years, in thirty?

The poor student tugged at his hair, in desperation, and tears blurred his sight. How he would have loved to be rich, to have no family, to be the sport of the unforeseen! For is not the unforeseen pregnant with all the vicissitudes of poetry? He felt the blood of conquerors pulsing in his arteries, the energies of bold adventurers who dare brave perils and emprise, and leave their bones on far-off shores. This fighting strain, this crave for danger, filled him with boundless melancholy as he reflected that he must live on, on to old age, and do no differently than all other men do, year by year. Destiny meant for him no more than this: to follow a costly, hard and tedious career merely that he might make a pittance, get a wife and find some hole or corner to live in—some poor, mean little house in a world of palaces, some commonplace love in a world throbbing with so many passions, some paltry dole in a world crowded with so many fortunes!

Whipped by the music, the foolish grief of Enrique Darlés broke into sobs.

Now the second act was done, and Don Manuel and Alicia came into the outer box. The young woman's eyes—green, eloquent eyes—filled with astonishment.

"What?" she asked. "You're crying?"

Before the student could answer, she turned to her companion and said:

"What do you think about that, now? He's been crying!"

In shame, Enrique answered:

"I don't know. I—I'm upset. But—yes, maybe——"

She smiled, and asked:

"You've got a sweetheart, haven't you?"

"No, no, Señorita."

"Well then, why——?"

"It's all foolishness, I know, but every time I hear music—even bad music—it makes me sad."

"That's funny! *I* don't feel that way!"

The red-faced, thick-set Don Manuel shrugged his square shoulders as much as to say it mattered nothing, and introduced them to each other. Enrique's feverish hand held for a moment the cool, soft hand—snow and velvet—of Little Goldie. Then all three sat down on the same divan, Alicia between the two men. Don Manuel drew out his cigar-case.

"Smoke?" asked he.

"No, thanks."

"Good boy!" exclaimed the deputy. "You haven't any vices, have you?"

"What?" asked Alicia. "You don't smoke?"

"No, Señorita."

"How funny you are! Well, *I* do!"

Enrique blushed again, and looked down. He saw quite clearly that this little detail made the beggarliness of his clothes even more noticeable. Women always seem to like a man to smoke. Tobacco is their best perfume. The student felt furious at himself. To regain countenance before this girl he would gladly have consumed all the Egyptian or Turkish cigarettes in Don Manuel's case. But it was too late, now. Opportunity was gone; opportunity, that master-magic which endues everything with grace and worth.

The young woman's self-possession was quite English in its cool perfection as she lighted up and fell to smoking, with one leg crossed over the other. She leaned her shoulders against the dun-hued back of the divan. And now, all about her diabolical, reddish-gold hair, the cigarette-smoke mounted thinly on the quiet air, and wove blue veils. Darlés observed her, from the corner of his eye. Her face was aquiline, with wide nostrils, with a little blood-red, cruel mouth and a low forehead that gave the impression of hard, instinctive selfishness. Her big, greenish eyes peered out with boredom and command. Her whole expression was cold, keen, probing, pitiless.

A string of seed-pearls girdled her soft, rosy throat. Her fingers blazed with the fire of her rings. Her nails were sharp as claws. In the well-harmonized rhythms of her every attitude, in all

her perfect modelings, in every nuance and detail of her—wonderful plaything for men's dalliance—Enrique, untutored country boy though he was, discerned a supremely selfish ego. He realized this woman was one of those emotionless creatures of willfulness, wholly self-centered, who are incapable of sorrow.

Don Manuel's mood was brusque, with that brusquerie of a rich, healthy man who has a pretty woman in tow, as he exclaimed:

"Well now, Enrique, how do you like my Little Goldie? I bet you never saw anything like her, back home!" Triumphant he added: "She doesn't cost much, either. When I first met her, I asked: 'What shall I give you?' She answered: 'A box at the Teatro Real.' Why, that's a bagatelle! Only a little more than thirteen hundred pesetas for fourteen plays. And here we are. I tell you the little lady doesn't ask much."

Darlés answered nothing. His emotions choked him—the novelty of this new world that till now he had not even known by hearsay; a topsy-turvy, unmoral world where, as in art, beauty formed the only criterion of worth; a world where women sold themselves for an opera-box.

All this time Alicia Pardo had been studying Enrique. The downright frankness of her look was alarming in its amusement. Enrique's extreme youth; the simplicity of his answers; the Apollo-like perfection of his features; the obsidian hue of his wavy hair which marked him as from the south of Spain; the black ardor of eyes, that in their eager curiosity contrasted with the boyish smoothness of his face; yes, even his proneness to blush, had all greatly interested her. Above all, Alicia found her attention wakened by the artistic spirit in him, which had wept at the sound of the music. Alicia had never seen men weep except through jealousy, or through some other even baser and more ignoble emotion. Therefore in the tears of this boy she discovered something wonderful and great.

And through her little head, all filled with curious whims, the idea drifted that it would be passing strange and sweet to let herself be loved by such a boy. Suddenly she exclaimed:

"What are *you* doing in Madrid?"

"I'm studying."

"Ah, indeed? A student, eh? I read a novel, a while ago, that I liked very much indeed. The hero was a student. Quite a coincidence, eh?"

Darlés nodded "Yes." The childish simplicity of the remark amazed him. Goldie went on:

"How old are you?"

"Twenty."

"Honest and true?"

"Fact! Why? Maybe I look older?"

"No, you don't. Younger, I think. I'm not quite nineteen, but *I* do look older."

Don Manuel had opened a newspaper, and was reading the latest market quotations. Alicia felt a desire to know the boy's name. She asked him what it was.

"Enrique?" she repeated. "That's a pretty name. Very!"

Then she grew silent a while, remembering all the Enriques she had ever known—and there had been plenty of them. She recalled they'd all been nice. Thus, reviewing her life-history, she reached her childish years; quiet years of peace, lived in the Virgilian simplicity of the country. And she seemed to see in this boy, innocent, healthy and sun-browned, something of what she herself had been.

Quite beside himself with new emotions, ecstatic and open-mouthed, the student looked at her, too, like a man studying some unusually beautiful work of art.

Now many footfalls echoed in the corridors again and bells began to ring. A flood of spectators began to fill up the seats. The third act was going to begin. Alicia and Don Manuel got up.

"Going to stay?" the deputy asked Darlés.

"No, thanks."

"Why not?"

"Because—well, I've got to go to bed early. To-morrow I'm going to get up early."

He felt so sure that Alicia might be able to love him, and so overpowered by the happy embarrassment of this thought, that he wanted to be alone, to enjoy it more fully. Don Manuel added:

"Well, suit yourself. Any time you want to see me, don't go to my house. I'm never there. Better go to Alicia's. You'll find me there every evening, from six to eight."

They took leave of each other. Enrique turned his head, as he left the box, and his eyes met the girl's. Their look was a meeting of caresses, as if they had given each other a kiss and made a

rendezvous. It was one of those terrible looks, capable of changing the whole current of a man's life—a look such as a man will sometimes receive in his youth, only to find it hounding and pursuing him his whole life long.

II

NEXT day, Alicia spent the evening before her fireplace, with a book. Don Manuel's visit to her had ended in a quarrel, and he had gone. A great nervousness possessed the girl; she wanted to cry, to yawn, to pull out her hair, to kick the little cabinets from behind whose crystal panes all kinds of little figurines, porcelain dolls and extravagant bibelots peeped out with roguish faces.

No one who has never been really bored can grasp the complete horror, the abysmal blackness, the silence like that of a bottomless pit or an endless tunnel, which lies in absolute boredom. Still, just as death is the beginning of life, so at times tedium can become a spring of vigorous action. Many men have sown wild oats in their youth till they have tired of them, and have in riper years become model husbands, applied themselves to business and died leaving millions. Boredom sometimes turns out works of art. Had not Heine and Byron been monumentally bored, they could never have risen to the heights of song.

Now, though Alicia Pardo was very young, she already suffered from this malady—the malady of quietude which rubs out boundary-lines and extinguishes contrasts. Never yet had she been in love. The selfishness of her lovers had in the end endowed her soul—itsself little inclined to tenderness—with all the hardness of a diamond.

"I can't love any one," she often said. "I've made a regular man of myself."

Since the human mind cannot long remain unoccupied by real emotions, she had come to adore luxury. She was neither miserly nor greedy for money; but she did indeed love purple and fine linen, noisy hats and precious stones glimmering with sunlight. Her idea of life was to buy good furnishings, appear in new gowns, show herself off, waste everything without restraint. With her pretty hands, now craving money and now throwing it to the four winds, she made ducks and drakes of men's fortunes. She had many things and wanted more; and as one quickly tires of what one has, her property did not increase.

The young woman was in high dudgeon, that evening. She knew not what to do. Her money was running short, and that morning in a bazaar she had seen all kinds of pretty gewgaws. She had taken up a book to amuse herself, but had not been able to read much. Her irritation would not go away. Why couldn't she be infinitely rich? Already she was beginning to consider this poor life of ours a grotesque affair—this life in which so many men think themselves happy in the possession of the ten-millionth part of what they really want.

It was almost seven o'clock when Enrique Darlés arrived. As soon as Alicia saw the student, she heaved a sigh of contentment and threw the book into the fire.

"What are you doing, there?" cried Darlés, to whom every book was sacred.

"Nothing," she answered. "It's a stupid novel. We ought to do the same with everything that bores us."

Enrique sat down and asked:

"Don Manuel—?"

"He's been here a while, but he's gone. I mean, I sent him away. I tell you I'm unbearable, to-day. I'd like to fight with everybody. I don't know what I wouldn't give to feel some new sensation—something real and strong. I'm in despair, I tell you! It's these nerves, these cursed nerves, that wake up everything ugly and vulgar in us. To-day is one of the black days when even the good luck of our friends makes us miserable."

She stopped and peered closely at Darlés. His close-shaven face, his southern eyes and wavy black hair made him look like some handsome, gentle boy.

"I'm strange," she continued. "I'm a chatter-box, ungrateful and never able to love anything very long. That's why you attracted my attention the first minute. You look like a man of strong passions. I like radical characters, good or bad. I like iron wills. Lukewarm temperaments, undecided and ready to fit into any situation, look to me like half-season clothes that are always disagreeable. In summer they're too warm and in winter too cold."

Darlés ventured to say with some timidity:

"What's the reason you're put out to-day?"

"I don't know."

"What?"

"It's true. Unless it might be——"

She stopped, inwardly searching her thoughts, then went on:

"It's because you're very young that my words astonish you. Sometime you'll be older, and then you'll understand the world better. You'll know the cause of all these little vexations that embitter life can't be found in concrete facts. We have to recognize such vexations as the total, the corollary of our whole history, of everything we've lived through. For example, we're sad now because we were sad before, or maybe gay. In to-day's tears you'll find the bitter-aloes of the tears of long ago; and there's the weariness of dead laughter there, too. Understand? Don't wonder, therefore, that you can't comprehend exactly why I'm in such a bad temper, to-day."

She grew quiet, sinking down into a brown study that drew a vertical line upon her pretty brow. Then she asked:

"Do you often go through Calle Mayor?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Do you remember the jeweler's shop on the right, on the even-numbered side, near the Puerta del Sol?"

The student nodded.

"Well, if you like jewels," continued Alicia, "take a look at that emerald necklace in the middle of the window. I just happened to see it, to-day, and it made such an impression on me that I haven't been able to get it out of my mind. It's magnificent, not only in size and in the wonderful luster of the stone, but also on account of its splendid clasp."

"Worth a lot, eh?"

"Fifteen thousand pesetas."

Darlés said nothing to this. But his brows lifted with admiration. Such figures filled his provincial simplicity with panic and confusion. By comparison with the miserable shallowness of his purse, they seemed enormous. Little Goldie continued:

"I told Don Manuel about it, but he's a clever fox. He's a sly one! There's no way in this world to rake *him* into spending any extra money. That's partly what we've just now been quarreling about. Believe me, it's men's own fault if we aren't more faithful to them."

Ignorant as he was of feminine psychology, Enrique understood that Alicia's black humor was on account of that emerald necklace she so deeply admired and so greatly wanted. Unsatisfied desires are like undigested foods. At first they cause us a vague ill-ease, which soon increases until indigestion sets in. Following this same line of thought, is not disappointment or grief, in a way, the indigestion of a caprice? Ingenuously, without realizing the indiscretion of promising anything to women or children, Enrique exclaimed:

"If I were only rich—!"

The pause that followed was like that in a romance; one of those silences during which women decide to do any and everything. Then all at once, with the same bored gesture she had used when she had tossed the book into the fire, Alicia put one of her little hands into the bony, trembling hands of the student.

"Do you like my hands?" she queried.

"Enormously!"

"People say they're very big."

"Oh, no! Very small, indeed!"

With rapture he examined the fine softness of her wrist, the wandering lines traced by the blue veins beneath the whiteness of the skin, the little dimples that adorned the back of her hand. That hand was an artist's, a dancer's. Its fingers were showily covered with rings. Alicia studied these rings. In their settings, the sapphires, the blood-red rubies, the topazes and diamonds filled with light blent into bouquets of tiny, never-fading flowers.

"Next time you go through Calle Mayor," directed the young woman, "take a good look at the necklace I've told you about. There are two necklaces in the window. One is of black pearls, the other of emeralds. I'm talking about the emerald one. You'll find it a little to the left, on a bust of white velvet."

The vision of the precious stones persisted in her memory with the tenacity of an obsession. It filled her mind and dominated all her thoughts with a dangerous kind of introspective tyranny.

Eight o'clock sounded. Enrique Darlés got up.

"Going, already?" asked the girl.

"Yes, I'm going to supper."

She looked him over, from head to foot, and saw that he was slender, with an almost childish beauty, as he stood there in his modest suit of black. Then she thought about having nothing to do, that night, and how horribly bored she was going to be.

"Why not stay here and have a bite with me?" she questioned.

"What for?" he demanded.

"What a question! Why, so we shan't have to separate, so soon."

"I—well, all right. Anything you like. But I'm afraid I'll bother you."

"What an idiot you are! Quite the contrary. Your conversation will amuse me. You'll see how quickly I'll be good-natured, again."

She got up with a swift, supple movement that made her petticoats rustle and that infused a perfume of violets through the room. She pressed an electric button. A maid appeared.

"Tell Leonor," she ordered, "that I have a guest. Señor Enrique is going to have supper with me."

She approached a mirror, to arrange her hair. She seemed happy, transfigured with joy.

"Have you seen the play they're giving at the Princess Theater to-night?" asked she.

"No, I haven't."

"They say it's awfully good. Shall we take it in? There's time enough, yet. We'll have supper right away."

Darlés felt a bit disconcerted, and secretly investigated his pockets, estimating the money he had. Mentally he counted:

"Five pesetas, ten, fifteen."

Yes, there was enough for two seats and a carriage to come back in.

"All right, just as you like," he answered, more reassured.

"Then I'll go change my dress. I'll be back in a minute."

She vanished behind the crimson curtain that draped the door of her bedroom. The student heard a little rustling of lingerie that slid to the floor. He heard corset-steels being tightened over a soft breast; heard mysterious, silken sounds of undressing and of dressing; heard closet-doors vivaciously opened and shut.

Enrique felt upset and very happy. He had known Alicia more than a month. During that time, using his visits to Don Manuel as a pretext, he had seen the young woman several times. In spite of the intimacy of these calls he had never dared let the girl see his love. His innocence had been too great to let him approach any such difficult avowal. When Alicia had tried to help him out of the embarrassment she had seen in him, and had tried to turn the conversation into confidential channels, he had evaded declaring himself. For he had been afraid of making some stupid blunder and of appearing absurd.

But now he felt calmer, more self-confident. Without quite understanding why, he suspected that Alicia's ill-humor was working to his benefit. She was keeping him with her because she was bored, because she was afraid to pass the night alone with that gnawing desire for the jewels that in all probability could never be hers. And Enrique reflected that the necklace, made to encircle some wonderful throat, might become the symbol of a bond of love now growing up between them.

Then he realized there was something sweet and intimate in the confidence Alicia manifested by dressing so very near him, and in the complacency shown by the maid when Alicia had told her that Señor Enrique was taking supper there. These were important details that roused up his failing heart and made him understand that all this—if his own cowardice were not too great—might lead to something much more complete and exquisite than a mere chaste, warm friendship.

Enrique lost himself in pleasant fancies. He remembered many novels in which the daring and eloquent heroes had taken part in situations quite parallel to this now confronting him, poor country boy that he was. The beveled mirror of a clothes-press flung back at him the reflection of his tall, slim body, his black clothes, his rather poetic face. Pale, beardless, romantic-looking, why might not he be a hero, too? What surprises might not destiny have in store for his youthfulness?

To calm himself he began looking at the little bronze and porcelain figures in the cabinets. There were cowered gnomes, dogs, cats looking into a little mirror, with astonished grimaces. Then Darlés studied the marble clock and the big vases on the chimney-piece. He examined the portraits and the little fancy pictures, of slight merit but gaudily framed, that covered the green wall-paper almost to the ceiling. And in a kind of analytical way he reflected that these portraits, these little paintings, these pretty, frivolous furnishings were the aftermath of all the mercenary love-affairs which had taken place here in this apartment.

His attention was now called to a large collection of picture post-cards stuck into a Japanese screen. There were dancers, love-making scenes and all sorts of things. Nearly every card bore

the signature of some man, together with a line or two of dedication. Many of the cards were dated from Paris—that City of the Sun, beloved by adventurers—while others had come from America, from Egypt or elsewhere. And all the cards seemed a kind of incense offered to the beauty of the same woman. Through all the longings of exile, and from every zone, memories had come back to her. You might almost have thought the warmth of her flesh had infused a deathless glow in all those wanderers.

Alicia Pardo came in again, bringing with her a gust of violet perfume.

"Have I kept you waiting long?" asked she. "I hope not. Come on, now, let's go to the dining-room. If we want to get to the theater in time, we mustn't lose a minute."

It was a light, pleasant supper—vegetable soup, partridges *à l'anglaise*, lobster and crisp bacon, then a bit of orange marmalade and dead-ripe bananas. At the theater, they had a couple of seats in the second row. The play had already begun, when they got there. None the less, Goldie's presence roused up interest among the masculine element in the boxes. Numbers of opera-glasses focused themselves at her. On the stage, an actor profited by one of his exits to give her an almost imperceptible smile, to which she replied with a nod.

Such marks of attention usually fill men of the world with pride and complacency. But they disturb young lovers. According to the temperaments of such youthful blades, public recognition of this kind excites jealousy or shame. Enrique Darlés felt suppressed and ill at ease. A wave of hot blood burned in his cheeks. Not for one instant did it occur to him that these grave, rich gentlemen—old men who never win the favors of the demi-monde along the flowery path of real affection—might be envying his beauty and his youth.

Alicia felt, in the student's silence, something of the embarrassment that possessed him.

"What's the matter with you?" asked she. "Are you ashamed of being seen with me?"

Enrique tried to seem astonished.

"Ashamed?" he repeated. "How could I be? On the contrary——"

And his fingers closed over hers with unspeakable ardor.

At the end of the act, the audience began to applaud. Many enthusiastic voices called: "Author! Author!" Alicia clapped her hands wildly.

"Oh, how I'd like to know him!" cried she.

Enrique also applauded noisily, to please her. The curtain rose again, in the midst of that uproarious tempest of triumph, and the author appeared. His profile was aquiline; his theatrical triumphs and loose way of living had enveloped him in a cloud of prestige, blent of talent and scandal. He looked a little above forty, but his lithe body still kept all the graceful activity of youth. The spot-light brilliantly illuminated him; he smiled, with the arrogant expression and gestures of a conqueror. Still applauding, Alicia exclaimed to Enrique:

"Isn't he lovely? I've got to get some one to introduce me to him. My friend Candelas knows him very well."

And her big green eyes widened with emotion. Her curly reddish hair shook like a lion's mane, over her willful forehead. At that moment, Enrique Darlés once more felt himself small and obscure. He saw his love meant nothing in the exuberant life of this girl. While he had been holding her pretty little hand, a few minutes before, he had thought her conquered and in love with him. Now all of a sudden he beheld her transfigured, beside herself, her scatter-brained little head flung back in an attitude of giving, that offered the victorious playwright her snowy throat. Ethnological reasons underlie woman's adoration of everything strong, shining, violent.

"If I were not here," thought Darlés with melancholy, "surely she would go to him."

The student got back his gayety, during the second act. Alicia pressed up against him, slyly and nervously, and her restless curls produced little electric ticklings on his temples. When the play was done, the ovation broke out again, and the author once more appeared. Enrique's applause was only mild. For a moment he thought the playwright's eyes fell with avidity on Alicia. This painful impression still lay upon the student as they went out into the street. The young woman walked beside him, holding his arm and shivering with cold in her handsome gray cloak. The night was sharp. Rain had been falling. Alicia said:

"Well, where are we going?"

He answered, in surprise:

"I'm going to take you home. We'll call a carriage."

"No, I don't want to go home."

"What?"

"Come on! I'm going to give you a treat, to-night."

She looked up at him, smiling in a fascinating, promising way that foreshadowed paradise. In anguish the poor fellow remembered he had hardly ten pesetas left. To escape the jostling and

rude staring of the passers-by, Alicia took refuge in a doorway. Her feet were stiff with cold. The wetness of the pavement was soaking through the thin soles of her shoes.

"Decide on something, quick," she shivered. "I'm dying of cold!"

Enrique exclaimed, with a resolution he thought very like that of a man of the world:

"If you want to eat, we'll go to Fornos."

The girl made a grimace of horror.

"Never!" she cried. "Everybody knows me there!"

"Well then, let's go to Moran's."

"Worse still! I'd be sure to run into some friend or other."

"How about Viña P?"

"I should say not! I don't dare." Then with cruel frankness she added: "Do you know why I don't dare? The women there look down on girls like me. And if any of my friends—they're all serious men—should see me with you, there, they'd call me flighty. They'd think me mad."

Enrique understood but little. He vaguely felt, however, that all this held some kind of humiliation for him. Suddenly, like one who clutches at a saving idea, Alicia exclaimed:

"What time is it?"

"Quarter past one."

"Well then, see here. Let's go to Las Ventas, or La Bombilla. The same carriage that takes us out can bring us back."

"Well—it——"

He hesitated, knowing not how to confess his absurdity, how to own up to the enormous, unpardonable stupidity of being poor. At last he made up his mind to speak, wounded by the questions of Alicia, who by no means understood his uncertainty.

"You know, I—forgive me, but—I haven't got money enough," said he.

"What a boy you are!" she answered. "Why, you don't need hardly any, at all. Haven't you even got, say, two hundred pesetas?"

"Two hundred pesetas!" stammered Enrique, horror-stricken. "No, no, I haven't."

"Well, a hundred, then?"

"No."

"All right. Come, tell me. How much *have* you got?"

Enrique would have gladly died. Gnawing his lips with desperation, he answered:

"I've hardly got ten left."

She burst out laughing, one of those frank, bold laughs such as perhaps she had never known since the time when some rich man, setting her feet on the path of sin, had taken from her the gentle happiness of being poor.

"And you were talking about going to Fornos?" she demanded.

Enrique answered, in shame:

"I'm not good enough for you, Alicia! I'm not worthy of you! I'll take you home."

The girl answered, charmed by the bohemian novelty of the adventure:

"Never mind about the money. I want to have something to eat with you. Take me to some tavern or other, some cheap little dive. It's all right."

He still hesitated. She insisted. The terror of falling from her good graces enfolded him.

"What if the food is bad, and you don't like it?" he asked.

"Fool! I don't want luxury, to-night. I want memories of other times. Was I always rich, do you think?"

"Well, in that case——"

"Yes, yes, take me along! Show me something of your life!"

Arm in arm they went down the street. Their feet kept time, together. Feverishly he repeated:

"Alicia! Oh, my Alicia!"

Then, as he buried his white and trembling lips in the hair of the greatly desired one, it seemed to him that all Madrid was filled with perfumes of fresh violets.

SOME days drifted by, after that unforgettable night, without Darlés getting any chance to see Alicia. Several afternoons he went to her house, between half-past two and three, at which hour Don Manuel was never there. But Teodora, the maid, never let him get beyond the parlor. Sometimes Alicia was out, the maid said; again, she was asleep or had a headache, and could not see him. Teodora spoke drily, disconcertingly. If there is any way to sound the good or bad opinion any one has of us, it is surely in the attitude of that person's servants. The student would murmur:

"And she didn't leave any word for me?"

"No, sir. Not any."

Then, at sight of the maid's sly and mocking face, Enrique would feel his countenance lengthen with sadness. His eyes would grow dim with grief and humility, like those of a discharged servant. But then, not being quite able to give up the illusion that had brought him there, he would say:

"Well, all right, if that's how it is. Tell her I called, and say I'll be back to-morrow."

As he went down the stairs, very sadly, that idea of his own inferiority which had wounded him on the night he had been introduced to Alicia once more overcame him. Yes, he was beaten at the start. He was inept and worthless. What could he offer her? Not money, since he was poor; nor fame, since he was not a noted artist; nor yet could he bring her gayety and joy, for whatever of these he had until now possessed in his sentimental, introspective soul, had been taken away from him by Alicia's indifference.

Many days, at nightfall, the student went to Calle Mayor and stood in front of the jeweler's window where he could see the sparkling of that magnificent emerald necklace that Alicia had told him about. Now he would walk up and down the street, wrapped in his cloak with a certain worldly aplomb; now he would pause to look at the shop, whose electric lights flooded the passers-by under a rain of brilliancy. He would stand a long time in front of the window, enthralled by the spell of the bleeding rubies, the topazes which burned like wounds, the celestial blue turquoises. He would stare at the chains and rings, shimmering with gold on the artistically-wrinkled, black velvet, which finely carpeted the broad reach of the window. And this vagrant attraction, wakened in him by the jewels, seemed to cause a kind of presentiment. All the time, his immature mind would be thinking:

"Alicia would be happy if she should pass along, now, and see me here."

During those first days of separation, the memory of the beloved one rooted itself into the student's memory under the strange sensation of violet perfume. He either did not remember, or he pretended not to remember, the big, green eyes of the girl, her cruel and epigrammatic little mouth, her firm, white body. But all the more did that violet perfume possess him. He seemed to find his clothes, his hands, his text-books, his poor little bed all odorous of violets. Still, even this sweet illusion began to fade. Time began to blur it out, as it had blurred his recollections of the girl. Darlés wept a great deal. And one night he wrote her a desperate, somewhat enigmatic note:

"I'm going to see you, to-morrow. If you won't let me in, I shall die. Be merciful! My little room no longer smells of violets."

Alicia felt annoyed by the student's note. What was the idea of these ostentatious hyperboles of passion? Could Darlés have got it into his head that what had happened—one of many adventures in her path—had been anything but perfectly worthless and common? Alicia felt so sure of this that her emotion was one of astonishment, more than of disgust. Yet, in the beginning, her surprise caused her a certain pleasure.

"It really would be interesting," thought she, "if this boy should fall in love with me like the hero of a play."

But the pleasure of such a curiosity hardly lasted a minute. Soon the girl's cold, selfish spirit, that always traveled in straight lines toward its own ends—the spirit and the will that never let themselves be interfered with—reacted against this romantic possibility. Alicia neither wanted to love nor be loved. For through the experiences of her girl friends she had learned that love, with all its jealousies and pains, is harshly cruel to lover and beloved, alike.

She attached no importance whatever to the caprice that had momentarily thrown her into the student's arms. The evening before their first and only night together, Darlés had just happened to find her in one of those fits of the blues, of eclectic relaxation, in which the volatile feminine sense of ethics swings equidistant from good and evil. Her virtues and her vices, alike, were arbitrary and without any exact motive. If the student had perhaps had finer eyes, she would have yielded to him, just the same; then too, perhaps if the emerald necklace that, just a few minutes before, she and Don Manuel had been quarreling about had been less desirable, she would have refused him.

The only certain thing about it all was this, that she had accepted the student's comradeship because in a kind of good-natured way she had reckoned the conversation of even a poor man more entertaining than the remembrance of a necklace. And next morning when she had got back home, she had found herself a little surprised at her own conduct. She felt that she had

shown a generosity, a fanciful whim such as perhaps might have driven a critic like Sarcey, after forty years of the real theater, to some miserable little puppet-show. At all events the thing should never happen again. It was absurd!

Next day, Teodora had informed her that Darlés had come to see her while she had been out. Day after day, the same thing had occurred. The girl had ended up by feeling very much annoyed at the young fellow's sad obstinacy. A veritable beggar for love, he had come to trouble the easy currents of her idleness. Every time Teodora had told her the student had been back again, Alicia had grown angry.

"What the devil does he want, anyhow?" she would exclaim. "Blest if I know!"

In this she was really sincere. She did not know. The selfish frivolity of her disposition could not understand how any man, after having received the supreme gift from a woman, could do other than get tired of her. Darlés' note, complaining of her desertion of him, increased her annoyance. Once for all she felt she must cut this entanglement. What better way could there be than to receive the importunate young fellow and talk to him in a perfectly impersonal way, as if no secret existed between them?

When Darlés arrived, next day, at the usual time, Teodora led him into the dining-room.

"I'll tell mistress you're here," said she.

Darlés remained standing there, reflective, one elbow leaning against the window-jamb. Once, when he had been nothing but "Don Manuel's friend," Alicia had used to receive him informally. Nobody had announced him, then. Now he felt himself isolated, stifled by that kind of friendly hostility used on boresome callers. The maid came back and said:

"Mistress will see you. Come this way."

Darlés found the girl in her little boudoir, together with a tall, dark-haired girl, dressed in gray. This girl wore English-looking, mannish clothes, well set off by her red tie and by the whiteness of her starched collar and cuffs. When Alicia saw the student, she neither moved nor stretched out her hand to him. All she said was:

"Hello, there! Is that you?"

Something in the rather scornful familiarity of her greeting infinitely humbled him. He grew pale. All the blood in his body seemed flooding his heart, turning to ice there. Still discourteous, Alicia introduced him to the other girl:

"Señor Darlés—my friend, Candelas."

Candelas fixed her keen, vivid eyes on the new-comer. Then she peered at Alicia, as if asking whether this visit might not perhaps veil some amorous secret. The girl understood, and gave her friend's sophisticated question a vertical answer:

"No, you're wrong. Enrique comes here only because he's Don Manuel's friend."

The student nodded assent to this, and Candelas smiled coldly. Then the two girls once more took up the thread of the conversation broken by the arrival of Darlés. The poor fellow sensed that he was isolated and dismissed. Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed, with no break in that animated chatter. Men's names came into it; and Candelas laughed heartily as she reviewed the details of a recent supper she had had. Alicia laughed, too. Quite possibly she did this to hurt the student's feelings and to persuade herself Enrique really was nothing more to her than just Don Manuel's friend.

A visitor dropped in; an old woman who dealt in clothes and trinkets. She had a heavy bundle with her, and this she put down on the floor. Alicia asked her:

"Well, Clotilde, what's new?"

Clotilde fairly oozed enjoyment, in her thick cloak, as she answered:

"I've got the finest petticoats and stockings in the world."

"High-priced?"

"Dirt cheap! I don't know why, but I've got it into my head you want to spend a little money, to-day."

Then the furnishings of the little boudoir vanished under a many-colored flood of showy silks—green, brown, blue—which, as they were spread out, diffused a most delightful perfume of cleanness. As if under some magic spell, Alicia and Candelas fell a prey to the intense, acquisitive passion that tortures women in front of shop-windows. The two girls vied in asking the price of every treasure.

"This petticoat here, how much?"

"Seeing it's you, a hundred pesetas."

"And that heliotrope one?"

"Seventy-five. Just take a good look at it. Wonderful!"

With amazement, Enrique studied this profusion of elegance and luxury. He had never even dreamed civilization wove so many refinements about the art of love. And as his frank eyes observed these petticoats that gently rustled, or took in the lace of these night-dresses—majestically full as senatorial togas—he sadly recalled the poor little white chemises and coarse underwear lacking in all adornment, that the women of his home-town hung out to dry on their clothes-lines.

Now a new detail came to increase his misery. The peddler and Alicia were arguing excitedly over the price of the heliotrope petticoat. Clotilde wanted seventy-five pesetas, and the young woman vowed she couldn't go over fifty. The peddler insisted:

"You'd better make up your mind to take it, because you won't get such a bargain anywhere else. I'm only selling it at this price just to please you, but I'm not making a penny on the deal."

Then she turned to Enrique, and added:

"Come now, this gentleman will buy it for you!"

Darlés blushed, and found nothing to say. Men without money are contemptible; and as Alicia did not even deign to look at him, the student knew he had lost her. Dear Lord, if there had only been some devil's bank where lovers might barter off the years of their life, for money, gladly would he have sold his whole existence for those curséd seventy-five pesetas!

Tired of arguing, the peddler gathered up her things and packed them into her valise. The conversation drifted off to other things. The women began talking about jewels. Candelas showed a brooch that had been given her. Clotilde offered the girls a necklace.

"If you'd like to see it, I'll bring it," said she. "I've got it at home."

Alicia sighed deeply; and that long sigh, broken like a child's, expressed enormous grief. She said:

"I'm in love with a necklace in a shop on Calle Mayor, and I don't want any other. I dream about it all the time. I never saw anything so wonderful! I tell you the man who gives me *that*, can have me."

"How much is it?"

"Fifteen thousand pesetas."

Then she fixed an inscrutable look on Darlés, and added:

"I think this gentleman here is going to get it for me. Aren't you, Enrique?"

Candelas was about to laugh, but checked herself. Her penetrating eyes had just seen in the student's congested face something of the terrific inner struggle now possessing him. Darlés was no longer able to contain himself. He got up to leave, and his eyes showed such despair and shame that Alicia took pity on him.

"I'll see you out," said she.

They left the little boudoir. When they got to the parlor, the student—who hardly knew what he was doing—seized the girl's hands and covered them with kisses. He began to weep desperately.

"Alicia! Alicia!" he stammered, "what makes you so cruel to me? I'm dying for you! Alicia! Oh, why can't you love me?"

But she had already recovered from her brief emotion, and now tried to rid herself of him.

"Come, come, now," she exclaimed, "what a fool you are!"

"I adore you, Alicia! Heart of my soul!"

"Come now, be good! Keep quiet—good-by! You're getting me into trouble!"

"But I've got to see you—see you!"

"All right! Only *do* keep quiet! Good-by—keep quiet, I tell you! Candelas might get wise to something, and I don't want her making fun of us!"

She spoke in a low tone, and at the same time kept pushing Darlés toward the door. He murmured:

"Are you sending me away forever?"

"No."

"Yes, you are, too! You're trying to get rid of me!"

"No, no; but for heaven's sake, get out!"

"Yes, you are; you're throwing me out—getting rid of me because I'm poor, because I don't know how to win you! But how *can* I win you, if you won't give me a little time?"

She was growing angry; her face became hard. The student clasped his hands and cried:

"You're doing a wicked thing to send me away like this!"

"All right, all right——"

"A wicked thing, because any man that loves as much as I do can do anything. Even if I *am* poor, some time I might be rich. Even if I *am* obscure, I might become a noted artist, if you wanted me to. I'd kill, I'd steal for you!"

"For heaven's sake, shut up and get out!"

"Yes, I'll go because you tell me to. But—hero or thief—I'd be anything to stay with you, anything for you! Alicia, oh, my Alicia, I'll do anything you want me to—yes, by God, if I get twenty years for it!"

The poor, innocent young chap, without suspecting it, was uttering a great phrase; he was laying all his youth at the feet of this ungrateful woman—offering her the same treasure of youth to gain which Faust lost his soul.

Alicia already had the door open.

"Good-by," she whispered. "Do get out! Manuel might come!"

"When am I going to see you again?"

"Oh, some time."

"When?"

"I don't know. *Won't* you go?"

"To-morrow?"

"No."

"Tell me! Tell me what day! I'll be patient. I'll wait. When can I see you?"

She hesitated. Ardently he insisted:

"When?"

"Oh, you make me sick!"

"Come, have it over with. Tell me, when?"

A look of perdition, of madness, gleamed in the green eyes of the Magdalene. This look seemed to illuminate her whole face, to change into a smile on the tyrannical line of her lips.

"When?" he repeated.

Without knowing why, the student was afraid; but almost at once he gathered himself together.

"Tell me, tell me, when?" he stammered.

"I don't know."

"You've got to tell me!"

"You're crazy!"

"No matter, tell me, when?"

Insidiously she replied:

"Never. Or—when you bring me the necklace I asked you for!"

Struck dumb, he peered at her, because he realized the girl meant what she said. She added:

"Then——"

The door closed. Enrique Darlés blundered, weeping, down the staircase.

IV

DARLÉS got up next morning very early and went wandering out into the street. He was completely done up. The night had been one of terror and insomnia; and when day had dawned, finding him in his miserable little room—a room whose only furniture was a bureau covered with books and magazines, a rickety pine table and a few rush-bottomed chairs, all mean and old—the realization of his solitude had struck him with the violence of a blow. He had felt that profound agitation which psychologists call "claustrophobia," or the fear of enclosed spaces.

For a long time he wandered about, absorbed in vacillations that had neither name nor plan. He hardly knew himself. His conscience had been cruelly wrung in a few hours of suffering; and from this savage convulsion of the soul unsuspected developments were emerging, enormous moral unfoldings, filled with terrifying perplexities. His despair had loosed a stupendous avalanche of problems against the bulwark of those moral principles which had been taught him as a child. And each of these questions was now a terrible problem for him. Where, he wondered, does virtue end? Where does sin commence? And if all our natural forces should go straight toward the goal of happiness, why should there be any desires that codes of formulated ethics should judge depraved and sinful? Why should not everything which pleases be allowed?

When he reached the Calle de Atocha, he met a friend of his, called Pascual Cañamares. This friend was a medical student like himself. The two young fellows greeted each other. Cañamares was on his way to San Carlos.

"Do you want to come along with me?" he asked. "I'll show you the dissecting-room."

Darlés went along with his friend. Cañamares noticed Enrique's pallor.

"You don't look a bit well this morning," said he.

"No, I didn't sleep much last night."

"Maybe you were out having a good time?"

"No. On the contrary, I cried all night."

There was such a depth of manly pain in this reply that Cañamares did not dare probe the matter any further.

The dissecting-room, cold and white, produced some very lively sensations in Darlés. Floods of sunlight fell from the tall windows, painting a wide, golden border over the tiled walls. A good many corpses lay on the marble tables, covered with blood-stained sheets; and all these bodies had shaven heads and open mouths. Their naked feet, closely joined together, produced a ghastly sensation of quietude. An indefinable odor floated in the air, a nauseating odor of dead flesh. Darlés felt a slight vertigo which forced him to close his eyes and leave the room. For more than an hour he wandered about the gravely-echoing, spacious cloisters of San Carlos. A strange sadness hovered over the building; the damp, old building which once on a time had been a convent and now had become a school—the building where the vast tedium of a science unable to free life from pain was added to the profound melancholy of a religion which thinks only of death.

When Pascual Cañamares left his classroom, he asked Darlés to go and dine with him. Enrique accepted. It was just noon. Cañamares usually ate at a little tavern in the Plaza de Anton Martín. This was a gay little establishment, with high wooden counters, painted red. The two students sat down before a table, on which the hostess had spread a little tablecloth.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Cañamares.

"Oh, I don't care. Anything you do."

"Soup and stew?"

"All right."

Cañamares ordered, in a free and easy way:

"Landlady! Bring us a stew!"

He was a big, young fellow, twenty, plump and full-blooded, vivacious with that healthy, turbulent kind of joviality which seems to diffuse vital energies all about it. He was very talkative; and in his picturesque and frivolous chatter lay a contagious good-humor. Darlés answered him only with distraught monosyllables. His whole attention was fixed on a few coachmen at the next table. They were talking about a certain crime that had been committed that morning. Two men, in love with the same woman, had fought for her with knives, and one had killed the other. The murderer had been captured. It was a vulgar but intense crime of passion; it seemed to have a certain barbarous charm which, in its own way, was chivalric, since there had been no foul play in the crime. The fight had been fair and open. And the student admired, he even envied those two brave men who, for the sake of love, had not shrunk before the solemnity of a moment in which the death-dealing wound coincides with the knife-thrust which carries a man off to the penitentiary.

As they left the tavern, Pascual took unceremonious leave of his companion.

"I'm going to leave you," said he, "because no one can have any fun with you. Hanged if I know what's the matter with you, to-day! Why, you won't even listen to a fellow!"

Then he took his leave. Unmoved, Enrique saw him walk away; but after that he felt a painful sensation of loneliness. Yes, and this loneliness had come upon him because he had been frank enough not to hide his ugly state of mind, because he had let all the melancholy of his soul shine forth freely from his eyes. And in that moment he understood that to be thoroughly sincere is tremendously expensive, for all sincerity—even the most innocent—invariably exacts a heavy price.

That evening he ate only a very light supper and went to bed early. He lay awake a long time, tortured by a flood of disconnected memories. His father, who represented all his past, and Alicia Pardo, who symbolized his whole present, seemed to be striving for him. The image of the girl at last prevailed.

Little by little he fell to studying the perverse and mocking spirit of the woman, who, even when she had waked up in the morning with him, had looked at him and shrugged her shoulders disdainfully. Well, what had happened? Between them, where had the fault lain? Was the girl naturally a hard-hearted creature, incapable of high and lasting sentiments; or was it that he, himself, quiet and peaceful, had not been able to live up to her illusions?

Scourged by the agonizing tyranny of his will, the student's memory recalled moments, evoked phrases, and once more endowed with new reality all the details of that enchanted night in which it had seemed to him all Madrid had been perfumed with violets. And as the human heart always yearns to forgive the object of our love, Enrique succeeded at last, after much reflection, in convincing himself that Alicia was innocent.

He decided that from the first moment she had been blameless. She had encouraged him to undertake the conquest of her; and afterward completely and with no other wish than to see him happy she had opened her arms to him—Venus-like arms, which had cast about his neck a bond of pity and sweet tenderness. And he, in exchange for such supreme happiness, what had he given?

Accusingly an implacable voice began to cry out in the student's conscience. Alicia, he pondered, was accustomed to the ways of the world; she was a woman of exacting and refined tastes, who adored luxury and understood Beethoven. Many men of the aristocracy worshiped her, making a fashionable cult of her beauty; and more than one famous tenor had sung for her, alone in the intimacy of her bedroom, his favorite *racconto*. The inexorable voice continued:

"And what have you done, Darlés the Obscure, to be worthy of this treasure? What merits have you had? Women of such complete beauty as hers seek that which excels—they love strength, which is the supreme beauty of man; strength, which is glory in the artist, money in the millionaire, elegance and breeding in the man of the world, despair in the suicide, courage and outlawry in the thief who boldly dares defy the law. But you, you who are nothing, what do you aspire to? Of what can you complain?"

The student heaved a sigh, and his eyes filled with tears. He was a fool, a shrinking coward, a poltroon. A man who has ruined himself for a woman, or who, to keep her as his own, has committed murder and been sent to prison, may justly complain of her. But *he*, quite on the contrary—

Suddenly Darlés shuddered so violently that the electric shock of his nerves made him utter a cry. Deathly pale, he sat up in bed. Since he could not give Alicia either a fortune or the glory of a great artist, he must drink a toast to her with his whole honor—he must steal. This came to him as a terrible revelation, resonant of Hell. And all at once he understood the enigmatic expression which had shone in the eyes of the girl and had sounded from her lips the last time they had talked together. He had asked her: "When am I going to see you again?" And she had answered: "Never—until you bring me the necklace I have asked you for!"

Now these mystic words clearly reëchoed in his mind; now he fully understood them. Alicia was in love with a priceless jewel; and often, thinking about it, she grew very sad. Her sadness was real; he himself had seen it. Perhaps the girl, when she had dismissed him, reminding him of that necklace, had spoken in jest; perhaps it had been in earnest. Who could tell? At all events, when she had declared that they would never see each other again, she had in a veiled manner expressed her belief that he was a coward, incapable of ruining himself for her.

The feverish eyes of Enrique Darlés burned like coals. Why, indeed, should he not steal? Why should he not prove himself brave, capable of everything? At the basis of every great sacrifice lies something superhuman, that confuses and that rends the soul. If he were a thief and could pay with his bravery something that his small, poor money could not buy; if he should ruin his whole career just to please her, should bring down upon his head the rigors of the law and his father's curses, Alicia—so he fondly believed—would love him blindly, with the same sort of frenzy that Balzac's hero, Vautrin, inspired in women.

The voice which until now had been thundering accusations in the student's storm-tossed conscience, now with soft flatterings began to wheedle and cajole him, saying:

"Alicia, your beloved Alicia would be happy with the emeralds of that necklace. If you have no way to buy it for her, go steal it! You're a cowardly wretch if you don't! What does the opinion of the crowd matter to you, egoist that you are? A man incapable of becoming a thief for a woman may love her greatly, but he does not love her to distraction. What your Alicia desires, you should give her. Have no longer any doubts, but go and steal! Steal this necklace for her and then clasp it about her neck—that neck whose snow so many times in the space of one night offered its refreshing coolness to your lips!"

These ideas combined to strengthen his more recent impressions—the impression of his visit to the dissecting-room where once more he had seen that nothing matters; and the impression of that crime of jealousy which he had heard talked about in the tavern. And all at once, Enrique Darlés felt himself calmed. His future had just been decided. He would steal. Fatality, incarnate

in the body of Alicia Pardo, had just mapped out his road for him.

Every evening at sunset, at that hour of mystery when the street-lights begin to shine and women to seem more beautiful, the student left his lodgings and, passing through the Calle Romanos and the Calle Carmen, took his way toward the Puerta del Sol, always full of an idle, loitering crowd which seems to have nowhere to go. He always stopped in Calle Mayor, to cast an eager, timorous look into the jeweler's shop, whose show-window glowed like a bed of living coals.

This calculating, daily contemplation of those treasures completely overturned Enrique's moral standards. He, himself, did not grasp the profound change coming upon him. Steadily this thought of stealing kept growing in his soul, obsessing him, evolving into a resistless, overwhelming determination.

As if to increase his torment, the emerald necklace which served as an advertisement for the shop, found no purchaser. It was far too dear.

With his nose pressed against the plate glass of the window, Enrique suffered long moments of anguish, unable to take his eyes from that abyss, that precipice of gold and velvet at the bottom of which the diamonds, topazes, emeralds, pearls, rubies and amethysts seemed the eyes of a strange multitude peering out at him. All this time his imagination was developing a mad, adventurous tale. With his prize hidden in his most secret pocket, he would go to see Alicia and would say to her: "Here, take it! Here is your necklace, the necklace that neither Don Manuel nor any of your millionaire aristocrats would buy for you. I, gambling my life, have got it for you! What do you say now?"

And thinking thus, he would close his eyes, seeming to feel that all about him the air was perfumed with violets. And then when he once more opened his eyes, the emeralds of the necklace, green and hard as Alicia's pupils, seemed to say to him: "All your dreams and hopes, all your sweet visionings, shall now come true!" It was the secret voice of temptation, a voice which had transformed itself to radiance.

One night, as he was recovering from one of these long, deep fits of abstraction, before the jeweler's window, he saw that Alicia Pardo and her friend Candelas were really drawing near. They, too, had seen him. Upset, almost speechless, the student saluted them. Alicia affectionately pressed his hand; and now more strongly than ever he breathed that violet odor which had perfumed all his dreams of theft. The girl asked:

"Well, what are you doing here?"

"Nothing much, only passing a little time."

Alicia inspected the shop window.

"Ah, yes, yes, you were looking at my necklace, weren't you?"

"Yes, that's just what I *was* doing."

And as he said this, he blushed deeply, because this confession was equivalent to another, that he was drawing closer to her. Smilingly Candelas peered at the student. Alicia added with cruel malice:

"You know, dear, I asked him to get it for me."

"Yes, I know, I remember," said Enrique.

He spoke sadly. Alicia began to laugh.

"Well, how about it? Are you really thinking of giving it to me?"

"¿*Quién sabe?*"

Sudden anger had endowed his face with virile and aggressive tension. Forehead and lips grew pale. Candelas, good-natured in a careless way, tried to salve his misery.

"You'd better leave us women alone," said she. "We're a bad lot. Believe me, the best of us, the most saintly of us, isn't worth any man's sacrificing himself for."

Alicia interrupted her friend, exclaiming:

"What a little fool you are, to be sure! We were only joking. Do you think Enrique would really do any such crazy thing for me? What nonsense!"

Proudly the student repeated:

"¿*Quién sabe?*"

Then, after a little silence, he added:

"I don't know what makes you talk that way. You've never proved me. You don't know what kind of a man I am!"

Two months earlier, the laughing, mocking words of these girls would have disconcerted him.

But now he felt himself transfigured; he felt new, vigorous ardors in his blood. He no longer doubted. An extraordinary dominating concept of his own person had taken possession of him; and this concept of his youth and boldness, of his strength and courage, had exalted him like strong drink. In a single moment the youth had grown to be a man.

Alicia closely observed him. Her mouth grew serious, and under the parting of her hair, that lay symmetrically on her forehead, her eyes became pensive. She knew little of primitive man's hunting-ways, but was expert in judging characters and stirring up passions. And though she did indeed care little for books, men's consciences lay open to her eyes; which kind of reading is far better. Her keen instincts, rarely amiss, perceived something dominant, something desperate in the student's voice and gestures. She judged it wise to end the conversation.

"So long, Enrique. By the way, Manuel's been asking for you, a number of times."

"Thanks. Give him my best regards."

"When are you coming to see me?"

Still shrouded in gloom, Darlés answered:

"I don't know, Alicia. But you can be sure I'll come as soon as I have the right to."

In this allusion to what he now called his duty, trembled indefinable bitterness and pride.

When the student found himself alone, rage seized him—rage that, unable to express itself in words, found vent in tears. He felt convinced that his answers, somewhat mysterious, had duly impressed the girl. Yes, they had been good. Now his conduct must back up his words, or he would lose all his gains. Boastingly he had pledged himself to something very serious. Nothing but ridicule could fall on him, if he failed to make good his offer. This meant he must go through, to the bitter end.

"Yes, I will become a thief," he pondered.

Calmer now, he took his way to his tavern, where he ate a peaceful supper, and went home and early to bed. He slept well, with that peace which irrevocable decisions produce in minds long racked by stress and storm. It was noon when he awoke. He got up at once, put on clean clothes and wrote his father a quiet letter that contained nothing except his studies. Then he tied up all his books and went down to the street with them enveloped in a big kerchief.

"They've all got to be sold," thought he. "If I'm caught, I'll need money. If I get away and nothing is ever found out about me, I can get them back, some time."

After having disposed of the books, he went to a fashionable restaurant and had rather a fine dinner. In all these little details, so different from the order and simplicity of his usual life, you could have seen a certain sadness of farewell. After dinner, he went to drink coffee on the terrace of the Lion d'Or, and stayed a while there, observing the women. Many, he saw, were beautiful. As yet he had decided nothing definite about what he meant to do. He preferred to let things take their own, impromptu course. Sometimes great battles are best decided off-hand, on the march, in the imminent presence of danger.

At exactly six o'clock he got up, crossed the Calle de Sevilla and went through the Carrera de San Jerónimo toward the Puerta del Sol. The street-lamps and the lights in the shops had not yet begun to burn. It was an April evening; a cool, fresh, damp breeze wafted through the streets. Far to the west, shining in rosy space, Venus was shedding her eternal beams. Darlés went peacefully along, his calm movements in harmony with the perfect equanimity that had taken possession of him. When he reached the Ministerio de la Gobernación, he stopped a while to watch the street-cars, the carriages, the crowds circulating about him. Then the idea that, before long, these people would catch him, rose in his mind once more.

"To-morrow," thought he, "I'll be seeing nothing of all this."

In his eyes gleamed the sadness of a last farewell. It seemed to him he had gone too far, now, to change his resolution of stealing.

A romantic desire, almost a dandified pride, that drove him to make good with the girl, formed the basis of his madness, rather than any carnal desire. This desire, which had at first possessed him, had now evolved into a refined and purely artistic sentiment, a wish to accomplish some heroic deed. At last analysis, merely to get possession of Alicia had become unimportant. The most vital factor, practically the only one now, was to assume in her opinion a splendid heroism. Darlés wanted to show this kind of heroism, which the adventurous soul of woman always admires. He was finding himself on a par with great criminals, with illustrious artists, with multimillionaires who wreck their fortunes in a single night, with every man who steps outside the common, beaten paths. And the poor student, reflecting how the girl would always remember that an honorable man had gone to jail for love of her, thought himself both happy and well-paid.

Absorbed in these chimerical fancies, Enrique Darlés came to the jeweler's shop in Calle Mayor. Its lights had just been turned on, and now they flung bright radiance across the sidewalk. The boy stopped in front of the window, which was filled with blinding splendor. There, in the middle of the display, was the terrible necklace of emeralds. It was hung about a half-bust of white velvet. Darlés studied it a long time, and at first felt that mingled chill and fear which the sight of firearms will sometimes produce in us. But soon this sensation faded. The green light of

the emeralds exalted him. It seemed to exercise a kind of magnetic attraction, resistless as the force of gravitation. Nevertheless, the boy still hesitated. He still understood that in this little space between him and the shop-window a great abyss was yawning. But suddenly he thought:

"Suppose Alicia should see me here, now?"

This idea overthrew his last fears. With a sure hand he opened the shop door. He walked up to the counter. His step was easy and self-possessed. A tall, finely-dressed clerk, with large red mustaches, advanced to meet him.

"What can I show you, sir?" asked the clerk.

With an aplomb that just a moment before would have seemed impossible to him, Enrique answered:

"I'd like to see that emerald necklace in the window."

"Yes, sir."

Darlés glanced about him. He noted that a white-bearded old gentleman—doubtless the proprietor—was closely observing him from the rear of the shop. Already the student had made up his plan of attack. He would snatch the jewels and break for the door. He had left this door ajar, on purpose.

The clerk came back with the necklace, which he laid on the moss-green cloth that covered the show-case. Enrique hardly dared touch it.

"How much?" asked he.

"Fifteen thousand pesetas."

The student clacked his tongue, like a drinker savoring the state and quality of good wine. The clerk added:

"I'm sure you've seen very few emeralds like these."

The white-bearded old gentleman had now come nearer. Saying nothing, he slid his hands into his trouser pockets. His face looked grave and puzzled. You would have thought his merchant soul had scented danger. Darlés gave him a glance. It was not yet too late. He still was honest. There was still time for repentance.

The clerk set out a number of trays, and from these took various necklaces. His way of handling them, of caressing them with careful fingers, of spreading them out on the cloth, all showed his love of jewels. There were diamond, turquoise, sapphire, topaz necklaces.

The student hesitated. A dizzying pleasure, bitter-sweet, enveloped this nearness to crime. He kept asking:

"What's this one worth? And this?"

"This is very cheap. Two thousand pesetas."

"How about this ruby one?"

"Forty-five hundred."

Darlés took them up, studied them carefully, put them down again. Suddenly he felt his cheeks were growing very pale. To give himself countenance he commented:

"This black pearl one is very beautiful."

"Yes, and it's more expensive, too. Ten thousand pesetas."

Suddenly the old gentleman, who till then had uttered no word, exclaimed brusquely:

"Now then, I think you've talked enough!"

He turned to the clerk.

"Look out for these trays," he ordered.

Darlés raised his head, and proudly looked the old man in the eyes, with the hauteur of one still innocent.

"What are *you* interfering for?" he demanded. "What's the idea?"

"We can't waste any more time on you," answered the jeweler. "If I'm not mistaken, you're not overburdened with money."

He turned to his clerk again. The clerk stared in amaze. Imperatively the old man ordered:

"I tell you to put these trays away!"

The student had not yet, perhaps, fully decided to steal. Perhaps something good and sound still lay in his conscience, that might have barred him from fatal temptation at the crucial moment. But the merchant's provoking words spurred him on and made him sin. A spirit of

revenge drove him to it. This is no novelty. How many times is crime nothing more than the logical reaction against injustice!

Beside himself, Enrique stretched out his hand toward the place where lay the emerald necklace. His fingers clutched convulsively. He turned, and with one leap reached the door.

At that second, two shots crackled.

Darlés flung himself into mad, headlong flight toward the Viaducto. At first he heard a voice behind him, screaming:

"Stop him! Stop the thief! Stop thief!"

It was a horrible, nightmare voice. Then came the thunderous tumult of the pursuing mob. Before him, the pedestrians opened out. He saw astonishment and fear in their faces. As he rushed into the Calle de Bordadores, a man brandished a stick and tried to stop him. Darlés veered to the left, and ran up the grade of the Calle Siete de Julio with the speed of a hare.

Some one threw a chair at him, from a doorway. It hardly grazed him, but tripped up his nearest pursuers. When the human hunting-pack, raging and giving tongue, rushed in under the archways of the Plaza Mayor, its menacing tumult echoed louder than ever:

"*Thief, thief! Stop thief!*"

Beside himself with terror, the student flung himself along. He kept straight ahead, reached the park railing and leaped it with one bound. This saved him. The dim light and the shadows under the trees masked his figure. Still, he kept on running till he came to the fence again, and once more jumped it.

This time as he landed, his knees could no longer hold him up. They doubled, and he almost fell on his face. But he struggled up, once more, and still ran on and on. Now the pursuers' voices sounded far-off, under the echoing archways of the Plaza.

Darlés kept fleeing down the Calle Toledo. He noticed that a good many women were looking at him with uneasiness. One woman cried:

"He's wounded!"

When he reached the Puerta Cerrada, the student drew near the famous cross that gives its name to the square. He could do no more. His legs were collapsing with exhaustion, his heart was bursting, his tongue protruding. A number of women, frightened, crowded about him.

"You're wounded!" they exclaimed. "What's the matter? They've shot you!"

There was no anger in their cries, but only simple pity. The student felt calmer. One of the women had a water-jug.

"Give me a drink!" stammered Enrique. "Water! I'm dying of thirst!"

He raised the lip of the jug to his mouth, and drank in huge swallows. The women kept saying:

"You're wounded. Poor man! You'd better hurry to the hospital!"

To avoid waking suspicion, Darlés answered:

"Yes, I'm on my way there, now."

Then he swallowed a few more mouthfuls, and fled toward the Calle de Segovia. He ran a long, long time, till his last strength was gone. He stopped then, and gathered his wits together. His wet clothes were glued to his body, giving him a disagreeable feeling of cold. His hands were red. What he had believed to be sweat, was blood.

"I'm wounded!" he murmured.

Then he understood what the women at Puerta Cerrada had told him. Just at that moment a slight nausea overcame him, and he had to lean against a wall. Presently he opened his eyes, and looked about him. He was in a steep, deserted little alleyway, with humble houses on either hand. Very near, looming up against the black immensity of the sky, appeared the huge mole of El Viaducto—that splendid, sinister height, that bridge spanning the city, whence so many a poor soul had bowed itself down to death in the leap of suicide.

Enrique Darlés began to think again:

"Yes, I'm really wounded."

His ideas became more coherent. He thought of Alicia, of his little room in the Calle de la Ballesta. He felt of his pockets. His fingers closed on the necklace—"Her necklace!"

The student smiled. Unspeakable joy soothed his troubled heart. He sighed, and wiped away a few tears. Alicia was his! The book of his life was written, was at an end.

CANDELAS and Alicia were coming back in a landau from the race-track. The afternoon had been unseasonably chilly, but the sun had shone brightly, and the races had been exciting. Alicia smiled, contented. She had won eight hundred pesetas, and her eyes still beheld the jockeys speeding with dizzy swiftness against the background of the April landscape.

There suddenly, in the last half of the race, a horse had leaped ahead from that party-colored group of red, blue and yellow blouses and of white trousers. A horse had sped away to cross the tape; and she had found herself a winner.

There was something personal, something flattering to her vanity, in this triumph.

"The count's jockey rides like a centaur," she exclaimed. "He's English, isn't he?"

"No, Belgian," Candelas answered.

Alicia hardly remembered, very clearly, where the Low Countries might be. This answer did not satisfy her. But no matter; after all, it was enough for her to know the victorious jockey had come from one of those northern countries where all the men are blond and well-dressed.

Candelas began to explain the blind faith that the count, her friend, had in this remarkable Belgian connoisseur of horses. Then she briefly outlined the brilliant program of travels and pleasures the count and she were planning. Along toward the beginning of May they would go to London, and in June to Paris, where the count was hoping to win the *grand prix* at Longchamps. They expected to pass the autumn at Nice.

Alicia answered:

"In September, the little marquis and I will be going to Monte Carlo. You and I simply *must* see each other, there. There's not much fun just with the men, you know. They don't really know how to amuse us."

When the landau reached the Plaza de Castelar, Alicia asked her friend:

"Have you anything on for to-night?"

"No."

"Well then, come to the Teatro Real with me. They're going to give the divine Bizet's *Carmen*, and Nasi and Pacteschi are going to sing. Enough said!"

Candelas accepted.

"And now," said Alicia, "I want to go home, to see if any important message has come. Then I'll take you home, dear. You can change your dress and we'll go get Manuel, so he'll invite us out to supper."

The carriage stopped before Alicia's door. Teodora, who had been on the balcony, hurried down. She had a letter in her hand.

"This came for you," said she.

"Who from?"

"From Señor Enrique."

"Enrique!" repeated Alicia, surprised. And she tore the envelope with feverish haste. She read:

"Come to my room, I beg you. I must see you to-day, without fail."

The only signature was "E. D."

Alicia seemed to ponder. She peered at her friend.

"Do you understand this?" asked she. "It's from Enrique Darlés. Remember him? A young chap—Manuel's friend."

Then she asked Teodora:

"Who brought this?"

"An old woman."

"What kind of a looking woman?"

"I don't know. Well—she looked like a janitress."

Alicia lacked decision how to act. The curt authority of those few words had created a good deal of an impression on her. This was the letter of a man; children cannot speak thus. An impatient hand, perhaps a desperate one, had written with vigorous letters the one word, "Urgent," on the envelope.

"What shall we do?" asked she.

"When he summons you, that way," judged Candelas, "something serious must have happened to him. Well——"

Alicia looked at her watch. It was just six. Without upsetting the program for the evening, she could still afford the luxury of a little condescension. She ordered the coachman:

"Number X, Calle Ballesta. Hurry!"

For a moment the two young women remained silent. Suddenly Candelas exclaimed:

"Have you seen what the papers have been saying about the robbery in Calle Mayor, last night?"

"No. What about it?"

"Oh, a jeweler's shop was robbed."

"A jeweler's!" repeated Alicia.

Her face assumed an expression of unspeakable anxiety and alarm. She remembered the emerald necklace she had spoken of, so often; and she remembered the evening, too, when Candelas and she had come across Enrique standing motionless in front of the shop window. Suddenly the student's sad face seemed to rise up in her memory. She seemed to be hearing his last words: "You've never proved me. You don't know what kind of a man I am!" And those words, that she had never paid any attention to, now sounded in her ears with prophetic tones.

"What did they steal?" she asked.

"I can't say. I only just glanced over the paper."

"And who's the thief?"

"No one knows."

"Haven't they caught him?"

"No. He was too quick for them."

"And he got away?"

"Yes."

The mystery surrounding the criminal increased Alicia's uneasiness. Still, it was an agreeable sensation, which caused her a certain vanity. "Suppose the robbery really has been done for me!" she thought. She felt a proud, unhealthy emotion, like that of man when he meets his friends and they know some woman has killed herself for love of him.

Candelas, who could read Alicia's thoughts, exclaimed:

"Strange if the criminal were Enrique Darlés!"

"I don't think it could be!"

"Well, now—it might."

"That would be a terribly bad thing for him to have done."

"Of course!"

"But if he really did do it, I don't care! Let the fool suffer for it. Did *I* tell him to? When you come right down to it, even if I had, what the devil? The one that does a thing is more to blame than the one that asks him to!"

The carriage stopped, and Alicia and Candelas got out. They made their way in under a poverty-stricken doorway. Candelas called:

"Janitress! Janitress!"

No answer.

"Follow me," said Alicia. "I know the way."

She started along, daintily holding up her pearl-hued petticoat and shaking the big plume of her hat with a graceful motion. They went through a damp, ugly yard, then another, and began to climb a high stairway. The silken frou-frou of their skirts and the tinkling of their bangled bracelets broke the stillness. They reached the fourth story, and stopped in front of a door that stood ajar. Alicia tapped with her knuckles. No one answered. She knocked again. A voice, the voice of Enrique, feebly answered from within:

"Come!"

The girls found themselves in a dark room that stank of blood. Alicia could not repress a coarse exclamation of disgust.

"How sickening! Phew!" she cried. "What's this smell?"

At the end of the room, the silhouette of the bed was dimly visible. From that bed, Enrique Darlés stammered:

"There, on the little table—you'll find matches. Light—the lamp."

Candelas stood motionless, near the door, afraid of stumbling over something. When Alicia had made a light, the two friends cast a rapid glance about the room. The only furniture was a writing-table, a bureau with a looking-glass on it, and, along the walls, half a dozen rush-bottomed chairs. The student was lying, fully dressed, on the bed. Against the whiteness of the pillow, his crisp and very black hair lay motionless. He opened his eyes, a moment, and then, very slowly, closed them again. Over his beardless face, saddened by the pallor of his lips, wandered the ethereal, luminous whiteness of the last agony.

The two girls drew near him. Alicia called:

"Enrique! Enrique!"

He half-opened his eyes. His dark pupils fixed their gaze on Little Goldie, in a look of gratitude. She repeated:

"Enrique! Can you hear me?"

"Yes."

"They shot you, did they?"

"Yes."

"You—committed that—robbery in the Calle Mayor?"

"Yes."

Alicia looked exultingly at Candelas, as if asking her to take full cognizance of this exploit of hers. Her expression showed the same kind of pride that people sometimes manifest when they are exhibiting a work of art. She had just won a great triumph, because men dare such crimes only for women capable of inspiring mad love. Then the girl lowered her head again, to look more carefully at the student's clothing; and as she found it all stained with blood she felt a new attack of nausea. The contrast was too sharp between the hot, sickening air of that long-closed room and the life-giving breeze of the street.

"Shall I open the window?" asked she.

"No, no," murmured Enrique. "I'm very weak. The cold would kill me."

Alicia, seated on the bed—that poor bed one night perfumed with violets by her body—silently looked at him. A broad-brimmed crimson hat, decked with a splendid white plume, shaded her pale face. Her green eyes shone wickedly in the livid, bluish circles under them. The free-and-easy grace of her manner, the childish shortness of her waist, the robust fullness of her hips and breast, and the uneasiness with which her impatient, dancing little feet tapped the floor as if they wanted to run away, strongly contrasted with the ugliness of the room—the bare, half-furnished room heavy with the odors of death.

Candelas seemed truly moved. But Alicia felt as if she were choking. The terrible nausea kept gaining on her. Now and then she raised her lace handkerchief to her pleasure-loving nose—her nose which all the afternoon had breathed the free, fresh air of the race-track. Her growing disgust overcame her distress. She could not weep. And after all, why should she? Just so she could get away from there quickly, little cared she whether Enrique lived a few hours more or less. In her abysmal ingratitude, Alicia Pardo wondered that women could love a man so much as to kiss his dead lips.

Suddenly, anxious to have it all over, she asked:

"But—how did they wound you?"

Enrique opened his eyes again, and then his lips.

"I'll tell you," said he.

Despite the terrible bleeding he had suffered, some little strength still remained in him. This last, dying strength enabled him to speak.

"I stole for you, Alicia," he gasped, "because you told me, that evening you sent me away, I could see you again when I should bring you the necklace you wanted."

Alicia exclaimed:

"I don't remember that!"

"Well, I do! You told me so. I remember it all."

The young woman shrugged her shoulders. Her impure eyes, of absinthe hue, were moistened by no tear. Candelas, on the other hand, was showing herself more human, far more a woman. Her eyes were drowned with grief. Enrique continued speaking. His manner was grave. Quite suddenly the youth had become a man.

"I decided to win you back," said he, "to offer you the thing you wanted so much. Last night, when I went into that shop, I wasn't perfectly sure what I was going to do. Still, I went up to the counter, and told them I wanted to see the emerald necklace in the window. When they brought it, with some others, a kind of dizziness came over me. It veiled my eyes with dark, terrible shadows. I thrust out my hand, swiftly took one of the necklaces—I didn't know which, because they all looked green to me—and ran. But the proprietor must have been spying every movement of mine. He pulled a revolver, and fired. His aim was good. At that moment I felt nothing, and kept on running. Voices shouted after me: 'Stop thief! Stop thief!' I seemed to see revengeful hands, eager to catch me, opening and shutting like claws, behind me.

"When I came to my senses, I was in a deserted alleyway. My pursuers hadn't been able to catch me. Then I noticed my clothes were all soaked with blood, and my knees were shaking. What should I do? Night sheltered me. Slowly I came back here. To-day, I sent for you."

The ring-laden fingers of the girl twisted together with a twofold motion of interest and horror.

"And you haven't had any treatment?" asked she. "You haven't called a doctor?"

"No. I didn't want to do that. Because if anybody had seen me, they'd have suspected. And I preferred to die, Alicia, rather than to have them take away the necklace I stole for you."

Then, feeling that his last strength was running out, he added with a little gesture:

"There it is, on the bureau. Just raise up those papers—"

The scene was poignant, melodramatic with sad romanticism. At last the Magdalene's eyes grew wet.

"Boy, boy!" she sobbed. "What have you done?"

Darlés only repeated:

"You'll find it there, on the bureau."

She did as the student bade her in his eagerness not to die before seeing his gift in the well-beloved's hands of snow and pearl. Under some papers her fingers came upon a black pearl necklace.

"Oh, how beautiful!" she cried, enchanted.

Without opening his eyes, and like a man talking in his sleep, Darlés answered:

"It's not the one you wanted, I know. I found that out, afterward. But—at that moment, they all looked green to me."

Thus befell one more event, one more caprice of the bitter and eternal irony of things. To give one's life for a necklace, an emerald necklace, and then to get the wrong one! The student murmured:

"Good-by!"

A long shudder trembled through his body. Suddenly the shadow of death gave his face a stern, manly severity. His lips twisted. Candelas, kneeling beside the bed, wept and prayed. Alicia, more violent in disposition, caught Enrique by the shoulder.

"Enrique!" she cried. "Enrique!"

And for a moment she looked at him with one of those tragic, passionate expressions that sometimes explain the sacrifice of a life. The student could still whisper:

"Remember—!"

This was his final word. His eyes drooped shut. He died quietly, with no bleeding at the lips. A whitish aura spread over his face. Alicia exclaimed:

"Enrique! Can you hear me? Enrique!"

She felt of his forehead, his hands. He was dead.

"He's gone," said she.

This too, in her way of thinking, was admirable. Came a pause. Candelas had got up, and now the two friends questioned each other with their eyes. The same idea, the same terror had just struck them both. Enrique's death would compromise them. The law would institute researches, and the girls might easily be called upon to testify. Instincts of self-preservation drove memories of the dead man from them.

"We're in a terrible position," said Alicia. "It's all your fault. I didn't want to come."

Angrily Candelas retorted:

"It's *your* fault!"

"Mine?"

"Of course! Who made him steal, but you?"

"I did? *P?*"

"Yes, you idiot!"

In Candelas' voice quivered that envious anger felt by all women against any for whose sake a man has ruined himself. Then she added, more calmly:

"It's lucky, anyhow, the janitress didn't see us coming up here."

Alicia Pardo examined the necklace. Her egotistic soul, enamored of luxury, her little soul, that worshiped loot and gain, was now thinking of nothing but the beauty of the jewels. Standing in front of the looking-glass, she clasped the necklace round her throat and began to turn her head from side to side. The contrast made by the blackness of the pearls on the ermine whiteness of her throat gave her pleasure. And for a moment her eyes burned with the insolent strength of happiness.

What had happened was by no means causing her any remorse. Why should it? Was it her fault if Enrique had taken in earnest what she had asked him by way of jest? Philosophically she reflected that the history of every courtesan always contains at least one tragic chapter. Then her mind drifted toward a shade of irony. Poor Enrique! The unfortunate boy, she pondered, was one of those luckless ones who never realize their dream, even though they lay down their lives for it.

At last, moved more by a feeling of tenderness than by any artistic delicacy, she drew near the corpse, to say farewell with one last look. At the door, Candelas summoned her:

"Let's be going! Come!"

Alicia Pardo turned. There was really nothing more for her to do there. The thick air of that room, the tiled floor all covered with crimson blotches, stifled her. Out in the street she would breathe deeply again. And she reflected that her necklace of black pearls would attract attention, that night, at the Teatro Real. She felt no sadness. As she passed in front of the mirror, she cast a sidelong glance at herself.

"It's a pretty necklace, all right," thought she.

Then she added, with a vague regret:

"Still, I'd have liked the emeralds better——"

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THEIR SON; THE NECKLACE ***

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